“BECAUSE WE’RE UNIQUE”: THE LITERATE LIVES OF BLACK ADOLESCENT GIRLS

by

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ABSTRACT

KELLAN WASHINGTON STRONG. Because We're Unique: The Literate Lives of Black Adolescent Girls. (Under the direction of DR. ERIN MILLER and DR. TEHIA GLASS)

This qualitative study explores the literacy and language practices of Black adolescent girls as they read and make meaning of a critical text. The focus of this inquiry was to broadly examine how societal and situational factors influence the ways in which Black adolescent girls make sense of Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* (2017), a form of culturally responsive text. This study embraces the Black Girls' Literacy Framework first created by Muhammad and Haddix (2016) and two interconnected research questions from that framework drove this study: a*) how do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?* and b) *how do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?* Data in the form of two semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and written journal entries in response to the novel were used to examine each Black girl participants' representation of themselves and their identities, as well as the way they made meaning of a critical text. Critical discourse analysis was utilized to analyze data across a societal domain, as well as across institution and situation. This study contributes to the current body of literature by positioning Black girls at the center and bringing visibility to the ways in which their intersectionalities (raced, classed, and gendered identities) influence the ways in which they enact their literacy practice.

DEDICATION

This dissertation study is dedicated to the memory and the lives of my beloved grandparents, Isaac Harmon (1925-2016) and Wylie Antoinette Harmon (1930-2018), whose love and dedication to education despite all odds continue to inspire me to reach higher than I've ever reached before. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:4

First, I'd like to thank God, whose strength, wisdom, guidance, and grace have sustained me throughout my life and my doctoral studies and without whom none of this would be possible. I would like to thank my parents, Gerald and Barbara Washington, who raised me to be a reader, writer, and most of all, a critical thinker. Thank you for sowing a seed of literacy throughout my childhood with trips to libraries, museums, and requiring me to watch documentaries on PBS about my Black culture—it was all indeed worth it. Thank you for your words of encouragement, kindness, and love throughout my life.

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Thank you to the participants of this study for opening their lives and thoughts to me. It was a pleasure to learn from you and my gratitude to you is unending.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge my boys: my husband, Gregory, without whose support this would not have been possible, and my son, Jordan. I continue to find inspiration and joy in being your mother. I love you always…to infinity and beyond.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAVE	African American Vernacular English
BGL	Black girls' literacies
BGLF	Black Girls' Literacy Framework
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
ELA	English Language Arts
HBCU	Historically Black college or university
LGBTQIA	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual
MCE	Multicultural education
PWI	Predominantly White Institution
YA	Young adult

GLOSSARY

Black is a racial identifier to describe various population groups of African descent.

Black girlhood is "representations, memories, and lived experiences of being and becoming in a body marked as youthful, Black, and female" (Brown, 2009, p. x).

Culturally responsive texts are texts that are often written by Black authors who recognize and accurately depict the Black experience (Bishop, 1983). Themes that are common to these texts may include Black history and heritage, urban life, hip hop, depictions of racism, and racial awareness. The idea behind culturally responsive texts is that exposing students to them allows them to build upon the strengths that students bring from their home cultures, instead of ignoring these strengths or requiring students learn through approaches that conflict with their cultural values.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy is teaching that helps ethnically and linguistically diverse students develop and maintain cultural competence, academic success, and a critical consciousness. Culturally sustaining pedagogy also seeks to perpetuate and sustain "linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

Identity is a "social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and characteristic attributes" (Fearon, 1999, p. 2). Identities are situational and often shift from one context to another. Identities are constructed through literacy practices in which the participants of this study engage.

Language practices are what people do with language. This includes written, reading, and verbal behavior.

Literacy is a social practice, rather than a set of measured skills that are traditionally taught in schools. Literacy is embedded in institutions and a part of social, economic, and political processes (Mahiri, 2005).

Literacy practices are what people do with literacy. This includes constructions of literacy, discourse, and the cultural norms that influence how people make sense of literacy. Literacy practices are socially situated and only make sense when studied within the context of social and cultural practices in which they are a part of (Heath, 1983).

PREFACE

"I write for young girls of color, for girls who don't even exist yet, so that there is something there for them when they arrive. I can only change how they live, not how they think."

- Ntozake Shange, 1995

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

My literacy experiences are rooted in being raised on a quiet, tree-lined cul-de-sac in Nashville, Tennessee. I attended predominantly White schools with White teachers, where very little diversity was the norm, and the existence and societal contributions of individuals of color were rarely discussed in the classroom. A natural reader, I was quiet, shy, had few friends, and was quite unpopular socially with peers. Books like Francine Pascal's *Sweet Valley High* series offered me satisfaction and an escape from loneliness. I could channel my angst into the lives of Jessica and Elizabeth Wakefield who were blonde and popular, sun-tanned twins living the Southern California life that I always dreamed about. I admired and envied them because I was, at least figuratively, in the daily orbit of their social circle. In reality, however, I knew I would never meet nor socialize with people like them because they did not look like me.

My high school reading experiences fared no better. In English classes I read all of the British and American classic writers and poets—John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ogden Nash, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath. I read their words aloud, and at times, wrote them down in notebooks for later recitation. Something, however, was missing. These people did not look like me either. My English III teacher must have sensed my discontent, because the next semester we were required to read Richard Wright's *Black Boy.* Although I liked this book, it was not my experience as a middle-class Black girl. What if I had never experienced poverty first hand, or the overt experience of mid-20th century Southern segregation? These were only a few of the questions I had as we immediately went back to our readings of classical American and British literature.

As a college student at a predominantly Black college, I was exposed to the works of such writers as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Audre Lorde. Although I cherished the perspectives of these Black women writers, I longed for a more modern, younger perspective. Roommates loaned me books by Black writers with titles such as Omar Tyree's *Flyy Girl,* Eric Jerome Dickey's *Cheaters,* and E. Lynn Harris's *Invisible Life.* I found these books to be intensely readable, yet completely unrelatable as far as characterization and plot lines. Why did modern books by Black authors seem so focused on extolling the virtues of a Black woman finding and maintaining a romantic relationship? When Black female self-actualization was the goal of the narrative, why did it almost always end with the character's gaining (or losing) a man? The context of a romantic relationship seemed to be the one and only frame in which the Black female psyche was explored. In many of these books, it was almost always by a male author.

Several years later, as a young teacher in an urban middle school, I continued to question the dearth of critical narratives by and about Black girls and women. Disengaged from much of the prescribed, sanctioned reading at school, many of my Black girl students passed around paperback novels to read amongst themselves. Upon further examination, I noticed that these books bore titles such as *Thug Baby*, *Addicted* and *Zane's Sex Chronicles.* When I looked at the covers and peered into one of these books, it was rife with bad language, descriptions of criminal activity, and graphic sexual scenes. Yet they read them with fervor, borrowing them from one another and quietly discussing them during moments in which they believed themselves to be out of the earshot of the teacher. While they did not necessarily relate to the characters or see themselves in the protagonists, they often found themselves provoked and challenged by the characterizations, situations, and the language of

these books. It was clear that this form of literature was popular and held their interest, yet I still wondered about its instructional possibilities. Could there be critical discussions to be had about Black girlhood within the pages of these books? I felt that an investigation of critical narratives that provided a distinctive yet relatable view of Black girlhood for girls like me and for girls like my ELA students was necessary, particularly in today's contexts, to confront stereotypes and make relationships between the intersecting oppressions of race, sex, and class.

Background of the Study

Brutality against Black girls has a long history in the United States, beginning with the sanctioned system of slavery and its accompanying acts of violence against Black female bodies (Sealey-Ruiz, 2016). Various degrees of brutal treatment have been experienced by Black girls throughout history; furthermore, there have been heightened attacks on them in schools. In 2013, an 8-year-old Illinois girl with special needs was arrested for acting out at school (Kaplan, 2013). In 2018, a sixth grade girl in Louisiana was expelled from school because of her hair extensions (Jacobo, 2018). A particularly violent physical attack on a Black female student by a school official was caught on video by a student wielding a cell phone on October 26, 2015. In this video, the world witnessed a police officer viciously body slam a 16-year-old Black girl student and throw her across a classroom at a high school in Columbia, South Carolina. Although many condemned the attack via social media, it remains a fact that Black adolescent girls continue to face academic and social barriers that are connected to their gendered, raced, and classed identities (National Women's Law Center, 2014). In 2014, the United States Department of Education for Civil Rights released a report that highlighted how racial inequities and discrimination in schools disproportionately affect

Black girls in particular, who are suspended at three times the rate than girls of any race or ethnicity (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

As with Black boys, Black girls are being educated during a time of mass incarceration, zero tolerance policies, and harsh treatment by security/police officers and school personnel. The overrepresentation of Black girls when it comes to exclusionary school discipline is often based upon stereotypical perceptions of Black female behavior, with Black girls more likely to be punished for being "unladylike" (Morris, 2015, p. xi) than White girls, and are viewed by teachers as "loud, defiant, and precocious" (p. xi). When Black girls do speak up and out in school, they are often stereotyped as "loud," a perpetuation of the "Angry Black woman stereotype" (Morris, 2014). The stereotype of the "loud" Black female is rooted in the perception of Black girls being dangerous, angry, and hostile, which goes against the traditional standard of femininity and positions Black girls in a oppositional relationship to school spaces (Morris, 2014). These stereotypes, as well as the interlocking oppressions of race and class, directly affect Black girls' chances for academic success in school. If any of the challenges that face Black girls in schools are to be addressed, research frameworks must move beyond the notion that all youth of color who are in crisis are boys, and that the concerns of White girls are indistinguishable from those of girls of color (Crenshaw, Ocen, & Nanda, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

School spaces continue to serve as purveyors of sociocultural knowledge (Jacobs, 2016) and act as a socializing agent for youth in that they often communicate, replicate, and reproduce the norms of the dominant society (Giroux, 1983). Schools perpetuate a classed system of instruction by providing what King and O'Brien (2002) call a "less than"

curriculum, predicated on offering the basics for students of color, who are perceived as "'less than'" elite. These basics are schooled literacy, the dominant discourse of learning, which include "print bias, recitation as performance, essays and their structure, and the scanning of textbooks for short answers to questions" (King & O'Brien, 2002, p. 48). By the regulatory nature of these activities, the privileging of a particular kind of knowledge occurs, one in which the richness and nuance of the discourse practices of Black girl students have not been permitted to flourish in school spaces.

Notwithstanding local, state, and federal mandates for schools to promote 21st century literacy skills and more inclusive learning environments, schooled literacy and traditional models of education continue to prevail in schools. It is not surprising that schools tend to treat literacy as a "measurable skill" (Abdelhay, Asfaha, & Juffermans, 2014, p. 1), with standardized testing and poor and low literacy rates ideologically associated with Black students. Although literacy incorporates print-based activities of reading and writing, sociocultural constructions of literacy move beyond this. To place this in technical terms, as Abdelhay, Asfaha, and Juffermans (2014) wrote that "reading and writing are not simply cognitive skills of encoding and decoding textual messages, but rather, they are communicative and pragmatic processes, mutually shaped by the social orders in which they are conducted" (p. 2). It is not surprising that traditional models of education often assign deficit labels such as "at risk," "underperforming," and "struggling" (p. 45) to describe Black girls whose literacy practices are different from the dominant mode of discourse (King & O'Brien, 2002, p. 45). The use of these labels to describe students of color indicate a hierarchy of reading domains, one in which certain school sanctioned texts are deemed appropriate and serve as the standard by which all other forms of literature are classified and

privileged, including what counts as "reading" and who counts as a reader (Alvermann, 2001; Mahiri & Sablo, 1996).

With a monolithic approach to literacy in school that privileges canonical texts, schooled literacy, and traditional modes of reading, Black girls are often excluded and disengaged from literacy in their school spaces. For those not born into the dominant mode of discourse, one may experience major conflicts when attempting to acquire another discourse with another set of values (Delpit, 1992). While this conflict is not inevitable to all Black girls, it is understandable that many do reject schooled literacies, due to the sentiment that mainstream literate discourses have rejected them (Delpit, 1992). The choice to not learn what is expected of them in school rather than to learn the nuances of a discourse that denies them a sense of who they are is what occurs when Herbert Kohl (1994) wrote that:

> someone has to deal with the unavoidable challenge to her personal family loyalties, integrity, and identity…To agree to learn from a stranger who does not respect your integrity causes a major loss of self. The only alternative is to not learn and reject the stranger's world. (p. 15-16).

The rejection of Black girls from mainstream discourses, reading, and texts positions Black girls as marginalized readers, with schools as a site of exclusion. According to Moje, Young, Readence, and Moore (2000), marginalized readers are defined as:

> those who are not connected to literacy in classrooms and schools….those who are not engaged in the reading of writing done in school; who have language or cultural practices different from those valued in school; or who are outsiders to the dominant group because of their race, class, gender, or sexual orientation. (p. 405).

There is limited research that focuses on the ways in which a culturally diverse group of girls negotiate literary texts. The current landscape of mainstream research remains saturated with harmful and damaging pathologies toward Black girls. Examples of pathologies include mental health issues, obesity, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, as well as sexual victimization and violence (Brice, 2007). Scholar Evans-Winters (2005) writes that in educational and social science research, Black female adolescents are often left out or "whited" out (subsumed under White girls' experiences), "blacked out" (generalized within the Black male experience), or simply "pathologized" (p. 9). The same deficit centered labeling that devalues Black girls' literate lives fails also to represent accurate representations of their literacy practices. The proliferation of deficit based research reveals a "separate but equal" school system for Black girls, and primes them for introduction into the school to prison pipeline (Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012; Sealey-Ruiz, 2016). The incomplete knowledge of the literate lives of Black girls informs curriculum development and educational policy, both of which often fail to center Black girlhood.

Due to Black girls' educational experiences being continually impacted by the intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender status in American society, a critical, culturally sustaining framework is needed to understand how Black girls' social positioning negatively and positively influences their literacy experiences, while centering their unique voice and affirming their sense of personhood. According to Paris (2012), the term "culturally sustaining" is a better alternative than "culturally relevant" because *culturally sustaining* requires that pedagogies be more than responsive and relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people. *Culturally sustaining* requires that the pedagogies

taught in schools support youth of color in sustaining their cultural and linguistic competence while also allowing access to dominant cultural competence (Paris, 2012).

Therefore, it is crucial for educators to understand that deficit pedagogical approaches that continue to favor White, middle class linguistic and cultural norms still exist. Creating strategies to interrupt these narratives is important, along with making literacy learning relevant and responsive to the languages, literacies, and cultural practices of students across categories of difference (Paris, 2012). Literacy educators are in a position to investigate pedagogical injustices and misrepresentations of Black girls in schools and acknowledging the value of a literacy framework that speaks to their experiences more accurately. According to DeBlase (2003), "by exploring how groups of girls of different racial backgrounds participate in literacy events in a particular classroom, we may more fully understand the differences in how girls' transactions with literacy contribute to and help shape their social identities" (p. 280). Thus, a focus on the critical literacy experiences of students both in and out of the classroom can have a direct impact on their racial identity development and academic achievement (Boston & Baxley, 2007). This study examines how Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices outside of the classroom, specifically in response to a culturally responsive, critical text written by a Black female author.

Purpose of the Study

Literacy instruction must be urgent and purposeful in responding to the social climate of our times. Applying a Black Girls' Literacies Framework (BGLF) to the texts that are used in the classroom and to the methods in which we research Black girls can break the long history of imposed, institutional silences. To center the literacies of Black girls, a comprehensive literacy framework first developed by scholars Muhammad and Haddix

(2016) will be utilized, which consists of six components. Within this framework, Black girls' literacies are: a) multiple, b) tied to identities, c) historical, d) collaborative, e) intellectual, and f) political/critical (see Figure 1).

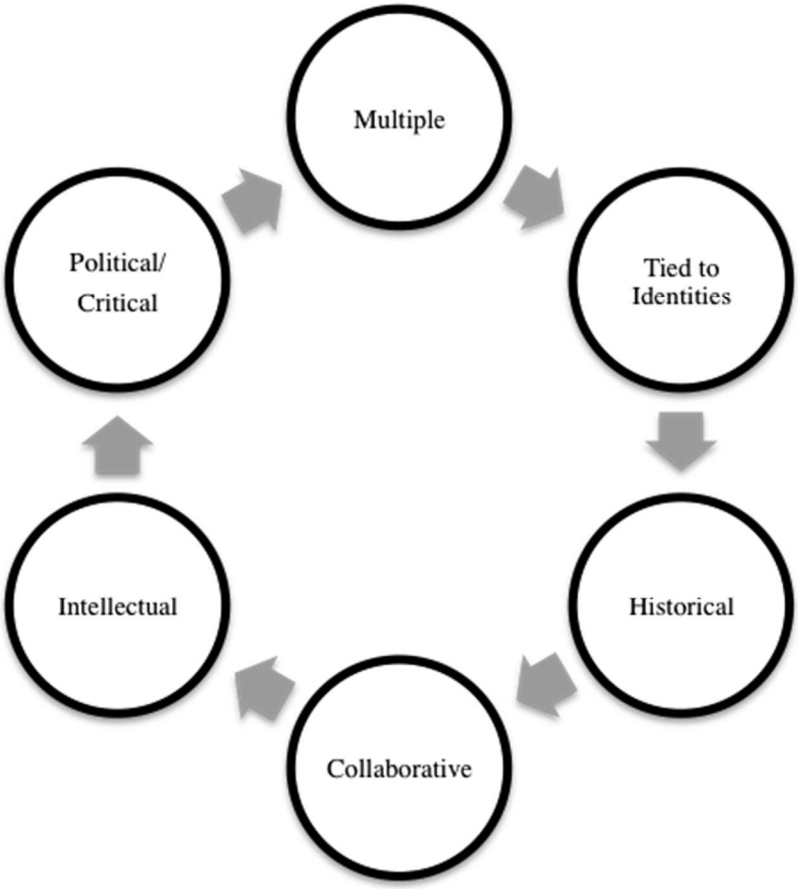

Figure 1. Black Girls' Literacies Framework

These literacies are related to one another, so that the Black girls in all of the literacy studies Muhammed and Haddix (2016) analyzed were never just engaged in one type of literacy at any given time.

Black girls' literacies (BGL) are distinctly tied to identity. As Black girls read and write about texts, they are always coming closer to knowledge of themselves. BGL is also historical in nature, as the researchers generally used historical frameworks to examine their

literacy as well as connect it to the earlier practices within the Black literacy tradition. BGL is also collaborative and inherently social, meaning that in all of the studies on BGL that were analyzed, the literacy enacted was not done so in isolation. Black girls' literacies are also intellectual and based in critical thinking and discussions on society. Black girls' literacies are political and critical, with ties to power and the need to counteract false narratives, as well as the need for social change (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016).

The use of Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) Black Girls' Literacy Framework (BGLF) is intended to respond to aspects of criticality, history, theory, and practice within culturally conscious forms of texts. The text for this study, Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* functions as a culturally conscious text in this new age of Black female political activism. In the novel, the main character, Starr Carter, performs as a cultural insider, utilizing the language and the highlighting the inner workings of Black urban community culture. The novel also features several characters in addition to the main character using AAVE (African American Vernacular English) in lieu of standard English, as well as various dialects, formal and informal registers. From a Black feminist standpoint, the novel subjectively engages in political ideology, institutional influences, conversations of the nature of Black girlhood, and hip-hop culture that frames so much of today's youth culture. These are the components of critical literacy that Black adolescent female participants engaged with in this study. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how Black adolescent girls enact literacy practices within Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) literacy framework in response to critical text, specifically one that is written from a culturally responsive standpoint.

Centering Black women's lived experiences and Black adolescent girls' responses to critical literacy texts will be the focus of this study. Thus, critical discourse analysis (CDA)

was the tool used to interpret the data. I used CDA because I acknowledge that Black adolescent girls draw from lived experiences and that power and positionality is embedded in their literacy practices. Much of CDA work deals in strategies of dominance and resistance in the social relationships of class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, language, religion, age, and nationality (van Dijk, 1995). CDA is particularly suited for data analysis because it deals with social groups and focuses on the relationships between their discourse and society. As members of a marginalized group, it is important to recognize that Black adolescent girls' literacy practices are not only influenced by their personal identities, but by external factors such as schools, the media, and other institutions of which they are a part.

The framing method of this study is intended to position Black adolescent girls at the center of their own literate lives. Deficit-focused research will be avoided, in order to create a safe space for Black adolescent girls to tell their own stories in their own voices and on their own terms. In addition, it is also my hope that this study will serve to legitimize Black girls' lives and literacy practices.

Research Questions

To understand the literacy practices of Black adolescent girls, two interconnected questions drove this study. Using Muhammad and Haddix (2016) Black Girls' Literacy Framework (BGLF), the research questions of this study are:

RQ1. How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?

RQ2. How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?

Significance of the Study

There are several reasons why this qualitative study is significant. First, this study illuminates the literacy practices of a marginalized population, specifically Black adolescent

girls, who have been historically underrepresented in scholarly and academic literature. Second, this study is significant because it will account for how the meaning making of newer critical literacy texts is influenced by society and the situations in which they are placed.

In addition, this qualitative study is significant because it addresses numerous gaps in the current academic literature. While there have been notable studies on Black girls and their responses to specific multicultural literature texts (Boston & Baxley, 2007; Sutherland, 2005), this study seeks to use a text outside of traditionally canonized works of Black female authors in light of recent political activism to reflect more contemporary and socially just topics that Black adolescent girls today are face.

This qualitative research study provides an opportunity for Black adolescent girls to tell their own stories on their own terms, in the hope of influencing the work of educational policymakers and researchers, school administrators, and classroom educators. Literacy and language in school spaces must continue to be culturally sustaining and extend beyond prescriptive reading lessons, standardized assessments, and traditional canons to provide opportunities for all students to begin to deconstruct racist, sexist, and classist narratives in favor of more authentic stories of Black girlhood.

Conceptual Frameworks

Black Feminist Thought

As Evans-Winters (2007) writes, "Black adolescent girls are raced, classed, and gendered subjects…affected by racist, sexist, and classist research paradigms and their resulting educational policies" (p. 167). Needless to say, these racist and sexist frameworks have affected the research on and about Black adolescent girls. In the lives of Black girls and

women, racism, sexism, and classism are three interdependent control systems that work simultaneously and interdependently to suppress black women into racialized identities. Patriarchy has historically subordinated Black women and deemed them powerless; concurrently, lower-income and working-class status has forced them to the margins of society. Their raced, classed, and gendered bodies have made them both invisible and hyper-surveillanced in educational policy and within the urban school system (Evans-Winters, 2007).

For hundreds of years, Price-Dennis (2016) writes that "Black women writers and thinkers such as Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Phillis Wheatley, and Anna Julia Cooper have taught Black women that what counts as being literate has always been tied to social, political, and economic goals" (p. 337). Across all of these contexts, Black girls continue to be identified as struggling, below grade level, and deficient (Price-Dennis, 2016). As a historically oppressed group, Black feminist theorist and scholar Patricia Hill Collins (2009) writes that Black women have long produced social thought designed to oppose these and other negative labels. According to Collins (2009), Black women's voices have always been to emphasize their lived experiences, requiring "collaborative leadership among those who participate in the diverse forms that Black women's communities now take" (p. 16). Because Black girls and women must constantly navigate the swiftly moving waters of intersecting oppressions, there is heightened need for them to draw upon their own "ways of knowing" and being in the world to anticipate how to respond in a variety of situations.

Scholar Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the term *intersectionality* to demonstrate how race, class, gender, sexual identity, marital status, citizenship status, and other social identities often serve as points of marginality (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw's 1991 *Stanford*

Law Review article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color" uses critical race theory to examine anti-racist and feminist discourse for women of color as victims of sexual violence, arguing that racism and sexism act as mutually interlocking systems of oppression, which result in disadvantages that affect Black women at three levels—structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality refers to the ways in which the systems of race, sex, and class oppression converge. Political intersectionality refers to how individuals who identify with multiple marginalized groups face challenges due to the conflicting agendas of political discourse. Finally, representational intersectionality is a political discourse that acknowledges the significance of other discourses in addition to the power relations that both challenge and strengthen them (Crenshaw, 1991).

The concept of intersectionality is important within the context of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrice Cullors, the women credited with founding #BlackLivesMatter, have invoked intersectionality as a way of naming their experiences as queer women of color and demanding that mainstream media and other outlets recognize and properly credit them for their contributions to founding the movement. This notion of erasure of Black women and queer Black people from liberation movements has historical roots in the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Liberation Movement (Dixson, 2018). Indeed, it is important to recognize the contributions and perspectives of Black women and queer Black people, because, as Dixson writes, "they not only helped shape movements for liberation but also represent and contribute to the diversity of the Black experience in the United States that is often portrayed as monolithic and homogenized" (Dixson, 2018, p. 234).

Black Girl Literacies

For this study, I draw upon Richardson's (2007) work on Black female literacy to inform my understandings of Black girls' literacy practices. Her work provides insight into the daily challenges that Black women and girls encounter, therefore, she defines BGL as "the development of skills and expressive vernacular arts and crafts that help females advance and protect themselves and their loved ones in society" (p. 329). Richardson also emphasizes the intersectionality that Black girls and women must navigate in our society. Therefore, BGL is not only the multiple ways of knowing that Black girls use to counter intersecting oppressions, but the ways in which Black girls read, write, speak, and act to make sense of their worlds. BGL is multimodal and fosters a critical stance across genres, platforms, audiences, and registers (Price-Dennis, 2016). Engaging in such practices with print texts position Black girls as active learners who consume and produce knowledge.

BGL has the potential to be transformative. It also assists in constructing a model for being more fully human in the world and working to make conditions for others more humane (Price-Dennis, 2016). BGLF makes visible how critical texts can contribute to more expansive literacy practices that represent the multiple, political/critical, historical, intellectual, collaborative, and identity-charged literacies that Black girls enact.

Summary

This qualitative study is designed to examine Black adolescent girls' responses within culturally responsive critical literacy texts. In doing so, this study explores the ways in which the novel chosen for the study, Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* (2017), function as critical literacy text in this new age of Black feminist political activism. Finally, this qualitative

study sheds light on the ways in which Black adolescent girls' positioning in society influence their literacy practices.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In 2018, scholar Tamara Butler called for a transdisciplinary analysis of Black girl research. She proposed the framework of Black Girl Cartography, which studies how and where Black girls are physically and socio-politically mapped in education research (2018). To engage in this work, we are required to be in explicit conversations about place, race, and gender. These conversations begin with charting the social geography surrounding Black girls, as well as the spaces where they are included and excluded. Black girl cartographers are researchers, scholars, and advocates who self-identify as Black girls and who have deep concern for "Black girls' health, lives, well-being, and ways of being" (p. 33). This commitment goes beyond the academy, it is an interest in sustaining, mapping, and protecting sites of learning and critical discourse where women and girls come together.

For Black girl cartographers such as myself, the space of curricula in search of how Black girls are represented, working with, and critiquing texts is the subject of this literature review. In light of damaging instructional practices in schools across the nation that define Black girls' literacy practices as deficient, there is a strong need for educators to understand the intersections of Black girls' histories, identities, and literacies. There must be a more complete vision of the identities that Black girls create for themselves, as well as the practices to best inform them. This literature review responds to these issues by providing a synthesis of research involving Black girls' literacies as they responded to various types of literature, as well as the negotiation and construction of selfhood within their responses. Several strands of knowledge inform this literature review that correspond to the theoretical frameworks of this study—Black feminist thought and Black Girls' Literacies proposed by

Muhammad and Haddix (2016). Table 1 (see below) highlights the two main theoretical frameworks for this study, as well as how they correspond to the literature review.

Table 1: *Main Theoretical Frameworks of the Study with Literature Review Correspondence*

Theoretical Perspective	Literature Review Focus
Black Feminist Thought (BFT)	Black women and girls' histories; miseducation; culturally sustaining pedagogy for Black girls; Black girls' identities
Black Girls' Literacies	Digital literacies; hip hop/urban literature; critical literacy

Black feminist thought, spearheaded by scholar Patricia Hill Collins, will provide a thorough account of the marginalization of Black adolescent girls, in addition to studies that examine how Black girls responded to and critiqued texts that embodied and countered stereotypical images. Due to the fact that race and gender oppression will forever be linked in the lives of Black women and girls, strands of critical race theory as articulated by scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, W.E. B. Dubois, Derrick Bell, and Carter G. Woodson are necessary to provide a background for the socio-structural and cultural significance of race, particularly in education as it relates to Black girls' "her-story" of miseducation in the current school system.

Black girls' literacies (BGL) is the second strand of this literature review, which provides a framework for BGL as well as the ways in which their literacy practices, identity, and social positioning affect the ways in which they read and make meaning of texts. This strand of the literature review also examines the implications of culturally sustaining

pedagogy for today's students, as well as hip hop culture's potential to provide a critical lens for students to read and make sense of video, print, and digital texts. It also considers the genre of urban fiction for classroom instruction, a literary genre featuring culturally responsive first-person perspectives of Black life that many Black adolescent girls read and can relate.

A History of Miseducation

In 1903, foremost Black historian, educator, writer, and scholar W. E. B. Dubois wrote in his classic book *The Souls of Black Folk* that "the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the colour-line" (p. 2). He specifically named race as a theoretical subject of inquiry when he identified a "double consciousness" experienced by Black Americans. According to DuBois, Black people "feel [his] two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (DuBois, 1903, p. 38). Double-consciousness is identified here as a "sensation" in which one which falls short of "true" self-consciousness (Pittman, 2016). It is a consciousness of one's self, as well as a part of a more complex feeling of competing thoughts, strivings, and ideals. It is not an occasional sensation, but a fixed and persistent form of consciousness ascribed to the Negro (DuBois, 1903). Double consciousness is also not benign: the condition is both imposed and fraught with psychic danger.

Carter G. Woodson, writing around the same time as DuBois, also gave legitimacy to race as a subject of scholarly inquiry, particularly as it relates to the education of Black citizens. "The same educational process," Woodson writes, "which inspires and stimulates the oppressor…depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by

making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples" (Woodson, 1916, p. 21). His book, *The Miseducation of the Negro* (1916), pointed to the role of education in structuring inequality and depersonalizing Black students.

Woodson and Du Bois both present salient arguments for considering race as a central lens for understanding inequity. Although class and gender based explanations account for some of the differences in school experiences and performance, as stand-alone variables they do not explain all of the educational achievement differences apparent between whites and students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Even when holding constant for class, middle-class Black students do not achieve at the same level as their white counterparts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Poor students of color are most likely to be placed at the lowest levels of the school's sorting system, and high rates of suspension, expulsion, and failure among Black students are higher than those of White students. The ever-present reality of race as a dividing factor in American life does not render class or gender insignificant, but challenges the Marxist critique that race matters, and, as David L. Smith (1993) writes, "blackness matters in more detailed ways" (p. 75).

Black women and girls have played an extraordinary part in education in the United States, as both teachers and students. Although Black women and men worked together to gain access to education to members of both genders and the fact that anti-literacy laws in many states made acquiring the ability to read and write an act punishable by violence, imprisonment, and death, Black women played an important role in educational efforts (Arao, 2016). Enslaved women who worked in White enslavers' houses were often privy to information and news they could share with other enslaved people. There are many accounts

of Black women who memorized letters and notes and newspapers found in masters' homes, which they then shared with literate enslaved people who could then make meaning of the messages and share them with the community (Arao, 2016). Following slavery, free Black women participated in education as both teachers and students, although those who pursued schooling often did not have to work outside of the home (Arao, 2016).

Black women and girls were also affected by school segregation. After the 1899 Cumming vs. School Board of Richmond County, Georgia upheld the *de jure* segregation of schools by race. It would be 55 years before the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision finally outlawed separate schooling for Black and White children and ended *de jure* segregation in many other facets of American life. Though the *Brown* decision had a positive impact on Black education, White resistance to school integration prevented its full implementation for twenty years (Arao, 2016). Resistance toward efforts for equity in education persist today in the form of opposition to affirmative action and support for the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and the subsequent Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), which fails to bring about equal educational outcomes for Black children with those of children from other racial groups (Center on Educational Policy, 2010).

There is much to be said about the status of Black girls and women in the American educational system. Despite unequal opportunities and the intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender, in almost every way, Black girls and women have been found to achieve more than academically than Black boys and men (Arao, 2016). Black girls earn higher grades and test scores than Black boys in primary and secondary schooling, and graduate at higher rates (Thomas & Jackson, 2007, p. 366). Black women also enter and graduate from

college at higher rates, for both undergraduate and graduate degrees (p. 367), and they are more widely represented in postsecondary education (p. 367).

The Failure of Multicultural Education

The framework that has been traditionally used to frame Black identity within the classroom has been multicultural education (MCE), which fails to capture the true essence of Black American life, whether real or imagined. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) have critiqued MCE as it has been traditionally implemented in classrooms as focusing more on a celebration of difference through a "food and festivals" approach (p. 61). This kind of demonstration focuses on examples of the artifacts of various cultures, such as the reading of folktales and literature of a particular culture and eating ethnic foods, rather than scholarly pursuit of the conceptions of social justice.

The superficial approach of MCE fits well with the goals of multiculturalism, a mixing of the proverbial "melting pot" of American culture (Dixson, 2018). The metaphor of the melting pot is synonymous with color-blind ideology, which states that people of racial and cultural difference must shed their ethnic identity in favor of a generic American one (Dixson, 2018). Despite the allure of an inclusive and unified American identity, the truth remains that people of cultural and racial difference are rarely celebrated, nor are they included into the White ideal of American-ness (Dixson, 2018). The erasure of Black personhood, in addition to deficit approaches to teaching and learning, characterize the languages, literacy, and cultural ways of being of students of color as deficiencies to be overcome in learning the dominant language and culture of schooling (Paris, 2012). The lack of criticality of MCE reflects a reluctance of teachers, educational policy makers, and school districts to engage in critical discourse on race, racism, and its intersecting oppressions

(Crenshaw, 1991; Dixson, 2018). Teachers and schools are thus miseducating students of color, particularly Black girls, about what it means to live in America, denying them critical possibilities of social change.

The Need for Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Critical race pedagogy can be defined as an analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly upon the perceptions, experiences, and counter-hegemonic practices of educators of color (Lynn, 2005). Critical race pedagogues are concerned with the following issues: the persistence of racial discrimination in schools and in the wider society, the struggle to maintain and develop their own cultural identities, and the ways in which class interacts with race to make the lives of the Black poor even more loathsome (Lynn, 2005). Critical race pedagogues are committed to understanding how to practice a liberatory pedagogy that involves the following: teaching children about the importance of African culture and heritage, dialogical engagement in the classroom, daily acts of self-affirmation, and resisting and challenging hegemony (Lynn, 2005).

Stemming from Derrick Bell's work, Ladson-Billings' (1995) ground breaking work on critical race theory developed the notion she refers to as "culturally relevant teaching"—which joins together basic aspects of critical pedagogy with important elements of culture-centered teaching. This has revolutionized the ways in which social justice teaching is conceptualized and practiced. In her work, Ladson-Billings called for "a culturally relevant pedagogy that would produce students who can achieve academically demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order" (1995, p. 474). Paris continues the work of Ladson-Billings by questioning the usefulness of the term "relevant," in that it does not go far enough to value linguistic sharing

across difference, nor does it explicitly support "linguistic and cultural dexterity and plurality, which is necessary for success and access in a demographically changing U.S" (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

Paris offers the term *cultural sustaining pedagogy* as an alternative to culturally relevant pedagogy, as it embodies the best in past and present research in pedagogy tradition. *Culturally sustaining*, he writes, "requires that pedagogies be more than responsive or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities, while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95).

Culturally sustaining instruction extends to Black girl students the opportunity to learn by connecting home, community, and school literacy practices. For example, a cultural modeling approach to teaching has been shown to motivate Black high school students to read book-length novels and engage in sophisticated levels of literary analysis (Alvermann, 2002). This approach, which builds on student's cultural knowledge and personal experience, has the potential to foster an intellectual community that sustains interest in reading and discussing texts critically (Alverman, 2002). Teachers need not be "insiders" of a particular culture or race to engage in cultural responsive instruction, but they can learn about that culture or race, respect its values, and view differences in Black adolescent girls' literacies as strengths, not deficits. Strong beliefs held by teachers in the literacy efficacy of Black students is not enough, nor are cultural examples and analogues embedded within prescribed curricula (Ladson-Billings, 2014). As Ladson-Billings (2014) writes, "students must be pushed to consider critical perspectives on policies and practices that may have direct impact on their lives and communities" (p.78).

The benefit of the link between classroom experiences and the personal lives of students of color justifies implementing culturally sustaining practices in literacy curricula. Not only do these practices aim to improve students' higher level thinking skills while incorporating their personal responses and experiences with literature, they bridge the gap between students of color and White, middle class culture which dominates much of the American K-12 educational landscape.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy also challenges educators to change the deficit perspectives of young Black women and view Black girl lives and literacies from a strength perspective. Given the sociohistorical context of Black women and girlhood and the Black Girls Literacy Framework (BGLF) upon which this study is based, traditional school sanctioned notions of literacy must advance. As a Black girl cartographer, my desire is for Black girls to reclaim spaces for themselves in order to define their excellence.

Black Feminist Thought

As a historically oppressed group, Black women have produced social thought to oppose their oppression. In 1893, Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, a teacher, public intellectual, and activist delivered a public address at the World's Congress of Representative Women on the progress of Black women since slavery. In her speech, she called for the social and educational advancement of Black women and girls, by speaking to the intersecting oppressions they faced:

> "We take our stand on the solidarity of humanity, the oneness of life, and the unnaturalness and injustice of all special favoritisms, whether of sex, race, country, or condition. If one link of the chain be broken, the chain is broken. A bridge is no

> stronger than its weakest part, and a cause is not worthier than its weakest element. Least of all can woman's cause afford to decry the weak. We want, then, as toilers for the universal triumph of justice and human rights, to go to our homes from this Congress, demanding an entrance not through a gateway for ourselves, our race, our sex, or our sect, but a grand highway for humanity." (Cooper, 1894).

Rather than wait for their rights and education to be granted from a higher legislative power, Black women crafted their own agenda and organized their own spaces for literacy. Synonymous with education, to be literate meant not only to read and write independently, but to engage in social and cultural literary practices (Harris, 1992). Thus, the early development of Black women's literacies was borne from a quest for improvement and the advancement of future generations. Because these male dominated contexts still often left Black women invisible, Richardson argues that Black women's misrepresentation and invisibility has been the cause of their use of literacy as a tool to counter these images and represent themselves (2002).

According to Patricia Hill Collins, Black women's oppression encompasses three distinct dimensions: a) the exploitation of Black women's labor, b) the denial of political rights and privileges to Black women, c) and controlling imagery that portrayed Black women as stereotypical mammies, matriarchs, welfare recipients, and jezebels (Collins, 2009). To survive, many Black women were forced into the poverty via low wage work, with jobs such as nannies, cooks, washers, and manual laborers. Millions of Black women were denied the opportunity to do intellectual work and were exploited for their labor. The political dimension of oppression denied Black women the same rights and privileges extended to White males, excluding Black women from public office, and equitable

treatment in legal matters, and relegated them to impoverished, segregated schools and neighborhoods. Many Black women in inner cities and rural areas left school before attaining literacy in order to work, a testament to continued efficiency of Black women's oppression (Collins, 2009).

Controlling images like the stereotypical mammy, matriarch, and sexually lascivious jezebel compose the ideological dimension of Black women's oppression. As part of the generalized ideology of domination, Patricia Hill Collins (2009) points out that these stereotypes take on a special meaning by "exploiting already existing symbols and creating new ones" (p. 69). Racist and sexist ideologies are endemic to the American social structure to such a large degree that they become hegemonic, and seen as "natural, normal, and inevitable" (p. 5). These images are not only designed to control Black women and girls, they are "designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be "part of everyday life" (Collins, 2009, p. 69).

Modern feminist scholars point out that the stereotypical mammy, matriarch, welfare recipient, and jezebel images have not evaporated with time, but rather, they have been transformed into the contemporary images of Black women in popular culture like radio, television, and magazines (Morgan, 1999). These images include the video vixen, the baby mama, welfare mother, the ghetto bitch, the "strong" Black woman, and the hoochie mama (Morgan, 1999). Popular culture and the media are rife with these refined stereotypical representations of Black women and girls. For Black adolescent girls, whose identity is shaped through images of themselves in media outlets such as televisions, movies, literature, and music, these images marginalize Black girls and stereotype them. Because educational institutions are politically driven and a site for reproducing controlling images, these spaces

often mirror controlling images of Black girls, labeling them as "loud, disruptive, and aggressive" (Collins, 2009, p. 85).

A Georgetown University study, entitled "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood," found that Black girls, particularly those age five to fourteen, are viewed by Whites as more sexually mature, independent, and knowing more about adult topics than White girls in their same peer group (Shapiro, 2017). This has several educational implications, the first being that Black girls experience "adultification," a racist misperception which brands them as sexually mature (i.e., the stereotypical jezebel) and does not endow them with the same childhood perceptions of innocence as White girls. Second, because adults see Black girls as less innocent and less in need of protection as White girls of the same age, this "adultification" of Black girls increases their culpability and helps to explain why Black girls in America are disciplined much more often and more severely than White girls in schools as well as the juvenile justice system (Shapiro, 2017).

Being both Black and female, Black girls are faced with oppressions that work with other oppressions to produce social injustice and marginalization (Collins, 2009). Their very citizenship of Black adolescent girls is inherently tied to their sociopolitical identity as marginalized group members. Black girl childhoods are not free from injustice and inequality as they are forced to navigate state institutions that are often hostile to their well-being (Brown, 2009). Scholar Pattillo-McCoy (2000) warned that

> "while lower-class neighborhoods are clearly hazardous to Black girls, neither do middle class neighborhoods afford Black girls security, as Black middle class youth in general live in neighborhoods with more poverty and worse schools than their White middle class peers." (p. 88).

Thus, the intersection of race, gender, age, sexuality, and class position Black girls and women in such a way that the public does not recognize their experience, strength, or knowledge (Brown, 2009).

There are several studies that examine the ways in which Black girls are represented in texts that counter dominant stereotypes. In a textual analysis of the beauty aesthetic in several Black young adult novels with female protagonists, Hinton-Johnson (2005) found positive themes for Black adolescent girls. In terms of body image, skin color, and hair, Hinton Johnson found that the characters in the stories she analyzed countered the racism around beauty and supported ideas of positive self-representation. Similarly, Brooks and McNair (2014) examined depictions of Black girls' hair in Black children's literature, using a content analysis of six picture books. The researchers found three central themes about hair in the texts: a) connections between Black hair and African history, b) the assertion that all hair is good, and c) the bonding that occurs between Black females as hair is being combed or styled.

Black Girls and the Construction of Selfhood

The ongoing challenge of Black girl cartographers is marking spaces where Black girls thrive, work creatively, care for one another, and negotiate. With classrooms functioning as the site of hegemonic ideologies, Black girls often seek out creative spaces as a form of resistance (Collins, 2009). Historically, these spaces were safe because they provided an opportunity for Black girls and women to discuss the issues that were of concern to them both individually and collectively. The action suggests that "not only does a self-defined, group-derived Black women's standpoint exist, but that its very presence has been essential to Black women's and girls' survival" (Collins, 2009, p. 98). Black girls listening and

speaking to one another is significant, particularly given their positioning in society and the importance of their voices (Collins, 2009).

Several scholars have explored the potential of designated creative spaces on Black girls' voices and self-expression. In a qualitative study that gathered its data from within an afterschool program, Wissman (2009) discussed the marginalization that Black girls are subjected to in school spaces. She argues that urban school spaces silences the literacy and language practices of Black girls by being sites of decontextualized curriculum and constant surveillance. Using a Black feminist framework, she found that Black girls used poetry and photography as forms of self-expression, and that they used oral and written language to resist the policies of silencing within their schools.

A study by Polleck (2010) examined the ways in which Black and Latina adolescent girls engage in literacy clubs within high schools. Polleck allowed her participants to choose the books that were read within the group (primarily books with female protagonists who were either dealing with family or peer relationship issues), resulting in participants engaging in group discussions about their personal and social lives (Polleck, 2010). The researcher also found that the participants situated themselves within the texts and discussed how they would handle similar situations. The researcher concluded that book clubs enhance girls' literacy, identity development, as well as their social and personal growth as individuals (Polleck, 2010).

Similarly, a qualitative study by Sutherland (2005) examined the literacy practices, identity, and social positioning of Black girls as they discussed Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in their high school English class. Sutherland found that Eurocentric standards of beauty, as well as the dominant society's perceptions about Black girls served as boundaries of their

identities as Black adolescent females. Sutherland maintained that texts with characters from the same racial and gender group are self-affirming for Black adolescent girls, and assist them with finding their voices within school spaces.

A great deal of modern Black feminist thought reflects on the efforts to find a collective, self-defined voice. Scholar Audre Lorde observed this paradox when she wrote that "Black women and girls have on the one hand always been visible, and so, on the other hand, been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism" (1984, p. 42). Lorde also points out that the visibility that makes Black women vulnerable (which accompanies being Black) is the source of Black women's greatest strength (Lorde, 1984). Resolving this contradiction takes considerable inner strength. In describing the development of her own identity, Pauli Murray remembers:

> "My own self-esteem was elusive and difficult to sustain. I was not entirely free from the prevalent idea that I must prove myself worthy of the rights that White individuals took for granted. This psychological conditioning along with fear had reduced my capacity for resistance to racial injustice." (as cited in Collins, 2009, p. 100; Murray, 1987).

Collins (2009) argues that Murray's quest was for constructed knowledge, a type of knowledge essential for resolving contradictions (Collins, 2009). To learn to speak in a unique voice, Black women must learn to jump outside of the frames that racist institutional systems provide and create their own frame. Because controlling images applied to Black women are so uniformly negative, they necessitate resistance. For Black women, Collins writes, "constructed knowledge of self emerges from the struggle to replace controlling

images with self-defined knowledge deemed personally important, usually knowledge essential to their own survival" (2009, p. 100).

Another subject of multiple studies of Black girls, identity, and their literacy over the past decade has dealt with Black girls' responses to colorism (Brooks, Brown, & Hampton, 2008; Brooks & McNair, 2014; Hinton-Johnson, 2005). Colorism (inter- or intra-racial discrimination based on one's skin color) is a part of a long Black literary tradition, in which authors have written about physical appearance such as hair and skin tone in children's literature.

Historically, colorism has involved lighter-skinned Blacks rejection of those who were darker skinned. In many instances, however, it has involved dark-skinned Blacks ostracizing lighter-skinned Blacks for not being "Black" enough (Fears, 1998). Colorism also includes attitudes and beliefs suggesting that Blacks are more attractive and more intelligent when their hair texture and facial features resemble more closely that of Whites rather than the typical "Afrotypic" look (Fears, 1998, p. 30). The Afrotypic look is generally characterized by dark skin, a broad nose, fuller lips, and kinky hair. The physical and psychological fixation surrounding the skin tones of Blacks have led many to discriminate against one another for decades, in an unmentionable coda which has been called "the last taboo" among Blacks (Fears, 1998, p. 30).

Research into colorism among Blacks has revealed that colorism influences aspects of human life: mate selection, life chances, perceived self-worth, and physical attractiveness (Fears, 1998). Research has also shown that Black women, rather than men, are most often negatively affected by colorism, with darker skinned women experiencing negative social effects while lighter skinned Black women have benefitted (Hughes & Hertel, 1990).

Brooks, Brown, and Hampton (2008) sought to understand how colorism is explored in Sharon Flake's *The Skin I'm In* (1998), seeking to understand how the novel portrayed colorism from the responses of ten Black adolescent girls who participated in an after school book club. While this study lacked depth into participants' responses beyond discussions of colorism, it offers insight into the unique transactions between Black females, their lives, and the texts that they read. The researchers found that the participants connected to the story and related to the protagonists feelings of self-image (Brooks, Brown, & Hampton, 2008). The researchers also found that a connection with the protagonist served as a gateway in which to explore their own ideas about self-representation (Brooks, Brown, & Hampton, 2008).

Boston and Baxley (2007) conducted a study that combined a textual analysis with the perspectives of Black adolescent girls as they examined multiple perspectives of race, identity, and gender construction in their English classes. They chose four texts with Black female protagonists: Jacqueline Woodson's *Hush* (2002) and *The Dear One* (1991), Sharon Flake's *The Skin I'm In* (1998), and Nikki Grimes' *Jazmin's Notebook* (1998). In a later study by the same researchers (2010), they examined the literacy experiences of eight Black middle grades girls as they participated in an after school mentoring program with the same texts. The researchers found that the Black girl participants chose books whose characters they could identify with and plots that they could relate to (Baxley & Boston, 2010). The researchers also concluded that when students are provided with more choices about literature that reflects the experiences they encounter, they are encouraged as lifelong readers (Baxley & Boston, 2010).

Black Girls' Literacies

In response to the stereotypical images of Black girls in popular culture, "Black girls have developed language and literacy practices to counter White supremacist images" (Richardson, 2002, p. 677). Drawing from Gee's theories of sociocultural literacy, I also propose that Black girls' literacies are bound in social processes, which locate individual action within social and cultural practices (Richardson, 2002). Multiple consciousness also plays a significant role in the development of Black female language and literacy practices, including, as Richardson (2002) writes, the "consciousness of her condition/ing, her position/ing in American society, and the condition/ing of her audiences" (p. 677). Thus, Black girls' literacies are "resistive in nature, designed to carve out free spaces in oppressive locations such as the classroom, the streets, and the workspace" (Richardson, 2002, p.678).

Black Girl's Literacies (BGL) are also the multiple ways of knowing that Black girls draw upon, not only to read, write, speak, and act in academic spaces, but that they rely on to make sense of the world (Price-Dennis, 2016). They embody a critical stance and, as Price-Dennis (2016) writes, "foster dexterity across genres, platforms, audiences and registers" (p. 340). To honor Black girls' multiple histories, identities, and literacies, the Black Girls Literacy Framework (BGLF) (Muhummad & Haddix, 2016) was created when conducting a literature review on BGL across the past several decades. Similar to Elaine Richardson's (2003) concepts of BGL, the Black Girls' Literacies Framework conceives Black girls' literacies as being: a) multiple, b) tied to identities, c) historical, d) collaborative, e) intellectual, and f) political/critical. When educators engage Black girls' learning to include these six areas, Black girls reach their highest potential in academic and personal achievement (Price-Dennis, Muhammad, Womack, McArthur, & Haddix, 2017). This

framework also expands the notion of school-sanctioned practices that define literacy as strictly reading and writing skills. In theory, all youth may benefit from the BGLF (Price-Dennis et al., 2017).

Reading is essentially a meaning-making process. Moje, Young, Readence, and Moore (2000) wrote that "critical literacy practices involve the interrogation of texts to uncover the ideologies operating in them; as well as the interrogation of the relationships among texts, readers, and the wider society in which they are embedded" (p. 403). To date, there have been two widely cited studies that examine how Black adolescent girls critically engage with gendered and race representations within the texts they read in their English classrooms. DeBlase (2003) investigated how two Black adolescent girls constructed social identities of gender and race through literacy experiences with text representing images of women in subservient ways, as well as texts with strong depictions of women. DeBlase found that the participants did not engage with the texts featuring the subservient women and easily identified themes of racism and sexism within the classroom discussion. She also observed that the teacher allowed few opportunities for the participants to think critically about the effects of the themes of racism and sexism in their lives outside of the classroom and in their communities (DeBlase, 2003).

Carter (2007) examined gendered and racial representations confronted by two Black adolescent girls in a British literature classroom. She looked at the influence of the Eurocentric curriculum on Black adolescent girls as they read William Shakespeare's "My Mistress' Eyes" and studied their perceptions of the images in the sonnet related to beauty. The participants found that representations of themselves within the images of the poem were absent and did not affirm the physical characteristics of Black girls. Carter also observed the

way the text was taught did not consider at all the self-worth of the participants, nor was the instruction accompanied by critical discussion on how to interpret the ideological hegemony present within the text (Carter, 2007).

Both of these studies concern themselves with critical literacy texts and speak to the need for Black girls to read and respond to literature that aids them in critique and the negotiation of self. Educators need to not only examine their curriculum for the consideration of the lives of Black girls, but to understand how they read critical literacy texts in the classroom. This means, according to Muhammad and Haddix (2016), "teachers frequently soliciting and hearing the perceptions of the text read while remaining attentive to how Black girls interpret various texts" (Muhammed & Haddix, 2016, p. 323).

Hip-hop and Urban Literature Criticism

When speaking of the cartography of Black girl spaces, urban fiction texts are where Black girls are the most prevalent and can thrive in the imaginations of writers and readers. Gibson (2010) wrote about Black adolescent girls and their responses to urban literature texts, signaling that Black girls have deep ties to urban geographies. Representations of Black adolescent girls in urban fiction allow them opportunities to connect with, negotiate, and challenge their portrayals (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). Common subjects within urban literature include crime, sexual activity, abortion, drug use, teen pregnancy, and incarceration (Gibson, 2010). Typically written in first person, these texts feature a Black female protagonist who overcomes difficulty in her life with some sort of pressing social issue. In the resolution of the novel, the protagonist generally experiences a sense of accomplishment and empowerment (Gibson, 2010).

In her study, Gibson discovered that many Black adolescent girls read urban literature because of the plots, as well as because the subjects of sex, relationships, and sensuality spark their curiosity (Gibson, 2010). The plots of these novels also served as an escape in their lives, and they are able to connect to the characters and problems in them. Gibson argues that the urban literature genre is in some way relatable to all Black girls, because it presents complex representations of Black femininity (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). Gibson concludes that these types of texts should be included in classrooms, and that their frank discussions of controversial subject matter only becomes an issue when teachers are not willing to learn about the complex lives of Black adolescent girls or engage them with culturally responsive pedagogy (Gibson, 2010).

While all Black adolescent girls may not necessarily relate to urban literature, the urban literature genre allows them to challenge Black girls' characterizations, situations, and language within them (Gibson, 2010). Similarly, a study by Morris (2007) looked at the emergence of urban fiction literature in Philadelphia, as well as the influence of hip hop culture on the reading choices of urban teenagers in an fiction book club at a public library. Morris found that there is a connection between the situations depicted in urban fiction literature and the ones that Black adolescents navigate every day (Morris, 2007). Morris concluded that the influence of urban literature texts on hip-hop culture leads to critical understandings of urban youth's lived experiences, as well as sharpening their critical literacies.

The Black feminist movement has been instrumental in attaining equality for Black women, but the current generation of Black girls continue to be confronted with societal challenges. These challenges include the saturation of negative, stereotypical images by the

mass media, social media, in schools, and popular culture. To address the issues confronting the current generation, feminism that is rooted in a hip-hop paradigm is a sensible choice. Hip-hop feminism is a culturally and generationally critical framework that focuses on contemporary systematic issues, such as colorism, misogyny, and sexual abuse that confront young Black girls (Richardson, 2007). Although hip-hop is laden with glorifications of sex, violence, materialism, and misogyny, it is these objectionable elements that make them valuable to feminism, as they provide the opportunity for youth to hone critical literacy skills (Gibson, 2010; Richardson, 2007).

In 2004, the controversial video "Tip Drill" by rapper Nelly became a catalyst for a movement against misogyny in hip-hop culture. Moya Bailey, a student in comparative women's studies and president of the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance at Atlanta's Spelman University, singled out the rapper because he was scheduled to participate in a bone marrow drive on campus. Disgusted by the sexually explicit lyrics and racy imagery of the music video, Bailey led a protest against Nelly's participation in the event. As a result of the protest, the drive was later cancelled due to overwhelming support by Spelman's students.

Major newspapers devoted stories to the Spelman protest, including the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *USA Today*, and the *Washington Post*. Several news programs such as CNN, Fox News, and NBC covered the event, and a PBS documentary was created. The university received hundreds of letters commending the students for taking a collective stand, revealing that the students had tapped into widespread frustration among Black women with the negative representations of them in rap music (Farrell, 2004). Moya Bailey later received her doctorate in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and would later coin the term *misogynoir*, a unique anti-Black racist misogyny that Black women experience.

A study by Richardson (2007) looked into the ways in which Black adolescent girls analyzed sexist representations of women in hip hop videos. The study focused on the ways in which Black girls demonstrated literacy when engaging with hip-hop culture. A similar study by the same researcher of Black girls' examinations of the meaning of Black womanhood in an after school setting revealed the nature of Black girls' constant identity negotiation through controlling discourses of Black female sexuality (Richardson, 2013). Likewise, a study by Love (2012) focused on Black adolescent girls' interpretations of pop culture and how it influenced their identities as Black girls. Love discovered that Black girls used hip-hop culture to construct their identities and make sense of their world (Love, 2012). Because hip hop is such a powerful force in shaping representations of popular culture and particularly Black girls, it is a useful source from which educators can glean critical print and digital texts that inform the ways in which Black girls negotiate their identities.

Black Girls' Digital and Multimodal Literacy

Black girl cartography also explores how Black girls engage in multimodal curricula. For culturally relevant instruction to occur, teaching must take place that takes into account students' everyday experiences between home and community and school literacy practices (Alvermann, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014). This requires teachers to utilize Black girls' funds of knowledge, which include their interests in the Internet, social media, print, and video texts. At the center of this realization is the need to develop their awareness of how all texts (print, visual, and oral) position them as readers and viewers within a certain social, cultural, and historical context (Alvermann, 2002). Because Black girls' literacies are rooted in the multiple ways of knowing that Black girls draw upon to read, write, speak, and act in

academic spaces, engaging in a critical stance with all print based or digital texts position Black girls as active learners who consume and produce their own knowledge.

By using digital tools to produce and question complex conceptions of Black girlhood, Black girls have created their own narratives to counter damaging and negative stereotypes. For a small group of Black girls participating in a Facebook street literature book club, Greene (2015) observed how digital platforms outside of school spaces give students a "a method of representing themselves through discussions of culturally relevant texts via digital technologies" (p. 284). She also found that the participants' self-reflections were shaped by the use of multiple modalities, the collective Black girl experience, perspectives around personal traumatic experiences, and social norms around literacy and language (Greene, 2015).

Conclusion

Similar to the current inquiry, it is not surprising that many of the studies in this review of literature are grounded in critical and Black feminist theories. Due to the qualitative nature of these studies, as well their examination of race, class, and gender, it is also not surprising that the findings of these studies are not easily captured in statistics, and lack the funding of large-scale grants (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). It is also worthy to mention that although there has been a large focus on adolescent literacies in academia in recent years, there is still a scarcity of research involving Black girls in specifically their response to critical texts. In their call for centering Black girl literacies, Muhammad and Haddix reimagine its potential for English education "where Black girls matter, all children would benefit from a curricular and pedagogical infrastructure that values humanity" (p. 329). In echoing Black feminist's

call for intersectional consideration, Muhummad and Haddix remind us that the work of Black girl cartographers is connected to the education and liberation of each and every child.

Using the six-part Black Girls' Literacy Framework, it is this same liberatory notion that I embrace as I answer the research questions of:

RQ1. How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?

RQ2. How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?

Table 2 (see below) highlights the theoretical frameworks for this study and the manner in which they correspond to the research questions of this study.

Table 2

Study Research Questions and Theoretical Framework Alignment

Research questions	Theoretical frameworks
How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?	Black girls' literacies Black feminist thought Black girls and the construction of selfhood
How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?	Black feminist thought Black girls' literacies Hip hop and urban literature criticism Black girls' digital and multimodal literacy

Although there have been studies that speak to the need for Black girls to respond to literature by Black women, none of the literature in those studies have been distinctly critical in nature, written in today's climate of social media influence and political change. These

studies also do not examine how critical literacy can become a means for the intellectual construction of self, particularly Black adolescent females.

These studies also call upon educators to examine their curriculum for ways in which to critically engage Black girls, as well as understand how they engage in literacy practices. This involves teachers soliciting the responses of Black girls in their classrooms, as well as embracing critical texts that reflect the politics of change. By embracing a recent critical text, *The Hate U Give* (2017), this study focuses on Black adolescent girls' critical analysis of themselves, as well as their responses to these very important texts.

As a Black girl doing the work of Black girl cartography, I am committed to continuing educational research that is rooted in critical reflexivity, which contributes to the long-standing history of activism of Black women. This study addresses current gaps in the academic literature on the literacy and language practices of Black adolescent girls, particularly as they respond to critical literacy works of Black women authors, written in the current climate of Black feminist discourse. This study also extends the ways in which Black adolescent girls negotiate Black and female identity through the reading of those texts, and documents the ways in which Black girls learn within their own sustaining, liberatory practice.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to address the gap in understanding on how Black adolescent girls enact literacy practices within Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) literacy framework in response to critical text, specifically one that is written by a Black woman author. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology of the research, the case study design and purpose of its data sources, the collection of the data, as well as the analytic procedures were used for this study. Chapter 3 also provides a description of the selection of the participants, the positionality of the researcher, as well the units of data analysis for this study. This chapter concludes with an overview of the strategies for reliability and a statement on the role of the researcher.

Research Questions

To understand the literacy practices of Black adolescent girls, two interconnected questions drove this study. Using Muhammad and Haddix Black Girls' Literacy Framework, the research questions of this study are:

RQ1. How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?

RQ2. How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?

A qualitative case study design was used in this study to understand the ways in which Black adolescent girls enact and respond to critical literacy texts, specifically one that is culturally aware. In this study, Black adolescent girls read and responded critically to the selected novel of the study, Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* (2017). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was the analytical tool used to interpret the data of this study. Table 3 (see below) is an overview of the major parts of the study and illustrates how the research questions of this study align to

its two theoretical frameworks, as well as the subsequent methodology, data collection, and analysis of the data.

Table 3

Research Questions, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology Alignment

Research question	Framework	Methodology	Data collection	Data analysis
How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?	Black girls' literacy Black feminist thought	Multiple case study	Interviews Journal entries Focus group	Critical discourse analysis
How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?	Black girls' literacy Black feminist thought			

Research Design

A qualitative research design was selected for this study for several reasons. Reflecting upon the work of Bogdan and Biklen (2007), "qualitative research has actual settings as the direct source of data because the content in which the events occur are important" (pp. 4-6). Therefore, a qualitative research design was selected to interpret how Black adolescent girls make meaning of their literacy, their identities, as well as the critical literacy texts in which they interact. Additionally, a qualitative research design was selected to draw upon the advocacy and participatory perspective (Creswell, 2009) and the long tradition of critical theory research. According to Creswell (2009), "an advocacy and participatory perspective focuses on the needs of marginalized populations and holds that research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political agenda" (p. 9). Historically, Black adolescent girls'

voices have been silenced and their stories told by mainstream society, which have long instituted the multiple oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism to subjugate Black girls and women.

Black Girl Adolescence in America: A Multiple Case Study

A common research strategy in psychology, sociology, political science, and social work, case studies arise out of the need to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2003). Case study methods tend to employ a variety of data sources, including direct observations, interviews, documents, artifacts, and other sources (Yin, 2003). The contextual conditions of this inquiry—Black adolescent girls and the ways in which they enact multimodal literacies to respond to a critical text—is highly pertinent to the phenomenon of this study. The cases of this study were a small group of 3-4 Black adolescent girl participants and their literacy practices as they interact with a critical text. Therefore, this qualitative inquiry constitutes a multiple case study design. The rationale behind selecting a multiple case study design is to be able to analyze the data within each participant's situation and compare it across the data from other participants as they utilized the multiplicity of their literacies to interpret a critical text. Due to my utilization of Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) framework of Black girls' literacies (BGL), the conditions under which this phenomenon is likely to be found was the focus of this research inquiry. As with any multiple case study, the results of each case will be studied to understand the similarities and differences between each case (Yin, 2003). I fully intend for this case study to become the vehicle for generalizing for new knowledge on Black girls' literacies. Because new findings on Black girl literacies were discovered at the conclusion of this study, the multiple case study design

provided the flexibility for making modifications to Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) existing Black Girls' Literacy Framework, which are discussed in Chapter 5.

Setting

Through purposive sampling, this study recruited Black adolescent girl participants within a 2100 level class during the fall semester at a large public predominantly White research university in the southern United States. The course, entitled "Adolescence in America," (pseudonym), is offered only during the fall semester through the liberal studies program at the university in order to familiarize students with selected topics in the humanities. The course is for incoming freshmen, and typically enrolls 30 to 60 students. The course met Mondays and Wednesdays, with additional smaller discussion groups that took place on Thursdays. The professor presided over the Monday and Wednesday sessions, and a graduate teaching assistant facilitated the Thursday groups. The intent of the course is to prepare students for work at the university level and to focus on student success/intentionality, inquiry/curiosity, and cultural awareness. The texts that were taught in the course were all written by women authors of color and include *The Bluest Eye* (1971) by Toni Morrison and *The House on Mango Street* (1984) by Sandra Cisneros. Optional texts included *PUSH* (1996) by Sapphire and the text that has been preselected for this study, Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* (2017).

The Selected Text of the Study

The selected critical texts for this study was Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* (2017). This text was selected for several reasons. First, it was written a Black woman author whose book represents a distinct, critical view on Black adolescent female life, as well as social issues that have been well-publicized within the public sphere: the police killings of unarmed

Black persons, gentrification and the collective dynamic of Black communities. Additionally, it contains a relatable Black adolescent girl character and an engaging plot and a relatable story line. The characters of the novel do not use standard English when speaking, but a Southern style of AAVE that is culturally familiar to Black girl readers. Reading level and content appropriateness was also a consideration in choosing this text, as well as the fact that this novel was published within the past year of the beginning of this inquiry. Thus, its application serves as timely within the lives of the participants.

The Hate U Give (2017) is inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement and tells the story of 16-year-old Starr, who must navigate between the mostly Black, poverty-stricken neighborhood she has grown up in and the White, upper-crust suburban prep school she attends. Her life is turned upside down when she is an eyewitness to a White police officer shooting of her best friend, Khalil. Her friend turns out to have been unarmed during the confrontation, and speculations arise that he may or may not have been a drug dealer. In the coming weeks during the investigation, Starr finds herself even more torn between the two very different worlds she inhabits, having to contend with speaking her truth and trying to stay alive herself.

There is a psychological realism in *The Hate U Give* that can be used strategically in classrooms to enhance literacy experiences for all students, specifically Black adolescent girls. Psychological realism places an emphasis on interior characterization and on the motives, circumstances, and internal action of the character (Boston & Baxley, 2007). Since this research study is driven by a critical lens, the goal of the selection of this book is to examine how Black adolescent girls draw upon their own racialized and gendered identities

to make meaning of this text and how the Black female protagonist's standpoint has in influencing their reading experience.

Criticality and Participants' Responses to *The Hate U Give* (2017)

The response to the selected text of the study is based firmly within Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reading, which places emphasis on the relationship between reader and text while constructing meaning. The term *transaction* implies that, during the reading process, the reader is not passive, but is actively engaged in making meaning of the text. Thus, the construction of meaning during the reading experience is the main characteristic when thinking of the connection between the reader and the text. This is significant because it challenges the tradition in literary theory of privileging text over reader (Garzon & Castaneda-Pena, 2015). A reader response approach to literature emphasizes the uniqueness of readers' backgrounds and encourages them to develop their own authentic responses to texts (Rosenblatt, 1978). Thus, the text "is subjected to multiple meanings that are made possible by the lived experiences, world views, morals, social codes, and personality traits of the reader" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 14).

For the Black adolescent female participants of this study, *The Hate U Give* (2017) was selected specifically for its criticality and its ability to 'talk' to the reader in a language that is culturally familiar to them. Although Starr, a Black adolescent girl, is the main character and her worldview is central to the novel, it is the task of the readers of this study to ultimately decide the authenticity of Starr's perspective and whether or not to apply it to their own distinct worldview. Although the novel represents a Black girl and her experience, however, the reader must assume a critical stance on this issue. Making connections to one's life is critical for any reader, but more specifically, as Black adolescent girls make

connections between themselves and this text, they will be able to do so by justify their connections, statements, or claims by finding textual support or when filling textual gaps.

Participants

The participants for this study were Black adolescent female college students in late adolescence, approximately 18 to 25 years of age, enrolled in the "Adolescence in America" course. The selected age group of this study is significant because it coincides with late adolescence, which, according to scholar Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, is known as *emerging adulthood*. Emerging adulthood period in a person's life from their late teens through their twenties and is distinct from adolescence and young adulthood. Emerging adulthood is distinguished by independence from social roles and normative expectations, and characterized by explorations of love, work, and worldviews. It is a time when, as Arnett writes, "many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, [and] when the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469).

A key feature of emerging adulthood, which aligns with the investigation of Black girls' literacy practices of this study, is personal exploration in the areas of love, work, and worldviews. Although adolescence has typically been associated with identity formation, research has shown that identity achievement has rarely been reached by the end of high school (Arnett, 2000). Identity development continues throughout the late teens and twenties, with young people trying out various life possibilities and gradually moving toward enduring decision making (Arnett, 2000). For emerging adults, explorations in love become more serious, work experiences are more focused on preparation for adult work roles, and changes

in worldviews are often a central part of cognitive development (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adults often enter college with the worldview they have inherited from experiences during their childhood and adolescence. College education often leads to exposure to a myriad of different worldviews, and in the course of this exposure college students often find themselves questioning the worldviews that they brought into their college experience. By the end of their college years, emerging adults have often committed themselves to a worldview that is vastly different from the one that they brought in, while remaining open to future modifications of it (Arnett, 2000).

For these participants, who were in their first semester in a college level course, the resulting conceptions of Black female identity outside of previously known institutions such as home and school were of particular interest to the researcher. These young women were also more likely to pursue novel and intense pursuits on their own and were freer from the constraints of parental monitoring. These qualities were also of intense interest to the researcher, who wanted to gain the access to unrestrained thoughts and literacy expressions of Black adolescent girls.

For this study, it was critical that the participants be willing to read, discuss, and critically write about the assigned text. Participants read and responded to the selected critical text, Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* (2017) in focus groups and in writing through both structured and unstructured journal prompts.

Recruitment of Participants

From prior class enrollment numbers, it was known previously to the researcher that freshman level students were typical of the makeup of the "Adolescence in America" class. Black adolescent girls in numbers greater than 10 had been enrolled in previous iterations of

the course taught by the professor, whose knowledge informed the researcher's decision to utilize this particular class for recruitment. Permission from the professor beforehand to recruit participants in person from the class was granted and the researcher prepared a quick presentation about the nature of the research and its requirements.

It was the researcher's ethical principle that the opportunity to join the study must be offered to all of the students in the class, regardless of race and gender. However, students were informed of the target population of the study, which were Black adolescent girls. Unfortunately, permission to recruit participants was not granted by the IRB until late in the fall semester, leaving no time to collect data. Therefore, data collection had to take place during the following spring semester when students returned from the holiday break. Recruitment occurred during the final day of the "Adolescence in America" class in December, when the researcher delivered a recruitment script which targeted the intended participants. Participants who fit the targeted demographic were invited to sign up for the study via a sign-up sheet, which asked for their name and contact information. After the holiday break, the researcher contacted all of the potential study participants from the sign-up sheet to inquire about their future availability for two in-person interviews dates, as well as the date of the focus group. Candidates who indicated availability for all three occurrences were given the time, date, and location of the first interview. The campus library served as the site of the focus group meeting, with the group discussion facilitated by the researcher. Additionally, the campus library was also the setting for participant interviews.

Participant Incentives

Participation in the study was voluntary, although participation was incentivized by the researcher. The incentive offered for the study included a $30 Amazon gift card upon successful completion of all of the study requirements.

Research Framework

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) focuses on how "language as a cultural tool mediates relationships of power and privilege in social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge" (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, & Hui, 2005, p. 367). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) also add that:

> Critical Discourse Analysis sees discourse—language use in speech and writing as a form of "social practice." Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discourse event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s), which frames it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions, and social structures, but it also shapes them. (p.55).

CDA focuses on how discourses are constructed as well as how they enact social relationships and social identities, with particular attention paid to patterns of power, such as dominance/oppression and liberation/justice (Gee, 2005). Therefore, language is not considered neutral because it is situated firmly within political spheres, with focuses on social, racial, gender, and religious influences. CDA is often used when working with the language practices of historically marginalized groups of people who tend to use discourse patterns that are different from the dominant society's linguistic standards (Rogers et. al., 2005).

By using CDA in this study, I am stating that power, ideologies, and positionalities are embedded within language and literacy practices. My use of CDA combines discursive theories of race, gender, and transactional acts of reading to guide my inquiry. CDA highlights the ways in which Black adolescent girls draw upon their gendered and racialized identities to construct responses both within the selected text as well as the outside world.

For this study, I utilized a multi-step CDA framework outlined by Mullet (2018), as shown in Table 5. The characteristics of this framework include: a) a problem-oriented focus, b) an emphasis on language, c) the view of power relations that are discursive, d) the belief that discourses are situated in social contexts, e) the idea that expressions of language are never neutral, and f) an analysis process that is systematic, interpretive, descriptive, and explanatory (Mullet, 2018).

This CDA framework outlines a set of objectives in broad terms, giving the researcher space to select methods that best fit the scope of the research problem. Additionally, the framework is defined in stages, which represent an ideal and the analyst may move back and forth between stages in a manner that is consistent with constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mullet, 2018).

The flexibility of the research methods, however, comes with some limitations. Because this framework relies solely on the analyst's interpretation of the data, the potential for the researcher to insert their own ideological agenda and not the one of the subjects' is increased. It is important to remember that reflexivity is a subjective process and to be used as a means of evaluating the outcomes of the analysis, with reflexive accounts richly and comprehensively described (Mullet, 2018).

Data Collection

A variety of three primary data sources informed this study: a) two (2) semi-structured individual interviews, b) one (1) semi-structured focus group interviews, and c) six (6) prompt-driven and free-write participant journal entries.

Data Collection Methods

Phase 1: Semi-structured Interview #1

In the first interview, the expectations for participation in the study in order to receive the incentive were explained to each participant in detail by the researcher, and each participant was asked to sign a form to give their consent to participate. Participants were also asked to select a pseudonym, which they would be referred to by the researcher as well as other participants for the duration of the study.

The initial interview was semi-structured and lasted for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The initial interview was given to each participant at the beginning of the study before any reading of the selected text began, in order to gain insight into current conceptions of the participant's racial and gendered identities. The initial interview also intended to serve as a means for the researcher to get to know the participants and their literacy practices, as well as to collect relevant demographic information and give the prompted journal entry for that week's data collection. The nature of this interview was semi-structured to allow me to ask specific questions about the participants, as well as to allow them to speak freely about their experiences if they so chose. The data from this interview was recorded via recording device and transcribed for later analysis, consistent with Stage 4 of the CDA Analytical Framework (Table 5).

Phase 2: Participant Journal Entries

Participants were asked to keep a reflective journal of their thoughts and impressions during the reading the text to better gain insight into how they responded to the selected text and utilized their multimodal literacies. The participant journal was intended to be auto-ethnographic in nature and to provide a private space for participants to express their thoughts on the novel. Journal writing sessions lasted for several minutes and occurred following the reading of the text at home.

Participant journals were composed of a combination of both prompt driven and free write style entries. The prompt driven entries were intended to focus on researcher generated inquires of Black and female identity while reading the text, as well as any critical responses to it. The free-written entries are intended to allow the participants to express their thoughts on the topic of their choice related to the reading, as well as their own literacy and personal experiences at home, in school, or in the community**.**

Before data collection began, participants were asked if they preferred to construct their individual journal entries via hand or electronically. In order to be faithful to the authentic voice of the participants, it was my belief that the writing method should be one that is most organic to the participant. Hand written responses were transcribed electronically after data collection for analysis, which corresponds to Stage 4 of CDA Analytical Framework (Table 5).

Phase 3: Semi-structured Focus Group

Focus group interviews are a collective research method that focuses on participants' attitudes, experiences, and beliefs (Madriz, 2000). This group interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to further engage in more relaxed conversations with

participants about their reading experiences, as well as capture their responses of the selected texts in a communal setting, the framework by which the research that informs this study posits that Black girls' literacies occur (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). Because people form their attitudes and beliefs relative to others, a group dynamic such as a focus group interview about the text provides the participants an opportunity to share collective testimonies (Madriz, 2000). The goal of the focus group was to offer participants the opportunity to engage with views that are different from their own, as well as to minimize the power that I assumed as a researcher.

The semi-structured nature of the focus group was to allow the researcher to facilitate the discussion with targeted questions, yet also allow the conversation to flow organically between participants and allow them to speak their own thoughts freely. Due to the busy schedules of beginning college students, the focus group occurred once, mid-way in the duration of the study, and lasted approximately 60-90 minutes.

To ensure accuracy in recording the participant's verbal responses during this interview, two audio recording devices were used with the permission of the participants. A second audio recorder served as a backup, in the event that the primary audio recorder malfunctioned. The researcher also transcribed the focus group recording, consistent with Stage 4 of CDA Analytical Framework (Table 5).

Phase 4: Semi-structured Interview #2

At the time of the second interview, the researcher had already begun to analyze the data from participants' journal entries and the focus group discussion, consistent with Stage 5 and Stage 6 of the CDA Analytical Framework (Table 5). To conclude data collection, the researcher conducted a second interview of participants, with the purpose of clarifying

journal and focus group responses. The nature of this interview was also semi-structured to allow me to ask specific questions for clarification, as well as to allow the participant to speak freely about their experiences if they so choose. The second interview was approximately 30 minutes, with responses recorded via audio recorder for later transcription, consistent with Stage 4 of the CDA Analytical Framework (Table 5). At the conclusion of this interview, the participants received their $30 Amazon gift card for successful completion of all of the study requirements.

Table 4 (see below) highlights the research questions and how they correspond to the data collection instruments utilized in this study.

Table 4

Correlation Between Research Questions and Study Data Collection Instruments

Research question	Data collection instruments
How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?	Participant journal entries Semi structured focus group Semi structured participant interviews
How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?	Semi structured participant interviews Participant journal entries Semi structured focus group

Data Analysis

The purpose of the data was to describe and interpret how the Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices during the reading of critical texts. It is critical to understand how the discourse employed by the participants in response to the selected text was

constructed, as well as how they interplay with the participants' raced and gendered identities. The unit of analysis in this study was the orders of discourse, which are key components of language that highlight social practices. These social practices expand on the relationship between text and the participant's social world (Gee, 1996). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) accounts for the micro and macro context in which the orders of discourse for this study are embedded. A microanalysis of the orders of discourse includes genre, discourse, and style across three domains—society, institution, and situation (Fairclough, 1995). The procedure for CDA data analysis for the orders of discourse of this study are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: *General Analytical Framework for CDA*

	Stage of analysis	Description	Example
1	Select the discourse	Select a discourse related to inequality in society.	Experiences of Black female characters in the chosen text along with connections and conceptions of identity.
2	Locate and prepare data sources	Select data sources (texts) and prepare them for analysis.	Journal responses, interviews.
3	Explore the background of each text	Examine the social and historical context and producers of the texts. Gee's building tasks (1999) are included at this stage.	Characteristics include but not limited to: genre, historical context, intended audience, writer characteristics.
4	Code texts and identify overarching themes	Identify the major themes and subthemes using choice of qualitative coding methods.	Thematic analysis, open inductive coding, axial or deductive coding.

5	Analyze the external relations in the texts	Examine social relations that control the production of the text.	Dominant social practices and norms (i.e., institutions such as schools).
6	Analyze the internal relations in the texts	Examine the language for indications of the aims of the texts (what it sets out to accomplish), representations (i.e., representations of social context, events, and actors), and the speaker's positionality.	Leading statements, structural organization and layout of the text, use of quoted material, high-frequency vocabulary, grammar, and voice.
7	Interpret the data	Interpret the meanings of the major themes, external relations, and internal relations identified in stages 4, 5, and 6.	Revisit the structural features and individual fragments, placing them into broader context and themes established in the earlier stages.

In Stage 1, discourse came directly from the participants, spoken in an interview or in the focus group to the researcher or written in journal responses. In Stage 2, these discourses were selected and prepared for analysis. If the participant chose to hand-write their journal responses, the researcher transcribed them into typed text. All of the data collected for this study (interviews, journal entries, and the focus group) was coded and prepared for analysis. Because the unit of analysis is usually a whole text, CDA often focuses on smaller units such as sections or paragraphs (Mullet, 2018). Data for this study was theoretically sampled, such as singling out a text, finding an indicator or key concepts, categorizing that concept, and collecting additional texts relevant to those concepts (Mullet, 2018).

In continuing Mullet's framework (2018), Stage 3 of my CDA procedure involved examining the social and historical context for the producers of the discourse. Factors considered here included characteristics of the genre, historical context, production context, intended audience, intended purpose of the text, as well the characteristics of the author of the text. Gee's (1999) building tasks were also implemented at this stage, a set of six categories of questioning of how language is used to construe meaning. Those six building tasks involve: *semiotic building* (the relevance and irrelevance of the sign systems of the situation), *world building* (the situated meaning of words and phrases that seem important in the situation), *activity building* (the main activity going on in the situation), *socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building* (the relationship between values, knowledge, and cultural beliefs), *political building* (the relevance of the social goods of status, power, gender, race, and class in the situation), and *connection building* (the kinds of connections within and across utterances in the same interaction).

For Stage 4, major themes and subthemes in the texts were identified through established qualitative coding methods, such as open coding, axial coding, and thematic analysis. A codebook was developed to standardize the analysis process, and the coding software Atlas.ti was used to assist in the process. The first level of analysis was initial coding and involved multiple readings of the data sources. The second level of analysis involved coding data for each order of discourse across domains. The third level of analysis involved looking across domains to see how each one "speaks" to one another, and developing themes along with a meaningful description and representative quotes from the text (Rogers, 2002; Mullet, 2018).

During Stage 5, external relations in the text were analyzed. This level of CDA, called interdiscursivity, is concerned with the identification of interactions among different discourses within specific texts or talks (Mullet, 2018). To locate discourses within texts, the researcher found fragments in the texts that identify ideological positions. Ideological positions often appear in a speaker's affiliation with his or her statements, such as "I am feminist," which would represent a speaker's commitment to the feminist ideology. These texts were compared with other texts in similar disciplines, and the similarities and differences in the discourses in each of those sources noted (Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002). Analytical attention was also given to social relations that control the production of the text, such as how it affects social practices and structures, and how those social practices in turn inform the arguments from the text.

During Stage 6, the texts were examined for internal relations, patterns, words, and linguistic features that represent power relations, social context, or speaker's positionalities. Headlines and leading statements were of interest here, as well as highlighted phrases or images, use of quoted material, high frequency words, grammar, and voice (Mullet, 2018). To facilitate interpretation and enhance credibility, linguistic features identified throughout this stage will be recorded in a tabled journal, along with its location and several lines of surrounding text to provide context. The analyst reflected on its meaning throughout the duration of the research process.

In the final stage, Stage 7, the meanings of the major themes, external relations, and internal relations identified in Stages 4, 5, and 6 were interpreted. During this stage, the analyst will revisit structural features and individual fragments and place them into a broader context along with the themes that were established in the earlier stages of analysis (Mullet,

2018). Throughout the entire process of CDA interpretation, the analyst recorded memos that described gaps, questions, and insights discovered during the analysis process, as well as reflections on personal perspectives that may have influenced the analysis.

Trustworthiness of Results

Qualitative data validity and reliability are important elements in qualitative research used to determine the quality and trustworthiness of data. While several definitions and criteria of trustworthiness exist, the best known are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Lincoln & Guba's notion of trustworthiness is based in a naturalistic inquiry approach, in which researchers pay careful attention to the quality of their qualitative research.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with truth value, as well as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. Two strategies used during this study to ensure the credibility of my findings were prolonged engagement with my participants and the triangulation of data sources. Prolonged engagement consists of sufficient time spent with my participants to ensure that I am listening to them, and that I am familiar with the setting and the context of their lives. Because I was interested in their conceptions of identity, I intended to get to know my participants through interviews, through writing, as well as frequent email and phone correspondence. This was not just to remind them of study obligations, but to build their trust to ensure rich data that represents them fairly and accurately.

In addition to prolonged engagement, a triangulation of data sources (individual interviews, a focus group, and written journals) were used for this study. This was to ensure

that comprehensive data was obtained, and that inadequacies found within a single source was minimized. Throughout the course of this study, I had the members of committee read my analyses and give feedback in order for me to view the data from an additional perspective.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a researcher, I provided "a thick description" of the participants and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether my findings are transferable to their own setting (i.e., the transferability judgment). To do this, I provide a rich account of descriptive data such as the setting, the sample, the sample size, sample strategy, demographic, socio-economic characteristics, interview procedure and topics, along with the procedures of collecting the data and the analysis process. This is to ensure that the research experience undertaken here becomes meaningful to an outside reader.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability involves in-depth methodological descriptions of the data, to allow the study to be repeated. Confirmability concerns the aspect of neutrality on the part of the researcher. The interpretation of data from this study will not be based on my own particular preferences, but is grounded firmly in the data. The focus of my interpretation must be embedded firmly in the process of analysis.

The strategy that I employed to maintain dependability and confirmability is an audit trail. With this study, I provided a complete set of notes on any and all decisions made during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials used, as well as the

findings and information about data management. This will allow an auditor to study the transparency of my research process.

Reflexivity and the Role of the Researcher

According to Hesse-Biber and Pitatelli (2012), the reflexivity and the role of the researcher are crucial in both critical discourse analysis research as well as feminist-centered research. This section of the study includes the researcher's acknowledgement of her own biases and interests, as Hesse-Biber and Pitatelli acknowledge that "a reflexive researcher accounts for the social conditions and the social location of the researcher when knowledge is produced" (2012, p. 245).

My social location in this qualitative study was informed by my personal experiences as a Black adolescent girl thirty years ago who now fully identifies as a Black woman. Even though I had had diverse learning and social experiences—public and private schools, predominantly Black, mostly White, and racially integrated environments—I still struggled deeply with knowing and understanding my identity as a young woman of color. I loved to read, yet did not see many positive representations of myself in the books that I read in a context that was familiar to me. Even when I began to make sense of my Black girl identity much later, I always wondered how, if any, difference it would have made in my formative years had I had more literacy experiences with books that "got" me.

My interest in Black adolescent girls stemmed from my work as an English Language Arts teacher in an urban middle school. For nine years, I encountered many girls with difficulties related to the pathologies that many girls experience in their adolescent years, many of which I experienced myself as a teenager. I began to ponder the ways in which literacy could help girls understand these issues. I firmly believed that if these girls had an

affirming and a healthy sense of self, they could protect themselves against harmful self-talk and negative pathologies.

I realize that Black girls come with all sorts of diverse experiences. I do not wish to push any particular type of representation in their reading of the selected text or in their writings, and my openness to their points of view is critical. My selection of this particular population and topic of study was to explore my own thoughts of selfhood and representation because such an exploration is an ongoing and continuous process.

Strengths of the Study

One of the strengths of this research study was the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to frame the study and interpret its resulting data. By employing a CDA approach to the data, I am able to conduct multiple levels of analysis at the situational, institutional, and societal level across three interacting discourses—genre, discourse, and style (Fairclough, 1989). CDA was the most appropriate analytical framework because it accounts for the connectedness between literacy and language practice and includes the added dimension of group collaboration. By using CDA, I am able to employ a lens of criticality to relationships of institutional power in the selected text. CDA was also the most suitable analytical tool because it accounts for the linguistic styles of historically marginalized groups, as well as captures the constant negotiation of identities that exist between personal and dominant languages (Rogers et al, 2005).

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the methodology and the methods of inquiry in this study. Chapter 3 also discussed the use of CDA to frame the analysis of the study results. This chapter also detailed the methods of data collection, the unit of analysis, data coding, as well

as the CDA process. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were employed to ensure trustworthiness of the data contained in this study. Lastly, reflexivity and the social location of the researcher provided a view into my positionality throughout this research process.

CHAPTER 4: DATA

The intention of this qualitative study is to address the gap in understanding on how Black adolescent girls practice literacy using Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) Black Girls' Literacy Framework (BGLF) in response to critical text, specifically a critical novel that is written by a Black woman author, Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* (2017). The purpose of this chapter is to provide Black adolescent girls' own narratives of their identities, which influenced their enactment of critical literacy practices during the reading of the novel. To understand how the discourse employed by the participants in response to the selected text is constructed, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used.

The unit of analysis in this study was the orders of discourse, which highlights the social practices of language. These social practices expand on the relationship between text and the participant's social world (Gee, 1996). CDA accounted for the micro context in which the orders of discourse for this study are embedded, which include genre, discourse, and style across three domains—society, institution, and situation (Fairclough, 1995). Interviews, a focus group, and journal entries were used to examine each Black girl participants' discourse on the way in which they represent themselves and their identities, as well as the way they made meaning of a critical text. To answer the first research question of how Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices, critical discourse analysis across a societal domain was utilized through a discussion and analysis of primary and secondary Discourses. To answer the second research question of how Black adolescent girls responded to a culturally responsive critical text, critical discourse analysis across institution and situation was used. Each section of critical discourse analysis will be followed by a summation of the themes discovered in the participants' discourse.

Table 6

Research Question and Data Source Correlation to Fairclough's CDA

Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis		
Research question	How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?	How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?
Fairclough's Orders of Discourse (genre, discourse, style)	Societal domain	Institutional and situational domain
Data sources	Participant journals Participant interview	Focus group interview Participant journals Participant interviews

How Critical Discourse Analysis was Utilized

According to Gee (1999), discourse analysis is based on "the details of speech (gaze and gesture and action) or writing that is deemed relevant in the situation and that are relevant to the arguments that the analyst is trying to make" (p. 88). Judgements of relevance (i.e., what goes into the transcript) were ultimately theoretical judgements, based on the theories of how language, situations, and interactions work in general and in the situation being analyzed (Gee, 1999). Therefore, the transcripts for this study were a theoretical entity, not outside the analysis, but part of it. Although the speech data from the participants were transcribed in a less detailed way, it is important to note that the validity of the analysis used worked together with all of the other elements of the analysis to make it trustworthy.

Asking questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to construe aspects of the situation give meaning to that language (Gee, 1999). Thus, the critical discourse analysis for this study involved asking questions about six building tasks: *semiotic building* (relevant sign systems), *world building* (the situated meaning of words and phrases

that seem important in the situation, *activity building* (the main activity going on in the situation), *socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building* (the relationship between values, knowledge, and cultural beliefs), *political building* (the relevance of the social goods of status, power, gender, race, and class in the situation), and *connection building* (the kinds of connections within and across utterances in the same interaction). Although the end result of this CDA is a set of themes, I maintain that there is data in the analysis support that theme.

CDA: Primary and Secondary Discourses in the Societal Domain

Fairclough's CDA draws upon Gee's well established definition of discourse. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2007, citing Gee, 2000), discourses are:

> socially recognized ways of using language (reading, writing, speaking, listening, gestures, and other semiotics (images, sounds, graphics, signs, and codes), as well as ways of thinking, believing, feeling, and interacting in relations to people, such that we can be identified and recognized as being a member of a socially meaningful role. (p. 54).

Gee states that primary Discourses are deeply rooted in one's family life and shaped by an individual's interactions in their early life. According to Gee (2000), a person is "initially socialized into their primary Discourse, which shapes each members' ways of speaking, acting, views, values, beliefs, and experiences, as well as their first social identity" (p. 7). The notion of "Big 'D' Discourse" ("Discourse" spelled with a capital D) is meant to capture the ways in which people enact and recognize socially and historically significant identities, or "kinds of people" through combinations of language, actions, and interactions. The Big D notion stresses how Discourse (language in use among people) is always a conversation

among historically formed Discourses—that is, a conversation among different socially and historically significant people or social groups. In order for humans to join a Discourse, they must understand the ideas within the Discourse. For this current study, Black adolescent girls' Discourses about their sense of self is rooted within their home and their community experiences which served as their primary Discourses.

Opposite to primary Discourses, secondary Discourses—also known as dominant discourses—are acquired within public spheres. Secondary Discourses are acquired through outside influences such as the media, religion, and school spaces. For the current study, media representations around the participants served as secondary Discourses. Because secondary Discourses are often tied to the presumption of power and have always been politically motivated, there is a need to conform to these conventions (Gee, 2000). Each participant's case to serves to illuminate the ways in which they navigated discourses of power within the society surrounding them, as well as in their personal lives. In this chapter, data compiled on each participant will be presented as a case, then analyzed and compared across the cases of other participants in order to maintain fidelity to the multiple case design of this study.

The Cases: Participant Data

Lily

Lily was an 18-year-old freshman college student who would best be described as pragmatic and a critical thinker. She attended a large arts magnet high school in her mid-sized hometown in the eastern part of the state, where her focus was choral music. Lily discussed her love of music several times during our interviews, confessing that she has been "singing her entire life" (interview, January 18). Despite her love for singing and

participation in a campus acapella group, Lily made it clear that she did not care to major in music, because she felt that there was "nothing she can really do with that" (interview, January 18) following graduation. Her current major is psychology, with a specific focus on child therapy. She loves to read YA-themed romance novels, as well as watch popular teen dramas such as *Riverdale* and *Jane the Virgin*. She confessed that she is quiet in social situations and does not leave her dorm room much, preferring to watch television privately, talk with her roommate, attend class, and search social media outlets such as Pinterest for outfits and clothing styles that interest her. Lily described herself as a loner, and, according to her journal entry: "I'm not the type of person to speak out about any issues that [I] feel passionate about. It's not that I'm scared to, but I just feel that there are enough opinions out there as it is" (journal entry, January 26). Although she will discuss her thoughts privately with close friends and family members, she admitted that talking in front of a group of people she doesn't know that well with a strong opinion is something that she generally avoids (interview, January 18).

Lily proudly described her race as African. She is the daughter of a Ghanaian mother and a Nigerian father who met in New York City in their twenties. She describes both of her parents' careers as "working class" and credits them with developing her spirit of perseverance and commitment to hard work. She also credits her upbringing in the Christian church with setting her on the right path early in life. When asked about major events that shaped her in her life, Lily spoke of moving from NYC to the mid-sized city in the eastern part of the state in the fourth grade where her family currently lives as a defining moment for her. "In New York, everyone was cool," she said. "Everyone was friends and no one really got bullied. But once I moved to [this state], it was weird being bullied" (interview, January

18). When asked about this experience, Lily recalled being teased mostly by Black students because of her darker skin tone, her accent, and her nationality, the oft-degrading title "African Booty Scratcher" being one of the worst that was assigned to her. Although Lily said that she no longer regards the past bullying as hurtful, she said that the experience made her distance herself from people and keep very few friends. The friends that she does have, she mentioned, are mostly White and Hispanic.

Lily's journal writing process revealed several instances in which her primary Discourse and her secondary Discourses were in major conflict. In a later interview, she revealed that she felt as if Black girls are seen in the media as a stereotype and not as they actually are. When asked about what some of those stereotypes were, Lily remarked that "online mostly…Black girls are seen as ghetto or loud or obnoxious" (interview, February 4). Although Lily disagreed that these images define her, she felt that they are bad for kids, who see these images and fail to question their accuracy. Despite Lily's worldviews being shaped by her family and the perceptions of her community, she spoke candidly of her own perception of Black girlhood, which were mostly situated around Eurocentric norms of beauty. She says that:

> "It was kind of hard growing up because you see all these white people on the internet and stuff like that and social media, so it's kinda like "Why can't I be like them?" So it's like Black girls weren't really…like we really didn't get that much light in the media. It was kinda weird growing up. Especially being a darker skin tone." (interview, January 18).

Lily later recalled in the second interview how badly she wanted to look like White girls at her North Carolina school and hating the color of her skin so deeply that she begged her

mother for a perm in the second grade (interview, February 4). Surprisingly, her mother obliged. Lily continued perming and chemically straightening her hair until the ninth grade, until she looked around her high school and realized that there were other Black girls with natural styles and curly hair. She said of this realization:

> "I'm like what, why don't I have curly hair? And so it wasn't until I stopped doing the perm and I was like: "yeah Mom, I'm not going to do these perms anymore." And then, like, I started seeing curls and I was like, "ooooh!" (interview, February 4)

Clearly, Lily came to an eventual appreciation of her darker skin tone, her nationality, and her natural hair. The profound nature of hair-related experiences begins at a very young age for Black girls and continues on into adult life (Brooks & McNair, 2014). Young girls, for example, often view media images that portray Eurocentric physical features, such as long and straight hair, as normative (Gordon, 2008). According to Ruth Nicole Brown (2009), society's dominant discourse on beauty privileges and normalizes Whiteness. This results in the constant erasure and invisibility of Black girls, which Lily, even as young as the second grade, felt that she needed to conform to in order to ensure visibility.

As stated earlier, Lily identifies her race as African. She admitted, however, that she does relate to the societal struggles of Black Americans, even though at times she doesn't (interview, February 4). She rebels against an idea of "typical" Blackness, saying that the things she likes are much different from the things that most Black teenagers like such as "rap music and Air Jordan sneakers" (interview, February 4). She points to a variety of identities that White teenagers have, such as "your preppy people and your chill White people" but laments the fact that there are not many roles for Black people to claim (interview, February 4). Although Lily claims a Black identity, she is constantly constrained

by its boundaries and its commonly dictated interests. Her frustration, for instance, with the idea that disinterest in stereotypically "Black" things such as rap music mark her as "White" created such a conflict within juggling identities that she admitted that she eventually gave up in high school when she "left the girl behind that acts like what I feel the world wants all Black girls to act like" (journal entry, January 20). For this reason, Lily wrote that she "relates more to Caucasian people now than the people [she] shares skin tones and heritage with" (journal entry, January 20).

Lily's words and journal entries position herself at the intersection of two conflicting ideologies. One ideology acknowledges the media and society's desire to denigrate Black girls and limit them to very narrowly defined behavioral roles and stereotypical interests, while the other gives Black girls control over the ways in which they are represented. Lily finds freedom in her ability to choose her own friends, her own hairstyle, and her own interests.

Of all three participants of the study, Lily was the one who talked and wrote most extensively about her thoughts and experiences with colorism, writing that although such discrimination based on skin tone should not exist in this day and age, it still does. She laments the fact that there are few darker-skinned women and girls to look up to in the media. In her frustration, she wrote: "besides Lupita Nyong'o, what other dark skinned celebrities are getting a lot of attention right now?" (journal entry, February 1). She also expressed reservation at the casting of Amandla Sternberg, a light-skinned Afro-Danish actress, as Starr Carter for the movie version of *The Hate U Give* despite the artistic rendering of a darker skinned, naturally curly-haired main character on the book cover. When I mentioned that no physical description is given throughout the entire book of what Starr looks like, Lily argued

for its inclusion: “I think [Thomas] should have looked into more detail on certain things. Like Starr’s skin tone. I feel like hair too. They really didn’t talk about hair” (interview, February 4).

It is evident that the inclusion of a physical description of Starr that matched the artist’s front cover rendering was important to Lily. Black girls with darker skin have a mostly negative history of scant representation in the media, therefore, the acknowledgement of a character with darker skin and natural hair by a Black woman author is crucial. Scholar Jacobs-Huey (1997) writes, “Hair, in particular, is an important cultural signifier for many African diaspora women given the fact that their moderate to tightly curled hair textures and diverse hair styles have had significant impacts on their economic, social, and emotional lives” (p. 213). To understand how Black women and girls view their worlds, it is essential to understand why hair matters to them.

As for Starr Carter, the main character, Lily admitted that she did not feel much kinship. Because Lily does not view herself as outspoken, she mentioned that she found it hard to relate to Starr’s need for visibility following Khalil’s death. While Lily admitted that she certainly understood Starr’s move from silence to speech, she could not see Starr’s evolution as an option for herself. Like Thomas, Lily also acknowledges that Black girls have a responsibility to be strong mentally, however, this ideology promotes another stereotypical image, the Strong Black Woman. According to hip-hop feminist Joan Morgan (1999), the Strong Black Woman possesses good qualities such as self-determination and independence, however, these qualities are counterproductive when Black girls continue to soldier forward, despite personal physical and emotional hardships.

Through Lily's journal entries and interviews, it is evident that her form of resistance against oppressive stereotypes and images is to push back against hegemonic ideologies of Black girlhood by simply not conforming to them. Lily's choice of a natural hair aesthetic, her embrace of "non-Black" interests, and her solid determination to choose who she wants to be despite perceptions by the Black community relate to a cultural consciousness that influences the ways in which she enacts her literacy practices.

Jane

Similar to Lily, Jane was an 18-year-old freshman college student. The middle child of single mother, Jane hailed from a mid-sized city in the eastern part of the state. Describing herself as "funny, hardworking, and a little bit of a 'jokester,'" Jane is a political science major who is determined to go into juvenile justice law after her undergraduate studies and eventually become a Supreme Court Justice. Jane credits her strong background in her Christian faith with getting her through a rocky phase in her relationship with her mother, as well as dealing with the ups and downs of high school (interview, January 20). In her spare time, Jane liked to read young adult mysteries and novels in the fantasy genre, with books such the *Divergent* series among her favorite. Jane also binge watches Netflix and hangs out with friends, revealing that she does so because she "enjoys being around different perspectives and hanging out with people and being around them" (interview, January 20).

Jane described her high school experience as mostly "up and down" with friends and teachers. Her school, composed of mostly White students, was large and "very competitive" academically. In my first interview with Jane, she discussed her experiences interacting with classroom teachers who had low expectations of her. Jane recalled being highly cognizant of how her teachers felt about her, saying that she "could always tell she was subtly

stereotyped" (interview, January 20). She spoke candidly about two particularly memorable experiences in school with teachers that shaped her perception on society:

> So I did a presentation about my family in one of my Power Point classes and the teacher said it was another girl who did it. I said that's literally my baby picture, my family picture, and she was saying that it wasn't mine. And then another teacher in middle school…I did this whole portfolio and he said it was great and I got an "A" on it and he said "I'm going to keep it for my class next year." Then, like, the next week he put in grades and he gave me a zero. So I went to him and was like, "you literally just told me that you were going to keep my work." He pulled up my project and he was like "this is yours?" I said it was, it had my name on it! He then gave me this great review and changed it and gave me the "A." (interview, January 20).

Jane mentioned that her experiences were examples of how she feels the world sees Black girls. Although her conflicts with each teacher found a conclusion, she said that she learned that "if you don't speak up, you will end up failing high school because they stereotype you and don't think that Black girls can do a lot" (interview, January 20).

Jane also discussed that finding her identity in high school was a struggle. A natural extrovert, many of her friends in high school were White. This did not win her any points with Black peers, particularly Black girls, who questioned her friendship choices: "They would be like 'you know you're not White' and I'm like 'yeah, I know that but it's not based off of race how I find my friends'" (interview, January 20). Her White friends, however, were prone to racist statements and microaggressions, which she recalls here:

> "If you hang out with white people all the time and they hang out with you and they're like, they know you're Black. But if you don't always talk about how you're

> Black, they'll assume that you're White. And so then they'll start treating you like that. Or they'll start making maybe a racist joke and not realizing that, um, I'm still Black. And then when you come back and you speak up about it, they're like "Well, what's wrong with you? Why are you so upset?" And it's not like that. It's just because you're speaking up. So you do have to speak up and tell people that you are Black and like, this is my culture. So yeah, if you don't speak up then they will forget." (interview, February 6).

Jane also talked very candidly in her journal about the pitfalls of being "the only Black friend" to Whites:

> The problem is how uneducated your friends can be toward your culture. They don't understand the meaning of a cookout. How it isn't the restaurant but a family gathering. They get confused when you state that you don't wash your hair every night. Their confusion grows when they see your natural hair and don't believe that it is your hair because they only know of Black people wearing braids or weave. They think that you not asking your parents the day of an event to go out is weird because they don't see what the big deal is. When having majority of white friends, you are signing up to become the face of your culture. (journal, February 4).

Jane displayed a keen sense of cultural consciousness and related very well to Starr Carter, the main character of *The Hate U Give* (2017). The experience that Starr goes through with being one of the only Black girls at her mostly White prep school yet at the same time maintaining and abiding by Black cultural norms is an experience that Jane completely understands. In another journal entry, Jane wrote: "the struggle that Starr went through with having two personalities at school and at home is one that I personally deal with" (journal,

January 24). Describing her attendance at a predominantly White high school as "going through a maze" (journal, January 24), Jane admitted that she was constantly trying to find who she wanted to be. Much like Lily, Jane's primary and secondary Discourses are in conflict as she faces pressure to be "White" to find acceptance by peers. Jane wrote in her journal:

> I went through the constant turmoil of being afraid to be black. The standard was a blond straight hair, full face of makeup, and white skin but back home the standard was natural or braided hair, natural beauty, and chocolate complexion. I always had to ask myself the question of "is it worth it?" Is the exhaustion of having two personalities worth denying my culture to fit into another? When discovering the impact of racial discrimination in my everyday life, I knew that I would have to express my blackness through my achievements. (journal, January 24).

Expressing Blackness through her achievements was a constant theme throughout Jane's journal entries and interviews. Despite the negative images of "loud, obnoxious, ghetto Black women" (interview, February 8) propagated by the dominant culture, Jane views herself and Black women everywhere as "smart." The stereotypical images in the media help her strive to show the world that she is not "that way" (interview, February 8). She defines empowerment as a Black adolescent girl as "being your true self…accepting your natural self and not that face you put on when you go out into the world" (interview, February 8). Jane discussed that her natural self is a realm that is more than just physical; it is being a straight "A" or A/B student and desiring for people to see her for her intelligence. For Jane, making good grades is a challenge to the status quo, a disruption to the long-held narrative that Black girls and women are intellectually inferior. She said proudly that:

> "I do want them to see that I am a Black girl and I just got the A/B honor roll and I just got all A's because that is a representation of me, like I'm changing things. So I do think…and then it shows to people that the stereotypes of Black people aren't real 'cause it's like "wow, this girl got straight A's throughout her entire high school career and she's Black." (interview, February 8).

Jane defined Black girlhood as "hanging out with Black people" (interview, January 20). When asked to elaborate, she said that it meant "wearing your natural hair…or not even about hair, just clothes and finding the things to fit your body type because most things are made to center around White girls and that's just not how our body types are" (interview, January 20). Jane firmly positions herself at the intersection of two conflicting ideologies—one ideology that acknowledges how the saturation of the imagery of thin, Eurocentric beauty models is a constant affront to the curvier body type of Black women, and the other ideology that allows Black girls to still see themselves as having positive attributes. Jane's double consciousness is an indication that Black girls are constantly negotiating their identities and how they see themselves in the world.

Like Lily, Jane did discuss colorism, however, she only did so when she was prompted by the researcher. As a lighter-skinned Black girl, Jane said of her own personal experience:

> "I don't understand it to be honest and I don't think it should be a thing because whether you are light skinned or you are dark skinned, society won't look at you like that. They'll see that you were Black and they will judge you based off of being Black, not because you are light skinned. So I don't get it personally. But then if you say that, then people will be like "well, you're not going to understand it like a dark skinned person." (interview, February 8).

The sentiment that Jane 'does not understand because she is not dark-skinned' is a very familiar adage to intra-racial conversations on colorism. Blackness as a notion is tied to hegemonic struggle, therefore in any discussion about colorism that comes up, many lighter-skinned Black women are not allowed to interject into that conversation. However, even as a light-skinned Black girl, it is worth mentioning that Jane still does not fit the standard of beauty dictated by White supremacist ideals. While Jane's stance on colorism may be infuriating to darker skinned Blacks, proving her Blackness to members of the same race as authentic is a struggle that she constantly faces.

Jane did not have any particular issues with the characters, the plot, the cover art, or the ideas portrayed in *The Hate U Give* (2017), though she admitted she was frustrated at an extended period of Starr's silence among her White friends following the death of Khalil. As a character, Jane found Starr to be inspiring and relatable, particularly when it came to speaking out against injustice. Much like Starr, Jane strives to speak out against racism. In the last interview, Jane said:

> "Staying quiet at times when others are making assumptions about Black culture is a time for you to speak up and say "that's not right, that's not what we do." *This* is what we do, and what you said is offensive. It is your responsibility as someone being Black to say that, just like it is with any other race. If you're wrong about their culture, someone's going to call you out on it. So why wouldn't you call it out?" (interview, February 8).

Despite the negative stereotypes that she is consistently confronted with, Jane views being a Black girl as having the power to create change. "The more the world views me as weak, the more I become stronger," Jane wrote. "The stereotypes of who I should be as a young black

woman is how I strive to become different than what people think. The stereotypes are there to keep the fear of black people. We are the most intelligent race that has ever lived. We are survivors. We know how to adapt to unknown situations. We made this country. We should be able to live in it without fear" (journal, March 8). Jane highlights the importance of Black female solidarity and asserting dominance and power in pushing back against the narratives of mainstream culture, and re-telling the narratives of Black women and girls on her own terms.

Simone

Simone was 19 years old, a first generation college student, and the only child of a single mother. She was a freshman majoring in political science with ambitions of becoming an attorney in either employment or civil rights law after graduation. When asked about her career goals, Simone said that she has always "really been interested in advocating for other people's rights and wanting to be a voice for them if they don't have one for themselves" (interview, January 20). She described herself as a "realist" and "overly cautious" when it comes to everyday situations, including the activities she does in her spare time. Although she read and liked the novel for this study, she could not recall the names of recent books she'd read, simply saying that she preferred reading urban fiction and "books about drama" (interview, January 20). Simone also revealed that she is an avid writer of poetry, which she shares with close friends.

Simone hailed from a small, rural town in the eastern part of the state. Although there were Black students at her high school, she described her Honors classes as "mostly White" (interview, January 20). Simone confessed that she made good grades in high school, however, she did not feel as if her teachers prepared her for life after graduation: "As far as

administration goes, it was a lot of people coming in, a lot of people that was leaving. Teachers were kinda wanting to have you succeed but they weren't really giving you the tools to help you do that" (interview, January 20). Simone went on to describe her teachers in high school as indifferent to her presence and more focused on the discipline issues of other students, particularly because of the overcrowding that was present in her school. She also revealed that her senior year in particular was very rough, due to personal issues that interfered with school:

> "My Grandma had passed away towards the end, and that really just kind of messed with my head a lot. I was in a really toxic relationship. That was…[pauses] that was a mess. Then it was just a lot of people coming in and out of my life, I really didn't know how to focus or how to really, just pick up or how I should continue to live my life after that." (interview, January 20).

Simone credits her poetry and relationships that she maintained with family and friends with getting her through the difficult period of her life.

When asked about Black girlhood, Simone discussed how she feels how Black girls "really don't get recognized for a lot of stuff" (interview, January 20). When asked to elaborate, Simone shared that Black women "get a bad rep. It's not a lot of positive things you see Black girls doing in the community" (interview, February 8). She feels as if successful Black entrepreneurs with access to the media could be doing more to further the good in the community instead of behaving in ways that bring out negative stereotypes of Black women as angry, loud, and prone to promiscuous sexual behavior. Although Simone rejects negative stereotypes against her, she is keenly aware of them at all times, writing in her journal that "one wrong move and everyone will want to label you as the angry Black

girl" (journal, January 24). Her ever-present awareness of being mislabeled has led her to censor herself in social situations:

> "I used to have, not a bad temper, but I would allow for things to get me to the point where I would want to argue. Especially when it just came to ignorance coming out people's mouths or them speaking on a situation that they may not particularly know. And then they'll just be like "oh well, you're just the angry Black girl." I feel like we have these different experiences and people constantly feel like I'm going to get mad over something faster than what other people will." (interview, February 8).

For Simone, the conflict between primary and secondary Discourses take the form of code-switching, which protect her against the damage of harmful stereotypes. Simone describes how code-switching between Black peers and White classmates has always been an issue for her:

> "In high school, because it was predominantly White and since I was in Honor classes, it would particularly be White people. But then when I would go and do other activities and I would be surrounded around Black people and so it's like when you're surrounded between two different groups of people, you're going to act the way that you act when you're at home. And then when you go on, you're around White people, it's like they really don't understand that. And then it's like when you're feeding into how they're acting and then you're coming back to a different group and it's just like…it's a mess, really." (interview, February 8).

Simone's problems with code-switching in high school led to a major dilemma when choosing between whether to attend a predominantly White institution (PWI) or a historically Black college or university (HBCU) upon graduation, a decision which she wrote about

extensively in her journal. Simone wrote about being "too White for the Black kids and too Black for the White kids" (journal entry, January 24). Her decision to attend a PWI is tinged with regret:

> Some days I wonder why do I go to a PWI. I get looked at as an inferior race to many and judged automatically. Some people look at me in disgust and probably don't understand why I come to this school. I could feel more comfortable by going to a HBCU but I chose not to. (journal entry, February 5).

When I asked Simone why she chose not to go to an HBCU, she explained:

> I really wanted to go to an HBCU when I was looking at colleges, so I'm not going to say I didn't entirely want to go. I did want to go, and then my Mom influenced me not to go because of the HBCUs that were here in [this state]. She didn't want me to go out of state and then she has to pay out of state tuition and stuff like that, which I understand. I didn't want to go to [name of an in-state HBCU] because I didn't really feel like they had the major I that I was looking for. I didn't want to go to [another name of an in-state HBCU] because I've been in that area and I'm not too fond of it. [Another name of an in-state HBCU], I've been there, they scared me when I went. (interview, February 8).

I asked Simone what she meant by "scared" and she mentioned that the campus tour for that particular school was "unappealing" (interview, February 8). As a result she said she stuck with going to a PWI, not because there was anything wrong with it, but as a result often feels that professors and her peers "don't want to take her seriously because of the color of her skin" (journal entry, February 5).

For Simone, code switching limits how much she speaks her mind in the presence of Whites (journal entry, February 18). She related a lot to Starr in the novel, about whom she wrote:

> I would say that Starr has three different identities. In Garden Heights, Starr is known as the girl who works in Maverick's store. Since Maverick is well-respected in their community, so is she. In her household she is expected to be strong and set a good example for Sekani. At school Starr acts completely different than how she ever would in Garden Heights and at her home. Overall its not bad to have different identities when you're in different settings but always remember not to let untrue identities of you control your life over your true self (journal entry, February 18).

When asked if having different identities is a struggle, Simone responded that she "feels as if it does change who she feels she is" (interview, February 8). However, like Starr, Simone's voice is steadfast when it comes to issues that she cares about. She mentioned one specific example of this in her journal:

> There are people out there that are losing their lives unfairly and at alarming rates. Khalil's death was not taken seriously like many other deaths happening in the U.S. that goes back to one main characteristic: he is Black. I feel the need to stick up for people who aren't able because what if it was me? What if I was in their exact same situation and didn't have anybody with the willpower in my corner? One specific way I helped voice my concerns was with the #Fight4Her campaign where we fought against Trump's rejection of wanting to support Planned Parenthood and all the benefits that came with it. In the end, Starr and I can relate when it comes to standing up for our beliefs (journal entry, February 13).

Summative Findings

Lily, Jane, and Simone: Similarities Between Cases

Throughout the study, Lily, Jane, and Simone's narratives illuminated how Black girls are constantly barraged by damaging stereotypes in the media and that these messages do affect who they are and how they see themselves. All of the participants in this study developed their own ways to counteract stereotypes about Black girls and women—whether by speaking out against them directly, avoiding them altogether by creating their own alternative version of Black girlhood, or consistently code switching and creating multiple identities in various social settings. While reflecting on the novel *The Hate U Give* during the course of the study, Lily, Jane, and Simone enacted critical literacies by constantly questioning the text and its implications for Black girlhood by negotiating their identities, positionalities, and power through their words in the interviews and journal writing.

The concept of literacies as ideological is critical to the present study and in opposition to notion of a single monolithic, autonomous literacy. The Black adolescent girls in this study were themselves a discourse group, emphasizing their personal histories, daily language practices, and ideas in ways that both reflected aspects of the hip hop and urban social culture of the book and at the same time questioned it. The values, thoughts, writings, beliefs, and performances that are accepted as instances of Black girlhood by Black girls themselves were ways of being from "people like us" (Gee, 1996). When questioning the nature of how Black girls enact literacy practices, I found that themes such as code switching and writing as resistance weighed heavily in their discourse practices, language, and social processes.

Free for All: Writing as a Space for Resistance

Over the course of the study, Lily, Jane, and Simone engaged in both prompted writing and free writes. As a group, their prompt-driven writes were generally brief and concise, while their free writing tended to be longer, more expressive, and more personal. Although Lily was very shy and reserved, she was comfortable using the free writes as her main form of expression. More outspoken Jane used the free writes to extend her initial thoughts and conversations in the prompted writes to express more intimate accounts of conversations that occurred in the focus group and interviews. Simone, often unsure of certain questions I asked her on the nature of Black girlhood, used her free writes to delve more deeply into the questions asked of her. During both interviews, when thinking deeply upon a specific question, she would often ask, "Can I write about that thought later?" I steadfastly told her each time that "yes," she could absolutely express her thoughts on the issue later in writing. The chance to mull over her thoughts through free writing offered Simone a way in which to expand her ideas and discuss issues that were easier and more convenient than speaking them.

Each participant also used the free writes as opportunities to express their feelings, expand their ideas, and talk about things that would often be considered taboo in discussions situated in White-dominated public settings. For Lily, she returned to the topic of colorism time and time again in her free writes, as well as her dissatisfaction with the confining nature of Black identity. Lily also criticized the book for its lack of attention to colorism, namely, the refusal of the author to include a physical description of Starr, despite the appearance of a dark-skinned girl on the mass-market hardcover edition of the book. For Simone, free writing allowed her to explore her conflicted feelings of Black social dynamics and the White society

in which she mostly attended school. She also expressed her dissention on the benefits of attending a PWI versus an HBCU. For Jane, she drew upon the internal pressure she experiences to constantly be "strong" and outspoken in a hegemonic society that seeks to dominate her.

Although the journal writing of this study provided participants with an opportunity to tell their story in their own words in an out of school setting, Lily, Jane, and Simone all employed writing conventions found in school spaces, using standard English to express themselves. Though there were some grammar and punctuation errors in each participants' writing, it was still based on writing that is commonly taught and endorsed in school spaces. This is very different than the linguistic practice employed in the face to face interviews, in which Lily, Jane, and Simone all incorporated instances of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). The participants in this study seemingly felt comfortable using AAVE in my presence, possibly because of the shared racial background between us, as well as its use throughout the book. During the interviews I often noticed that the lines between the participants and myself as the researcher became one, as conversations always took on a naturally congenial, conversational tone. The participants and I often laughed at cultural anecdotes, and conversation often drifted between the prescribed questions of the interviews and general discussions on pop culture, life in college, and their lives in general.

Cross Case Analysis: Code Switching and the Participants

According to the Black Girls Literacy Framework (BGLF) that maintains that Black girls' literacies are composed of six parts (tied to identity, historical, collaborative, political/critical, and intellectual), it is not surprising that multiple consciousness plays a significant role in the development of Black female language and literacy practices.

According to Richardson (2002), "the Black woman's consciousness of her condition/ing, her position/ing in American society, and the condition/ing of her audiences must be factored into her language and literacy practices" (p. 686). Due to historical injustices and a continuing present existence that includes racist and sexist marginalization, the literacy practices of Black girls include the strategic use of polite and assertive language and code switching, or, in some cases, the strategic use of silence. As with Starr Carter in the novel, who speaks out openly in her home and neighborhood yet is more reserved and silent with her White peers at her school, the participants of the study were also aware that to be successful in environments where White middle class values dominate, they must learn the language and literacy practice of code switching. Although people from all ethnic and racial groups code switch, several factors contribute to the heightened importance of this practice in Black language and literacy traditions.

The first is double consciousness, as defined by scholar W. E. B. DuBois (1903). For DuBois, double consciousness represented the psychic ambivalence experienced by Blacks in their negotiation of conflicting White and Black American identities. Because all of the participants are well aware of the stereotypes of the Black speech styles and behavior against them, Black girls may use a more standardized American English when speaking to Whites (Richardson, 2003). While code switching is generally understood to be linguistic in nature, I assert that code switching extends to Black girls' behavior in White-dominated spaces as well. For Jane and Simone, code switching was not just a way of speaking when in the presence of Whites, but following a code of behavior designed to disprove White assumptions of cultureless Black existence. This behavior included speaking out, doing well

in school, and always maintaining visibility in their pursuits of personal and academic excellence.

For Lily, strategic silence is in itself a speech act to resist perpetuation of distorted images of Black girlhood. She challenged and critiqued the notion that Starr is a 'typical' Black girl for being outspoken about the injustice around her. As Lily stated: "sometimes people say things that's so stupid it's not worth responding to," it is evident that her silence is resistance; rather than verbally confronting people with negative opinions of her based on race, she consciously chooses to say nothing at all (interview, January 18). Rather, she persists in her own distinct way of knowing, pursuing her own interests, and being who she is. Through performing her own version of Black girlhood, she asserts herself and refuses to be bound by a narrow representation of stereotyped Blackness.

CDA: Orders of Discourse Across Institutions and Situation

Historically, social science has viewed identity as a fixed notion—one that focuses on individual behavior and the individual mind (Gee, 2000). Recently, sociocultural research into identity has broadened and identity is now viewed as the product of social and cultural interactions. Sociocultural linguists Bucholtz and Hall (2005) assert that identity is a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that occurs in discourse across contexts rather than a fixed idea that occurs within one's mind. These contexts shape the participants' social meaning, which is influenced by social factors that ultimately shape their identities. Smitherman (2006) describes a "linguistic push and pull" that marginalized groups experience around their use of linguistic styles, as well as how they attribute meaning to texts. Therefore, in order to examine the linguistic style of the participants, the focus group data will be examined within this section. This "push and pull" is attributed to the constant

negotiation of dominant and cultural ideologies, as well as the constant negotiation of power and positionality, which contributes to the shaping of identities. In examining Black adolescent girls' positionalities (i.e., gendered and racialized identities) and situating this study within a particular institution, namely, an out-of-school space, I claim that power and positionality is embedded within the language and literacy of the participants.

The second research question of this study guides my analysis: How do Black adolescent girls respond to culturally responsive critical texts? In utilizing the BGLF, collaboration is a key component of Black girls' literacies. Literacies are not enacted in isolation, but are inherently social and involve a co-construction of knowledge with other Black girls (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). CDA will account for the interconnected and ideological nature of the talk and discourse on critical social issues that occurred within the focus group and directly impacted Black adolescent girls. Because the novel selected for this study focused on multiple social issues, the findings in this section are organized thematically.

Discourse on the Black Girl Societal Condition

Being Black and female, Black girls are continually confronted with oppression that works in conjunction with other forms of oppression to produce social injustice and racial marginalization (Collins, 2009). In *The Hate U Give*, the main character, Starr, navigates life in her predominantly Black neighborhood of Garden Heights and among her peers in a predominantly White prep school in light of the police-sanctioned shooting of her friend Khalil. Starr endures the scorn of her White peers who are unaware of her role on the night of the shooting until she makes it public that she was present and begins to speak out against injustice. The conversation below details an exchange between Lily and Jane in response to

asking the participants to share their initial reactions to *The Hate U Give* (interview, January 25):

> **Jane:** Well, yeah, it was like really relatable. While I was reading and was like, 'wow, this is like basically what people go through today.' Like this is literally like most people's lives and like, especially like when Starr was with her friends, I related to that so much. Also, it's like a lot of my like, you know, Caucasian friends, like...they things they say about black people. It's not very, how would I put this "acceptable." But like, okay, you know, I let it slide, you know?
>
> **Researcher:** Right, right. Yeah. So, yeah, give me an example. Like what are some things that they say?
>
> **Lily:** Because this is the way they talk to me. Thing for me is talking about hair--
>
> **Jane:** Yes!
>
> **Lily:** Natural hair and asking all these questions and they don't realize that when they're saying things. Um, what's an example? Like your different hair types. They don't understand that you can have different hair types and some of their questions can be like ignorant or offensive—
>
> **Jane:** Exactly!
>
> **Lily:** And you don't like let it, you don't, you let it slide because they're your friends and you know, they're not meaning to have bad intentions, but you're kind of also like, you're very clear. You don't…you're not cultured to know about what I do in my life. Or with my hair.

This conversation between Lily and Jane is an excellent example of what scholar James Paul Gee (1996) defines as *social language*. Because human language is not a monolith,

different patterns of vocabulary and syntax constitute different social languages, each of which is connected to a specific sort of social activity and to a specific socially situated identity (Gee, 1999). Social languages are recognized by recognizing specific patterns, such as those in diction, tone, even in voice pitch. In the conversation between Lily and Jane, two Black adolescent females discussing a culturally responsive text, it is evident that the designation of "they" is a reference to White people as a whole. Jane refers only once to "her Caucasian friends" and for the rest of the conversation, "they" serves as a stand-in for all White people, regardless of their intentions to be racist. "They" is used consistently throughout the participants' conversation and used freely without constraint. The use of "they" to denote White people separates this particular conversation as one that would most likely only be conducted in a close, intimate space (in this case, a private room in the library) and one in which only Black women are privy to (myself as a Black woman included).

The function of this social language is to carry out a social activity to mark solidarity in recognizing the injustice of the daily occurrence of such experiences. Lily's use of the word "you" is one such example. The use of "you" is not referring to an individual in particular, but to all Black women and girls who, in their interactions with White people, have had a similarly degrading racist experience ("You let it slide because they're your friends and you know, they're not meaning to have bad intentions…"). Lily's continues to mark solidarity even though her use of "you" changes in the context of her last statement, when she says to "they" (White people) that "you're not cultured to know about what I do in my life. Or with my hair" (interview, January 25). This is a statement directly to White people, who presume to think that they know the interior of her life, her Black culture, and about the natural style in which she wears her hair. Through the use of shared social language

reinforced by a common Black adolescent girl identity, both of the participants are united in their stance against the racism that they have experienced, as well as negative stereotypes.

In addition to this exchange, it was observed that Lily and Jane made meaning of events in the story through both personal and intertextual connections, as they both immediately were able to relate to the manner in which Starr is forced to silence her voice to maneuver in a White-dominated social world. For the researcher, it is notable that a conversation that was originally intended to be focused on initial reactions to the novel turned to talk about a common cultural experience for the participants: hair. Although the novel did not contain any reference to Starr's hair or any other character's hair texture or style, the participants responded with discourse about negative comments arising from the manner in which they wear their hair. For the participants, their natural hairstyles are part of a world full of implicit racism, which composes the microaggressions of everyday interaction. According to Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso (2000), microaggressions are "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously" (p. 60). Fleras (2016) adds that in addition to operating under the radar, microaggressions often take the form of "thinly veiled compliments, aversive reactions, and seemingly neutral language" (p. 3). For Lily and Jane, who both wear natural hairstyles, these comments are personally directed, subtle but significant. While they agree that the expressions are more than likely unpremeditated rather than calculated acts, dealing with such incivility as a Black female within White dominated social situations is an injustice that comes with the pattern of daily life. Though Lily and Jane let the microaggressions "slide," Lily's objection to the verbal slight is clear in her distancing language ("You're not cultured enough to know about what I do in my life").

According to Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (2009), Lily's power is described as an agent of knowledge. Through social and cultural awareness, Lily offers a counternarrative about what it means to be both Black and female in society. To be credible, Black girls must be personal advocates for their material. In this case, the material is the choice to wear her hair natural, free of chemical straightening processes. By choosing to abandon chemical straightening (i.e., a perm), Lily breaks free of her childhood desire to blend into White dominated society, as stated in an earlier interview in which she described wanting to have long, straight hair like White girls at her school (interview, February 4).

Discourse on Black Girl Empowerment

Because *The Hate U Give* (2017) is the story of Starr Carter's process of moving from silence to voice, I wanted to know if this process mirrored the lives of my participants. During the focus group, I asked my participants what were their initial reactions after reading the novel.

> **Lily:** It makes me kind of feel bad.
>
> **Researcher:** Really?
>
> **Lily:** For not getting out there and like speaking up for like what's right. Like all the activism stuff kind of scary cause like I'm not the type of person that will like speak out for like what I believe in, you know, I'm like kind of in the background. Right. Like seeing Starr, you know, finally like going up there and speaking, you know, what she believes for, what's his name?
>
> **Jane:** Khalil.
>
> **Lily:** Yeah. Like it makes you like, like actually want to get out there but like at the same time too, like scared to go.

> **Jane:** Um, I would probably say it's definitely makes me more empowered of being Black and I think that's like how it's slowly progressing in society like being proud of being black and not like always straightening your hair and being um, like trying to be like the white person, which is what he has going on with like body types and stuff. Accept your body type, accept your skin color, the markings on your skin. Like it's stuff after reading that is definitely like it's, it's fine. It's okay to be black because you're unique. Yeah.

To analyze the manner in which the participants build socially situated identities in language is to look at when they refer to themselves by speaking in first person as "I." These are, according to Gee, called "I-statements" (Gee, 1999). In his work, Gee has named several different kinds of I-statements (i.e., state and action statements, affective statements, cognitive statements), however, it is interesting to observe the difference between Lily's I-statement and Jane's.

Lily, unlike Starr Carter in the novel, who admits that she does not feel compelled to speak out against things that she feels are not right, mostly speaks in *ability and constraint* I-statements. She speaks of being able and or having to do things. She mentions first that she "feels bad" for not "getting out there and speaking up for what's right." Although she is perfectly able to speak, she constrains her ability and characterizes herself as "not the type of person that speaks up for what she believes in" and "kind of in the background."

Jane's I-statements take on the form of mostly *achievement* statements. Gee states that *achievement* statements are about desires, activities, and efforts that relate to accomplishment or distinction. In a statement about herself in response to the novel, Jane is "made more empowered of being Black." Her use of the word "empowered" brings her to self-acceptance,

particular of "your body type, your skin color, and the markings on your skin." Her use of the "your" seemingly refers to no one directly in this conversation, but embodies an ethos that includes all Black women and girls everywhere.

Also in this exchange, Jane and Lily represent opposing views toward coming to voice. While Jane is empowered by Starr's outspokenness, Lily responds with fear. This is not unusual, being that much of Black feminist thought reflects the effort to find a collective, self-defined voice. According to Collins (2009), "the category of 'Black women' makes all Black women especially visible and open to the objectification of Black women as a category" (p. 100). For individual women, however, resolving contradictions between outside perception and one's own voice requires considerable inner strength. To learn to speak with an authentic voice, Black girls must leap outside of the frames and systems that society decides and create their own frame. Being that institutions such as schools, media, and other government agencies serve as sites of silencing, it is reassuring that the focus group serves as a place in which Lily feels free to share her true self, doubts, and fears.

Lily's confessions on her reluctance to speak out are a rejection of another controlling stereotype, that of the "strong Black woman." Forced to endure the dehumanizing effects of slavery, the notion of the matriarch treats Black women as stoic, hyper-competent, invincible matrons who persevere through innumerable odds without complaint. While this may strike some as a positive stereotype, it is harmful because it normalizes Black women's extraordinary efforts and exploits their repeated trauma (Collins, 2009). For Black girls and women who internalize the "strong Black woman" message, any emotional expression or behavior that falls short of a demonstration of strength may appear to be a failure that can negatively affect their self-identity. For all the reported emotional strength that the "strong

Black woman" demands, it may result in devastating frailty in spirit and health (Offutt, 2013).

Discourse on Black Discourse

Linguistic tensions were evident in this study, particularly across social spheres. Participants assumed heightened positions of awareness in their journal entries, employing standard English in their writing. However, in a speaking context with the researcher, they employed the features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Shifting linguistic styles are a clear indication that participants were constantly negotiating multiple identities.

AAVE serves as a tool for storytelling and functions as a form of resistance from more mainstream, dominant language practices. Along with AAVE, with features such as fast paced storytelling, vivid depictions of the inner city environment, and young adult protagonists, *The Hate U Give* functions as an urban literature novel. According to Gibson (2010), one of the reasons that urban literature appeals to Black youth is "the fact that many urban literature writers are African American authors who hail from the neighborhoods featured within their texts, and they employ references to real cities and real neighborhoods" (p. 567). While the city in *THUG* is never named explicitly, it is understood to be a reflection of a mid-sized Southern town, much like the Jackson, Mississippi neighborhoods in which author Angie Thomas hails from and is familiar. When asked what they enjoyed most about the novel, the participants responded that it was the language used:

> **Jane:** I think I enjoy how like the author wrote in the way black person would talk like this wasn't written with like, this is an offense. It's supposed to be offensive, but like, correct grammar in a way. You know, how we say words and stuff like and use 'you all' and everything and like skip over some pro, uh, like, uh, what is it? Not

> symbols, but you know what I mean. Yeah. Like certain words and we just make up words and stuff. But I liked how when it was Starr's dad talking and stuff and she wrote it the way I would imagine like my uncle talking or something, you know that. So it was, it's definitely like relatable in a black person's front too. You understand what those saying, but to a white person it's probably like "gonna" [going to] or something, I don't get it. They probably think it's like the country or something like that or any like, you know, it's "gonna," but you know. So yeah, I think I enjoy that.
>
> **Simone:** Yeah, I agree with Jane. The flow of the book was really nice. Like you can just like read for like hours, you know, without stopping. Like the writing was really well done.

According to Gee (1999), people use language to fashion their identities in a way that is "closely attached to a world of 'everyday' social and dialogic interaction" (p. 124). The participants consistently used verbal language to construct their identities in a way that detaches itself from 'everyday' social interaction and matches with their personal lives. As a Black girl, whose identity and existence is distinctly separate from the White mainstream through a history of marginalization, Jane mentioned that she liked "how the author wrote in the way a Black person would talk." Through *cognitive* I-statements that focus on thinking and knowing, Jane recognizes and expresses an appreciation for "how Blacks talk" and immediately follows this with a statement about how White people may find the use of incorrect grammar "offensive." Regardless, Jane maintains deep kinship to her everyday social interaction by making a personal connection, saying that when it "was Starr's dad talking and stuff [the author] wrote it the way I would imagine my uncle talking or

something." Jane's cognitive I-statement here assumes a background of cultural dialogue and interaction.

Strong connections to experiences and elements familiar in the lives of Black adolescent girls provide them with opportunities to make sense of and take power in their worlds through their literacy practices. Because reading is essentially a meaning-making process, Morris (2007) says that:

> "This meaning making process allows them to look at life critically in order to "know what's going on" and is key to survival. Urban fiction plays an important role in not only heightening their resistances to the unsavory people and locations around them, but it also strengthens resiliencies, allowing them to carve out a sober space within their neighborhoods." (p. 5).

Friere's critical literacy framework is firmly placed within a reader's power to read the world using a critical lens. The Black adolescent girls in this study may or may not relate directly to Starr Carter in *The Hate U Give*, but they were provoked and challenged by the characteristics, situations, and language of the text, written by a Black woman author.

Summative Findings

Theoretical Connections

Central to Black feminist theory is the intersectionality of race and gender. According to Collins, Black women's social positioning, which accompany a "distinctive history within a matrix of oppression" make Black women unique (2009, p. 23). In America, Black women share a set of myths with which they are repeatedly confronted. The participants of this study reported that they are often expected within the larger society context to "be" a particular something, to hold particular values, to exhibit particular behaviors, and to express particular

personality traits. They are expected to be loud, angry, and sharp-tongued. They are expected to be sexually promiscuous. In a culture that is dominated by a Eurocentric standard of beauty, Black women learn, in many ways, that they are not considered attractive—especially those with darker complexions. As these stereotypical traits continue to define Black women as a group, they continue to serve as boundaries on what Black women and girls are able to be. In this study, the participants resisted the boundaries placed upon them by society, as well as other false narratives that sought to subjugate them. They repeatedly used their stories, in both interviews and writings, to represent their personal truth as well as define themselves in contrast to negative stereotypes.

Earlier in this study, I drew upon the work of Richardson (2007) to inform my understanding of Black girls' literacy practices. She defined Black Girls' Literacies (BGL) as "the development of skills and expressive vernacular arts and crafts that help females to advance and protect themselves and their loved ones in society" (p. 329). Indeed, the early development of Black women's literacies was due to their search for improvement and the advancement of future generations through these social contexts. Richardson suggests (2002) that misrepresentation played a critical role in the literacies of Black women and the cause for them to use literacy as a tool to counter negative images. Throughout this study, the participants' stories confirmed that the literacy practices of the participants enable the rejection of socially ascribed boundaries, as well negotiation of their identities. Although participants' talk veered far from the novel, the literary text was the impetus for conversation about topics that were important to them. Participants all said that they thought it was important to see people like themselves in the literature they read and to discuss issues that mattered to them.

Meaning Making and Identity Negotiation

Throughout the study, participants constantly negotiated their identity, power, and positionality in their writings and in their face to face interviews. Much like Starr Carter, participants navigated through two set of norms: dominant White social worlds and Black ways of being. According to DuBois (1903) this "two-ness" is the essence of double consciousness:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings: two warring ideals in one dark body (p. 3).

Linguistic tension was also evident in throughout this study. Standard English was employed by the participants in journal writing, with AAVE used in face to face interviews and in the focus group. This linguistic "push and pull" was a clear indication that participants constantly negotiate identities: a dominant identity and a local one (Smitherman, 1977, p. 129). According to Smitherman (2006), this method of code shifting is political and indicative of power and resistance among the participants (p. 132). They assumed a certain consciousness and took up certain ways of being based on social norms, sacrificing what Smitherman terms their native dialect to navigate interactions.

The Role of Popular Culture in Meaning Making

Participants often made meaning of the text of the study by drawing upon popular culture references. Lily made numerous references to romance novels that she reads, as well as Netflix shows she watches, including *Riverdale.* In the initial interview with Simone,

when speaking of the ways in which she felt Black girls' accounts of sexual abuse were not believed by society, she referenced R. Kelly. Kelly is a popular R&B singer who has been recently accused and jailed as a result of the statutory rape and sexual abuse of many young Black girls throughout his decades as a performer. Of Kelly's legal troubles, Simone said that she felt the girls involved "got a lot of backlash" because people said that the "Black girls were lying about that type of stuff" (interview, January 8). For Simone, Black girls are traumatized by rape and sexual assault, and then when we are asked about it, then "we're automatically lying" (interview, January 8). Clearly, the lens by which Simone could easily draw upon to illustrate her point about the sexual abuse and silencing of Black women had its base in popular culture.

Another observation I made throughout the study was the participant's consistent references to the movie version of *The Hate U Give*. The movie came out in theaters in October 2018, and topped box office ticket sales for several consecutive weeks. While I have not yet seen the movie for personal reasons, all of the participants did see it before the data-gathering phase of the study commenced. When asked about details of the book throughout the study, all of the participants would reference a scene from the movie, and not directly from the book. Although I still believe the participants' recollections, thoughts, and perceptions of *The Hate U Give* to be accurate and the movie a decent reflection of the events of the book, it was notable to see how often participants seemed to stop drawing on the book altogether when they had a visual representation of the movie as a more recent example. The visual imagery of *The Hate U Give* heightened the meaning making process and resulted in a more emotional connection with the character and plot.

Reflections on the State of Black Girls in Society

Participants drew upon representations of Black girls in the media, as well as their own personal experiences. Participants made meaning of the novel by analyzing the Black female condition in society and made similarities with the experiences of Starr Carter. They most often made personal connections with Starr, relating personally to her marginalization and silencing with which she was confronted. All of the participants of the study spoke back against hegemonies through counter narratives in their lives, writings, and behaviors. Participants also drew upon their critical literacy skills to analyze Starr's life and relationships, and evaluated the social structures designed to denigrate the experiences of Black girls and women. Their emotional and personal connections to the text served as therapeutic, helping the participants to recall and confront challenges that they are experiencing in their own personal lives.

Summary

At the conclusion of this study, I have learned that the discourse of the young women participants reveals a persistent awareness of the constraints of White hegemonic norms, as well as the power and the desire to counter them through words and action. While reflecting on the novel *The Hate U Give*, Lily, Jane, and Simone consistently negotiated their identities, positionalities, and power through their words and in their journal writing. Because Black women are constantly adapting to the task of navigating life in a White-dominated society, this struggle influences their literacy practices, as well as their ways of knowing and coping. As with generations of Black women before them, the participants' literacies have developed with a necessity to fulfill a desire for a better world. Black adolescent girls communicate their literacies through storytelling, conscious vacillation between silence and speech, and

code switching. Whether speaking out against racism or choosing to remain silent, I point to the participants' use of discourse to carve out free spaces in oppressive locations such as their classrooms, the streets, and in their lives. Black adolescent girls language and literacy practices reflect their socialization in a racialized, genderized, sexualized, and classed society in which they skillfully employ their language and literacy practices to rise above oppression.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In Chapter 2, I utilized Tamara Butler's framework of Black girl cartography, a praxis-oriented form of inquiry concerned with how and where Black girls are physically and socio-politically in education. It bears repeating that Black girl cartographers are researchers, scholars, and advocates who self-identify as Black girls and who have a deep, abiding concern with "Black girls' health, lives, well-being, and ways of being" (p. 33). My commitment to transformational change in the lives of Black girls goes beyond this study and my role in the academy and manifests itself as a sustaining interest in mapping and protecting the areas of learning and critical discourse where Black girls come together. As I discuss the results of this study that I've conducted on Black adolescent girls literacy practices and their responses to culturally responsive text, I would like to build upon Butler's framework by asserting that my study continues to push connections between the interlocking oppressions of race and gender and sociocultural locations, namely, the area of critical young adult text.

Although the cartography of which Butler speaks is not a physical map, I would like to use the metaphoric image of a map with its traditional cardinal directions as a structure for my discussion of this study. This will serve as my framework to approach this final chapter as I provide a discussion of practical research implications, methodological strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for future research. After revisiting the need for this study, I have organized this chapter to first discuss the *north*, the guiding element of the Black Girls' Literacy Framework (BGLF) and the theoretical work by Muhammed and Haddix's (2016) upon which this study is based. Next, I will turn to the *south*, which represents the implications of the thoughtful use of culturally sustaining critical texts, which are integral for engaging Black adolescent girls. Next, I will discuss the *east*, which is the

practical application of this knowledge in its likely location, which is the inside of a classroom. Last, I will discuss the *west*, which represents the small but growing body of academic research on the literacies of Black girls, and I provide insight into how this study is aligned in that context and the possibilities for future research.

This chapter will also discuss limitations of the study and its findings. While I am in no way generalizing my findings in the traditional sense, I am positioning this study to inform the work of classroom teachers and school administrators who are interested in improving the intellectual and academic well-being and lives of Black adolescent girls.

The Journey: Revisiting the Need for this Study

This study was an attempt to understand how Black adolescent girls enact literacy practices within Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) literacy framework in response to critical text, specifically one that is written from a culturally responsive standpoint. I specifically sought to answer to research questions: 1) *How do Black adolescent girls enact critical literacy practices?* 2) *How do Black adolescent girls respond to a culturally responsive critical text?* These questions were examined based on the need for more research that centered the voices and lives of Black adolescent girls, as the current research landscape is saturated with harmful and damaging pathologies of this group. This study provided a counternarrative to such representations and created space for Black adolescent girls to talk and write about themselves in response to a culturally sustaining young adult novel in an environment that encouraged and valued their presence. The research questions I chose proved more than worthwhile, as I found that all of the participants in the study felt that the dominant society negatively portrayed them based on inaccurate judgments and controlling,

damaging stereotypes. I did not find that these false narratives discouraged them, as all of the participants used their literacy as a tool to counteract negative conceptions about them.

In their call for centering Black Girl literacies, Muhammed and Haddix (2016) stated that "if we reimagine English education where Black girls matter, all children would benefit from a curricular and pedagogical infrastructure that values humanity" (p. 329). This echoes the noted the Black feminist Combahee River Collective's statement that everyone else's freedom is a result of Black women's freedom (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). In my work as a Black Girl cartographer, I want to remind educators that each child's education and liberation are connected to the education and liberation of Black girls. In naming the structures and institutions that are responsible for inequities and articulating how Black girls' experiences are shaped by these structures and working within and against them, I am documenting the ways that Black girls are leading the way to more sustaining educational practices. I am committed to education research rooted in responsibility and critical reflexivity that contributes to the long-standing activism and visibility of Black girls and women.

Implications for Practice

The North: Implications for Theory

Muhammad and Haddix's (2016) Black Girls' Literacies Framework (BGLF) has been instrumental in this study to examine the ways in which the participants interacted with text and enacted their literacy practices. The framework has six established parts, stating that Black girls' literacies are: a) multiple, b) political/critical, c) historical, d) collaborative, e) intellectual, and f) tied to identities. While most of the participants' recorded literacy practices and responses to the text can be found within these six components, I would argue for the implementation of a seventh component: media.

The concept of critical media literacy for K-12 students is nothing new. Many scholars at the dawn of the internet age observed the potential for media literacy to touch every issue impacting human life in society, which it undoubtedly has. Popular media, which is composed of news reporting agencies, magazines, books, films, music, video games, and social media, has become the dominant culture that socializes citizenry and provides the material for identity in terms of social reproduction and change (Kellner, 1995). No group is more impacted by the dominant narrative of media culture than urban youth of color, who are both commodified and criminalized by it (Morrell & Andrade, 2006). The uncritical consumption of dominant media that frame youth of color as consumers, or even worse, as criminals, can disempower young people.

All of the participants in this study referenced the media culture in shaping their worldview on beauty, societal institutions, politics, friendships, culture, and ultimately, themselves. Their knowledge of media is a point of reference and embedded into their language practices, with all three of the participants starting off a sentence or description at some time during the study with a statement such as: "You know, like on [insert the name of a television show, social media meme]" or "Have you seen [insert the name of a popular film or television show]?" I sensed that my understanding of these shows was never truly being inquired about, for it was a given that I would know something about the media world in which they lived—the world of popular Netflix shows, YA novels, and popular music. The girls of this study constantly referenced television shows, movies, memes from social media, and public figures such as Cardi B, Nicki Minaj, and Post Malone. When asked to reflect upon the book, all of the participants referenced a scene from the movie version of *The Hate U Give* instead. Media is clearly part of the framework from which the Black adolescent girls

of this study enacted their literacies, and my strongest argument for its inclusion in the BGLF.

The South: Implications for Critical Text

This study revealed that the Black adolescent girl participants employed several meaning making strategies in their reading of *The Hate U Give* (2017). The pedagogical approach to bridge in and out of school literacies is to encourage students to engage in critical reading by focusing on features in the text such as power dynamics, social structures, and the raced, classed, and gendered identities of the characters. This allows the students to view storylines and characters in the text within their own social world. By engaging in a critical reading of a text, students assume an active approach to the text by understanding inequities that are enmeshed within the plot in the characters' lives. This approach allows them to better understand how power structures function and how they interplay within the text and the larger society. In this sense, probing questions are not about seeking a right or wrong answer, but voicing multiple perspectives. If classroom teachers would expand their teaching practices to include critical approaches, students would be better able to make meaning of their world, as well as the power relationships that are present in society.

One such strategy encompasses critical media literacy by merging culturally sustaining texts with other forms of pop culture media, such as movies and television shows. Pairing *The Hate U Give* (2017), a novel about a fictional police sanctioned shooting, with the film *Fruitvale Station* (2016), a movie about the real-life events leading to the 2006 death of Oscar Grant, a young Black man who was killed by Oakland BART police officers, would encourage participants to engage in critical media literacy and compare and contrast the elements of each movie medium with literary elements. Students are given the chance to

understand how stories and characters are depicted across different popular culture mediums. By using a critical lens, students analyze both the oppressors and the oppressed and can discuss whether gender inequities are present, and how power is distributed unequally in society. Students can also understand how the unequal distribution of power influences characters raced, classed, and gendered identities, which influences the way they view themselves.

Another pedagogical approach is to pair the reading of a more modern, culturally conscious fictional text with a canonical one which draws upon a similar theme, but focused on a different time period, or even characters from a different racial group. Students may complete a comparative analysis of both texts and discuss where the boundaries of power and privilege lie, or if they exist at all.

The East: Implications for Facilitation

This study revealed that participants had an emotional investment in the selected text. This resulted in the participants having a heightened connection to the plot and characters of the novel. These connections were rooted in social issues the participants have first-hand knowledge of through their experiences with media and contact within their social worlds. Such strong connections between the participants and the literature has implications for creating book clubs for Black girls in both in-school and out-of-school settings.

Although this study was not a book club in the traditional sense (i.e., regular, formalized meetings, assigned readings), the findings hold great potential for educators to implement book clubs within school and out of school spaces for participants to engage in identity work as they make meaning of culturally sustaining texts. Building a trusting environment can create a community that Black adolescent girls feel comfortable in and one

in which they can engage in identity work in a safe setting. Book clubs create environments in which members can privilege their own voices, as well as respect the diverse voices of their peers. By democratizing all voices in a safe space, book clubs can become transformative spaces. Book clubs are also opportunities to construct knowledge, not only individually, but collectively as well.

A pedagogical component that facilitators can use within their book clubs is to incorporate a free-write journal. This encourages Black adolescent girls to dialogue with their peers as well as with themselves. For school spaces, encouraging students to create their own discussion questions and select their own texts is critical, as it gives an opportunity for autonomy and encourages identity development.

The West: Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings in this study and the dearth of research into Black girls' literacies, I recommend further research on the literacy needs of diverse and marginalized populations, as well as the educators that serve them. More literacy research with embedded historical frameworks would be useful in interpreting the literacies of learners. Adding a historical frame for the work Black adolescent girls, for example, contextualized their words and writings and helped me to better be able to interpret them.

Research is also needed that offers broadened views and used of literacy. For this study, literacy was conceptualized as more than just skill-based but embedded in history, power relationships, and culture. Instead of limiting literacy to specific reading and writing tasks, literacy research would benefit from finding more meaning in reading and writing, particularly for students of color. Smart research on the purposes of reading and writing with

youth of color has the power to transform reading writing instruction and have a lasting impact on national curriculum policy.

Due to the proliferation of public campaigns such as We Need Diverse Books, a non-profit organization of children and YA book lovers who advocate for changes in the publishing industry, there has been an increase of the publication and mainstream visibility of children's and YA books that recognize the experiences of LGBTQIA, Native/Indigenous, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and other ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities. One recommendation for future research would be a critical exploration of the literacy practices of Latinx, Asian, and/or Native/Indigenous adolescents and their responses to critical YA texts by authors that reflect their cultural heritage. A recommendation for this vein of research may be a critical comparative study of how adolescent girls of color literacy functions in both in-school spaces and out of school spaces. Such a study would lend a clear picture of the ways in which Black, Latinx, Asian, or Native American/Indigenous adolescent girls make meaning of their literacies in both a formal and an informal context.

Finally, it is important to note the challenges of writing about Black adolescent female subjects. Because the voices of Black girls have often been left out of the research about them and damaging pathologies left in their place, my study stands as evidence that it is definitely possible to include their perspectives, while at the same time illuminating the beauty and resiliency of this group. As literacy researchers push the boundaries of this subject of scholarship, I would like to issue a challenge for us to be more responsible in the language that we use and how we frame our studies. We must avoid misrepresenting and

erasing the voices of those we seek to help. It is not an easy task, but a necessary one to include the voices of historically marginalized groups in future research.

New Directions: How This Study Aligns with and Extends the Extant Research

A growing body of research on the literacy practices of Black adolescent girls suggests the need for researchers to advocate for spaces for the literary practices that Black adolescent girls utilize to make meaning of their identities through reading and discussion of issues that are relevant to them (Boston & Baxley, 2007; Richardson, 2002; Sutherland, 2005, Wissman, 2008). The reading of culturally sustaining critical texts helps Black adolescent girls use their literacy as a tool to have their voices and identities affirmed (Sutherland, 2005; Boston & Baxley, 2007). Findings aligned with research have found purpose in reading and writing and the use of language to take back authority and speak for critical issues in the lives of Black girls (Wissman, 2008). In alignment with this small but growing body of research, the reading of Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give* (2017) by the participants and studying their responses to it honors the importance of Black adolescent girls reading and writing to represent themselves.

This study aligns with the extant literacy research but also expands reading and writing research with Black adolescents. I particularly think this study expands the research of Sutherland (2005) in particular, whose work with a small group of Black adolescent girls reading Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) highlighted the interconnectedness of literature, literacy practices, and Black girl identity. Although this study takes place in a different context (a college campus vs. a high school classroom), connections to all of Muhammed and Haddix's BGLF framework are present: multiple, tied to identity, historical, intellectual, collaborative, and political/critical. Sutherland advocated for the use of culturally

responsive text but found that simply adding it to the curriculum was not sufficient. The literature cannot simply be taught alongside texts from the traditional canon but must be approached differently, particularly from non-Black teachers who are using it. Sutherland maintained that when social, historical, and political issues that stem from culturally responsive texts are brought to the forefront in the classroom, their absence or present has the potential to reproduce racist and sexist ideologies. To make informed decisions, teachers must hear the stories of others, particularly their Black girl students, and become familiar with their inner lives. Literacy and identity are interconnected, and for Black girls, this interconnectedness is particularly deep. My study strengthens the further expands on the interconnected of the lives of Black adolescent girls and the literacy that they practice to make sense of their world.

Methodological Strengths

One of the strongest methodological strengths of this study was the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to frame the study and interpret the interview, journal, and focus group data from the participants of this study. By employing CDA, I was able to conduct multiple levels of analysis of discourse at the societal, situation, and institutional level across three orders of discourse: genre, discourse, and style.

CDA was the best framework of analysis for this study because it acknowledges that texts, language, and communication must always be considered in their social context, as they are shaped and informed by power relationships within society. Because this study focused on the language and literacy practices of Black adolescent girls, whose voices are devalued within the larger, dominant mainstream society, the use of CDA captures the

resilience of this group, as well as their constant negotiation of identities that they must employ to maneuver between Black and White social worlds.

Methodological Weaknesses

Recruiting for this study was a methodological weakness. Because the data of this study is not embedded within school based literacy practices or reading for the purposes of improving standardized testing outcomes, situating the study within a school setting was never considered by the researcher. Early in the recruiting process, it was clear that the local school district was unlikely to accept the research proposal for this study for the reason stated above. Recruiting efforts focused predominantly on community organizations and local agencies that worked closely with children and teenagers, however, this proved to be a fruitless search as well. Many of the community organizations and local agencies only served younger children (students in grades 1-6), who were far younger than the targeted demographic of this study. Also, several of these organizations made it clear that although they appreciated my gesture, school based literacy practices (i.e., reading passages, comprehension drills) were indeed their focus. Since many community centers receive federal and state funds to support their programs, many asked how my study would impact attendance and boost results (i.e., improved school literacy standardized test scores). At least one organization made it clear that reading *The Hate U Give* with their students "would be a problem" (personal communication, May 1, 2018). The local library was a dubious locale as well, with money required up front to rent space and, due to the "walk-in" nature of the library, kids would be unlikely to consistently attend each and every required session for data gathering. A researcher wishing to replicate this study at a future time may face such challenges with recruiting adolescent girls of color outside of a school based context.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the study was due to the positionality of the participants. Although planned for three weeks, data collection of the study occurred over the course of 56 days, from January 4 to March 1, 2019. During this time, all of the participants were first year college students balancing coursework, part-time jobs, and participation in extracurricular activities. The timing of this research study, coupled with their personal and academic lives, limited the amount of time they were able to devote to the study and contributed to late journal entries and a shortened focus group meeting. Due dates for journal entries often had to be extended to permit the participants to keep up with their coursework. The focus group meeting, originally intended to last 90 minutes, ended up clocking in at about 70 minutes because all three participants had to attend a previously scheduled event.

Because all of the participants were college students, extraordinary effort had to be made by the researcher to respect their time, as well as their busy schedules. On several occasions, I had to send email and text reminders to participants to remind them to turn in their journal entries to me. The previous decision to keep the data collection short and succinct was a positive one, being that participation in the study was completely voluntary and relationship between the participants and myself never had the opportunity to become a contentious one.

Summary

This dissertation study re-positions Black adolescent girls at the center of their literate lives. There are many people who will benefit from this study, including scholars, educators, and policy makers who work with Black adolescent females. If educators in and out of schools are to appropriately teach and respond to the needs of Black adolescent girls,

pedagogy must be developed and implemented that considers their unique histories, identities, and literacies. Understanding how Black girls enact their literacy practices is critical to countering narratives of oppression, institutional silencing, and hegemonic educational practices. In order to understand how Black adolescent girls make sense of their lives, instructional practices and research are needed that center their voices. By highlighting Black girls' own voices and exploring the ways in which they make meaning of literacy in response to critical texts, it is my hope that we can begin to do the work of offering sustainable change in the field of literacy education, psychology, and media studies.

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APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND RATIONALE

Method	Rationale
Initial interest Inquiry & Follow Up	Participants who fit the targeted demographic were invited to sign up for the study via a sign-up sheet, which asked for their name and contact information. After the holiday break, the researcher contacted all of the potential study participants from the sign-up sheet to inquire about their future availability for two in-person interviews dates, as well as the date of the focus group. Candidates who indicated availability for all three occurrences were given the time, date, and location of the first interview.
Interview #1 (30 to 45 min.)	The researcher scheduled an interview time with the participant at a time and location convenient for her. After explaining the expectations for participation in the study required to receive the incentive and reviewing the informed consent form, the participant was asked to sign the informed consent form. Once the informed consent form was signed, the participants were interviewed by the researcher following the Semi-structured interview #1 guide. Beginning at this point, the participants' responses were audio-recorded. Participants were given a schedule of the journal writing protocol for this study, including specified dates (when they will be collected by the researcher) as well as the subject (whether it is a free written or prompted response).
Journal entries (15 to 30 min)	Participant journals are a combination of both prompt driven and free write style entries. The prompt driven entries were intended to focus on researcher generated inquires of Black and female identity while reading the text, as well as any critical responses to it. The free-written entries were intended to allow the participants to express their thoughts on the topic of their choice related to the reading, as well as their own literacy and personal experiences at home, in school, or in the community
Focus group (1 hour)	The focus group interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to further engage in more relaxed conversations with participants about their reading experiences, as well as capture their responses of the selected texts in a communal setting, the framework by which the research that informs this study posits that Black girls' literacies occur (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). The semi-structured nature of the focus group allowed the researcher to facilitate with targeted questions, yet allow the conversation to flow between participants.
Interview #2 (30 min)	The researcher had already begun to critically analyze responses from the participants' first interview, first three journal entries, and the focus group discussion. Therefore, this interview's intent was to clarify those responses. Participants were interviewed by

	the researcher following the semi-structured interview #2 guide. Participant responses were audio recorded. Participants were also be given their $30 stipend for participation in the study.

APPENDIX B: DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE

Week	Data Collection
0	Initial interest inquiry
1	Initial Interest Inquiry Follow Up Interview #1 – 30 to 45 minutes Journal #1 (prompted)
2	Journal #2 (free) Focus group – 60 to 90 minutes/Journal #3 (prompted) Journal #4 (free)
3	Journal #5 (prompted) Journal #6 (free) Interview #2

APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

Department of Reading and Elementary Education
9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

"Because We're Unique": The Literate Lives of Black Adolescent Girls
IRB: #18-0422

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled *"Because We're Unique": The Literate Lives of Black Adolescent Girls.* Participation in this research study is voluntary. The information provided is to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Investigator (s):
This study is being conducted by Kellan W. Strong, Ph.D. Candidate, and will be advised by Dr. Tehia Glass and Dr. Erin Miller (Dissertation Chairs).

What is the purpose of this study?
This study explores how Black adolescent girls enact literacy practices in response to a critical text that is written by a Black woman author.

Why am I being asked to participate in this study?
You are being asked to be in this study because you are a Black female, age 18 to 25, and are an undergraduate student at UNC Charlotte.

What does this study involve?
We are asking Black female college students who are 18-25 years of age to complete several activities, which are explained below:

- **Semi –structured interview #1**. In this interview, you will meet with the investigator for approximately 30 to 45 minutes, and your responses will be recorded via audio recorder. You will be asked relevant demographic information about your personal background and literacy experiences. You will also be asked questions about your current conceptions of racial and gendered identity, and asked to read the selected text, Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give*, on your personal time and respond to through journal writing.
    a. **Questions for Interview #1 include**: How would you describe Black girlhood? What are some particular life experiences that have greatly contributed to who you are? In what ways do you use social media?
- **Participant journal entries.** Throughout the study, you will be asked to keep a reflective journal of your thoughts and impressions during the reading the text to better gain insight into how you respond to the selected text. Journal writing sessions may last for several minutes and should occur following the reading of the text at home. The journals will be a combination of both prompt-driven and free write style entries. The prompt driven entries are intended to focus on researcher generated questions of Black and female identity while

reading the text, as well as any critical responses to it. The free-written entries are intended to allow you to express your thoughts on the topic of their choice related to the reading, as well as your own literacy and personal experiences at home, in school, or in the community**.**

   a. **Questions for Participant Journal prompts include:** What is your initial reaction after reading *The Hate U* Give? Do you personally relate to Starr or any experiences in her life? If so, in what ways?

- **Semi-structured focus group.** Approximately halfway in the study, you will asked to participate in a focus group interview in which all of the other study participants will be in attendance. At the time of the focus group, you should have completed their reading of the majority of the book and are expected to have approximately 3 journal entries completed. This interview will be facilitated by the researcher and last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and responses will be recorded via audio recorder. Light refreshments will be provided. The focus group is intended to will provide an opportunity for the researcher to further engage with you in a more relaxed conversation with you about your reading experiences with the selected text.
   a. **Questions for the focus group include:** What is your initial reaction during *The Hate U Give?* Did you relate personally to any of the characters and/or events in the text? How do you think your personal knowledge and experiences affect the way you read this book?
- **Semi-structured interview #2**. This interview, which will take place at the conclusion of the study, will last approximately 30 minutes. Your responses will be recorded via audio recorder. The purpose of this interview is to clarify journal and focus group responses, as well as to allow you to speak freely about your experiences while reading the selected text. You will also receive a $30 stipend for successful completion of all of the study requirements.

How long will this study last?

Study participation will last approximately 6 weeks. As mentioned previously, your participation in this project will consist of one initial 30 to 45-minute interview using an audio recorder. Next, you will participate asked to keep a written journal of responses as you read the text for the study, Angie Thomas' *The Hate U Give.* Next, you will participate in a focus group interview, which will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Finally, you will participate in a final interview, in which you will be asked to clarify any journal or focus group responses. The length of the final interview will be 30 minutes.

Why are we doing this study?

This study seeks to examine how Black adolescent girls enact their literacy practices, particularly within a critically and culturally sustaining literacy framework. Your voice has the potential to affect the teaching and learning of critical text, as well as how to meet the educational and socio-cultural needs of students from diverse backgrounds. The impact of this research will provide implications for teacher/practitioners, educational policymakers, and other researchers to reflect on how Black females experience and respond to critical text.

What are the risks and benefits of participation?

This study poses no risks to you. You have the right to decline any question that you wish and withdraw from participation at any time. You will only recount your literacy experiences and be asked to give insights into your reading of the selected text. You will not personally benefit from taking part in this research but the study results may help literacy researchers better understand how Black female students respond to critical texts.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

It is up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

How will my information be protected?

Any information about your participation, including your identity, will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. Only the research team will have access to the study data. Other people who work for UNC Charlotte that are affiliated with the researcher's dissertation team may need to see the information we collect about you, as well as other agencies as required by law or allowed by federal regulations. The following steps will be taken to ensure that participation in this study will be confidential:

- Interviews will be transcribed and de-identified
- Data will be referred to by coded identifiers for analysis
- Data will be stored on a password-protected laptop computer and destroyed (3) three years post-project completion.

How will my information be used after the study is over?

After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies or as may be needed as part of publishing the results. The data we share will NOT include information that could identify you.

Will I be paid for taking part in this study?

You will receive $30 total in the form of an Amazon gift card. This will be paid to you by the Primary Investigator at the conclusion of the study.

Who can answer my questions about this study and my rights as a participant?

For questions about this research, you may contact Kellan W. Strong (704-661-4398), kawashin@uncc.edu, Dr. Tehia Glass (704-687-7015), tstarker@uncc.edu, or Dr. Erin Miller (704-687-8898), emille90@uncc.edu. If you have questions or wish to discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 704-687-1871 or uncc-irb@uncc.edu.

This form was approved for use on _____ for a period of one (1) year.

Consent to Participate

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study entails before you sign. You will receive a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

_____ _____

Participant Name (PRINT) DATE

_____ _____

Participant Signature DATE

_____

_____ _____

Investigator Signature DATE

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #1

"Because We're Unique": The Literate Lives of Black Adolescent Girls
Length: 30-45 minutes

Step 1: Explain the expectations for study participation.
Step 2: Sign permission form. Participants may keep a copy of the expectations of the study.

a. Ask participant to select a preferred pseudonym.
b. Preferred contact method (phone, text, call, email)
c. Ask for preferred method of journal data collection (handwritten/typed).

Step 3: Set up recording device.
Step 4: Commence interview.

Interview Protocol

Literacy practices

1. What kind of activities do you do in your spare time?
2. I'd like to hear a little bit about your social media experiences. In what ways do you use social media?
3. Tell me a little bit about your reading and writing experiences in and out of school.
4. Tell me about a piece of literature that you really liked.
5. Do you ever discuss literature outside of the classroom? With whom? What kinds of things do you talk about?

Racial and gendered identity

6. How would you describe yourself?
7. In terms of race, how would you describe yourself?
8. In terms of gender, how would you describe yourself?
9. What other aspects of your identity would you like to share (regional, social class, faith, family, etc)?
10. How would you describe Black girlhood?
11. What are some particular life experiences that have greatly contributed to who you are? Please describe them.

Demographic data

1. What is your name (pseudonym)?
2. What is your age?
3. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
4. Tell me a little bit about your high school experience in general.
5. What is your current major?
6. What are your plans after you graduate from college?

Step 5: Remind participant of upcoming journal entry for the following week.

APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW #2

"Because We're Unique": The Literate Lives of Black Adolescent Girls
Length: 30 minutes

Caveat: Because the purpose of this interview is to clarify journal and focus group questions for later analysis, the questions will be individually prompted to the participant.

Interview Protocol

Prompts:

- In your journal, you stated [that] _____. Tell me a little bit more about that.
- During the focus group, you mentioned [that] _____. Could you talk a little more about that, please?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share about the text?
- Are there any other personal insights that you would like to share?

APPENDIX F: SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

"Because We're Unique": The Literate Lives of Black Adolescent Girls
Length: 60-90 minutes

Characterization

1. What is your initial reaction **during** the reading of *The Hate U Give*?
2. Did you relate personally to any of the characters and/or events in the text? If so, tell us who and in what ways?
3. Who is Starr and how would you describe her?
4. Do you feel the characters from this story are complex or stereotypical? Why so or why not?
5. What is your initial reaction **after** reading *The Hate U Give*?

Criticality

6. What do you feel is the author's purpose of *The Hate U Give?* How do you feel this influences the way it is written?
7. What have you enjoyed most about this novel? What have you disliked most about it?
8. What would you change about the novel if you could?
9. What, if anything, did you find problematic about *The Hate U Give?*

Text-to-Self Connection

10. What parts of the reading spoke the most to you?
11. How do you think your personal knowledge and experiences affect the way you read this book?
12. Angie Thomas, a Black woman, is the author of *The Hate U Give.* Do you believe that she accurately represents the Black girl experience through Starr Carter?

Conclusion: Complete Journal Entry #3

At the end of the novel, Starr pledges to "never be quiet" (p.450). In what ways does Starr grow when it comes to learning to use her voice to fight the issues that she is passionate about? In what ways do you use your voice to discuss issues that you care about?

Facilitation Prompts:

- Thank you for sharing.
- Does anyone want to respond to what she said?
- Does anyone else want to respond? What were you thinking as she was sharing?

Elaboration Prompt:

- What I heard you say is _____. Would you like to add anything else?
- Tell me more about _____.

APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT JOURNAL ENTRIES

"Because We're Unique": The Literate Lives of Black Adolescent Girls

Prompted journal responses

1. Do you relate personally to Starr or any experiences in her life? If so, in what ways? (#1)
2. Who is Starr in her neighborhood? In her household? Who is she at school? How does she manage her many identities across different settings? How might you "code switch" in different circumstances in your life? (#5)
3. What is your initial reaction **after** reading *The Hate U Give*? (focus group, #3)
4. At the end of the novel, Starr pledges to "never be quiet" (p.450). In what ways does Starr grow when it comes to learning to use her voice to fight the issues that she is passionate about? In what ways do you use your voice to discuss issues that you care about? (focus group, #3)

Free-written journal response

1. In this week's journal entry, you are welcome to discuss anything you would like related to the characters, issues, and events discussed in the novel or your own personal experience as a Black girl in today's society. (Journal #2, #4, #6)