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The African American/Black Racial Tapestry: Black Adolescents' Private, Independent School Experiences and Racial Identity Development

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THE AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK RACIAL TAPESTRY:
BLACK ADOLESCENTS' PRIVATE, INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
EXPERIENCES AND RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Educational Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Angela Birts

May 2017

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by

Angela Birts

APPROVED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL DOCTORAL PROGRAM
IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

While private, independent schools are homes to students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, the subjective experiences of African American students within these spaces are distinct. Twelve African American high school students attending ten different private, independent schools were asked to describe their racial and ethnic backgrounds, and explain how race is manifested in their schooling experiences. A methodological bricolage, including ground theory methods, is intricately woven into the fabric of this study to reflect the rich tapestry of African American/Black youth identities and their experiences in independent schools that underscore youth's interpretation of contemporary black culture and my personal reflections on high school. This study begins with a review of the characteristics of independent schools, racial socialization, and Black racial identity literature to understand better how it informs adolescents' self-concept and perceptions of how others feel about them and how they feel about other Blacks. Next, an examination of how the private, independent school settings of Black youth serve as sites that inform participants' racial identity development through their interactions with peers across lines of difference, peers who participate in race-based affinity groups, and supportive non-parental adults, follows. These findings are shown to contribute to bodies of literature that explore racial identity among Black youth, which helps to explain adolescents' processes of defining race or ethnicity as central to their identity. Finally, the implications of this work for administrators, teachers, and parents concludes the study.

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ABBREVIATIONS

RQ – Research Question
RIAS – Racial Identity Attitudes Scale
CRIS – Cross Racial Identity Scale
MMRI – Multidimensional Model of Identity
MIBI-t – Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-teen
NAIS- National Association of Independent Schools
POCC- People of Color Conference
SDLC- Student Diversity Leadership Conference
POCIS- People of Color in Independent Schools
CAIS- California Association of Independent Schools

Chapter 1

Introduction

Problem Statement

Some parents and students of color consider independent (private) schools as viable educational options (Anderson, 2012). Once admitted, independent schools may offer a quality education to children. However, many Black students, for example, face adversity and have to negotiate racial-ethnic identity in their interactions with members of different social groups to feel a sense of belonging and to gain acceptance within predominately white independent school settings (Cooper & Datnow, 2000; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Horvat & Antonio, 1999). Given the distinct experiences of African-American students in independent schools compared to their school-aged, non-Black counterparts, it is vital that research continues to explore how the high school environment contributes to the racial identity formation of Black youth.

My dissertation study examines the subjective experiences of African-American/Black students in independent schools across the San Francisco Bay Area and investigates how youth make sense of their racial identity in the high school context. This study uses a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) coupled with ethnography (Wolcott, 2016) to elucidate the subjective experiences of twelve African-American high school students who participated in separate 90-minute, semi-structured interviews. Moreover, the study presents an account of my first-hand experience as an African American (female) at an elite independent high school.

My Background

I graduated from a prestigious, independent college preparatory school (grades 6-12) in 2004 and I wanted nothing more than to leave the school campus and never return after graduation. I had a long list of reasons why I was eager to graduate and never look back, but overall my sentiment stemmed from the fact that I was exhausted from having spent four years feeling like an outsider. The experience of being an African-American in a predominately white private school, and feeling alone most of the time, was my high school reality—I was one out of two African-Americans in my class of 141 students. Those four years are characterized best in a nutshell as emotionally wrenching, and academically challenging, which makes me empathetic toward other students who face similar challenges.

I grew up in East Palo Alto, a community where drugs, violence, and teenage pregnancy were the norm. Despite the social issues that persisted in my neighborhood, however, I experienced joy and peace in my community and my home. I always felt supported and affirmed as a child, as I belonged to a tight-knit, diverse, and inclusive community. I lived in a low-income public housing complex from the ages of three to sixteen with my mom, stepfather, and seven younger siblings. The apartment complex was an exciting place to live; the community was safe, and the people were friendly. I had many friends of different racial-ethnic backgrounds, including persons of Mexican, African American, Tongan, and Samoan descent. Hence, I tasted various types of music, food, and culture that differed from my own at an early age, which taught me to appreciate others' cultures. I would discover during high school that the ability to

celebrate culture unencumbered and connect with others cross-culturally is what I value most in life. During my childhood, I never perceived that anyone viewed me as obtrusive for being Black nor did I witness someone denigrate another for expressing their race and culture. Unfortunately, I later experienced this form of discrimination when I made the shift from public school to private school as a teenager.

When I began high school at a prestigious, co-educational day, independent school, I saw racial and ethnic identities manifested in new ways. My White peers, and even a few Latino and Black students talked, dressed, and behaved in fashions that were unlike what I had witnessed in the K-8 public schools of my early schooling. There were also glaring inequalities that persisted between my hometown, and the upper-class city of my new school in which the schools, roads, and houses looked different. I resolved in my mind that my new school was the antithesis of what I called home, which was discomforting. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge how my feelings evolved as I attempted to adjust to the school environment and make new friends. Nevertheless, I will always remember my first day of private school, which was extremely challenging. I was uneasy throughout the day because I was one of the few “brown” faces on campus; I experienced a visceral reaction to the environment.

Attending lunch in the dining hall was by far the hardest part of my day. While entering the cafeteria, I experienced culture shock for the first time in my life, as I was the only African-American in the room. I pondered, “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “What am I going to do?” I immediately scurried out of the building and searched for a place of refuge, finding solace in a bathroom stall and reflecting upon the book,

“Warriors Don’t Cry,” that my father had sent to me a few months earlier. I recalled reading about the Little Rock Nine, a group of African-American students who entered a racially segregated and hostile, predominately white school known as Central Rock High in Little Rock, Arkansas, a key event of the American Civil Rights Movement. I subconsciously knew that I wasn’t the first person to embark on a journey toward attending a predominately white school, as my ancestors had paved the way for me to receive a quality education. I am grateful that I never endured physical violence because of my race as a high school student. It felt impossible to rid myself of the loneliness and pain that I was experiencing in that moment. I eventually lost the battle and wept for several minutes until a White, kind, senior approached me. She directed me to the school’s psychologist who became my anchor and helped me to make sense of my challenging day, and the many incidents that followed in which some of my classmates made me feel like I did not belong.

Several of my peers from White and affluent socioeconomic backgrounds sometimes spoke negatively about my community; often making a mockery of the people that lived there. I once had a White classmate ask if I knew any “welfare queens.” That was my first time hearing the word, and after researching it, I was saddened to discover that is was a stereotype used to describe Black women and families receiving some form of government assistance. I believed firmly that he only asked me the question simply because of my race and my SES. This incident represents just one example of the many that followed. That is, there were other times that I felt insulted as a Black student on campus. Fortunately, my teachers never treated me as such.

To cope, I clung to other students of color and adults on campus with whom I shared the same socioeconomic status, racial background, or schooling experience. I participated in groups such as the Black Student Union and the Multicultural Awareness Club where I met people of many races and namely, a few Black and Latino upperclassmen. Some of the Black students came from middle and upper-class families, which was a new experience for me because I came from a low SES background. Notwithstanding our different upbringings, I felt safe, accepted, and affirmed when I interacted with them. I am grateful for the relationships I was able to forge with my peers over time, including a few White classmates whom all made me feel like my choice to attend a private school was worth it during some of my most difficult days on campus. I also developed and maintained a strong, and healthy relationship with the high school counselor and several different teachers who also helped me to feel affirmed. There was one Black teacher, in particular, who mentored and supported me beginning my sophomore year of high school until this present time. The relationships aforementioned were instrumental in helping me to maintain a positive racial identity.

A Magnified Moment

In her book, “The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work,” Arlie Russell Hochschild (1994) wrote about a “magnified moment”—“episodes of heightened importance, either epiphanies, moments of intense glee or unusual insight, or moments in which things go intensely but meaningfully wrong. In either case, the moment stands out as metaphorically rich, unusually elaborate, and often echoes throughout the book” (p. 16). In many ways, my first day of high school represents a

magnified moment. I wanted to be happy and to make new friends. I wanted to learn new things in the classroom. I wanted to feel a sense of belonging in my new high school. Instead, I felt terrible and fearful that I had chosen the wrong school. I wish someone would have told me the truth—the private high school environment was not ethnically, racially, and culturally rich and diverse as the public schools I inhabited in my early schooling or like the images I had seen on television.

I grew up watching the American sitcom, *Moesha*, starring R & B singer Brandy Norwood, who portrayed a high school student with her family in South Central Los Angeles. *Moesha* juggled school, friends, and romance and navigated through tumultuous times. Hence I envisioned the cultural premises that I had seen on television—especially eating in the cafeteria where all the fun and excitement occurred. As I walked to the cafeteria on my first day of school, however, I experienced the overwhelming feeling of being Black and feeling alone for the very first time. I was fourteen years of age. Now, as an adult, I also recognize that I cried tears of frustration because reality sunk in; high school was not what I imagined. The simplicity through which I viewed the world as a child was abruptly challenged; I began to question my self-worth and positive sense of racial identity, as I had always known it.

The Argument

In recounting and analyzing a chapter in my high school story, I posit the high school environment as an example of what Hochschild (1994) called a "magnified moment" to illustrate that adolescents have ideas or underlying assumptions about high school, which are either affirmed or disrupted in a moment in time. Some fear the start of high school,

yet overcome their fear by participating in an extracurricular activity, while others look forward to starting ninth grade, but are overtaken by feelings of abandonment when they move on from their peers (Butler-Barnes et al., 2015; Hanewald, 2012). During adolescence, the young person longs for authentic and unencumbered life experiences such as finding meaning in his or her life, finding human relationships and a sense of connectedness to the world, and feeling that he or she can make a difference in the world (Wang and Eccles, 2013). One's development of a sense of self and understanding of which groups he or she belongs to is called social identity (Hogg, 2016).

Scholarly writings that address explicitly how African-American youth contend with racial identity as they mushroom into adulthood are germane to this study of African-American adolescents. In her seminal book, "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria: And Other Conversations About Race" psychologist and educator, Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) explores Black and White children's understanding of race, racial identity in adolescence, and everyday racism. She writes:

Why do Black youth, in particular, think about themselves in terms of race? Because that is how the rest of the world thinks of them. Our self-perceptions are shaped by the messages that we receive from those around us, and when young Black men and women enter adolescence, the racial content of those messages intensifies (p. 54).

Developing a sense of self is a process, and connecting race to one's self-concept can become an arduous task for Black adolescents struggling to find acceptance in predominately white schools (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012). I began high school with the goal of succeeding academically and attending college, but after the first week of school, I also sought to find comfort among minority groups (e.g. Black and Latino). As an African American student, my White classmates called my positive sense of self into

question, and I had to learn how to express my attitudes, beliefs, and motivations to receive help from caring adults and students. It was a tough endeavor that reflects a larger narrative, African American adolescent identity development that is sometimes distinctively different than White young persons' developmental trajectories.

Philosophical and Theoretical Foundation

Educators, researchers, and scholars can turn to existing models of racial and ethnic identity and aim toward creating new ways to approach the complexity of race in the lives of African American youth and this case, those attending private high schools. According to Cross and his colleagues (2017) racial identity is the different attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors an individual holds about African American culture and heritage—it is how one conceptualizes racial/ethnic identity and how one identifies with members of their racial/ethnic group. Additionally, ethnic identity refers to the shared culture, religion, geography, and practices of individuals when references to loyalty and kinship are omnipresent (Umaña-Taylor, et al., 2014). The Cultural Psychologist, Hazel Markus' (2008), interdisciplinary study of race and ethnicity is also relevant to the studying of African American adolescents' racial identity development. For instance, she argues that race and ethnicity, for example, are "dynamic sets of historically derived and institutionalized ideas and practices" that are often used interchangeably (p. 651). She explicates the similarities and differences between the two phenomena and offers the following definitions: (1) Race sorts individuals into ethnic groups based on perceived physical and behavioral characteristics and associates these attributes with differential value, power, and privilege. (2) Ethnicity allows people to identify or be identified with a

particular social group on the basis of commonalities such as language, history, religion, customs and/or and belonging (p, 654). To this end, African American youth may identify personally with members of their racial and ethnic group in schools. Studies explore how the school context may influence African American youth perspectives and attitudes about their race and ethnicity (Nasir et al., 2009; Tatum, 2004).

I know from my first-hand experience that high school is a crucial time in which adolescents may begin to re-interpret their identity and face new challenges related to their racial identity. Furthermore, in my current role as Director of Diversity and Inclusion at 6-12 independent school, I teach a freshman seminar class on identity in which I ask students to consider the following questions, “Who am I?” “Who am I as a member of this community?” “Who am I racially, ethnically, and culturally?” I have learned in working with students who come from many different backgrounds that the process of defining one’s identity is no easy task for high school students who seek to gain membership into groups and to contend with how others perceive of their identity. African-American adolescents, in particular, whom some have deeper roots in the African American culture than others, deserve opportunities to feel secure and confident about themselves in the private school environment, where there are often so few of them.

Research Questions

For my dissertation, I explored the racial identity development of African American adolescents and how it is related to their experiences in private, independent high school contexts. The research questions (RQ's) are as follows:

- RQ1: How do African American/Black high school students attending independent schools conceptualize race and identify racially and ethnically?
- RQ 2: How do African American/Black high school students experience independent schools as sites for racial identity development?

The chapters following this section will offer a review of the literature on the topic of African-American children and their experiences in independent schools and adolescent development and black racial identity development theories, among the other concepts explored. The following sections will also underscore the research design and methods, and qualitative findings and their implications for future studies of Black youth attending private high schools.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Characteristics of Independent Schools

Independent schools, which are commonly referred to as private schools, non-governmental, or non-state schools, are autonomous and retain the right to select their students. They are private nonprofit elementary and secondary schools that are characterized as co-educational, single sex, boarding or day schools—at times affiliated with a particular religion or denomination. While independent schools are considered private schools, not all private schools are considered independent schools, as the two have different legal structures and governances. There are many various types of private schools rooted in different traditions and practices, including Catholic Schools, Episcopal Schools, Friends Schools, and Independent Schools. Independent schools own, govern, and finance themselves and are not dependent upon national or local government for funding their operations as opposed to private schools owned by the church. They are financed through a combination of tuition charges, private gifts, charitable grants, donations, and investment yield from larger endowments. Independent schools educate a small fraction of the school-age population and have small student-to-teacher ratios—many pride themselves on providing sound educational experiences through high-quality teachers, for instance (Balossi & Hernandez, 2016; Walton, 2010).

As of the 2015-2016 academic school year, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), a nonprofit membership organization, represented approximately 1,672 independent schools and associations in the U.S., serving more than 730, 425 students. According to a recent NAIS' report, independent schools enrolled

roughly 183, 917 (29.1 percent) students of color nationwide; 6.5 percent of the students were African-American compared to the 8.2 percent who were Asian American, the largest group of children of color within the independent school education sector. In addition to data provided on the racial and ethnic composition of independent schools, the report revealed that the average tuition at schools (grades 1-12) was \$20, 173. Furthermore, the medium percentage of students on financial aid was 24.1%, and the medium total expense per student was \$19, 254 (NAIS DASL, 16).

Reardon and Yun (2002) report that approximately 65% of students in private schools come from families who earn over \$50,000 annually, while only 8% come from families with incomes \$20,000 or less. The researchers also note that independent schools are more segregated than public schools, as they tend to be predominately white, and enroll students who come from upper-middle income families, which especially in the South where independent schools are more abundant than private schools in the West. More recent studies show that White students from middle-upper income families represent a significant proportion of the total private school student population—despite comprising less than half of all students enrolled in K-12 grades in the nation. Whereas private schools have high proportions of White students, public schools (e.g. magnet, charter, and traditional public) have 31.36 percent of Black students, and poor Black students, in particular (Butler, et al., 2013; NAIS, 2016). Moreover, reports on private and public school enrollment data also show that Black students, as well as Hispanic students, are underrepresented in private schools in comparison to White students (Southern Education Foundation, 2016). The fact that a majority of students attending

independent schools come from middle-upper school families and tend to be White foreground my study that focuses on the experiences of Black students in predominately white school settings who may come from low or upper-middle income families.

Documentaries Highlighting African American Students' Experiences in

Independent Schools

Prestigious independent schools in Philadelphia and New York have been at the focal point for several popular articles and film projects chronicling the challenges students of color and especially African American youth face in predominately white school settings. The documentary, “The Prep School Negro,” directed and produced by André Robert Lee (2012), the film’s protagonist, examines his experience as a young, gifted, and Black low-income student at Germantown Friends School (GFS), an elite private day (non-boarding) school in Philadelphia. In the film, André reflects on his educational journey and explains how he had to negotiate cross-racial friendships while contending with harsh conditions in the Philadelphia ghetto where he lived. He explains to his sister “[this film] is about what did going to GFS mean for the whole family?” André answers that although he received a transformative education at GFS, he found himself estranged from his family and friends over time, which dampened his connections with his mother and sister. He continues, “As soon as I stepped foot in the school, I started to go in a separate direction from my family. I had planned to tell the story of Black kids in private schools, but just as I began, mom had a stroke, and the project became personal” (Lee, 2012). André and his family’s story symbolize the value and cost of educational achievement for many African American students attending private schools.

In another documentary, “American Promise,” two filmmakers, Michéle Stephenson and Joe Brewster (2014), undertake a 12-year project at The Dalton School, a private co-education college preparatory school in New York City. They track their son Idris Brewster’s and his best friend, Oluwaseun Summer’s kindergarten through high school educational experience. Idris and Seun are two young, gifted, and Black boys who are excited about starting at the Dalton School. Idris comes from a middle-upper class background, and Seun’s originates from a working class background. As the two start to mature and reach adolescence, they begin to encounter problems. Idris struggles academically and eventually is diagnosed with ADHD, and Seun’s academics becomes at stake, and he’s in jeopardy of failing in all of his classes; he eventually transferred to a predominately African-American charter school in his neighborhood. Ultimately, both young men are admitted into a four-year university. The film elucidates concerns parents, educators, and scholars have as to whether or not elite, private schools are helping or hurting their children—especially Black males.

Both films premiered at a conference hosted by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) network, a non-profit membership consortium that provides educational resources for educators, teachers, and students in K-12 private, independent schools. Each year, NAIS hosts the Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC) and People of Color Conference (PoCC) in different states throughout the country in which all private school constituents are invited to attend. The conference consists of guest speakers, forums, workshops, and film screenings that focus on acknowledging the diverse, and challenging experiences of people of color and empowering people of color

as well as their allies (e.g. Whites) to take back what they learn to create inclusion in their schools. The anecdotal experiences of African-Americans in these films and posts call for more studies investigating African American students experiences with issues of race, ethnicity, and identity in particularly in America's elite, private schools.

Black Families Who Choose Independent Schools

As researchers seek to explore the experiences of African-American children in secondary independent institutions, they must consider a poignant question: what motivates African American families to pursue independent schools, and ultimately make the commitment to enroll their children? Various factors influence African-American parents' decision to select an independent school for their children. The motives vary insofar as the characteristics that define the independent school of choice align with the families' vision for their child's future. Numerous studies that cite parent taste for choosing an independent school education show that middle-upper class African-Americans, in particular, may send their children to private, independent schools instead of public schools as means of obtaining social, upward mobility (Ohikware, 2013). The internal resources and opportunities that are prevalent within independent school communities, such as smaller classroom sizes, highly qualified teachers, and important and promising, social networks are additional explanations for why Black parents may entrust their children's educational experience to independent schools (Davis, 2015).

Not all African American families have access to reliable and valuable information on independent schools to enroll their children (Saporito, 2009). For instance, Black children who come from high-poverty neighborhood go to increasingly segregated

schools, and experience less mobility than middle-upper class Black, and historically, Whites (Neckerman et al., 1999). Hence, these parents choose to send their children to private school because of their dissatisfaction with the public schools and hopes for better educational opportunities (Goldring and Rowley, 2006). It is common for low-income families to learn about independent schools at diversity and admission outreach events. Independent school constituents such as middle school and upper school division heads, diversity directors, admissions directors, and head of school aspire to identify and recruit students of color who would thrive in the private school context.

Similarly, independent schools work collaboratively with parents, students, and teachers in attempts to create inclusive school environments whereby students of color feel a sense of belonging once they are admitted. Independent schools are not engaging exclusively in efforts to increase the percentage of students of color in their schools. For instance, some agencies and organizations assist African American students in applying to private schools. The A Better Chance (ABC) program has spurred the enrollment of African-American students at independent schools across the country—approximately 67% of the young scholars are African American (Datnow and Cooper, 1997; Meraji, 2013). The efforts of other national organizations such as Prep for Prep have also maintained the presence of African American students in these schools (Anderson, 2012).

Racial Socialization

In his chapter, “The Triple Quandary and the Schooling of African-American Children,” Boykin (1986) focuses on the forces of oppressive ideology and hegemony that result in the exclusion of racial minorities within institutional structures such as

schools. He coins the term the triple quandary to capture the richness and complexity of the African-American experience. He explains it as the interplay among three realities of experiential negotiation: the mainstream experience, the minority experience, and the Black cultural experience—which justify the need for African American students to receive institutional support from school leaders. Boykin (1986) explains further, “Black parents typically want their children to function successfully in mainstream America, even while they retain many traditional African propensities in their psychological transactions. The Afro-American experience is fundamentally bicultural” (p. 62).

African American students are “bicultural” because they have to contend with two cultural systems and sociopolitical and historical forces that distinguish them from White students. This notion highlights the fact that multidimensional realities are prominent in how African Americans interpret and view the world (Brittian, 2012). Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) wrote:

Why do Black you, in particular, think about themselves in terms of race? Because that is how the rest of the world thinks of them. Our self-perceptions are shaped by the messages that we receive from those around us, and when young Black men and women enter adolescence, the racial content of those messages intensifies (p. 54).

The explicit and implicit messages African American adolescents receive about race from one’s parent, for example, is known as racial socialization—adult caregivers communicate a diverse range of socialization messages such as “to be proud of one’s racial-ethnic heritage” and to recognize the realities of societal oppression (Peck et al., 2014). These parenting strategies may serve as a protective factor for the many negative experiences that may occur in their child’s life (Tatum, 2004; Thomas, et al., 2010).

Brown et al. (2010) have underscored that maternal caregivers more frequently convey ethnic-racial socialization messages to their female adolescent children than to their young male children.

In the United States, there is often an implicit assumption that people who self-identify as Black or African-American are a monolithic group of citizens with similar values, attitudes, and experiences (Tadjiogueu, 2014). Despite the belief that Blacks are all the same, heterogeneity and “intraracial” diversity exist within the racial group (Smith and Moore, 2000, p. 3-4). Not all parents communicate race-related messages to their children. Hughes et al. (2006) contend that many parents of multiple ethnic groups (e.g. African American, Latino, and White) encourage their children to value hard work, individual characteristics, and equality. With this approach, “egalitarianism,” parents do not convey messages about their children minority status, and instead, they orient them toward developing skills deemed necessary to succeed in settings that are part of the White, dominant culture (p. 757). In fact, some adults emphasize that all individuals are equal and seldom discuss racism and discrimination. Hughes and Chen (1999) found that some African American parents report engaging in “egalitarian practices” by just not addressing racial discrimination with their children and preparing them to cope with it in life.

Hughes and Colleagues (2006) argue another approach that is rarely reported in studies on the racial-ethnic socialization of African American. They contend that some African American parents tell their children not to trust members of different racial and ethnic groups, which is also referred to as “promotion of mistrust” (p. 757). In a study of

293 Black-White biracial kindergartens, children with one white-identified and one Black-identified biological parent, Csizmadia, Rollins, and Kameakua (2014) found that one-fifth of parents who participated in the study reported virtually never having discussions with their children about racism and discrimination. The various mechanisms through which Black parents transmit messages about ethnicity and race are noteworthy and just as the home context; school sites also play a role in socializing Black children and youth around race and ethnicity, helping them to understand their racial identity (Aldana and Byrd, 2015).

Studies continue to show that race is a factor in how African-American adolescents define their self-concept. The notion of race in this regard focuses on the unspoken and spoken messages that they receive about what it means to Black. The next section takes a closer look at the racial identity formation of Black students and the ideas of race promoted within independent schools. Racial identity is defined as a sense of group identity based on one's awareness that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular ethnic group (Camacho, et al., 2017). In this case, it helps illustrate the extent to which Black students feel a sense of collective identity with their racial group. Similarly, Black racial identity development is the process that encapsulates a Black individual's journey to develop a healthy self-concept and mostly a black identity that is activated in various contexts (Cross et. al, 2017).

Black Adolescents' Race-Related Identity Development

Identity is a term used throughout the social sciences to describe how a person answers the question, “Who am I?” and to demonstrate one’s beliefs, ideals, and values (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). Postulating that identity occurs within a social milieu, Benner (2011) argues that the transition from middle school to high school serves as a catalyst for the identity development of adolescents. Youth may begin to search for group affiliations, and social networks and social convoys behave differently, just to process character change. She explains that social convoys, a topic that has received significant attention in the high school transition literature, consist of parents, school personnel, and peers in educational settings (p. 311). She further contends that during this stage of adolescence, one’s thoughts run rampant, and individuals begin to ask questions such as, “Who am I?” “Where am I going?” “What do I believe in and why?” and “What do I want to do with my life?”

African-American teenagers, who have a keen sense of racial consciousness, start to contend with their personal and social identities. Some ponder, “Who am I racially?” as well as “What is my relationship to my ethnic/racial group membership” within predominately white schools (DeCuir-Gunby, et al., 2012; Peck et al., 2014). As they begin to construct their identity or to develop a sense of self, the social convoys within the high school context can serve as a site where they make meaning of who they are. That is, the psychosocial environment of high school facilitates identity exploration among African American students. In the fields of education and social sciences, research

has identified the relationship between the high school context and identity formation for African-American youth.

Black Adolescents' Race-Related Identity Development in Independent Schools

Independent schools educate students representing diverse forms of identities such as race and ethnicity (NAIS, DASL, 16). Although the schools' organizational structures vary, at the heart of the mission-driven practices is the desire to provide all students with a quality education. As the literature suggests, however, there is a depth and breadth necessary for schools to truly promote the success of all students (Schneider & Shouse, 1992). Research shows that primary and secondary independent educational institutions, which are often characterized as elite, and predominately white, fall short in nurturing students who experience "race/ethnicity consciousness-raising events" and who struggle to develop a racial and ethnic identity as they transition from middle school to high school (Benner, 2011; DeCuir Gunby, 2007). Studies have shown that once admitted into private, elite predominately white independent schools African American students may feel marginalized and struggle to develop a healthy and positive racial identity development in which race and ethnicity are more salient factors in their self-concept (Cooper and Datnow, 2000; Datnow and Cooper, 1998; Tatum, 2004). Some additional studies have explored specifically how private, elite schools help to marginalize African American youth (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Horvat and Antonio, 1999). Helping Black children unpack the relative importance of race and ethnicity in their schooling experiences is a noteworthy task for independent schools and researchers.

What it Means to be Black in a Predominately White Independent School

DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) stressed that peer relationships, teacher-student interactions, and overall school culture in the private school context influenced the manner in which African American high school students attending an elite, independent school located in the South, Wells Academy, interpreted and defined themselves racially. The study focused on the experiences of six high achieving students who were enrolled in the school because of its' reputation and academic opportunities. Each participant was involved in multiple extracurricular activities such as sports and dance (p. 119). DeCuir-Gunby and her colleagues found that the students' interactions with other and same-race peers, for example, both affirmed positive messages about their race and communicated negative stereotypes about the adolescents' racial group. Both experiences had implications for the racial identity development of African American youth in that they influenced the beliefs youth internalized about their race and identity at the independent school.

For several of the participants, defining who they were as African Americans was at times disconcerting because of the small percentage of Blacks at the school and the institution's history of racial issues (e.g. racial slurs and White students use of the confederate flag) (p. 119). As African Americans made up 8% of the student body population (43 of 599 students), many of the study participants sought support from Black peers at Wells to interact with others cross-racially in the environment. For instance, the participants expressed that they preferred to sit at "the Black table" in the cafeteria during lunch-time that provided a sense of refuge and racial solidarity for youth

and served as one of the few opportunities throughout the day to socialize with peers who looked like them (p.124- 125). The researchers also briefly explain that Black students who chose not to sit at the Black table were labeled “acting White” by some of their Black peers, which connects to early research on Black students’ school success, collective identity, and copings with the burden of acting White (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). Additionally, verbal exchanges such as White students expressing to Blacks, “You’re so articulate” and “You’re so different from others” or minority students expressing to Blacks, ‘You’re not Black” are other types of covert messages conveyed about Black adolescents’ racial background (Allen, 2010).

Previous studies have shown the Black adolescents’ conceptualization of what it means to be Black in predominately White spaces, underscoring how some students’ negative or positive encounters shape their responses to racial identity questions (e.g. who am I racially and what is my relationship to my ethnic/racial group membership). Tatum (2004), who explored why Black kids sit together in the cafeteria, points out that racial identity development is a part of Black youth maturation process throughout childhood and adolescence, and into adulthood. Moreover, she emphasizes that racial/ethnic identity are aspects of one’s self-concept and that without a healthy perspective of oneself in different contexts (e.g. home and school), Black youth cannot develop a positive self-image with regard to race. Therefore, research that seeks to explicate African American adolescents’ experiences in independent schools that promote positive or negative racial identity exploration among Black students is central to this study (Arrington and Stevenson, 2006).

In the final report of their longitudinal study, “The Success of African American Students (SAAS) in Independent Schools,” or SAAS Project, Arrington and Stevenson (2006) posited that various social, emotional, and institutional factors influenced how Black students navigate the private, independent school environment. They postulated three assumptions to ground their work:

1. Promoting Black students' connection to the school community and their □ emotional health is key to their academic success. □
2. Schools not only socialize students academically, they also socialize □ students racially. □
3. The experience of racism is a reality for Black youth that can compromise □ the quality of their school experience and tax their emotional resources. □

The report findings relied on the above tenets and demonstrated how African American adolescents’ race-related identity experiences within independent schools were predicated on one’s background characteristics, experiences with race and racism (e.g. including racial socialization), and personal perceptions of self and the school environment (p. 237).

A number of themes arose from the interviews and focus groups that the researchers conducted with students, in particular. I offer one. The participants reported the importance of being Black, which correlated to their views of the Black community and how they perceived others regarded the Black community. One student explained:

I just think that there's another level of being a person of color. I mean, there's another stress level that's added to or sometimes some that's based on other people's assumptions about who they think we are or who those students might be in the classroom. A White student can have on their blazer and tie...but when that

Black student, young woman in uniform or a young man with his jacket, tie or however, whatever the dress code may or not be at his or her school, comes in, it maybe an assumption or something assumed about who he is or where he or she may come from that's there.

Other participants described similar realities, and reported that they experienced isolation within their independent school environment, which impacted their sense of school connectedness (p. 7). A student commented:

And I think when I first came to [the school] I wasn't welcome. I didn't feel welcome as a family member that had a voice that was being heard, but I feel that in the...years that I'd been there... And seven years is a long time. That I do have a voice now that is heard and that I think it has taken time (p. 7).

Both of the students' responses highlight how race is a central factor in the lives of African American students in independent schools, which their overall identity related processes and their struggles to develop a sense of connectedness in independent school settings. More specifically, the first finding demonstrates the struggles Black youth may encounter as they seek to maintain a Black identity in a predominately White space. Black adolescents have to contend with whom they say are and how others define them because of their race, which shows the bicultural identity they possess, and the potential race-related stressors operating in the environment.

Based on their study findings, the researchers recommend that the teachers and administrators serving in independent schools respond to the challenges that African American students face concerning race by sanctioning what are called race-based affinity groups—a bringing together of people who have an identifier in common such as race (p. 240) According to the National Association of Independent Schools (2015), affinity groups are for individuals who identify as members of the group and can speak to

the experience of being a member of the group from the “I” perspective. An affinity group can serve as an outlet for students to have honest conversation about their schooling experiences. It is important to note that the study conveys the importance of having adults within independent schools to help facilitate these groups, and especially to share their personal experiences grappling with race and identity throughout their lives. Additionally, as the researchers argue, “They should also be comfortable discussing topics that may cause tension and involve the expression of emotions, such as anger and sadness, that many people try to avoid in the effort to ‘keep the peace’” (p. 240). Difficult topics that arise for African American adolescents’ include race and class differences, which influence students’ sense of identity in the independent school context (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007, p. 27).

There is a need for teachers and administrators to foster a safe and open environment in independent schools that allows Black youth to discuss their racial and ethnic identities. In fact, research shows that earlier start children have in developing a healthy racial identity, the sooner they start to develop a positive self-concept and mature in other areas of their life (Tatum, 2004). As aforementioned, the learning process often begins in the home in which Black parents convey a range of messages with regard to race to their children (Peck et al., 2014). However, schools are also environmental contexts that communicate race-related socialization messages about Blacks (Carter, 2006).

When African American adolescents attend private, independent schools they may encounter many obstacles concerning race. Therefore, it is important that research continues to explore how youth feel and make meaning of who they are within

independent school spaces. To do so, researchers can employ different methodological and theoretical approaches; however, studies show that understanding the racial identity formation of Black children must include an examination of their psychological adjustment (Tatum, 2004; Worrell et al., 2011). In this way, the theories on Black Racial Identity Development provide useful frameworks for discussions on the racial identity formation of Black youth attending private, independent schools.

Nigrescence Model of Black Identity

Research on African-American racial identity has utilized the theory of Nigrescence, a widely used model. Cross (1971; 1991) model of Nigrescence describes five stages of racial development that African-Americans undergo to move from self-hatred to self-acceptance: (1) pre-encounter, (2) encounter, (3) immersion/emersion, (4) internalization, and (5) internalization-commitment. Nigrescence provides a viable conceptual framework for the study of personality metamorphosis of Blacks both in the evolution of their identity from childhood to adulthood and within the context of white hegemony.

Cross writes:

What motivates a person (in the pre-encounter world) to encounter or to become Black? A predictable answer is suggested by the word encounter: some experience that manages to slip by or even shatters the person's current feeling about himself and his interpretation of the condition of Blacks in America. The encounter is a verbal or visual event, rather than an "in- depth" intellectual experience (Cross, 1971, p. 17).

The third stage, immersion/emersion, represents a turning point wherein persons begin to idealize blackness, surrounding themselves by Black Culture, and dismissing everything that is not Black. Cross explains, "The immersion is a strong, powerful, dominating sensation constantly being energized by Black rage, guilt, and a third a new fuel, a

developing sense of pride” (Cross, 1971, p. 18). The fourth stage, internalization, is the stage in which the individual achieves pride, comfort, and security in his or her race and identity while exhibiting increased acceptance of other cultures (e.g. no longer completely shutting out other cultures as they did in the Immersion/Emersion stage).

Cross explains:

Others internalize and incorporate aspects of the immersion-emersion experience into their self-concept. They achieve a feeling of inner security and are more satisfied with themselves. There is receptivity to discussions or plans of action; however, receptiveness is as far as it goes. The person is not committed to a plan of action (Cross, 1971, p. 21).

The fifth stage, Internalization-Commitment, marks the individual’s desire to translate their new personal identity into activities that are symbolic to the group. He points out, “The individual functioning at the fifth stage differs from the person in the fourth stage in that he or she is committed to a plan. He is actively trying to change his community” (Cross, 1971, p. 23). Cross’s racial identity development model underscores possible personality, behavioral, and worldview changes in which African-Americans experience, both negative and positive, offering researchers an instrument to measure these assumptions.

Racial identity attitudes scale. Parham and Helms (1981) attempted to operationalize the Nigrescence model by developing the Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS), which measures attitudes that are reflective of individuals’ beliefs about the self, Blacks, and Whites. RIAS focuses on the attitudes as a person holds as he or she transverses through just four of the stages going from anti-Black (pre-encounter); to attitude flux (encounter); to pro-Black, anti-White (immersion/emersion); to pro-Black

without reference to anti-White views (internalization). Using a 50-item scale, the researchers ask respondents to use the latest version of RIAS, which consists of a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) to indicate the extent to which each item represents their attitudes (Helms & Parham, 1990). Most of the research on racial identity has used the Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS); however, psychological literature explicates the underlying complexities of the RIAS (Ponterotto & Wise, 1987).

Cross racial identity scale. Vandiver et al. (2000) developed the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) to address the psychometric properties criticized in Cross's original theory and to better represent the revised model—pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization. The CRIS measures six racial identity typologies as opposed to tracing the linear progression of one racial identity stage to another. Three pre-encounter identity typologies are defined as the following: (1) assimilation, (2) miseducation, and 3) self-hatred. The first typology, assimilation, represents individuals who de-emphasize being Black and rather, stress their American identity. The second typology, miseducation, demonstrates people who endorse the negative stereotypes about black persons and strays away from a Black identity. The third typology, self-hatred, shows people who idealize whites and devalue Blacks. In delineating these three typologies, Vandiver and colleagues accentuate the diversity of attitudes embodied in the pre-encounter identity (p. 72).

The immersion-emersion, fourth typology, remains as turning point wherein persons begin to overemphasize Black culture and employ an anti-White attitude. Lastly,

the final two typologies of the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) represent distinctive internalization identities: (1) Afrocentricity and (2) Multiculturalist-inclusive. Individuals with the fourth topology, Afrocentricity, embrace a pro-Black perspective whereas people are embodying the sixth topology, Multiculturalist-inclusive, believe other identities (e.g. Hispanics, Asians, gays, Muslims, etc.) are just as important as Black identity (p. 73) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Schematic representation of the revised model of Nigrescence, the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS).

Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity

Cross's model of racial identity—Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS) and the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS)—has some similarities to Sellers, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI), another commonly used model of racial identity. According to researchers, the MMRI defines racial identity in African-Americans as the significance and qualitative meaning that individuals attribute to their membership within the Black racial group within their self-concepts. This definition can be broken into two questions: “How important is race in the individual's perception of self?” and “What does it mean to be a member of this racial group?” (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 23).

The MMRI addresses these questions through the four assumptions and four dimensions that undergird the theory. First, the MMRI assumes that identities are conditionally influenced as well as being stable properties of the person (p. 23). A second assumption of the MMRI is that individuals possess multiple identities, which are hierarchically ordered (p. 23). A third assumption of the MMRI is that individuals' perception of their racial identity is the most salient factor of their identity conception (p. 23). Finally, the fourth assumption that undergirds MMRI focuses on the significance and the meaning of an individual's identity as opposed to situating it along with a developmental trajectory (p. 24).

With these foundational assumptions, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) consists of four dimensions: (1) racial salience, (2) racial centrality, (3) racial regard, and (4) racial ideology. The first two dimensions, racial salience, and racial

centrality refer to race as an important factor in how individuals define themselves (e.g. “Who am I racially?”). Racial salience refers to one’s proclivity to identify oneself regarding race at a particular moment or in a given situation (p. 24). Racial centrality signifies the extent to which race is a central characteristic of an individual's self-concept. Unlike racial salience, racial centrality is stable across contexts (pp. 25-26). Sellers and her colleagues argue that implicit in the conceptualization of centrality is a hierarchal ranking of different identities along the lines of culture (p. 25). For example, an African-American woman may define herself concerning gender rather than race, while race may represent the most defining characteristic for a different Black female.

The other two dimensions of the MMRI, racial regard, and racial ideology denote the individual’s conceptualization of what it means to be Black (e.g. “What is my relationship to my ethnic/racial group membership?”). Racial regard addresses an individual’s feelings of positivity or negativity towards being Black, a consistent theme in the literature of African-Americans. Two aspects of regard include (1) private regard, the extent to which an individual feels positively or negatively about his or her race, and (2) public regard, the degree to which people feel that others view African-American positively or negatively (pp. 26-27).

Racial ideology refers to a person’s philosophical beliefs, opinions, and attitudes about how African-Americans should behave in society. Racial ideology is delineated into four racial ideologies: (1) the nationalist ideology stresses the uniqueness of being of Black descent, (2) the oppressed minority ideology highlight the commonalities between the oppression that African-Americans experience in society and that of other groups, (3)

the assimilationist ideology represents the similarities between African-American and American society and (4) the humanist ideology emphasizes the commonalities of all humans (pp. 27-28). For example, a person such as Malcolm X could believe that Blacks must develop their society and ethical values (nationalist) while another person like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. may feel that African-Americans should integrate white, institutions (assimilate) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Graphic representation of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)/ Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-teen (MIBI-t).

Newer Models for Black Racial Identity Development

Vandiver et al. (2001) revised Cross Nigrescence Identity Model to include the subscales Black involvement (pro-Black), anti-White attitudes (anti-White), Black Nationalism, and Inclusion movements (multi-cultural inclusive). For example, Black Nationalism is characterized by honoring the dignity and humanity of Black people. Two common types of Black Nationalism undergird the theory: separatism and inclusion. According to scholars, separatism emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and represented a Pan-Africanist ideology (p. 180). Black nationalists emphasize the importance of African culture by wearing African clothes and hairstyles and changing their names to African ones (p. 181). On the other hand, inclusion movements emphasize Blacks are achieving an American education and the same political and civil rights as their counterparts.

Research that utilize MMRI has focused on African-American adolescents and college students to assess some of the following hypotheses: (1) the relationship between racial identity and self-esteem, (2) racial identity and academic attainment, and (3) racial identity, racial discrimination and psychological distress among African-American students (Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers, et al., 2003). A body of psychological literature reveals that there are differences between African-American adolescents (middle school/high school) and college students (emerging adults). The appropriateness and psychometric properties of the racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology subscales (Arnett, 2000; Eccles et al., 2003) were called into question. Several overarching claims include the case that African-American adolescents may be

unfamiliar with concepts such as Afrocentric values, Black liberation, and other terms expressed in items within the scales of MMRI. Secondly, the studies suggest that the family is the primary racial socializing agent for African-American youth and the differences between the social environment and ecologies of young African-American people and college students are vast.

Scottham, Sellers, and Nguyenn (2008) build on Sellers et al. (1998) MMRI to design the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity-teen (MIBI-t), which assess the three stable dimensions (Centrality, Regard, and Ideology) within teenagers. In the study, the researchers used a sample of 495 African-American middle school and high school students to determine whether adolescents experience and understand racial identity in ways that are consistent with MMRI and to test the underlying structure of MIBI-t. The findings reveal that most African-American youth have a basic understanding of the constructs that underscore the MMRI. Moreover, the adolescents were able to draw correlations between the constructs to the events and experiences in their lives without demonstrating any difficulty in articulating the meaning of each of the MMRI dimensions (p. 303). Evidence of the construct validity of MIBI was also obtained, as the African-American adolescents' responses were consistent with the MMRI measures. For example, there were significant differences between African-American adolescents with regard to assimilationist attitudes that featured three items on the subscale: (1) It is important that Black go to White Schools so that they can learn how to act around whites, (2) I think it is important for Blacks not to act Black around White people, and (3) Blacks should act more like Whites to be successful in society (p. 306).

The theoretical and empirical expansion of Black Racial Identity Development is useful in today's society (see Appendix A). Namely, racial identity development theory is a useful vehicle for examining the beliefs that African-American children have in regard to the relevance of race in their lives. The black racial identity development theories also enable researchers to understand how Black adolescents view themselves in relation their ethnical and racial group in the independent school context. As African-American students define their self-concept, which is fostered by the beliefs, attitudes and values of other Blacks as well as Whites, and negotiate their identities in independent schools, it is sometimes difficult for them to establish positive racial identity (More & Owen, 2009).

The most popular models of African-American racial identity development—Nigrescence Model of Racial Identity Development and Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity— foreground this study in various ways. While Nigrescence Model of Black Identity provides a conceptual framework for the investigation of Black youth in the formation of their identity, rather than using the five stages as instruments to trace the progression of one racial identity stage to another or where African-American high school students are in their psychological development, this study assumes that individuals may possess thoughts that may mirror the assertions undergirded in the model. Second, both the racial identity attitude scale and cross-racial identity scale serve to highlight the diversity of beliefs embodied in the different stages. Third, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity serves a particular purpose in this study insofar as I will use the four dimensions to identify African-American study participants' multiple self-identification choices as Blacks, to determine when and where in schools

racial identity is the most salient factor in their identity formation. Moreover, this study explores the significance and meaning of African-American students' racial identity in independent schools.

Chapter 3

Research Designs and Methods

The literature on the educational experiences of Black youth in private schools shows that African-American children have unique, multifaceted racial identities (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). My research study explored the racial identity development of twelve Black adolescents attending independent schools, grades 9-12, in San Francisco Bay Area. I chose to recruit participants from the Bay Area because it was a convenient sample. The San Francisco Bay Area is among the most diverse places in the country. People of color comprise 58 percent of the overall population, including individual's of Hispanic or Latino, Black or African-American, Native American and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander descent and those whose backgrounds are some other race or two more or races (U.S. Census 2000). Indeed, this sounds fantastic, but the reality is the gap between the wealthy and poor is widening, and ethnically and racially diverse persons are fleeing cities like San Francisco to live in more affordable regions (Nevius, 2015). The changes in demographics have implications for the Black population in the Bay Area especially.

In selecting participants for this study, I weighed the relative importance of various membership organizations that support people of color in independent school communities. These associations acknowledge the experiences of Blacks attending private schools, among other marginalized groups, across the California region, for example. The two organizations included: People of Color in Independent Schools (PoCIS), and National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). Each organization provides resources to private school constituents, especially people of color, including

teaching faculty, staff, administration, students, and parents, within independent school environments. For instance, PoCIS supports the academic achievement, professional development and overall well-being of students, families, and adults of color in Pre-K through 12 grade independent schools. Similarly, NAIS is non-profit membership association that provides services to more than 1,500 private K-12 schools in the U.S. and abroad. For example, NAIS hosts an annual People of Color Conference (PoCC) and Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC) to provide a safe space for people of color and allies in independent schools to improve the intercultural climate in their schools. Hence, PoCIS serves independent school constituents in Northern California whereas NAIS supports a broad range of institutions that extends globally. Since these groups exist for independent school constituent populations, I saw the need to hone in on the independent school educational contexts for my study in addressing the realities of Black/African American student populations.

The Study

Exploring how African-American adolescents conceptualize race and identity racially, ethnically, and culturally was an important first step in ascertaining the racial identity formation of study participants attending private, independent schools. One of the primary selection criteria I employed in selecting research candidates was to require that interested high school students self-identify as Black or African-American. In succinct, my study aimed to paint a narrative of the Black school-aged population of students who are underrepresented in many independent schools throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and to demonstrate the complexity of what it means to be Black in what sometimes

referred to as a 'white' space. Ultimately, the self-identification choices among participants, which included a combination of racial, ethnic, and national identifications, were based upon a globalized notion of blackness, reflecting the history and cultural richness of study participants who identified as Black or African-American. I also sought to address the development of Black adolescents' racial identity through identifying various social variables in independent schools that motivated study participants to articulate race as a dimension in their self-concept during critical moments.

Methods

I weaved multiple methods and traditions into my analytical lens to present a bricolage of ideas, perspectives, and interpretations in the findings of this study. According to Kinchloe (2001), bricolage is an approach to research design whereby a researcher employs multiple research methods to gain a multidimensional perspective of a phenomenon. The author states:

In this thick, complex, and rigorous context, bricoleurs in the social, cultural, psychological, and educational domains operate with a sophisticated understanding of the nature of knowledge. To be well prepared, bricoleurs must realize that knowledge is always in process, developing, culturally specific, and power-inscribed. They are attuned to dynamic relationships connecting individuals, their contexts, and their activities instead of focusing on these separate entities in isolation from one another. They concentrate on social activity systems and larger cultural processes and the ways individuals engage or are engaged by them (p. 689).

Bricoleurs are called to recognize his or her personal (e.g. epistemological) and analytical stance to the subject matter (e.g. various theoretical and philosophical notions), and synthesize data collected via the process of multiple methods, using an interdisciplinary approach to research.

Researchers can draw from numerous dimensions of bricolage to develop innovative research. Kinchloe (2005) delineates five dimensions of the bricolage: methodological bricolage, theoretical bricolage, interpretive bricolage, narrative bricolage, and political bricolage (pp. 335-336). For this study, methodological bricolage uses several data gathering strategies derived from “the interviewing techniques of ethnography, historical research methods, discursive and rhetorical analysis of language, semiotic analysis of signs, the phenomenological analysis of consciousness and intersubjectivity...” (p. 335). In conducting this study, I drew from different methodological approaches, including: ‘social constructivism’ as the chosen philosophy, ‘ethnography’ to collect data and ‘grounded theory’ to analyze data (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Schematic representation of Bricolage Methodology: A tapestry of social constructivism, ethnography, and grounded theory.

Social constructivism. Creswell (2012) explains that researchers may adopt social constructivism, emphasizing the importance of culture and context in constructing knowledge, and interpretivism, valuing the human subjective experience, in grounded

theory research for several different purposes. First, social scientists focus on the environment in which people live and work to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participant. Secondly, researchers develop personal meanings of patterns, which are negotiated socially and historically, to make an interpretation of what they find, which is shaped by their experiences and backgrounds. Third, investigators generate a theory or pattern of meaning. Thus, proponents of constructivism and interpretivism methods share a common goal of understanding the lived experiences of people in the world from each's point of view. However, to understand someone's point view of one must also have a basic understanding of a person's background (p. 14).

My subjectivity and positionality. My training as a Diversity Director, freshman seminar high school teacher (e.g. Identity class), and facilitative leader made me conversant both in adolescent identity development and private, independent school environments. In order for bricolage to be sustained, my approach to making meaning and exploring the findings of the racial identity development of African American adolescents that is manifested within ten different independent school settings involved the link between my positionality and subjectivity. Before beginning the research study, I reflected upon and jotted down my thoughts about how I anticipated participants would respond to questions about their racial identity and experiences in private school settings. I weighed my assumptions that were based on the experiences that I have had with the African American students in the independent school context where I work. This process enabled me to recognize my potential biases, and to keep a mental note of them throughout the data collection and data analysis sections. I aimed to capture the lived

experiences of Black high school students as told from their first-hand perspective and to avoid assuming the students experiences were the same as mine.

My positionality helped me to develop an understanding of where the participants were coming from as well as to formulate interview questions concerning school connectedness and racial identity in which I attempted to put the research participants at ease during the formal interviews, and their families as well who entrusted in me to interview their children (see Appendix C). My positionality provided me guidance in how I shaped the research questions that aimed to investigate racial identity development among African American students attending independent schools in the Bay Area, California, and more specifically, how these schools serve as sites for racial identity development serve as sites for racial identity development, and how I was careful not to project in interpreting the findings.

Ethnography. Ethnography is the qualitative research design that "describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language" of a cultural group (Creswell, 2012, p. 90). Typically, researchers chose a site of analysis and study participants (roughly a group of 20 or more) where they work or live. This line of research entails that the researcher must spend time in the field, and conduct participant observation, and commit to respecting the daily lives of individuals at the site of study. In his book, "Ethnography Lessons: A Primer" Harry Wolcott (2016) argues: "Ethnography is flexible, adaptive. The ethnographer works with an "open" research design.... The assumption is that until you are present in the setting, you may not discover what an appropriate question is or how to approach it. For the ethnographer, data shape the

theory, not the other way around" (p. 20). I did not engage in a systematic process of observation and note-taking; however, I weaved the traditional ethnographic interview method into my analytical lens. Based on the interviews that I conducted, I attempted to entwine the different stories of students who come from independent schools to tell the lived experiences of Black adolescents' in these spaces from the perspective of the research participants who attend them.

I interviewed twelve participants of African American and Black descent to examine how they self-identify racially and ethnically and how their racial identity development occurs within their ten different respective school sites. Due to limited time constraints, unlike some ethnographers, I did not observe students in their school settings. I conducted in-person interviews and FaceTime interviews to capture first-hand accounts of participants' narratives and stories. My first-hand experience working in a private independent school setting and interacting with constituents who work in independent schools across the country has shaped my positional lens as a researcher. Hence, my perspective is that there is a need to illuminate the experiences of Black students within these spaces to identify the ways in which the private school context may shape youth's racial identity development. In this way, I used a self-reflective research practice and narrative form of representation as well to design this study.

Data collection procedures. I contacted adults within my social networks—personal and professional friends and acquaintances—to recruit human subjects for my study. I reached out to my close friends (Oakland and East Palo Alto, CA) as well as leaders and volunteers of youth ministries at two different non-denominational churches (Mountain

View, CA) that I've attended over the past seven years, asking them to spread the word about my study. I also contacted leaders of local and national organizations (Northern California Chapters) that provide services and support to African American private school students and their families. My goal was to identify at least five willing students who met the criteria and to employ a snowball sampling by asking students to recruit prospective research participants among their acquaintances.

Phase I: recruitment strategies. I initially sent emails to adults within my social networks providing them with a description of my study and a flyer to distribute to prospective human subjects which included some of the following information: my background and credentials and information about the study—the selection criteria, interview time-frame and duration, and compensation (see Appendix B). I was able to recruit thirteen human subjects. I followed up with individual students and their families to discuss the study and to provide them with assent and consent forms to review, sign, and submit to me before engaging in next steps—to schedule an interview.

I interacted with the participants' parents in several different ways. For instance, I spoke directly to some of the students' parents either in person or over the phone. Whereas a few of the students talked to their parents about the study and obtained their permission, encouraging their parents to contact me should they have questions or concerns about the study such as potential risks (e.g. loss of confidentiality & emotional discomfort) and rationale. I called seven of the families in particular, and I spoke to each family on average 20-25 minutes about the study, and I visited one of the parents at their home to discuss the study. I found that parents of participants who were personal

acquaintances of mine and also associates of close friends were keen on discussing the research over the phone or in person. Overall, these parents expressed enthusiasm for the study and the potential benefits to their children.

Phase II: interview procedures. After receiving consent and assent forms from human subjects, I scheduled two types of interviews—in-person and FaceTime—with African American students attending private schools. I had preferred to interview each face-to-face; however, some students had limited availability, so I chose to work around their schedules. My only criteria in preparing for the interviews and discussing the details with their parents was to ensure that they'd have a quiet and private place in their home or a close room at their local library or school to make the FaceTime call. I wanted to ensure that the students felt comfortable sharing their perspectives without being interrupted or fearing what others would think of their responses.

As for the interviews that I conducted in person, I used four central locations that I hoped would allow each research participant to feel safe and comfortable. The four locations included: the two different sites of a non-profit organization that were located both in Santa Clara County and the County of San Francisco, the school where I work located in San Mateo County, and a public library in Contra Costa County where two of the students lived, but attended schools in Alameda County. I drove roughly between twenty-five miles to forty-five miles to interview students face-to-face. The interviews spanned anywhere from thirty-five minutes to ninety minutes. The participants relied on different means of transportation to arrive at the interviews—some took Bart (public transit), some walked, some drove, and others parents dropped them off and waited

nearby for them to finish. I also interviewed a student in her home, which was in Alameda County. In all instances, I decided on locations that were convenient to the human subjects and their parents.

Upon completion of the interview, I compensated interviewees and allowed them to choose one of the two options: a \$20 iTunes gift card and a \$20 Amazon gift card. I gave compensation directly to each participant immediately following the interviews I conducted in person. As for the interviews, I did via FaceTime; I mailed the payment to participant's home address immediately following the interview. Two out of the twelve students that I interviewed did not accept compensation and just stated its "ok," and thanked me for providing them with the opportunity to interview.

The interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. Some interviews have been carried out in person, and some via video-conference (e.g. Skype, FaceTime, etc.). I developed a set of broad, open-ended questions that helped me to facilitate discussions on topics related to my studies such as racial identity, racial socialization, and school climate. I wrote the questions carefully, soliciting input from a few members of the Educational Leadership doctoral cohort, and asking some of the following questions proposed in the literature on grounded theory approaches to research: 'Will my interview guide address the purpose of the study?' 'Have I asked the right background questions for what I need to do in this interview?' 'Do I have enough information about the research participant to delve into his or her experience?' 'What do my questions assume?' 'Have I thought about the probes that will follow up on the general questions? Are any of my probes too intrusive?' (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 64-65).

These questions were among many that I considered studying the research participants' experiences. Interview data was collected and analyzed to answer RQ1: How do African American high school students attending private, independent schools identify racially and ethnically? RQ2: How do African American high school students experience private, independent schools as sites for racial identity development?

The duration of interviews was between forty-five minutes to ninety minutes. Interviews were conducted in locations convenient and safe for participants, including in the homes of study participants (closed room or via FaceTime or Skype), a room at a public library, and a room within a site of an organization that serves first-generation college students attending high schools. Additional follow-up interviews and email exchanges were analyzed. Although the FaceTime and Skype interviews allowed me to obtain data on three of the participants' experiences in independent schools, the process felt impersonal in comparison to the face-to-face interviews that I conducted. As the researcher, I struggled to gauge the participants' tone and body language, which would have been useful information that could have allowed me to understand better their responses to the research questions. Lastly, there were a few distractions such as loud noises in the background and loss of Internet connection, which challenged me re-focus the participant throughout the interview process. Taken together, I would have preferred to interview the three participants in-person as opposed to online.

I conducted four different follow-up one-on-one interviews with participants, asking them to expound on the statements that they made about the Black Student Union clubs at their respective school sites, and the self-identification categories (e.g. Black, African,

etc.) in which they used to describe their racial and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, I asked one of the participants to answer additional questions about a poster activity that members of her school's BSU facilitated on racial injustice, which culminated in a campus-wide discussion about police brutality and the shooting of unarmed Black men. I asked the participant, "Do you remember the names of the unarmed black men that BSU commemorated in the poster? You could even take a picture of it if you want." Additionally, I asked, "Why did BSU feel that it was important to make the poster? Did you receive any resistance?" I asked another participant to explain further why he feels disappointed in his school's BSU club, and the extent to which he considers members, "bring each other down," as he stated. I asked the following questions, "Are there specific times or experiences you've encountered in which you felt members of BSU have brought each other down? If so, what happened?" Furthermore, I asked, "how have you and others been taught to hate yourselves?" In both instances, the participants' responses illustrated the various purposes BSU serve on independent school campuses and the range of experiences for students who participate in the club.

The other individual follow-up interviews I conducted with two other participants focused on the racial-ethnic self-identification choices of participants who denoted an African immigrant and second-generation African immigrant status. I sought to understand how they relate to African Americans, in particular. One the study participants expressed he has mixed feelings about Blacks born in the U.S. Hence, I asked the following questions, "In what ways do you feel connected to African Americans?" and "In what ways do you feel disconnected to African Americans?" The

distinction each participant drew between his or her ethnicity and race was central to the research question, and their answers elucidated the self-categorization process for African immigrant students attending independent schools, which may differ from African American students. Findings from this study demonstrate that some students refer to themselves as African whereas other participants demarcate a Black, African American or mixed-race identity.

In addition to the data I collected from the interviews, I conducted research on the ten different schools that the study participants attend, using the Internet as my primary tool and pooling information from several domains such as school websites and links that contained each school's organizational information that is available for public dissemination. I perused the school websites, focusing on four central areas: "About Us," "Admissions," "[school name] at a Glance," and "Mission and Values." These different focuses helped me to find information on the different schools' percentages of students of color, financial aid budget, and diversity coverage in the news. In the end, I was able to identify the percentages of students of color for eight out of the ten schools, financial aid budget for eight schools, mission and values for ten schools, and media coverage for two of the schools. In many ways, my status as a Director of Diversity and Inclusion and former private school student at an elite independent school informed my perspective on the type of information necessary for interpreting the messages each school conveys about race. I sought to explicate culture and diversity related topics embedded in the schools.

Lastly, I made phone calls to several of three of the institutions that did not list the racial composition, for example, the percentage of racial-ethnic groups that comprise the environment on their school website. What was most striking about my results were that they highlighted several characteristics and practices of independent schools, which provide the social context for understanding black adolescents' identity formation. For instance, I wanted to verify the numbers and convey analytically, as some of the participants alluded to in their initial interviews, that students attended predominantly white institutions (PWI), an institution in which Whites account for 50 % or greater of the student enrollment. I found that students of color represent less than 50% of the student enrollment at five out of the twelve independent schools whereas as students of color accounted for 50% or more of the student population at three of the schools. Lastly, two of the schools did not offer data on the percentage of students of color at their school sites via the Internet. Hence, I called the two schools to inquire about the numbers, introducing myself as a researcher, and I received responses from staff within the Admissions Office stating that their organization does not keep track of such information. To further probe, I asked a friend to call the different institutions and ask for the schools' demography and racial composition, and she received the same messages, as they had rehearsed them.

The steps that I took to gather the data reflect the steps that an African American parent may perform to determine whether a particular private school education is suitable for their children. It is common for parents to peruse school websites or to call prospective educational establishments to ask about the racial composition of the school to weigh the relative costs of sending an African American child to a predominately

white institution. These findings reveal the different approaches that the independent schools take to acknowledge dimensions of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic diversity in the environment. The fact that the two schools provided a scripted answer and shared that they do not make a concerted effort to record the racial and ethnic student body composition raises the question of how such decision-making influences the experiences of students of color, and especially African-American youth. Hence, I carefully examined and analyzed the interview with participants who attended the different schools to assess the correlation between the two.

Grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss's (1967) initially framed grounded theory as a systematic methodology involving the construction of theory using a series of iterations known as "constant comparison" in which the researcher reviews the data collected and develops codes and categories that become the basis for a new theory. First, I engaged in simultaneous data collection and data analysis. Second, I constructed analytic codes and categories from data. Third, I used the constant comparative method, and made comparisons during each stage of the analysis, utilizing memo-writing, informal analytical notes as an intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of the study, to write memos, elaborate categories, and postulate their properties, and theoretical sampling to define their interrelationships, identify gaps, and collect additional data. Charmaz (2014) points out, "memo-writing encourages stopping, focusing, taking data apart, comparing them, and defining links between them" (p. 164). I engaged in memo writing to minimize asserting my preconceptions on the data that I coded, mainly to

analyze data and codes early on. Lastly, I developed theories and compared them to the scholarly literature on racial identity development among Black adolescents.

Data analysis procedures. The interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method (CMM), a process of data collection for generating theory. Developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967), the constant comparative method is a technique used to conduct qualitative analysis in grounded theory research. Boeije (2002) contends that CMM is essential for developing theories grounded in qualitative data and “comparison” is the intellectual tool is necessary to carrying out the method (pp. 392-393). In an empirical study focuses on the experiences of patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) and their spousal care providers, Boeije explicated a five-step CMM data analysis procedure; however, she mentions that the number of steps are not critical and depend on the material included in the study. Since my study does not involve dyads, such as a parent and child or student and teacher, I focused on three of the steps to analyze the interviews. That is, my study explores the racial identity development of African American high schools student in independent schools as told by the participants.

The interviews were analyzed using the first three components of the five-step analysis procedure, but I list them all to highlight the difference between the two studies. They include the following: (1) Comparison within a single interview; (2) Comparison between interviews within the same group; and (3) Comparison of interviews from different groups; (4) comparison of pairs at the level of the couple; and (5) comparing couples (p. 395). I used the qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA 12 to code the twelve interviews. I coded the twelve transcripts three different times to ensure that I did not

overlook any significant findings and to check my analyses of sentences and paragraphs.

Step 1: comparison within a single interview- open coding. I began analyzing the data by focusing on one interview at a time. I gathered on average 20 pages of transcripts and I felt it was necessary devote time and energy into reading each transcript twice to honor the commitment participants gave to participating in the study. I engaged in a process of opening coding, reading every passage of each interview twice, and carefully, to understand exactly what each participant had said. I then labeled certain passages that appeared to answer my research questions with a code. Following this step, I compared different parts of the interview to determine the consistency of interviews. If a reference was made to a category more than once, I explored whether new information was given to the category through examining fragments related to this category (Boeje, 2002, p. 395). Hence, I began with initial coding, and identified core categories, capturing ideas, events, and processes (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 116-120).

Step 2: comparison between interviews within the same group- axial coding. I treated all new interviews the same as above. I developed more codes as a result, and compared the interviews that dealt with the same group—participants' who self-identify as Black or African and attend independent schools. I compared fragments from different interviews, and searched for the similar themes and gave them the same codes, as process known as axial coding (Boeje, 2002, p. 397). I also continued to write memos to track new information and to keep an inventory of each category, which helped me to define some concepts such as 'family background.' More specifically, the traditions and rituals the participants practice in the home. I focused on what these practices mean in the context of

Black parents' racial socialization practices in the home, and how did participants define and conceptualize what it means to be Black based on what they had learned in the home. I then selected interview transcripts of people who shared the same experience to draw a comparison between the findings.

Step 3: comparison of interviews from different groups- triangulation. In this third step, I compared interviews from two different groups with regard to several different phenomena, including racial socialization, sense of school connectedness, and school climate. In comparing interviews from groups with different perspectives but who was a part of the study, I employed a process known as triangulation (Boeije, 2002, p. 398). In synthesizing and analyzing larger segments of data, I listed all of the codes and organized them into distinct categories to conduct focused coding (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 140-146). I created focused codes that demonstrate, for example, the relationships between each category and dimensions of existing black racial identity development theory. After organizing the categories into focused codes, I attempted to hone both initial and focused codes to give coherence to the emerging analysis and to develop themes. I utilized statements that harness participants' experiences and created new categories. To this end, I offer an excerpt from an interview I conducted with a female research participant. She expresses that she has grown up in a household in which her mother and grandmother have taught her what it means to be black by exposing her to literature, film, and overall, black culture. Section of an interview on November 5, 2016:

This is coming from my mom forcing me to, because I didn't want to see "Twelve Years a Slave." I was, like, "This is sad. I don't want to see it." But any time there has been a Black movie, my mom has made sure I saw it. You know, I saw the movie, "Belle." I saw, "Birth of a Nation," you know, "42--" or not "Birth of a

Nation." 'm actually going to see that tomorrow. But "Birth of a Nation," "Twelve Years a Slave," "42," and even the ones from way back, you know, "The Great Debaters," the one about them swimming, the Black swim team. I don't remember. But my mom has made sure I knew what was going on and what will go on. Because something that's very important in my family is you need to talk about this, that you cannot escape this. It is something that is real. You turn on the TV; you see Black people getting shot like animals every day. You know what I mean? And so the fact that you ignore it, it just hurts you in the end. And I read Ta-Nehisi Coates' book. I'm right, right now, "Just Mercy," by Bryan Stevenson.

Some of the codes that are attached to these statements are racial identity, racial socialization, black culture (e.g. movies & books), and police brutality against black people.

To extend the comparative analysis to other interviews in the same group, step 2, interview transcripts of new participants were selected. For instance, both male and female participants who self-identity as Black or African American and attend independent schools were interviewed because research shows that racial identity development is a phenomenon impacting Black high school students of different gender backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. Among the themes to emerge were traditions and black male generational differences. I aimed to identify participants who show a variation on these topics. As an example, some fragments of two additional interviews – one of another female participant and another, a male participant— show a comparison between the initial participant's statements. Some codes and coded segments of interview excerpts:

So the practice, I guess, for family dinner came from-- probably come from a sort of legacy of family dinner through my dad's side, so my-- I know my dad always is pretty heavily family oriented and for him, my dad is African-American, my mom's Middle Eastern, and so he-- his family came from-- or probably had a

similar focus on that sort of time, like a designated time during the day to approach family discussion.

CODES: racial socialization: traditions; bi-cultural identity

Well, for my dad, my dad likes to talk about our racial preference a lot, so differences of how a black man lives today in today's generation; yeah, he's really into that.

CODES: racial socialization: communication; black male generational differences

The comparison of the three interviews explicated which racial socialization messages in the home directly relate to racial identity and what the words convey in the lives of the various participants in the study. Next, I gathered more data to hone in on the preliminary category, racial socialization, and its' properties, using theoretical sampling to collect pertinent data and to enhance the categories in the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014, p. 192).

The original codes I created from the interviews used were general and explicated the statements and reflections of participants in the interview process. Later, I developed initial codes and axial codes based on categories that appeared in more the one interviews. I also shifted the meaning and exact wordings once drew comparisons between different transcripts. I found the memo-writing process especially helpful in that it helped me to track my thinking and understand why I labeled passages in a particular way. During the triangulation process, I used dimensions of the racial identity development typology, Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) such as racial salience, racial centrality, public regard, and private regard, to name codes. I also created additional categories such as racial socialization and psychological sense of school membership. All were related to the research topic of racial identity development

among African-American high school students attending private, independent schools (Arrington and Stevenson, 2006; Hughes and Chen, 1999; Sellers et al., 1998; Scottham, 2008).

Validity of interpretation. Given the time constraint in conducting my study, I did not collaborate with peer reviewers to code any of the interviews. However, I debriefed my interpretations with my advisors to yield consistent coding results and performed member checking. I summarized the content of categories and garnered input from two different members of my cohort, whom I engaged with for nine –twelve hours during the weekends to work on the study over the course of nine months. My goal was to ascertain the primary arguments within each category. In addition, I reached out to participants to determine the validity of the codes. About member-checking, a process of transparency, I sent to study participants fragments of their individual interviews and posed follow-up questions to test my interpretations and to ensure that I eloquently captured the essence of their statements. I then moved toward developing themes. I contacted others within my network to discuss the descriptions of the categories and to determine if the write-ups made sense. I tested codes, categories, and themes throughout the CMM analysis process, and assessed their relevance that was grounded in data from all twelve interviews and additional resources.

Limitations. The twelve participants attend ten different independent schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. According to research on African-American students attending independent schools, for black students, a strong sense of connection, a positive sense of self, and a racial identity that serves as a protector factor makes them feel as successful

and valued members of their school community (Arrington and Stevenson, 2006). In the next section, I will highlight study participants' sense of connectedness and racial identity in school. Researchers have suggested guidelines for qualitative sample sizes, arguing that the minimum number of interviews is roughly between twenty-to-thirty (Charmaz, 2012; Creswell, 1998). The data obtained was sufficient to answer the research questions. The participants attended ten different independent schools in the geographical region of the Bay Area, which enabled me to answer the research questions with breadth and depth, and examine how the independent school setting serve as a site for racial identity development among African American students. Using a form of generalization in the process of data collection, theoretical sampling, I analyzed the initial interviews and conducted further research, including new interviews and phone calls, to confirm the results (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). The fact that the twelve participants attended ten different schools enabled me to draw comparisons between participants across school contexts.

As previously noted, the impetus for my study came from my personal experience attending an elite, predominately white independent high school where I was one out of two African Americans in my grade. Drawing upon my first-hand experience as a student, I explored literature on Black racial identity development, racial socialization, and independent schools to broaden my perspective on the factors associated racial identity development among African American/Black high school students today. The research questions (RQ's) were as follows:

- RQ1: How do African American/Black high school students attending private, independent schools identify racially and ethnically?
- RQ2: How do African American/Black high school students experience independent schools as sites for racial identity development?

Figure 4 provides an overview of the project. Interviews were employed to understand the experiences and perspectives of African-American students as they contend with racial identity in their high school settings. The constructivist inquiry utilized qualitative, semi-structured interviews each lasting approximately forty-five minutes to one hour.

Figure 4. Single-phase qualitative method research design: interviews.

Participants

My goal was to conduct audio-recorded interviews with 10-15 participants who self-identify as Black/African-American. Ultimately, audio-recorded interviews were conducted with ten of the participants, and two were conducted using FaceTime. Table 1 displays the pseudonyms I have created for each participant, including a descriptor to capture each participants' personality and characteristics. In addition, participants', age, gender, grade level, parents' highest level of education, family income level and extracurricular activities are included. This sample consists of seven females and five males; the students were between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, grades ninth through twelve (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Profiles

Name (Descriptor)	Age	Gender	Grade	Parent(s) Highest Level of Education	SES	Extracurricular Activities
Ari “Politician”	14	M	9	Mom (Bachelor's degree or higher)	Low	Plays football and soccer; served as dance coordinator for homecoming, and an ambassador for admission’s open house events.
Nadia “Storyteller”	14	F	9	Mom (Bachelor's degree or higher)	Middle	Plays soccer; Participates in French Club and Diversity Club.
Jasmine “Realist”	15	F	11	Mom + Dad (Bachelor's degree or higher)	Upper	Works with lower- school PE classes; participates in Black Student Union.
Leonardo “Motivated”	16	M	11	Mom (Bachelor's degree or higher)	Middle	Plays football; participates in Black Student Union.
Jennifer “Diversity leader”	18	F	12	Mom (some college) + Dad (high school)	Middle	Student government leader, former president Multicultural Club; serves on a committee that creates rich and relevant social justice curriculum such as ‘race in the criminal justice system.’
Dennis “Versatile”	14	M	9	Dad (Some college)	Middle	Plays basketball and handball; enjoys music and coding; participates in African-American Club.
Kimberly “Activist”	15	F	10	(Bachelor's degree or higher)	Middle	Participates in Debate Team, Black Student Union Club, She’s First Club; Cinnamon Girls; organizes protests and rallies to address police brutality.
Caleb “Role model”	17	M	12	Mom + Dad (Bachelor's)	Upper	Lifts weights; Serves as president of Vanguard’s

				degree or higher)		Group; organizes events with community, grassroots organizations to address issues impacting Blacks.
Rhena “Game changer”	18	F	12	Mom + Dad (high school diploma)	Low	Participates in Black Student Union Club and Gender Equality and Rights Club; Serves as editor and Chief of the Yearbook and Representative for Diversity.
Johnny “Focused”	15	M	10	Unspecified	Unspecified	Plays football; hopes to start a Black Student Union.
Tia “Overcomer”	15	F	11	Mom (some college) /Dad (high school diploma)	Low	Participates in a tutoring program: hopes to start at Black Student Union.
Rosa “Thoughtful”	15	F	11	Mom + Mom (Bachelor's degree or higher)	Middle	Participates in Black Student Union, Gender Club, and Spectrum Club.

Independent school contexts. There were twelve participants in my study who each self-identify as African American or Black and attend private high schools in the Bay Area, California. There were *five* boys and *seven* girls between the ages of *14 through 18*, grades *9th through 12th* attending, from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Information on students’ reasons for deciding to participate in the study as well as their opinions on what changes they would like to see in their school community to help develop the racial identities of African-American students are provided. A descriptor for each participant is highlighted as well (see Appendix D). Participants attended *ten* different independent schools in which I have developed pseudonyms to discuss throughout the sections to follow. *Seven* students attended co-educational non-religious affiliated schools; *two*

attended all boys' schools, and *three* attended Catholic independent schools (see Table 2).

Table 2

Independent School Data

School Name	Type	Geographical Location	Diversity (Students of color)	Financial Aid	Mission
Riverside Prep	Independent, private Catholic, pre-K- 12 school	San Mateo County	27%	22%	Encourages students to have faith in God, to respect intellectual beliefs, and to develop social awareness.
Franklin College Prep	Catholic, Jesuit, co-educational high school	County of San Francisco	45%	22%	Fosters students' growth in faith and justice, leadership and service, and academic excellence and compassion.
The Metropolitan School	Independent, co-educational high school	County of San Francisco	39%	27%	Encourages its' students to be self-motivated and to be enthusiastic about their education.
Lighthouse School	Independent, co-educational, Catholic, day and boarding school, grades 6-12	San Mateo County	43%	20%	Commits to fostering a safe and inclusive environment that is welcoming to all peoples; irrespective of race, nationality, and gender.
Sutton High School	Independent, co-educational, day school, grades 5-12	Alameda County	Not accessible	30%	Offers an experiential learning program and sends students at the high school to Spain, Costa Rica, Yosemite, etc.
Parks School	Independent, co-day educational day school, grades 5-12	Alameda County	52%	25%	Commits to providing and recognizing diversity within its' student body, teaching faculty, staff, and education.
Lewis School	Independent, co-educational day school, grades	Alameda County	46%	Not accessible	Promotes discipline and curiosity.

	K-12				
Evers School	Private, co-educational day school, grades 9-12	Alameda County	58%	25%	Fosters students deep engagement in learning, appreciation for one another, and growth into intellectually adventurous, ethically sound, and kind-hearted and spirited adults.
Cathedral High School	Catholic, co-educational, grades 9-12	Santa Clara County	Not accessible	Not accessible	Encourages students to develop a social consciousness and to become involved in projects that promote positive change in their community.
Sky Limit High School	Private, Catholic, all boys, grades 9-12	County of San Francisco	54%	48%	Educates students using key principles including, faith, family, service, justice, peace, social consciousness & change.

I conducted a qualitative study of twelve African-American students attending independent schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. In designing the study, I raised general questions about the ways in which study participants' self-identity regarding race and ethnicity and conceptualize what it means to be Black. I sought to determine the various racial and ethnic self-identification choices among participants, and how independent school contexts serve sites for their racial identity development processes. I applied several steps that represent the grounded theory model to develop theoretical explanations for the racial identity processes of Black high school students.

I used the constant comparative methods (CCM) to analyze the data (Boeije, 2002; Kolb, 2012). I compared initial interviews with data drawn from additional interviews to

find similarities and differences between the participants' statements. For example, I analyzed interview statements and events within the same interviews and reports and incidents within different interviews (Charmaz, 2014). I aimed to determine what the research participants' perspectives and reflections on racial identity conveyed about their thoughts and attitudes on social and personal identities, namely, what it means to a Black adolescent and the circumstances that may influence their identity development such as the messages communicated about their racial group within their independent school setting. The findings are presented using narratives and direct quotes from the study participants and insights and discussions reflecting the development of my thinking throughout the data collection and data analysis process, mirroring the bricolage approach I employed to write the overall study.

The next chapter presents findings from the twelve interviews that the research questions. First, the chapter will outline profiles for the twelve study participants and highlight their overall feelings about the schools they attend. Second, the chapter will provide an analysis of the self-reported racial and ethnic identification choices among participants and highlight how they understand and articulate these racial identities. Third, the section will present an analysis of the social interactions in independent school contexts that impact African-American student's formation of their racial identity and ethnic identity. Pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity and to conceal the following information: participants' names, school names, and names of others.

Chapter 4

Results of Qualitative Analysis & Findings

The African American high school students attending private, independent schools that participated in this study identify racially and ethnically in multifarious ways. Scholars contend that both race and ethnicity is often salient to ethnic minorities, especially African-American, Latino, and Asian-American persons (Sellers et al., 1998). Often, people use the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably. Although the two concepts share an ideology of common ancestry, they differ in various ways. As aforementioned, race refers to the process of grouping people on the basis of physical features (e.g. skin color) that is assigned by society. On the other hand, ethnicity connotes a population groups' identification with a common nationality or shared cultural tradition, reflecting one's to self-identify. The participants' racial and ethnic backgrounds highlighted their different processes of defining a particular race or ethnicity as central their identity.

Self-Identification Choices

In the initial inquiries to research participants, an important study selection criteria were that individuals self-identify as Black or African American and specifically, use the self-categorizations in their self-concept as adolescents within independent schools. Ultimately, I interviewed twelve adolescents who claim to have a Black ancestry and attend independent schools. Central to the racial and ethnic self-identification choices demarcated amongst youth were their different family backgrounds, which consisted of the people that they live with, their families' traditions and values, and racial socialization messages received in the home. These factors provided useful information

that illuminated why participants described themselves in a particular way and how they conceptualized race. Research that focuses on the racial socialization practices espoused by Black parents, for example, suggests that race-related messages are communicated in the home, informing children's thoughts about race (Aldana & Byrd, 2015; Evans & et al., 2012; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). To this end, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) dimensions *racial centrality*, *racial salience*, and *public and private regard*, help to explicate why participants used particular titles to describe their identity. The data I collected reports key findings on each research participant's statement of how and why they identify along the lines of race and ethnicity, and with nationality foregrounded among one of the participants in self-categorizations (see Table 3).

Table 3

Racial-Ethic Self-Identification

Name	Gender	Racial Socialization	Racial Centrality	Racial, Ethnic, or National Origin Category
Ari	Male	“We try not to lose any part of our Kenyan roots.”	“I’m Kenyan by birth”	Kenyan
Rhena	Female	“Tigrinya is like the native Eritrean language. So when my grandparents and my mom immigrated here, they kind of just brought that with them.”	“I would describe my racial background as black. And my ethnicity as Ethiopian—Eritian.”	Black/ Ethiopian, Eritrean
Rosa	Female	I think [my parents] just wanted me to, like, feel more in touch with [Black] the community and also maybe not feel so lonely.	“I would describe myself as black. And not African-American, because my family’s Jamaican.”	Black/Jamaican
Nadia	Female	I have a lot of black friends, a lot of black people in my life, my family’s black, but I just feel different because I’m light-skinned.	“I’m black. I’m Nigerian. So my mom did that DNA testing thing, and she’s 80 percent Nigerian.”	Black/Nigerian
Jennifer	Female	“I’m reconnecting with the other side of my family, we try to at least have a family dinner, like, once a month. My grandma and my dad like it, they, like, make chitlins. And I feel like that’s more of a cultural-- my grandma grew up in Louisiana. And my dad lived in, like, parts of Texas for a period of time. And that’s just something they always ate.”	Black	Black
Kimberly	Female	“And so, since I was little, I can tell you-- <laughs> she told me in preschool, “You know what you’re getting for Christmas?” I said, no, what? And she said, “A black baby doll, because black is beautiful.””	“African-American”	African-American
Dennis	Male	“Well, for my dad, my dad likes to talk about our racial preference a lot, so differences of how a black man lives today in today’s generation;	I’m an African-American scholar.	African-American

		yeah, he's really into that."		
Johnny	Male	"Sometimes [my mom] doesn't want me to go out. She thinks that something will happen because of my race or my ethnicity."	I'm an African-American.	African-American
Tia	Female	"I think just going back in history from the beginning of time like slaves, I mean, they didn't really have like much to really enjoy at the time. So I think that's where the family value comes from."	"Me being African-American, I think a lot of people have stereotypes about us."	African-American
Jasmine	Female	"Well, in the Middle East, like, my mom's from... It's really small country. And she was, like, one of the very first women to marry someone who's not [from the country]."	"Well, my dad is black, so that's- that's-- and then my mom is from Kuwait. So I'm half black, half Middle Eastern."	Black/Middle Eastern
Leonardo	Male	"A lot of soul food on the holidays. I feel like that would come from slavery days. you didn't have as much resources as you needed, so people put together little pieces that they could and they came up with greens and stuff like that."	"Well, I am mixed, but I would say, like, to other people, I just say I'm Black, basically. I'm Black and Chinese, though."	Black/Chinese
Caleb	Male	"My dad always is pretty heavily family oriented and for him, my dad is African-American, my mom's Middle Eastern, and so he-- his family came from-- or probably had a similar focus on that sort of time, like a designated time during the day to approach family discussion."	"African-American if I was just defining it simply. If I wanted to go into detail I'd define it as what it is, which is a combination of African-American and Middle Eastern, but I usually go by African-American 'cause of my appearance."	Black/Middle Eastern

National identification. Ari asserts his Kenyan national identity. Having migrated to the U.S. with his family five years ago, his "home" is very much still Kenya, and thus, he asserts a non-U.S. identity. He describes his national identity as such:

I'm Kenyan by birth. I moved here [U.S.] some four, five years ago, and so I still have the Kenyan cultures inbred in me. Yeah, we try not to lose any part of our

Kenyan roots. We do everything-- we watch Kenyan news; we play Kenyan music. As I said earlier, we eat Kenyan food. We even have-- about every other Sunday, we go to a Kenyan's house, and we have food there, but not just food; we socialize and play with them. And then, in Kenya, education is really important, because many-- it's a third-world country, quote unquote, and so it's really important to be educated so that you can rise above the poverty line and make everything better for your family. And so, when I came here, my mom stressed the need to really focus on education and to not goof off-- just know where I'm going so that-- that's generally how it is.

The distinctive way in which Ari identifies is noteworthy and warrants a closer look. The literature on the topic of Black immigrants suggests that individuals develop an ethnic identity as "African" in the United States over a racial identity. Scholars posit that living in the U.S. feels transitory rather than a permanent home for Black immigrants (Waters, 1994). In fact, some African immigrant parents expose their cultural values in their child-rearing practices by linking their children to other Africans who share a common homeland, ethnic ties, and values, as opposed to Westernized influences (Habecker, 2016). In this case, their children may express an African identity over an American identity during adolescence.

Ari embraces a cultural, and national identity and recognizes his ethnicity nonetheless as opposed to denoting a racial category. He notes, "There are 42 ethnic tribes in Kenya, so that means that there's a lot of diversity." In this way, there are different ethnic groups in Kenya that is representative of the myriad of persons, cultures, norms, customs, and language prevalent in the country. He identifies with his African heritage that encapsulates his attitudes and feelings of belonging to Kenya. Moreover, his national background shapes his self-concept as well as his cognizance of African Americans in the United States. Ari stresses that he was raised with different cultural norms and customs

than African-Americans/Black Americans and recognizes the nuances of black life in America. He explained:

It's hard for me to identify myself with the same black people here because our experiences are so much different and so [are] our backgrounds. I have had the privilege of knowing my African heritage. I know African history and have lived in Africa. I have grown with Kenyan customs, and consequently, my mannerisms have been honed differently than those of black people here. The lifestyle that black people live here is different than people in Kenya live. So, I do not connect with the way [native-born blacks] live and the way they conduct themselves. But, at the same time, I still feel connected to them. I guess sometimes if people see some other black people on the street, they don't feel as safe or comfortable. I don't really feel like that.

Ari's thoughts reflect minimally studied research and perspectives on intergroup relations between blacks from the Caribbean, the continent of Africa, and the United States (Mowen and Stanfield, 2016). Research indicates that African immigrants in the United States show changes in racial self-identification during their transition from adolescence to adulthood and embrace the racial categorization Black (Waters et al., 2014).

Ari embraces his mother's culture and maintains his African and national identity over a racial identity to differentiate himself from African-Americans. He also recognizes that public opinion about Blacks regardless of their origins and ethnic identities proliferate in America—the media often portrays African-Americans negatively, focusing on drugs, violence, and crime (Hacbeker, 2016). He explains, “I think that to the general public I am simply a black kid; therefore, any discrimination that happens to African-American automatically affects me.” Ari statement supports Awokoya (2012) assertion that African parents must face the reality that they have no control over their children's exposure to notions of Blacks in the media and school despite their efforts to preserve

their children's culture and to protect them from Westernized, American influences.

Moreover, the significance of the U.S. racial hierarchy and the importance placed on the

The MMRI dimension *private regard* (e.g. the extent to which African American feels negatively or positively about members of his or her race) and *public regard* (e.g. how A.A. thinks others' feel negatively or positively about their race) provides insight into how Ari processes his identity. Ari was the only participant that was an African immigrant; however, his story has implications for other groups of Black high school students attending private, identity schools who come from countries within the continent of Africa, and have migrated to the United States to receive a secondary education. More specifically, these African immigrant students may possess an awareness of histories, languages, and customs that differ from African Americans, American born Blacks. Nevertheless, African immigrants may interpret the misrepresentations of Blacks in society, which has the potential to foster or thwart their positive racial identity formation. For instance, Ari has an allegiance to his country of origin, Kenya, and he sometimes feels disconnected from other African Americans. However, he associates with the racial group due to his understanding of the discrimination and overall prejudices that Blacks face in U.S.

Racial and ethnic self-identification. Another participant, Rhena, identifies as Black and African descent, unequivocally using the categories of race and ethnicity to describe her self-categorization. She explained, "I would describe my racial background as black and my ethnicity as Ethiopian/Eritrean." She asserts her ethnic identity because of her

family's national origin identity as African immigrants in the United States and their native languages spoken. She explained:

We speak a lot of different languages within my family. One of the main ones is Tigrinya, I speak that, too. And most of the people on my mom's side of the family speak that, too. Tigrinya is like the native Eritrean language. So when my grandparents and my mom immigrated here, they kind of just brought that with them. And my grandparents don't speak English very well. So when I would be with them, and I'd want to speak with them as a child, that's the only language I spoke. So I think that's probably how became proficient in the language. And then like the other languages, there's like colonial ties, but I don't speak those, so. I think my mom spoke to me in that language growing up.

As African immigrants who immigrated to the United States from Ethiopia, Rhena's parents were able to preserve their language and maintain their cultural heritage thereby fostering Rhena's ethnic identity development. Hence, Rhena's values, languages, and thoughts are predominating factors that differentiate her from African-Americans. As she put it, "I know my specific ethnic background, which many African-Americans aren't able to do due to history. However, aside from my ethnicity, I feel at one with African-Americans." She further explicated that the sense of connection she feels with African-Americans, despite her Eritrean background, is embedded within her experience of having to confront the everyday, subtle and covert experiences with discrimination in the United States. Moreover, for as long as she can remember her interactions with African-Americans has solidified her connection.

Rosa, a third participant, identifies as Black when describing her background. She does not use the term African-American to demarcate her identity, and instead, she asserts her Jamaican identity. Rosa's non-preference for using the term "African-American" reflects the collective group identity among those with black ancestry in the

U.S., demonstrating how individuals contend with racial labels. For instance, in their study of the terminological preferences of persons in the U.S. of African descent, Sigelman et al. (2005) found that the respondents' preferences for the label "Black" versus "African-American" were nearly equally divided. Namely, the racial composition of schools, individual's racial group consciousness, and age contributed to their difference preferences. Hence, Rosa explained:

I would describe myself as black and not African-American because my family's Jamaican. I am adopted, but my mom, my birth mom, and my birth dad, were both born in Jamaica. So, I'm first-generation born here, technically.

Rosa underscores her Caribbean descent to differentiate herself from African-Americans. She is the offspring of Jamaican immigrants and a transracial adoptee. Similar to Ari who discusses his Kenyan origins (e.g. "We try not to lose any part of your Kenyan roots") and Rhena who explain her Eritrean heritage (e.g. "We speak a lot of different languages within my family"), Rosa expresses her Jamaican identity. Although the three differ regarding national origins and family type, their responses are germane to discussions on the ethnic and racial identities of first-generation and second-generation Black immigrants in the U.S. (Rumbaut, 2015).

Transracial adoption. Rosa is a black transracial adoptee who has two White mothers. That is, she was adopted by a White lesbian couple, and the cross-racial, female-dominated, and non-dominant familial identities embedded in her family have influenced her self-identification with respect to race, religion, and gender. For instance, she refers to her family as "very feminist" and points out:

I think honestly the not saying "Amen" might contribute to, like, I don't know, like, [my mother] queer culture. I guess our collective queer culture, of, like,

sometimes religion and sexuality, if it's not, like, heterosexuality, don't really mesh well together. Or they, like, weren't designed to mesh well together. And so I think us not saying "Amen" is like a small resistance.

In a similar way, she became acutely aware of her parent's attempts to shepherd her social integration with African-Americans at a young age. She recalls what it was like to be in the presence of black people and culture (e.g. music and art) as a young child growing up in a predominately white community. Studies reveal that the racial socialization process in the home may foster healthy youth development of racial identity (Tatum, 2004). For example, parents who promote race-consciousness or awareness of Black culture in the home promote positive Black identity in their children whereas other parents who remain race-neutral may inadvertently cause their children to struggle with their identity (Tatum, 2004, pp. 118).

Rosa, for example, reflected upon the symbolic meaning of race-related encounters during her childhood:

Angela: What are some traditions and routines that your family value?

Rosa: We used to live in Maine and back then we went to a black church because my family wanted me to just interact with more black people because Maine's very white.

Angela: Could you tell me a bit about your experience attending the black church in Maine? What was that like?

Rosa: I don't remember a whole bunch of it. I just remember it feeling super special and different, and, like, you know, Maine is so white. And we would, like, enter the space. I remember it was always warm and it always smelled good and everyone was super nice to us because I think they realized what my parents were trying to do. And so although we weren't religious, we never really participated in that part, it was kind of just like, "Oh, we're bringing our daughter to hang out with you guys." They would have potlucks on every Sunday after service. And I remember us just being offered food. We'd bring food too, and

there was lot of singing happening. I got to sit on a lot of people's laps. I remember it just being fun in general. We moved when I was I think six.

This excerpt has several implications for what life was like for Rosa in Maine. First, she regarded Maine as “so White” to suggest that there were hardly any people of color there but to also denote the lack of cultural diversity. Second, situated in a white space, she moves from a community into a Black church and experiences sensational, excitable, and experiential feelings in a more resonance space. Third, she comments that people were “super nice” to perhaps, suggest that they were friendly in comparison to others she encountered throughout Maine. Lastly, she does not consider herself religious, as “that part,” which could connote the actual church service, which consists of preaching, teaching, and worshipping, did not resonate with her family. Rather, the after service celebrations were the most engaging part of the Black church experience. In the light of existing research on transracial adoption, the social interactions provide context and insight into Rosa's early sensitivity to race, offering an example of how transracial adoptees come to articulate their ethnic identity based on the formal education and acculturation that they receive in the home (Ferrari et al., 2015; Rosanti and Ferrari, 2014). Moreover, Rosa's story also emphasizes the social and cultural heterogeneity that exists among blacks in the U.S.

The MMRI dimension *racial centrality* (e.g. how one defines themselves normatively) offers information about the reasons behind Rhena and Rosa's self-identification choices. Both of the participants' racial and ethnic identities are rooted in their family's ancestral origins that extend far beyond the U.S. There are striking differences between the two, especially concerning their familial ties. For example,

Rhena lives with her biological parents and has inherited the culture and languages from their native homeland, while Rosa lives with her White parents but feels connected to her biological family's Jamaican ancestry. To further understand why these young girls describe themselves as Black and other related identities, researchers must consider the different racial socialization messages that African immigrant parents and White families convey in the home. Moreover, scholars should also explore how those topics reinforce positive or negative belief systems that shape how participants define race as a part of their self-concept.

Another participant, Nadia, focused on having black ancestry when defining her racial and ethnic background. She explained, "I'm black. I'm Nigerian. So my mom did that DNA testing thing, and she's 80 percent Nigerian." Nadia expresses that being black, and more specifically Nigerian, exemplifies her racial identity and ethnic identity. Namely, her family's history and genealogy, which traces back to Nigeria, shape her self-concept. She noted:

I love my family because we're Black, and we're proud to be, and I feel now we are connecting more to our African roots because we have a lot of tribal artwork, sculptures, and stuff in our house. And it's empowering with the Black Lives Matter and stuff, and my family's really a part of that. My grandfather is a Black Panther.

Nadia receives affirmation from her family that is interwoven with Black aesthetics and culture, reflecting the family's embracement of the African diaspora— a concept used to recognize the communities throughout the world where descents of Africa dwell. For example:

Angela: Are there any traditions in your family that you feel are important and central to you being black?

Nadia: Oh, yes. We really are into symbolism, so there's an Ankh and, yeah, I feel like, well, I know everyone on my family either has something that's Ankh, or a tattoo, or jewelry, or anything like that, 'cause it's just tradition of, like, all being connected, you know. Like, my mom has a tattoo of an Ankh on her arm. My cousins have 'em everywhere. You know, it's just like a, I don't know, it's just something that connects us all, and it's Africa, like a tattoo of Africa. And it's just like el moto subi. That's an African dance. Me and my sister, we did African dance when we were younger, but then soccer came over and we had to drop it. But, yeah, we did African dance with my grandma and my aunties, and they had this group, and we dressed in African head wraps and outfits, traditional. I don't know exactly what they're called, but they're these traditional wraps on your head, and then the skirt and the shirt.

Nadia's upbringing fosters her understanding of culture and the meaning she ascribes to asserting her black identity. The implicit and explicit messages that she receives about Black culture in the home convey socialization practices that render her happy about having a black racial identity.

Colorism. Nadia's self-definition as a black individual also stems from her experiences of feeling and being perceived "different" or "mixed race" because of her skin tone and eye color. That is, That is, these distinctive physical features influence how Nadia makes meaning of her racial identity development. She explained:

Growing up, I always kind of felt different because I have a lot of black friends, a lot of black people in my life, my family's black, but I just feel different because I'm light-skinned, and I am on the lighter side, and my hair is not black. It's light brown or blonde, red, whatever. I have light, caramel skin, and my eyes change color depending on the season, so they can be green or light hazel and stuff. So when I have green eyes, they be like, "You must be mixed something," not a black girl looks like that. I always felt mixed, because I feel like I don't have enough melanin in my skin. I feel like when someone thinks of a black girl—if you're going to be stereotypical in a sense—they see a black girl, a darker brown skin girl, with black, curly, kinky hair.

Nadia's statements provide insight into the role of skin color in her self-concept as a Black adolescent, revealing a deeper meaning associated with the chameleon nature of

her identity. That is, she desires mutual recognition from Blacks and especially her peers whom she wants to respect her black authenticity. In a study of Blacks who come from four different countries, Australia, Bermuda, South Africa, and the United States, Neville et al. (2015) found that individuals “developed an affirmative racial identity under situations in which one’s humanity is called into question by external forces” (p. 249). Nadia’s indignation to have more "melanin" in her skin demonstrates the forces that have made her feel that this would somehow signify that she's more worthy of respect for having darker skin.

Nadia’s story illustrates an experience that Blacks face concerning skin color issues in the United States (Adams et al., 2015; Matthews et al., 2015). Researchers contend that pervasive colorism, the practice of discrimination that privileges those with lighter skin more favorably than those with darker skin, reflect the deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes of colorist ideologies stemming from long-standing, collective racialized socio-historical experiences of Blacks in the U.S. (Dupree et al., 2014). For instance, she retells an experience in which a teenage girl tried to initiate a fight with her merely because of her appearance. Nadia believed that the exchange was unwarranted. She elaborated, “I’m not that type of girl who's going to start drama. I'm not into that or into fighting or anything like that. And I was just like, I didn't even do anything. I'm literally just standing here. And I don't know. I felt like I looked different, too, from all them.” She suggests that her peers would assume she would stir up conflict if she were to assert her identity. Moreover, Nadia has struggled to understand why people of all races (e.g. White, Indians, Polynesians, and Blacks) would question her black authenticity because

of the color of her skin. Her story demonstrates that individuals with fairer skin are subjected to colorism just as persons with darker skin. That is, the pernicious effects of colorism may vary depending on one's environment and experience but can operate as an oppressive force nevertheless in black individual's self-esteem, self-perception, family dynamics, and racial and ethnic identities (Hunter, 2007).

The MMRI dimension *racial centrality* is a useful in this example because it helps expound Nadia's experience with colorism. Nadia was the only participant to mention the impact that issues of skin color have on her racial identity development. Nevertheless, I found her experience representative of powerful forces that other youth struggle to combat as they seek to develop an understanding of who they are racially. It also ties to other Black adolescents' exchanges with members from their racial group and other racial groups who question the origins of their racial and ethnic background, causing them to think twice about their status as a member within the Black/African American racial group.

Mixed-race and multiracial self-identification. Three of the study participants—Jasmine, Leonardo, and Caleb—identified as belonging to more than one racial group. Jasmine, for example, explained, “Well, my dad is black, and then my mom is from [Middle Eastern country]. So I’m half black, half Middle Eastern.” On the other hand, Leonardo deployed the term mixed-race to describe his self-categorization. He explained, “Well, I am mixed, but I would say, like, to other people, I just say I’m Black, basically. I am black and [Asian country], though. My grandma is [Asian]. So my mom is half, and I’m just 25 percent.” Similarly, Caleb explained, “[My racial-ethnic background] is

African-American if I was defining it simply. If I wanted to go into detail, I'd define it as what it is, which is a combination of African-American and Middle Eastern, but I usually go by African-American cause of my appearance." These findings suggest that claiming a black identity or mixed race identity is common among black youth who have parents of different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Csizmadia et al., 2014; Mowen and Stansfield, 2016).

In her book, "Mixed-Race Youth and Schooling: The Fifth Minority," an in-depth analysis of the educational experiences and needs of mixed-race children, Sandra Winn Tutwiler (2016) stresses that mixed-race individuals may describe themselves as biracial, multiracial, or mixed-race. By exploring studies of Asian/White persons and Black/White mixed race people she found that those with Black physical appearances were perceived as Black and thus internally identified with being black because others treated them as such, which is no anomaly. She argues, "Mixed-race youth possess different and sometimes conflicting, frames of reference that they must make sense of to categorize their race (p. 112). Similar, Khanna (2011) argued that the one-drop-rule predominate an observer of any race who may judge mixed-race individuals to be black regardless of the identity categories they may claim, or their personal ancestry and Sullivan (2014) stressed that being mixed-race entails finding one's place within a social hierarchy.

Racial self-identification. Six out of the twelve study participants—Nadia, Jennifer, Kimberly, Dennis, Johnny, and Tia— assume a monoracial identity (e.g. Black, White, or Asian) as African-American or Black. Some identify themselves solely based on race, and others combine racial and social categories in their self-identifications. For example,

Tia responded:

Me being African-American, I think a lot of people have stereotypes about us. But I love being African-American. I wouldn't say, "Oh, I don't like it." I love it! People learn new things about African-Americans every day. And I think that's why people are so fascinated with us.

Tia expressively shows that her racial group membership is a significant factor in her self-conceptualization. Based on her experiences in private school in which she states, "I'm like a deer in headlight" due to the fact she's one of the few Black students in the environment, she has clung to her race to feel secure and empowered.

Tia's response underscores her positive sense of identity, and racial pride, representing a black consciousness wherein the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of blacks are entrenched. However, two of the study participants' conceptualization of their racial identities is intertwined with other identity factors such as gender and ability. For example, Dennis explains, "I'm an African-American scholar" to suggest that his racial identity encompasses his ability status (e.g. educational skills). Similarly, Johnny says, "I am an African-American man." Taken together, racial identity and other social identities are essential to the articulated sense of self of each black adolescent.

The MMRI dimension *private regard* (e.g. African American perceives how others' feel negatively or positively about their racial group) help explain the excitement and sense of pride Tia has about being a member of her racial group. She highlights both the negative and positive aspects of being African American. That is, she mentions that just as there are stereotypes about African Americans in society there is also a preoccupation with the group. Tia believes that a dichotomy between the two exists because of the totality of Black experience; the fact that there is so much to learn and understand about

individuals within the racial group. In this instance, she feels a sense of pride as she considers the elements of both viewpoints whereas other Black youth may feel disconcerted. Tia, along with the other participants mentioned in this section, show us that when a Black adolescent demarcates his or her identity it is not about the title one chooses to self-identify, but how they feel about their identity, and why they feel a particular way.

This section focused on racial and ethnic self-identification choices among African-American high school students attending private, independent schools located in the Bay Area, CA. The study participants demonstrated variation in their racial and ethnic self-categorizations, responding to the question 'How would you describe your racial or ethnic identity?' in various ways. For instance, the African study participants' racial identities are centered on their national origin identity and ethnic identity, while determinants such as skin color, racial and ethnic ancestry, and family background (e.g. racial socialization) comprise the racial identifications of mixed-race and African American study participants. It's not about the words they use to describe their identities but the qualitative difference that youth feel and how they see themselves amongst the different MMRI dimensions, including racial centrality, racial salience, public and private regard. Lastly, the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of participants' family members, school community constituents, and society as a whole influence the racial and ethnic identity and self-categorizations they employ as Black individuals. In this regard, the diverse ways in which black adolescents identified racially and ethnically has prompted me to use the term Black (e.g. African, Caribbean, mixed-race, and African-American youth in

the U.S.) instead of African-American (e.g. native-born Blacks) to reference the identities and subjective experiences of participants in independent schools henceforth.

Racial and ethnic identities are integral dimensions in how Black high school students experience private, independent schools. This section addresses the ways in which participants experience independent schools as sites for racial identity development. Based on study participants' statements, indications of racial and ethnic identity formation occur along the various interpersonal relationships they have with members of their respective independent schools communities, including (1) cross racial friends, (2) race-based affinity groups, and (3) supportive non-parental adults. With each interaction illustrated, I explored existing phenomenon and interwove new themes throughout the analysis (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Social Interactions Facilitating Black Racial Identity Development Among Study Participants in Independent Schools

Cross-Racial Interactions with Peers

Study participants reported interacting with peers who come from different racial and cultural backgrounds than their own. These connections symbolize the inherent encounters between participants and members of their school community across lines of difference that inform participants' self-concept. A majority of the research participants

attend schools where there are between twenty-five percent to fifty percent students of color—the terms for which individuals meet this category varies, but typically include Hispanic, Multiracial/Other, African-American, and other Asian ethnicities. Despite the varying percentages of diversity, these independent schools proffer opportunities for Black students to develop relationships with peers of different backgrounds. The extent to which these relationships occur and develop varies for participants across school sites. However, the interactions are expressed as negative or positive and demonstrate why participants feel a particular way about themselves as Black adolescents and harbor feelings towards non-Black members of their respective school communities. The exchanges two of the participants have with their cross racial friends, for instance, suggest that there is something else at play that influences what it means to be Black in a predominately white independent school known as class

Intersectionality of race and class. The intersectional nature of race and class appeared in two of the participants' interactions with cross-racial friends within independent schools. For example, Jasmine comes from an upper-class socioeconomic background, which became a point of contention between her and her peers at the independent school that she had attended during her freshman year of high school. Comparing her current independent school to the former independent school, Jasmine discusses how her racial identity correlates to her social class self-representation. She explained:

I'm really happy that I moved, 'cause I feel like I have such a better high school experience here at [Parks]. [Shelby], I just don't think it was a good school for me and my brother. The students who are there [would say], "Well, you're not really black." Just kinda that mindset. Because my family—where we lived and where

I'd gone to middle school. I went to an all-white middle school too, in, like, a nice town. It was a public middle school. But, I [am] also half black, half Middle Eastern. They had that, "You're not really black." So, I tried to overcompensate or something to prove I was black, which is not something [I needed] to do. Being black is not one thing. I'm happy—in some ways—I'm happy I went there because I feel I got perspective. Now I can see how much better I have it at a school like [Parks].

Race and class intersected in Jasmines' daily experiences in such a way that her race signified a particular social class status. Jasmine's peers regarded her as non-Black, which suggests they may have equated being Black to lower class social groups. Bettie (2000) argues that many young girls of color in the U.S. possess ideas of what it means to "act White," which convey different class connotations. That is, "acting white" means presenting a middle-class persona, whereas "acting black" indicates the presentation of a lower class or "ghetto" identity. For example, Jasmine used to present a gendered, middle-class identity at her former school:

I think I even changed, like, the way I talked a little bit. Like, the way my voice was. Because at my middle school I used to have, like, that Valley girl kind of thing. So I think I changed that. But, like, I don't really change too much when I go to [Parks]. More just because I think I'm a little more confident in myself now. So, like, I don't really care as- as much about, like, what people think of me, I guess.

These statements demonstrate the relationship between class, gender, and race in the experiences of Black adolescents within independent school contexts. Jasmine created and negotiated her racial identity during her interactions with peers through her language usage.

Jasmine's encounters with cross-racial peers at the two different schools in which she attended created issues of difference that impacted her race and class identities. Her mixed-race identity is very much intertwined with her class identity. That is, being a

young Black girl born into an affluent family shaped her language, persona, and overall upbringing that her peers challenge. Only she knows her identity as a Black, but she has to confront stereotypes and expectations that come from her peers who expect her to behave based on the stereotypes that they possess about Blacks. This is a key finding that speaks to the social interactions in the independent school environment that create pressure for Black students who search to define their Black identity in majority white environments. Some may perpetuate the negative stereotypes espoused that surround them schools to fit it in while others will falter at the prospect of having to put on for others. Either way, it is also the case that Black youth experience exhaustion from having to wrestle with this type of challenge. The identification struggles that Jasmine undergoes parallels another participant's experience in the independent school she attends.

Tia attends Cathedral High, a predominately white school located in an affluent community. Unlike the majority of the students attending the school, Tia comes from an inner-city neighborhood. She explains:

In middle school, it was mainly just like African-Americans, Hispanic. So I was used to being around all of them like we all grew up in the same city. I know how everyone is. And then for me coming from that middle school and just being here in [the inner city where she lives] to go into [Cathedral School] is like more of a culture shock. Because you're not-- I'm not-- you're not really exposed to all the things that they do. It's more like upper class, like everyone has money. So it's definitely a different experience from middle school.

She experienced culture shock when she made the shift from public school to private school, transitioning from a homogenous environment (e.g. students of color) to a more diverse and heterogeneous setting (e.g. predominately white & a mix of racial groups). Through this experience, as previously noted, she has experienced feelings of

“otherness,” and struggled to acclimate to the environment. The disproportionate percentage of Blacks in the school and the norms, customs, and values of white, middle-class hegemony that are strikingly different from the cultural norms embodied in neighborhood community contributed to her level of discomfort. Despite these challenges, now, as a junior, she has friends of all types—some who share her frustrations, others who experience feelings of isolation, and one, in particular, who deals with the “otherness” dilemma.

She has developed a close relationship with a black girl who comes from an upper-class background. Their friendship and interactions with other black and non-black peers at school present similar race and class dynamics as the ones found in Jasmine’s school community. Tia offers a detailed description of her friendship with the black girl, which underscores the complex interplay between race and class among Black adolescents in high school settings:

Some African American students like my friend, she's African-American, and she's been in private school her whole life, she's been around the other race for her whole life. So meeting her freshman year, I was like, "Oh my gosh, she's so different." "Why is she so different from me?" People would tell her, "Oh you're so whitewash, why are you not like [Tia]?" She came to me one day and broke down and she was like, "I don't want people to feel like, oh because I've grown up around white people my whole life that I'm different from you" and I was like, "Honestly it's just the way that we've been brought up, you know what I mean. You grew up in a different environment than I have so that's how you are. You've gotten accustomed to everything that you've done because of the environment you've been in and then me, like I've grown up in an environment where I'm around my race all the time." I said, "You're around, you know, this other race or you've grown accustomed to the things that they do." I said, "It's not that you're different it's just that we've been brought up differently." She was really hurt about it she was like, "People always tell me like I'm not black even though I am black. Like, I don't act black." I was like, "But how is a black person supposed to act? How is a white person supposed to act? How is a Hispanic person supposed to act? I don't understand" and then she told me, "Well maybe because people

think that black people are so loud and ratchet and everything," and I said, "You're right, but that's not how all of us act."

Tia recognizes that the home environment and social context that her and her friend inhabited at birth are astronomically different, but both settings have influenced the trajectory of their racial identity process. Whereas Tia has reported feeling secure and insecure about being black when she's at home versus, at school, her friend has presented a keen sense of attachment to middle-class values that inflate when she's at school.

Tia's story reveals information that addresses the intersectionality of race and class among Black youth attending private schools. Unlike Jasmine who comes from an upper class family, Tia is from a low-income household, which shaped her early schooling experiences. She attended public schools that were majority-minority, consisting of Hispanic and African American students. Making the shift from public school settings to a prestigious private independent school was challenging for Tia who develops a close relationship with another Black girl who comes from a wealthy background. The two bond because they both identify as Black. Their relationship presents valuable information about the various cross racial interactions with peers that shape Tia's understanding of who she is as a Black person. She struggles to fit in, but also recognizes the lack of sense of connectedness her friend feels toward their peers who expect her to conform to the negative stereotypes they have about Blacks. Yet, Tia does not experience the same class identity as her friend and is left to confront her own set of issues. In the section to follow I will discuss further how another meaningful relationship Tia has with an adult at school helps to ameliorate her circumstances in the school that in turn influence her healthy racial identity transformation.

Non-Parental Adult Relationships

Participants reported having teachers and staff to support and guide them at their respective independent schools. These individuals with whom youth feel they have a meaningful connection are what scholars refer to as non-parental adults (Bowers et al., 2015). The study participants, indeed, have developed and maintained interpersonal relationships with non-parent adults at school. Eight participants reported that they feel most connected to a non-parental adult at school: five reported a teacher; two reported a staff member/club advisor; and one reported a football coach. On the other hand, four participants reported that they feel most connected to their friends and did not reference an adult with whom they associate with on campus. Nevertheless, the relationships formed between the eight study participants and supportive non-parental adults were shown to have contributed to adolescents' racial identity development—namely, their positive self-perception and academic motivation.

Tia had an exceptionally difficult time during her first two years at Cathedral High School where she is now junior. However, she attributes her ability to cope to her mentor, a non-parental adult on campus, and her family. She explains:

When I need help, Mr. Lucas, like I go to him with anything because my freshman year I struggled a lot and I went through depression, and it just got really bad to a point where I was just like, "I don't wanna live anymore." So he was my support system, like there for me at school and telling me like, "Everything will be okay," 'cause I wanted to transfer. I was thinking about it, and he was like, "You get free tutoring here," like, "You have this program you're in that supports you. You got a full ride scholarship here," like, "You know, all of the resources you have here, you're not gonna have at [other schools] or anywhere else that you go... he's like, "Even though you don't feel comfortable here because you're African American and you're in a school where it's really all white people but is that really what you wanna do?" He was like, "You go home, and you sleep

on it, and you tell me in about a month," and I was like, "Alright.. tell you in about a month." So I thought about it, I thought about it so hard, and I was like, "If I leave, I'm really gonna have to start all over.. And then I just thought about it, and I was like, "You don't have a reason.." like, "You just don't have a reason. You wanna leave because you don't.. you're not around your culture.. like, your race." And then I was just thinking about it, and I was like, "You're not leaving."

Tia was depressed during her sophomore year at Cathedral, and she believed that the pain deep down in her soul stemmed from the fact that she is Black in a predominately white school. Tia's experience is not uncommon for Black youth in private, independent school settings who report feelings of depression and loneliness. Hawkins (2014) contends that there is a psychological price for being a minority student in a majority white school; the experience can be tough, and the psychological difficulties can contribute to youth's feelings loneliness. Furthermore, he argues, "mattering among adolescents ranks high in the order of importance in developing a sense of belonging in schools" (p. 203). In this way, mattering to Tia is based on her perception that others understand her. She agonized over the decision to transfer out of Cathedral but eventually found solace in her mother and Mr. Lucas as we worked through the pain because they transmitted the message over and over again that she matters. Moreover, Mr. Lucas also faced similar struggles as Tia so she trusted she could tell him her darkest and painful experiences. She explains:

He's been through a lot in his childhood, and his adulthood still to this day. And so like we all trust him with everything. Mainly because he's African-American, so it's someone you can go to and talk to about anything, and he'll give you advice. So I trust him a lot with a lot of things I tell him. So that's one person that I would say.

Tia was the only participant to mention having experiences with depression. I choose to highlight her experience because scholars have found that the independent school context can take an emotional toll on youth of color (Arrington and Stevenson, 2006). Moreover,

Tia underscores the role that non-parental adults working in private schools play in fostering a healthy, psychological and socio-emotional well-being, and positive racial identity development among African American students in private, independent schools.

Student-teacher relationships. Leonardo, a junior at Franklin College Preparatory School, comments on his connection with a significant non-parental adult at his school.

He explains:

A person I feel most connected to would be my English teacher because I feel like in that class I can express myself freely. I don't have any barriers. Or any boxes, or anything that prevents me from expressing myself, I guess you could say. I feel like my words have meaning. And there's a message that I can get across to other people. And, like, through English class and writing my papers, I can educate some people and break down stereotypes or some of the ignorance that people have against African Americans like that we may not be as educated or intelligent or yeah, basically that.

Leonardo's statement reveals three key findings that are central to this study of racial identity among African American high students attending private, independent schools.

First, the safe and supportive classroom climate that Leonardo describes his teacher has fostered positively affects how he perceives him or her as a supportive non-parental adult.

Ambrose et al. (2010) define classroom climate as the following:

Climate is determined by a constellation of interacting factors that include faculty-student interaction, the tone instructors set, instances of stereotyping or tokenism, the course demographics (for example, relative size of racial and other social groups enrolled in the course), student-student interaction, and the range of perspectives represented in the course content and materials (p.170).

Second, the positive teacher-student relationship between him and his teacher by way of the construction of a positive classroom climate has contributed to Leonardo's academic attitudes and academic motivation as an African-American student (private regard).

Lastly, both the teacher-student relationship and positive classroom climate are factors

supporting Leonardo's ambition to debunk the negative stereotypes society have toward his racial group through his writing (public regard).

Rhena, a junior at Franklin College Preparatory School, reports that the school's Director of Diversity and Inclusion, who is also her English teacher, is a supportive non-parental adult that she trusts on campus. She states:

He was an English teacher, and then he became the Director of Diversity and Inclusion. So he just stopped teaching. And this was our senior year, and I was like, "I'm really about to leave this school without learning anything about people of color." And so he just started [it] this year, and it's a semester course. He's Director of Diversity and Inclusion, so it's like a really hard job for him to do both. He gives me information that I never knew or is super useful but is never given to me. We read the Autobiography of Malcolm X in his class, and like a bunch of other things. We studied pop culture and what it is and what it's not, and the different views on it and stuff like that.

The teacher-student relationship helps foster Rhena's academic motivation and support her desire to learn about the history of marginalized people in society and namely, people of color. The fact that Rhena sought him out to advocate for a course that suits her interests in race and culture is noteworthy as it demonstrates her confidence to posit her identity in the context of the classroom.

Jennifer, a senior at Riverside School, reflects on her relationship with a non-parental adult at the school. She explains:

I think it's really important to have black teachers on campus because right now there's only one, and it's a lady, and she came last year. But before that, we had another black lady, and she ended up leaving my sophomore year. Because it was like, when she first left, I was like, "This is stupid. Why'd she leave?" And I was mad because she was always there to listen to me and other students of color rant, and not just even rant. Just, she was easy to talk to. And it's like, not having that, and it was like... she left in the middle of the year. And that was before I went to the conference. And I was like, "I don't understand why she left." But then, coming back from the conference, it was like, "It's hard to be one black person." I understand being a black girl in a private school that's predominantly white, but at

least I had other people-- a few other people. But seeing that she was the only black female teacher in a school that's predominantly white, and the teachers are predominately white, it's a whole different experience because it's like... how do you... keep encouraging students of color to stay when you don't even want to stay yourself?

Jennifer describes the relationship she had with a former Black teacher in the school who acknowledged the differences between the school culture and the students' various racial, ethnic, and cultural identities. Jennifer alludes to the fact that Riverside is a challenging place for students of color, and posits that hiring more than one Black teacher to serve in the role as a teacher and supportive non-parental adult for students of color in the school community is crucial. Based on Jennifer's recount of why the teacher left Riverside it appears that the adult may have also encountered issues related to race just as the students of color.

Jennifer also mentioned that she was emboldened by her experience at the Student Diversity Leadership Conference, which provided a safe space for youth to coalesce and brainstorm ways to improve the climate of their schools and work alongside supportive adults and White allies. She connected with other African American students, especially in the Black Affinity Group, and has remained in contact with them and other student attendees to date. For instance, she notes:

Jennifer: We have a Facebook group. It's, like, made up of, like, a thousand kids. And then, like, within that we have, like, subgroups. Like, I have the-- we have, like, SDLC Black Queens and then SDLC Black Affinity group. And I've noticed, like, the Black Queens are more active than, like, the whole Black Affinity group, which is like-- it's interesting, because, like, they're willing to talk about those issues, but I've noticed, like, some of the boys don't want to talk about it, or they don't feel the need. Which is weird, because they went to the conference. <laughs> But in the larger group, all issues are talked about, I feel like. And it's just like a space for, like, people to rant and just talk about what

they feel, yes. But in the larger group, all issues are talked about, I feel like. And it's just like a space for, like, people to rant and just talk about what they feel, yes.

Angela: So you could put posts, it sounds like, put a post up there, people could comment and so forth. But just having some sort of dialogue. With over a thousand people to see it.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Angela: So is this a closed group?

Jennifer: Mm-hm.

Jennifer has formed a bond with other students of color attending private, independent schools throughout the country in which they feel safe to discuss their experiences in white spaces. The SDLC experience and presence of students in online affinity groups has helped Jennifer to develop empathy for the teacher who left abruptly. She believes that her former teacher may have dealt with unique issues as being one of the few black adults at Riverside.

In a study of black teachers' formation of professional black identities in white schools, Hasberry (2013) finds that Black teachers working in predominately, white and affluent independent schools experience "racial tokenism," a fundamental issue in the retention of faculty of color. The term refers to an ethnic minority's "heightened visibility due to being the only one, or one of a very few, who look physically different; being trapped in the role of an expert in all things having to do with their race." The author found that racial tokenism connected to the Black professionals' coping strategies, such as over-performing, in which they reported their constant awareness of their image and need to work extremely hard to prove themselves (p. 98). Although the finding offers an example of a type of challenge Black teachers face in white spaces, it does not explain

why the non-parental adult whom Jennifer felt cared for and supported students of color left. However, the teacher-student relationship conveys how non-parental adults working in independent schools may influence adolescents' racial and ethnic identity development in so far as Jennifer developed a heightened awareness of the institutional barriers that Black adults and other students of color face predominately white schools.

The role of non-parental adults operating within private, independent schools is of paramount importance to understanding the participants' racial identity formation. The participants highlight how their interactions with adults evoke feelings, thoughts, and ideas about their racial and ethnic identities and help them to contextualize what their experience represent in the context of what they referred to on throughout the study as “predominately” white schools. Although the dynamics of the teacher-student relationships, in particular, vary, some Black youth gain and while others hone their analytical lens of what it means to be Black in developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with non-parental adults.

Other meaningful relationships. Kimberly stresses that she has a dedicated space at Evers School where she feels supported by a non-parental adult. She explains, “The Director of Diversity at my school has been very, very helpful. Whenever I've had an issue, I've been able to go talk to him about it, and so I feel very supported.” The school's Director of Diversity is a significant non-parental adult that Kimberly can call upon to help her deal with the issues she faces on campus, which often has to do with race. For instance, she points out, “A lot of things happen, and often, it's a race thing, and my peers want to believe not everything's a race thing... If I didn't have a black person who I could

go talk to about black issues, it would've been very hard for me." Researchers show that non-parental adults who recognize the role race and ethnicity, among other identities, play in adolescents girls of color lives contribute positively to youths' racial and ethnic identities, helping you to sustain their culture, values, and beliefs (Clonan-Roy et al., 2016).

While Kimberly denotes the interpersonal relationship she has with the Director of Diversity, she also mentions that some of her peers of color do not engage with him because they do not want to be seen seeking out an adult of color on campus. She states, "I have friends who don't really talk to him that much because they don't want to be associated with always going to talk to someone of color 'cause it's not cool or whatever, but I know that, personally, it would've been very hard for me." This statement supports research that focuses on identity negotiation and more specifically, students of color negotiation of their racial and ethnic identity within and across contexts and especially "white spaces" (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Nguyen and Brown, 2010).

According to Ting-Toomey (2012), "an individual's multifaceted identities of cultural, ethnic, religious, social class, gender, sexual orientation, professional, family/relational role, and personal image(s) [are] based on self-reflection and other categorization social construction processes" (p. 1). In this case, Kimberly suggests that students of color at Evers may negotiate their identity in the independent school context, where there is a disproportionate representation of African-American and other students of color. In doing so, they may assert, define, or support their own desired self-image (private regard), which highlights the evaluative and interpretative responses students of

color have about how members of their school community may view them as African-Americans. Also, they may consider how they feel others may perceive the Director of Diversity as a Black, non-parental adult (public regard) (Ting-Toomey, 1999; 2005).

Another participant, Johnny, attends Sky Limit High School and reported having a connection with a non-parental adult on his school campus. He explains, “I [feel connected] to my football coach because he’s my history teacher. So he helps me. He taught, like, other subjects also. So if I need help with something, he’ll help me. And he gives me rides home sometime if I need it. He’s, like, there, he’s caring.” The interpersonal relationship Johnny has with his history teacher/football coach helps facilitate his academic motivation as an African-American male. The relationship supports researchers assertion that middle school and high school African-Americans’ connectedness to formal and informal (natural) mentors, experienced individuals who support non-experienced mentees, promote their academic achievement (Hurd et al., 2012; Hurd and Sellers, 2013).

Researchers attempting to explain the achievement gap have explored racial identity as a construct that is predictive of negative or positive educational outcomes among African-American adolescents. For example, feeling good about one’s racial group may inspire African American youth to achieve academically whereas feeling negative may lead to an adolescents’ less positive academic outcomes in predominately white schools, for example (Pickney IV et al., 2011; Tatum, 2004). In the case of Johnny, he is aware of the institutional racism and barriers that African-Americans have endured in American

society, and he feels motivated to succeed. A discussion about the impact of his race on Johnny's life includes:

Angela: If you think about the example that you gave, researching someone because you read their book, or any other time where you felt like you went online and you checked out a book or looked up anything related to your race, did the information have an impact on how you see your racial identity? In other words, in learning about the information, did it impact the way you see yourself as a black male?

Johnny: Yeah. Like, the way people were treated back then, like, I'm like, I say I'm kind of lucky because it's not the same. It's a little different. And they were treated, like, little bad back then. And now it's like little bit better, but it's still there. Like, because, like, they didn't have a lot of stuff back then. Like, from what I have now, I have a lot of stuff. And I'm lucky enough to go to a private school, and back then they probably didn't, they probably couldn't do that.

Johnny is aware of the troubles Black's face today. For instance, he mentions, "My mom, sometimes she doesn't want me to go out. She thinks that something will happen because of my race or ethnicity." In addition to feeling supported academically, the student-teacher relationship Johnny has with his mentor and coach at Sky Limit High School facilitates his identification and membership with a racial group and also contributes positively to his racial identity, safety, and academic motivation.

Johnny does not report experiencing any type of adversity at his school. I found this to be important data for this study that focuses on the racial identity development of Black high school students in that it conveys the role that gender plays in adolescents boys' inclination to discuss racial identity related issues. Johnny shares his understanding of the issues of race and racism that Black men have to confront in everyday society, but he does not express having difficulty with his race in school. However, Johnny's relationship with his teacher and coach signifies a rich and nuanced meaning behind how

he defines himself as a Black male at his school site. He reported that his teacher/coach was the individual with whom he felt most connected with on campus. There is possibility that Johnny can discuss just about anything with him but will not engage in the same level of discussion with others whereas other participants, in particular, the adolescents girls, handle the conversations about race differently.

Discussions About Race in Race-Based Affinity Groups

Nine of the study participants reported that they were involved in a race-based affinity group known as the Black Student Union (BSU) at their respective school sites whereas two of the participants expressed that they wanted to implement BSU at their schools. Only one of the participants made no reference to BSU in his interview. According to the National Association of Independent Schools, race-based affinity groups help individuals who share race and ethnicity in common to unite around a common goal. For example, data from the study reveal that these groups may promote increased learning about adolescent's race, culture, and values in which they explore their commonalities and differences. However, few studies explore the impact of race-based affinity groups on the racial identity development of African-American students. In one finding, an article published in the Independent School Magazine entitled, "Identity, Affinity, Reality," elementary school educators, Parsons and Ridley (2012) explain:

Even in the most progressive independent schools, issues of race often lie just below the surface of children's daily experiences. In the relative security of an affinity group, these realities come to life. Affinity groups are places where students build connections and process "ouch" moments from their classes. Children talk about the isolation they sometimes feel. The relationships students gain through race-based affinity groups enable them to feel less alone with their emotions and help them build a stronger sense of self (p. 2).

The authors suggest that race-based affinity groups serve as an outlet for people to discuss race-related issues, facilitating racial-identity exploration, self-awareness, support, and connection for those whose ethnic group is underrepresented in K-12 independent schools. Findings from this study will offer additional insight into how black high school students contend with race-based affinity groups in the independent school context.

The study participants—Rhena, Leonardo, Dennis, Rosa, Jennifer, and Kimberly—reported belonging to a race-based affinity group known as the Black Student Union (BSU) or African-American Club at their schools. Dennis explains, "Basically, it's just for African-Americans to explore more about ourselves and to get into colleges, I believe." While Jasmine states, "[It's] the main place where I meet most of the other black students." Another participant, Caleb, leads a Black affinity group that focuses on the experiences of young African-American men on his school campus. "It's exclusive to black boys," he explains. Two of the other participants--Tia and Johnny-- aspire to start a BSU at their different school sites. For example, Tia points out:

I definitely would want to start at the Black Student Union so bad because I think it would open a lot of doors for people that really don't know much about African-Americans. Other than the history classes and the social justice classes, I think a Black Student Union would definitely help out, and it would just help teach people the culture and what really happened and what really goes on because I don't think a lot of people really know what really happened.

Johnny also mentions, "I wanted to start a BSU to let black students know where you come from and like how the world is going."

Positive experiences. Race-based affinity groups such as the Black Student Union espouse different goals, including to facilitate positive identity exploration, pride, and self-esteem and to serve a conduit through which students advocate for educational activities grounded in race and identity. Jasmine describes:

We started the year with a project, and we all made a big poster. I don't know how big it is, but it's huge. In the center, like, it was the centerpiece, we put all the names of the unarmed black people who've been killed by the police, just in this year, and it filled up the entire thing, which was eye-opening. We hung it up in the school. And since then it's sparked a lot of conversations, so we've been invited to talk in front of the entire faculty and stuff.

The victims represented in the poster that the Black Student Union created, included, but was not limited to the following unarmed black men who were killed by police between date and date: Leroy Browning, Alton Sterling, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Christian Taylor, Walter Scott, Philando Castile and Michael Sabbie, among other victims. Their tragic deaths left an imprint on the hearts of so many, including students at Jasmine's school. Thus, students took action. Rhena points out how students at her school responded to the incidents, and protests that preceded the killings:

The football players at my school decided to kneel during the national anthem—and it caused a bunch of controversies. So we decided to give people a place to talk about it [by organizing a Town Hall Discussion]. And it took a lot of planning and talking to Administrators. But it went well, after. People were asking a bunch of questions. We gave people the option of answering anonymously, or like raising their hand. Most people answered anonymously like on flashcards and passed it down. And yeah, it went well.

High school students such as those on Rhena's school campus and beyond—other high schools, a few middle schools, and youth leagues—reportedly began sitting or kneeling during the playing of the National Anthem during school sporting events joining San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick in protest (Gibbs, 2017).

Starting in late August of 2016, Kaepernick made national headlines when he refused to stand during the playing of the Star Spangled Banner at Levi's Stadium before the 49ers' preseason game against the Packers. A month later he went on record saying, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color." He later added, "There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder" (Sandritter, 2016). The protests sparked controversy, as people were vehemently opposed to his decision to protest. Amid the uproar against Kaepernick, Rhena's statement reveals how the controversy in which he incited spurred discussion; people of all ages, and youth especially, were inspired to take a stand against injustice and to engage in conversation, dialogue, and social activism.

The Black Student Union rallied in support of leaders at the school and took it a step further by organizing a Town Hall Discussion. The event proved not only successful concerning attendance—student, faculty, and administration participation—and the honest, though heated dialogue that occurred, but in "[holding] Black students together," a student leader explained in an interview with a local reporter, nearby to the school. Black students felt affirmed and safe enough to address an issue that impacts them deeply because of their race. These findings show how the Black Student Union at Rhena's school bolster efforts to raise awareness of racism that black people experience in this country, and solidarity from the administration, which, in turn, allowed students to feel accepted and safe, yet, challenged.

The Black Student Union also serves as a hub for the black students and faculty at independent schools. It is a rare space for individuals to discuss trending topics with people whom they feel can relate to them. Rosa explains:

I'm one of the co-leaders with a senior boy, whose name is [Jason]. BSU is special because it's one of the few clubs, a lot of the faculty are actually a part of it, but they're not in charge of it. My school's, like, four percent black maybe. I think. So I know that there are possibly 25 people who can go to the meetings-- who checked the box. And I think we usually get about eight or nine people. Last year, we critiqued Beyoncé's "Lemonade."

Released on April 23, 2016, singer and songwriter, Beyoncé Knowles-Carter introduced her visual album, *Lemonade*, to the world. Her sixth studio album featured a series of videos that captured the attention of millions, including high school students throughout the country. Members of the Black Student Union Club at Rosa's school were no exception. They embraced the album that explores modern feminism, black female personhood, sexuality, and spirituality while critiquing it.

Negative experiences. Although the Black Student Union clubs imbue some students with a sense of belongingness, pride, and empowerment, practices and traditions sometimes inadvertently prevent all members from experiencing a sense of community and positive racial identity. For instance, Leonardo states:

I honestly don't think that the BSU is a good thing at my school. And the reason why I say that is because we tend to bring each other down more than uplift each other. And I feel like that is because, like, we've been taught to hate-- like, hate ourselves, basically.

Kimberly also expresses her views about the BSU on her school campus and her feelings about some members of her racial group. She explains:

I don't know if I have a space that I can go to because our Black Student Union goes to the seniors. So juniors through freshmen don't like the way our BSU is

[ran] by the people who are running it. They're not the best leaders. It's frustrating because it was run really, really well before them. For example, we have Clubs Fair, and so the black people stopped Clubs Fair to say they had a presentation. And in the middle of Clubs Fair in front of the whole school, [they] started doing all the traditional black dances, like the wobble, the whip, the Dougie, like all that kind of stuff. And it's like, "That is not all black culture is about." You know what I mean?

Kimberly's statement provides great insight into how she feels about the leaders of Black Student Union and notably, how they pursued the chance to communicate whom they are using music and dance. First, she states that the former group leaders did a better job leading BSU than the current organizers. Secondly, she makes the bold assertion that there are others who share her dissatisfaction for the leadership team. Thirdly, she reveals her critical thoughts and attitudes toward the seniors because of their behavior and utilization of hip-hop dances to express themselves, which has tarnished her perception of the group. While recounting the incident that occurred, she hones in on the fact that, "the whole school," was watching, which produced racial identity salience at a particular moment in time.

Kimberly is one of the few Black students in her grade, and she commented throughout the study that she often has to navigate the white spaces and conditions of her school to become successful. She explained:

No matter how hard I try, no matter how hard I work, I will never be looked at as equal in comparison to my white peers, and that is the harsh reality of being an African-American student, but it's something I know.

During the club fair and every single day she steps foot on her school's campus, she is acutely aware that being Black comes with judgments, stereotypes, and formidable obstacles. However, like her White counterparts, she shows judgment toward some Black

seniors who employ alternative skills and efforts to demarcate their existence. There's a complicated relationship Kimberly has with her peers who are Black and show different ways of conducting themselves and her peers who are white and display autonomous behavior in a school setting that has been traditionally and historically occupied by whites. The conundrum she faces is by no means a creation of the study participant, but a reflection of the inequalities of power and privilege that stem from American society.

Among the many extracurricular activities that study participants self-reported engaging in within their respective independent schools, the race-based affinity group, Black Student Union (BSU), provides students opportunities to interact with their Black peers as well as adult figures in a more intimate space. For some, BSU fosters an environment that helps them grow and develop, and hone leadership skills through facilitating cultural, social, and academic discussions and activities based on their perspectives as underrepresented, Black students. Others simply enjoy learning about Black culture and history and having fun within BSU while some students grapple with intragroup dynamics. On the other hand, the Black Student Union does not feel like home to some of the study participants, which shows how the group can vary context to context, a range of feelings for its participants. All of which demonstrate that BSUs are spaces where Black students develop positive or negative feelings about their racial identity and racial group.

The Black Student Union is an outlet for African American students attending private, independent schools, which can serve multiple purposes such as to offer a safe space for Black youth to coalesce, to explore their identities and to address social issues

that pertain to Blacks through the promotion of race-based discussions on campus. As the findings reveal, Black adolescents' experiences within the race-based group may vary but it is vital that these groups continue to exist for several reasons. First, the feelings associated with being one of the few Black students in a private, independent school setting such as isolation and exhaustion, in which race is a salient factor in how youth define themselves, warrants a particular action on account of independent schools to help youth who seek to gain acceptance into the school community such as to enhance students' inclusion experience. Simply put, student should feel that they belong.

Second, the different experiences and perspectives of the members of BSU create a unique opportunity for them to reflect upon both their private and public regard for other African Americans. When Black youth come together in the same room it can foster healthy, difficult conversations that challenge individuals to unpack their hidden biases toward one another, and to address any misconceptions that others may have about them, including thoughts about other aspects of their identity such as class and gender. Thirdly, the ideas and conversations that permeate in BSU meetings amongst Blacks may serve as springboard to larger whole school discussions that highlight the experience of students of color in the school as whole. Lastly, Black youth are not the only who participate in BSU. In fact, Black teachers and administrators also belong to the group, which leads me to my final point. The role of non-parental adults is vital in ensuring that race-based affinity groups are safe for students. Club advisors and mentors are needed within BSU to help youth process their experience and to encourage thoughtful and honest dialogue

about race that can lead to positive, healthy racial identity development for all students, especially those who have negative experiences with other Blacks in the group.

This section reveals that there are many factors that shape how the participants conceptualize their racial and ethnic identities, including mixed-raced status, skin color, and foreign national parent statuses. Similarly, factors such as class, individual characteristics, participants' length of time spent in the school or grade level, and different expectations youth have as to how their respective schools will deal with the issues impacting them. In this regard, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) dimensions *racial centrality*, *racial salience*, and *public and private regard*, helped elucidate participants' beliefs, understandings, and interpretations of what it means to be Black at an independent school. Taken together, I propose that researchers employ a new lens to explore Black adolescents' experiences that speak to the intraracial diversity that exists among youth who demarcate various racial-ethnic identities, and have multifarious experiences in schools.

The new model I propose is what I call the Black/African American Racial Tapestry, which is emblematic of the multiple identities and experiences that Blacks have in a given setting. The threads that inform Blacks' understandings, beliefs, and interpretations of their racial identity include: family makeup, racial-ethnic self-identification, Black history knowledge, and interpersonal relationships in a given setting. In the final chapter 5, I will present a summary of my key findings and expound how the Black/African American Racial Tapestry threads can contribute to further research that explores the

private, independent school experiences and racial identity development of Black/African American youth.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

It has been nearly thirteen years since I graduated from an independent high school, but the experience remains vivid in my mind. It was challenging to be a young Black girl in a majority white and affluent independent school for a plethora of reasons. For instance, I experienced loneliness and isolation during my freshman year. When I began to reflect on the difficult circumstances surrounding my high school experience during adolescence, and again, as a young adult in college, feelings of frustration and anger arose as I attended to those emotions. The endeavor I chose to unpack my experience was onerous, but it sharpened my perspective and bolstered many positive transformative effects in my life such as being able to support other individuals who were in similar situations. I continued to embark on a journey of healing and restoration throughout my early twenties, and I ultimately gained an appreciation for my private school experience that cemented my commitment and desire to grow as a person and to make a mark in the world. I am now eager to learn about the identity formation processes of Black students in independent schools. Therefore, I conducted a study of twelve participants whom attend ten different independent schools and have distinct experiences, using a bricolage of methodical approaches to inform my positional lens and grounded theory methods to analyze the data.

Findings from this study underscore the ways in which African American youth make meaning of their racial and ethnic group membership that is so central to their identity that may become increasingly cognizant of messages about Blacks (e.g. stereotypes and

prejudices) during adolescence, which can impact their sense of connectedness to the independent school environment. For instance, one of the poignant explanations participants expressed as to why they deemed it necessary to participate in the study was to demonstrate the salience of race in their lives. The participants embodied distinct identities such as mixed-race, immigrant backgrounds, and a common African American identity with diverse family backgrounds (e.g. family makeup, parents' backgrounds, traditions, rituals, and racial socialization practices) foregrounded in their experiences. For instance, one participant attuned himself to focusing specifically on issues that people face in his native country, Kenya, and discussed the notion of white supremacy and its' legacy that has left an imprint on civilians throughout African nations. Moreover, Black youth of this study reported that race is a compelling and pervasive topic to discuss and examine in their lives, especially in the independent schools that they attend.

The different independent schools that the participants attended are characterized by their mission and values, high expectations, extracurricular offerings, and highly qualified teachers, which shape the culture of the school. These characteristics are also reasons why Black families choose to send their children to independent schools. Moreover, the racial and ethnic diversity that make up each school are also of relevant importance. Many of the participants described their school as predominately white, reporting that there are few Black/African American students that comprise the student body population. Although I found the percentages of students of color for eight out of the ten schools there is also something to be said for identifying the percentages of Blacks in these schools. Information on those numbers was not posted on the school

websites so the participants' responses were presumably useful for this study, and allowed me to obtain a glimpse of what the numbers might possibly be. Additional research on this topic could include a close analysis of the recruitment strategies independent schools employ to attract and recruit adolescents of Black/African American descent coupled with an examination of their experiences once they are admitted. This study focused specifically on Black youth self-identification choices, and racial identity development trajectories.

The Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) Dimensions

MMRI Dimensions (Centrality, Salience, and Regard) elucidated participants' beliefs, understandings, and interpretations of what it means a part of their racial group. *Racial centrality* appeared through participants' beliefs about one's self-perception weighed with their different social identities that intersect. In this way, centrality offered a consideration for where race fell in each adolescent's core definition of himself or herself given the hierarchal ranking of the different social identities that intersect and therefore inform participants' identity. For example, many of the participants denoted their racial identity but I assumed they also held gender identities or religious identities as central to their self-concept in a given situation. *Racial salience*, another dimension of MMRI, emerged through the extent to which participants reported their understandings of situational factors (e.g. school and people) and contextual factors (e.g. class) that shape their proclivity to define themselves in terms of race at a particular moment in time. For example, participants expressed what it feels like to be one of few Blacks at predominately white independent schools. Lastly, racial regard (public & private) were

shown through participants interpretations of negative or positive experiences with others African Americans and negative or positive messages others held toward their racial group. For example, one participant expressed feelings of frustration toward Black students on her school campus whom she felt perpetuated negative stereotypes about their racial group (public) whereas several other participants referenced their racial pride and overall, positive self-awareness of their racial background, and commandership with other Blacks on campus (private).

Intraracial (within race) Diversity Among Blacks

Participants reported different racial and ethnic self-identifications, which support the notion that there is diversity among Blacks within independent schools and society in general. That is, several of the youth identified as African American, while other participants used the racial and ethnic categories—Black or mixed-race to describe their identities. Their responses were integral to answering how African-American high school students attending independent schools identify racially and ethnically. In understanding racial identity formation, participants' responses show that individualized consideration to racial and ethnic self-identification processes is vital to validate the subjective experiences of Black individuals. Studies have shown that Black youth have multifaceted, and distinct experiences as they define their racial and ethnic identity. However, few empirical research studies focus on heterogeneity among Black youth and explicate the various racial-ethnic self-identification choices among high school students.

African American/Black Racial Tapestry

I have developed a model called the “African American/Black Racial Tapestry,” to encapsulate each person's personal experience, and identity designation in which I define as the following:

The weaving of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities that weft thread, African descendants, and multi-ethnic Blacks, piecing together our intricate, and complex experiences in societies and institutions, to encompass multifaceted and multidimensional Black realities.

The different threads that shape Black adolescents’ understandings, beliefs, and interpretations of their racial identity include: family makeup, racial-ethnic self-identification, Black history knowledge, and interpersonal relationships in a given setting.

(1) Family makeup consists of the people that youth live with and where they come from, traditions espoused by members of their family and the historical origins of those practices, and the racial socialization messages conveyed by adults in the home. (2) Racial-ethnic self-identification refers to the racial, ethnic, and cultural categories an adolescent uses to describe their identity. (3) Black history knowledge is one’s general education and knowledge about the experiences of Blacks/African Americans in the U.S. and/or the world, particularly as it related to Black culture and customs, and African Americans experiences with oppression and discrimination. (4) Interpersonal relationships consist of youth strong or close connections or acquaintances with individuals in their environment that trigger the onset of race-related episodes (e.g. negative stereotypes or marginalization in the classroom (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. A Model of Black/African American Racial Tapestry and its' threads that inform Blacks' racial identity development in Independent Schools.

Black Adolescents' Attending Independent Schools

Black students who attend independent schools represent multiple ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds, a tapestry of identities and individualities. Therefore, they are not a monolithic group of people. In fact, there are remarkable differences between Black youth who were born in the U.S versus those born outside of this country. Most notably, Black individuals of African descent coming from places such as Kenya or second generation Blacks whose parents migrated to the U.S. from Ethiopia, for example, speak different languages and are accustomed to different values and customs than native-born African Americans. Therefore, it is common for some youth to denote an African identity as opposed to using the label, African American to express their backgrounds, which was the case for several of the participants in this study.

Similarly, youth who are multiracial or mixed race, meaning they have one parent who is African American and the other who is of a different race or ethnicity, are shown to have a bi-cultural identity, a unique lens for understanding the world around them. Another scenario that is central to this study and often less examined is the experiences of Black youth who are transracially adopted and have parents of a different race than their own. These distinct differences among Black young people are powerful and show the rich, cultural manifestations of each. Hence, further research is needed to expand the discussion of how Black youth in independent schools interpret their experiences based on these differences so that they are valued more in independent schools. It is important to remember that Blacks, irrespective of the various ethnic groups that comprise one's self-

concept, face challenges associated with race in American society and independent schools that are real and can have a lasting impact on their lives.

Diversity representation in independent schools. It would behoove independent schools also to identify or hire teachers and staff to guide and support students of color. These adults can also serve as club advisors to help students lead race based affinity groups, providing guidance and support to youth who wish to coalesce and discuss their experiences with race in society and school. A club advisor's role should be to maintain a safe space for students to explore their different backgrounds. Students need help in addressing the challenges they face within independent schools, including conflicts with peers and issues with fitting in, and adults can serve to assist their personal development journey. The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) dedicate ample resources (e.g. conferences, workshops, facilitative training, and climate surveys) to educators in independent schools to design and implement projects such as race-affinity groups and other affinity groups that affirm and support LGBTQ students and allies. Independent schools interested in implementing these groups should take advantage of such opportunities, and consult with leaders on separate school campuses who have them to learn about successful strategies for implementation or the do's and don'ts to launching affinity groups.

I suggest that schools allocate resources to also send students and faculty to participate in professional development such as to attend the NAIS' annual People of Color Conference (PoCC) and Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC) where they can meet people from across the country who are a part of independent school

communities and networks. The conference affords participants opportunities to hear from guest speakers and partake in workshops such as affinity groups, aimed at providing safe spaces for Black, Latino, White, Mixed-Race, and Transracially Adopted individuals, for example, to discuss their struggles. Although the conference focuses on people of color, White students and faculty allies may also attend to explore topics such as identity, privilege, and status as a way to be continually mindful of the ways schools may become better for all members through their individual leadership.

I have attended the conference in the past, once as a high school student, and three times as an adult. I can attest to the fact that PoCC has equipped me as a leader and person of color with the necessary skills to both provide self-care to myself and to create changes in the school where I work. For instance, I have attended workshops on how to successfully implement race-based affinity groups, and strategically launch the group, and I have also participated in race-based affinity group session with over 300 Blacks to address my needs. It takes tremendous zeal to advocate for changes that improve the climate of independent schools, and especially to start a BSU. Even when students are at the center and foci of discussion, there is sometimes resistance in the independent school communities. My advice to adults striving to implement new programs that support students of color and other marginalized groups of students is to keep pushing, and advocating for the needs of your students.

Implementing Race-Based Affinity Groups in Independent Schools

It is often the case that Black families entrust in independent schools to support their children academic and social development. The Black Student Union (BSU) represents a

conduit through which independent schools may fulfill the call. Although the mission and purpose of BSU clubs may vary, the group encourages and facilitates individuals social networks and interactions with other Black peers and adults, which help Black adolescents to maintain their Black racial identity in predominately white high school settings. That is, BSU reinforces messages about the importance of positive racial identity formation among Black students by helping youth to unpack how they fit in (or don't) with other groups of people on campus and within wider communities. BSU also promotes youth involvement in the school community.

Not all schools have BSU. Therefore, students in some independent schools may request that administration supports their efforts to create a designated space on campus where they can be amongst other Black people with whom they can relate. As previously noted, some Black students long to establish a relationship and cultural connection with individuals who look like them and share their life experiences in a smaller, tight-knit community so that they do not have to feel isolated and alone while in school. I recommend that independent schools, and high schools, in particular, aspire to meet the needs of each child where issues of race persist in encouraging one's discovery of self. For instance, schools can endorse race-based affinity groups that are open to all students on campus but meet the needs of students of color.

Future Research

The discovery of oneself is an integral part of the racial identity development of Black youth in these schools. More research that focuses on the independent schooling experiences and racial identity development of African American/Black youth of

different subgroups is needed to truly capture the subjective experiences of Black high schools students. These studies can include: studies on mixed-race youth and how they negotiate their identity, African immigrant youth and how their experiences are different or similar to African American adolescents, and transracially adopted youth and how they begin to develop a racial-ethnic identity in the context of the families to which they belong. Additional research might examine the experiences of upper class African American students versus low-income African American students. Finally, studies that highlight the experiences of Black girls and Black boys attending independent schools could also contribute to bodies of scholarly writing that aim to address the realities for Black youth in independent schools.

Final Thoughts

There are advantages and costs to attending independent schools. The independent high school context, where there are abundant resources and endless opportunities, is ripe with magnified moments and periods of exploration for students. Adolescents may begin to question their personalities, examine realities, and strive to achieve personal goals. During high school, a young person may contend with discovering answers to existential questions such as, "Who am I?" "What do I believe and why?" "What do I want to accomplish in life?" Therefore, it is common for some adolescents to construct their identity and develop a sense of self during this season. The findings from this study reveal that social interactions and multiple activity types, for example, promote the social growth of Black youth who attend independent schools. However, despite the benefits of attending these schools, some elite, independent schools pose challenges for Black youth.

As studies have shown, Black adolescents who possess a keen sense of embodied awareness of racial differences in society and schools, in general, are likely to consciously consider whether or not people think negatively or positively about their racial group in a given environment. The structure and culture of independent schools all influence the manner in which youth weigh their experience and work to form their identity. Keeping the pursuits of adolescents in mind, it can be taxing for Black school-aged students who deal with the overwhelming plight of searching for meaning in places where the behaviors of others make them feel perplexed and unsettled. Independent schools play a pivotal role in creating structures for Black youth to explore what it means to Black. Whether through the curriculum, programs, or simply exposure to understanding and caring adults and students, and especially people who look like them, students need to feel safe enough to unpack their experiences in the context of predominately white schools.

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Appendix A:
Table of Black Racial Identity Development Theories and Expanded Models

Authors	Date	Name	Model Type	Components	Description
William Cross	(1971)	Cross Nigrescence Model	Stage	1) Pre-encounter	1) Identifies with white culture, rejects or denies membership in Black culture
Parham and Helms (1981)	(1981)	Racial Identity Attitudes Scale	Stage	2) Encounter	2) Rejects previous identification with white culture, seeks identification with Black culture.
				3) Immersion-Emmersion	3) Completely identifies with Black culture and denigrates with culture.
				4) Internalization	4) Internalizes Black culture, transcends racism.
				5) Internalization-Commitment	5) Internalizes Black culture, fights general cultural components.
Vandiver at al.	(2000)	Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS)	Typology	1. Pre-encounter: A) Pre-encounter assimilation B) Pre-encounter mis-education C) Pre-encounter self-hatred 3. Immersion/Emmersion A) pro-Black B) anti-White 4. Internalization: A) Black Nationalism B) Multi-cultural Inclusive	A) Maintains a strong orientation toward being an American B) Internalizes negative stereotypes about being Black C) Holds extremely negative views about African-Americans A) Celebrates everything Black as good B) Views everything white as evil A) Adheres to a Afrocentric (pro-Black) perspective B) Embraces a Black identity while acknowledging the cultures of non-Black persons
Sellers, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous	(1998)	Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)	Typology	1. Racial Salience 2. Racial Centrality	1) Defines oneself in terms of race at a particular moment or in a particular situation 2) Defines himself or herself with regard to race
Scottham, Sellers & Nguyen	(2008)	Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity- Teen Version (consisting of different items on test, but same theoretical framework)		3. Race Regard: A) Public Regard B) Private Regard 4. Racial Ideology: A) Assimilist B) Oppressed Minority C) Nationalist D) Humanist	A) Feels positively about his or her race B) Feels that others view African Americans positively or negatively A) Acknowledges his or her status as being an American and attempts to enter into the mainstream B) Seeks as link between the oppression that African-Americans face and that of other minority groups\ C) Views the African-American experience as being different from that of any other group D) Views everyone as belonging to the same race—the human race

Appendix B: Recruitment Announcement

Black Private High School Students Needed for San Jose State University Study!

Description:

- I am currently engaged in research about how Black youth attending independent schools self-identify racially as well as how they perceive develop racial identity in high school. I invite you to share your opinions and experiences about these topics by allowing me to interview you. Your responses are anonymous.

Participant Criteria:

- A student an independent (private) school.
- Self-identify as Black/ African-American.
- For more information, email Angela Birts (birtsar@gmail.com).

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

School Connectedness

1. To what degree do you feel you are a member of your school community?
 - a. Describe some of the activities your involved with.
 - b. Describe something you look forward to at school.
 - c. Describe a person that you feel most connected with at school.

Racial Centrality

2. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?
3. Describe your family, the people you live with?
4. What are some traditions and routines that your family value?
 - a. Where do these practices come from?
 - b. How do these practices relate to your culture?
 - c. Describe the historical context behind these practices
5. To what extent do conversations about race occur in your life?
 - a. Where do they occur?
 - b. Where do they occur most?
 - c. How often do you discuss race or racial-related issues in your day-to-day life?
 - d. How often do you seek information on historical content surrounding your race? Or, people of your race?
 - e. How often is information on historical content surrounding your race presented to you and in what context does this occur?
 - f. How has this information impacted your racial identity?
 - g. To what extent do you engage with social media?
 - i. What social media applications do you interact with?
 - ii. Do you engage in race-related content or discussions with your classmates on social media?

- iii. If so, to what extent do these conversations resurface while you're at school?

Racial Salience

6. Where in your school do you feel comfortable discussing race?
7. What are some common reactions that come up when you're discussing race with peers? Adults? Classroom setting?
8. To what degree do your behaviors and mannerisms change in school compared to when you're at home and with family?
 - a. Why do you think the change occurs?
9. How do you navigate the culture of your school to gain academic success and further develop your racial identity?
10. What changes would you like to see in your school community to help develop the racial identities of African Americans and other student of color?
11. What changes would you like to see in your school community to help African American and students of color to feel as valued members of the school community?

Appendix D:
Participants' Reflections Involving the Study of African American Students
Attending Independent Schools

Name (Descriptor)	Gender	Grade	School	Why did you make the decision to be a part of my dissertation study, and to allow me to interview you?	What changes would you like to see in your school community to help develop the racial identities of African-American students?
Ari "Politician"	M	9	Riverside Prep	"I guess being asked my opinion is something that I really value because I always like to-- in class, I share a lot."	I feel like [Riverside] does a pretty good job at that already, because, as I said earlier, we have the espacios, which tries to-- it's a monthly discussion on other cultures. And so, I think doing something like an espacio is a good way to educate everybody about how different other cultures are, but at the same time, how similar they are.
Nadia "Storyteller"	F	9	Lighthouse School	"I've been trying to share my voice for years. I act like I'm so old, like years, but literally like three years, like, I really wanted to, you know, say what I stand for, what I believe in. At my old school, I was getting punished for it. And I was like this isn't right. Like I still, you know, have something to say and, you know, my [new school] has been really good about it, 'cause they've been encouraging me, but for [my former school] they were just taking it as disrespectful, and stuff. And I'm like how am I gonna get my word out where it's not perceived disrespectful in their eyes? I feel I've been waiting for something, for someone, or someone so I can share my story, because, I mean, I have so much more to my story, but for just this particular element of it is really big, and I really	"I don't really know my school that well, 'cause, you know, I've only been here since August, since the end of August. And so I don't really know it, per se, that well to know what they're to do for, like, Black History Month, you know, 'cause I haven't gotten there yet, to that point."

				wanted to share it, because I felt like it's important. I feel like the rest of the world needs to care."	
Jasmine "Realist"	F	11	Parks School	"Talking about personal experiences is the way that people related the most. If you share your experiences, like, you just kinda give more than just, "Oh, there's this percentage of black students. We need more." I think people really don't understand until you give them an experience that actually happened to you."	"I want more peers who are black, but I think starting with faculty uhm.. or not starting but, like, having more faculty... . So, like, even the classrooms, like, in my Bio class and my math class, I'm the only black student. And then in my other classes it's-- well, I think it's because, like, yeah. In my other classes there's, like, three black students."
Leonardo "Motivated"	M	11	Franklin College Preparatory School	Unspecified	Unspecified
Jennifer "Diversity Leader"	F	12	Riverside Prep:	"I just think... it-- well, I thought it was a cool project, because it's like no one really... like, people ask me about, especially students that come and shadow on the campus, what it's like to be a student of color on that campus. And it's like, "Okay, it's a quick answer: I'm fine." But I don't really have time to go into depth about what it means to be a person of color on a predominantly white campus. And I feel like, if other people heard what the experience is, it could really open people's eyes. And I feel like, if other people heard what the experience is, it could really open people's eyes."	"I feel like the school is already trying to do that, by having assemblies when it comes to Black History Month, and just... any other cultural, just bringing awareness to that culture and expressing it to the school. Because before, we didn't have Pacific Islander Awareness Month, and we just started that. So I feel like, if the school's just aware of the culture that people are coming from, it may bring insight into why a person's a certain way, or why they act a certain way around certain people."
Dennis "Versatile"	M	9	Sutton High School	"Well, for this, I kind of wanted it for community service, but also to talk to someone about being African-American one-on-one."	"Maybe just African-Americans-- maybe us just kind of being known, I guess, kind of not just like other kids: oh, less white kids as presidents or student council stuff. It's kind of like that, kind of just get known, really."
Kimberly "Activist"	F	10	Evers School	"I think that it's very important. I think that the experiences that black students have are often not heard. And if they are heard,	"I think that there needs to be more, there need <laughs> to be more black students for them to feel like they have a

				<p>there's nothing done about them. So I think that this really brings to light the issue. And I think if people understand what students are saying they go through... I think it's very easy for people to dismiss, "Oh, that doesn't really happen." But I think if you hear multiple students and multiple people saying, "This is what happens. This is my experience. This is how I feel," you know, what are they going to do to deny that? And then because it's a real issue that multiple black students are facing, I feel like that might be something where people are like, "Okay. What can I do to change it?" And they might actually try to do something about it. And, like, personally, when I've had problems at my school and I've gone to talk to someone, they've tried to do their best to handle it. And I really commend my school for that. I think that that's great. I think, I mean, I'm sure not all schools are like that or they're not all the same, but I think that if they're realizing that something is happening, they're going to do something about it to fix it. And I think that that's really important."</p>	<p>group of people they belong to. The Asian kids-- we have the AAA group. They are huge. Okay. Like, my school says they're like 50 percent students of color. Like, 40 percent of that is, like, if you break it down, like, 40 percent is, like, Asian, and then the 10 percent is like other, you know. And so-- or like black and Hispanic, whatnot. And so we don't make up a large <large> percentage of the school."</p>
Caleb "Role model"	M	12	Lewis School	<p>"I saw no reason not to, to be honest, so I just-- I wasn't-- I'm pretty, I'd say, confident about this issue, so it's not something I worry about or something that I'd feel insecure talking about, so that makes it easy for me to accept these sort of things. Two years ago, that probably would've been a different story, but my new school definitely allowed that to take shape little bit in terms of my confidence, so yeah, I saw no reason not to and it's kind of like, I just do these things, especially being-- kind of filling the role that I have at my school in terms of the president of [affinity group for Black boys] and stuff, I kinda</p>	<p>"Probably kids who need to find-- would need to try and find an awareness of their privilege and-- don't wanna say "drop it," but throw it on the back burner when at school or when discussing. Privilege will come off in certain ways, not-- doesn't have to be racial privilege, but just can sometimes just be privilege of-- like when-- I'll come back to the trash throwing topic. The kids will just leave their trash around and my school gets pretty angry about that..."</p>

				have a responsibility to, so I just-- yeah, basically just don't see why not and kind of-- I want to as well as-- I feel like it's just a new experience that it would be a mistake to not-- to neglect and to not pursue."	
Rhena "Game changer"	F	12	Franklin College Preparatory School	"I mean if someone's studying this. I haven't heard about many studies around it, like why not help?"	"I think I've just been really focused on like curriculum changing. I feel like if everyone's more educated, but then you're helping people that you could possibly help with the mindsets that you could change. And if education doesn't help a certain person, then I don't think much can. So I'm just really about having a more diverse curriculum and diverse teachers teaching."
Johnny "Focused"	M	10	Sky Limit High School	"So I can, like, let people, like, let black students know, like, where you come from and like how the world is going. And stuff like that."	"I wanted to do a Black Student Union."
Tia "Overcomer"	F	11	Cathedral High School	"Because I know that there's a lot of African Americans that go to private high school and we all have different experiences. Like some of us can really hate it, some of us can really like it. Some of us, you know, choose to like go a different route and I think that for me I've been through a lot, and I mean like, I don't necessarily think that a lot of people have really been through what I've been through. A lot of people have but like not to an extent like I have. So I just wanted to open up and share and tell my story."	"I definitely would want a black student union.. definitely. Me and my friend talked.. I've been.. I told my mom last year at the beginning. I was like, "Mom, I wanna start a black student union." Like, I want to so bad because I think that this would like open up a lot of doors like for people that really don't really know much about African Americans. Like, we can like teach them the history, like it's a club at my school. Like you get club credit, it looks good on your college apps."
Rosa "Thoughtful"	F	11	The Metropolitan School	"I think I've definitely been kind of coming more in touch with my blackness and, like, and just my person of color in general. And my, when my, like, brother's grade left, they took, like, half of the student of color, and especially the black kids, with them. Like, their grade was just super beautiful, and the rest really	"I would just add more of us at this point. It's a very small school, but we're four percent. So I want to, like, crank it up to, like, 10 percent even, I think."

haven't been. And so I've kind of
been making up, I think, for the
space that they have left. And so I
took his spot at leading BSU.