NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE: CRITICAL EXAMINATIONS OF POWER,
SOCIOPOLITICAL AGENCY, AND THE IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF GIRLS OF
COLOR

By

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ABSTRACT

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In this case study, I explore how girls of color from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds make sense of their sociopolitical realities and their experience participating in a social justice education course focused on Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP). Given that course is situated in a community-based educational context specifically for girls of color, I investigate its affordances in shaping how they understand and respond to social injustices that impact their lives. I draw on politicizing socialization (Brown, 2007) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) as theoretical frameworks for understanding how girls of color make sense of power and oppression that shape their experiences. I also utilized concepts focused on women of color feminist pedagogy to make connections between instructors' decision-making and the experiences and perspectives the girls gained from participation in PIP.

This study relied on qualitative data collection methods that include reflections shared by girls and young women of color in Critical Conversation Spaces (CCSs) as well as interviews with course instructors. I analyzed these data sources using concept and value coding to generate three significant findings. The first finding suggests that girls of color are acutely aware of the white supremacist and patriarchal ideologies and practices that shaped their girlhood. The second finding reveals that participation in PIP bolstered the girls' critical consciousness and sense of agency. The third finding illustrates that the girls utilized their lived experiences and insights

from the course to examine, critique, and pursue social action to mitigate institutional,

interpersonal, and internalized oppression within their schools, families, and communities.

I dedicate this dissertation to girls and women of color who boldly take up space with their voices and bodies in a world that continuously demands they shrink themselves.
You inspire me.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I find it very funny how everyone is posting MLK quotes and pictures pretending like you

support Black people. But, when Colin Kaepernick asked for your support, you were silent.

When Black Moms cried because her children were being killed by police and thrown into

jail, you were silent. When R. Kelly sexually assaulted Black girls, you were silent. But

you choose one day to pretend to be woke. You can't choose one day to support us and

every other day, stay silent. You must; we must do better.

-Sadie Nash Leadership Project Participant, 2020

Introduction

I choose to begin this dissertation with a quote from one of the girls that made the

insights offered in this work possible. She wrote this statement in an Instagram post on Martin

Luther King Jr. Day, January 20, 2020, in response to the plethora of social media posts intended

to celebrate his legacy and calls for justice. She points to the reality that these displays of

solidarity are too often symbolic gestures and serve as a placeholder for demonstrated

commitments that actualize justice and liberation for Black people. Her statement holds

relevance, especially given the present moment when the white supremacist U.S. power

structure's ramifications are on full display. As I write these words, protests are occurring in

cities all across the U.S. in response to anti-black violence and police brutality. Unfortunately,

violence against Black people at the hands of white supremacist actors has a long history in the

U.S., but what makes this moment even more enraging is that even under the conditions of a

global pandemic, Black people have no refuge.

Currently, over 100,000 people have lost their lives from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in

the United States. According to a report by the Centers for Disease Control (2020), Black people

represent a disproportionate number of deaths ("COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups"). Even with stay-at-home orders enacted to reduce the spread of the virus, Black people are being killed by anti-black violence in our homes, in the street, and while they jog by white vigilantes. Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd are amongst a tragically long list of Black lives stolen by white supremacist motives.

And, amid the rage and rebellion manifested from enduring countless injustices, some are using MLK's words of peace and non-violence to criticize and pacify the resistance.   They do so, with limited understanding of the complex and nuanced views held by MLK. They are unaware of MLK's legacy outside of his "I Have a Dream" Speech which can be viewed as a failure of the history curriculum taught in schools. Similarly, the legacy of the Black Panther Party (BPP), Malcolm X, and other Black leaders and liberation movements are distorted or rendered invisible in schools. In history books and in popular media, the BPP and Malcolm X are often portrayed as advocates of violence and anti-white militants without context or acknowledgment of their purpose and goals.

Given that the institution of slavery, Jim Crow laws and practices, and the Civil Rights Movement are fundamental to the history of the U.S., the curricula omissions mentioned above impede a robust comprehension relating to the genesis of the present uprisings. However, if we acknowledge that schools are extensions of the white supremacist, patriarchal, and capitalist power structure, then we can understand why MLK's speeches on workers' rights, opposing the Vietnam War, and on racism and poverty are routinely absent from the curriculum. Images of BPP members carrying guns are admonished while in present-day white protestors entered Michigan's capitol building boldly brandishing firearms to express their discontent with the Governor's stay-at-home orders. They get away with this conduct under the guise of exercising

their constitutional right to bear arms. However, the very thought of Black people exercising their right to bear arms is worrisome, because it disrupts notions of white safety and whiteness as property, meaning the laws exist for the protection and benefit of white people (Harris, 1995). Thus, MLK's message of non-violent protest is more digestible because it feeds into the antiblack desire for Black bodies to serve as defenseless targets of racism and white aggression.

With a sense of entitlement, white people co-opt MLK's words in efforts to dictate how Black people should appropriately protest. The opening quote which was written by a young Black woman, and the backlash former NFL player Colin Kaepernick faced for taking a knee in protest of police brutality, demonstrate that any form of protest in defense of Black lives is met with silence or resistance. Her firm critique of the silence concerning social injustice impacting Black people, along with her call for us all to do better, exemplifies the insights offered within community-based organizations committed to engendering critical consciousness and activism. In sharing her views through social media, the critical perspectives she provides contribute to the collective consciousness of youth, their communities, and the wider public.

Contextualizing the Study: Girls of Color in Schools

The work of community-based organizations centered on social justice is important because these spaces are often the only educational settings where youth of color can engage in discussions that attend to the concerns and conditions of their lives. With attention to the experiences of girls of color, the existing literature addresses the benefit of outlets where they can unpack the racism, sexism, and other dimensions of oppression they experience in schools and society more broadly (Carter Andrews et al., 2019b; Evans-Winters & Girls for Gender Equity, 2017; Player, 2018).

In *The School Girls Deserve Report*, girls, transgender, and gender-nonconforming youth of color attending NYC public schools "identified experiences with both institutional and interpersonal violence that intersect and overlap through a combination of school policies, curriculum, and practices" (Girls for Gender Equity, 2018, p. 6). Given these acts of violence and other social and political issues that impact their lives, girls of color express an urgency to learn about and to participate in ongoing struggles for justice, equity, and liberation.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

This study builds on the findings from a pilot study in which I explored the experiences of girls of color participating in the Sadie Nash Leadership Program (SNLP), a New York City based non-profit organization committed to programming focused on social justice, activism, and leadership. A significant finding from this pilot study was the participants' desire for opportunities to engage in critical discussions about issues of power, which was often seen as "taboo" in their schools. They viewed opportunities to engage with these topics as critical in their process of understanding systems of oppression. Building on these findings, the purpose of this case study is to understand the experiences of girls and young women of color that were participants in SNLP's course on Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP). More specifically, I aim to explore how they utilize their lived experiences and insights from PIP to interrogate and respond to issues of power and oppression that impact their lives. With this goal, I investigate the following questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do girls and young women of color -- who were participants in a social justice leadership program -- make sense of their racialized, ethnic, and gendered identities in relation to their sociopolitical realities?

Research Question 1 (RQ2): How do the girls and young women describe their experiences participating in a course on Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP)?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do the girls and young women utilize the content and learning experiences fostered through participation in (PIP) to engage in discourse and action about issues of power concerning their schooling, social communities, and interpersonal interactions?

A Note on Using the Term Nashers

Participants in SNLP are lovingly referred to as Nashers by themselves, faculty, staff, and other members of the SNLP community. Throughout the dissertation, I refer to the girls and young women involved in this study as Nashers. I intentionally make this move to situate our conversations in the community where they took place and to refrain from "nam[ing] people and communities not as they are but as the academy needs them to be" (Paris, 2019, p. 217). I decided not to provide individual profiles and pseudonyms, given that I aim to focus on the breadth and complexities across the Nashers' experiences within PIP. However, if, at any point, it becomes essential to identify relevant aspects of the speaker's identity to contextualize their statement, I do so.

Locating Myself in the Work

My experiences as a student and educator navigating various educational spaces inspired my interests in the context and research questions at the center of this dissertation. As a Jamaican immigrant growing up in the Bronx, I attended public schools where most students were youth of color from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. However, most of our teachers were white, along with the authors, characters, and perspectives shared in the books we read. Of course, there were exceptions, but whiteness was the norm. In school, I was also repeatedly

subjected to sexual harassment from my adolescent male peers, and no one intervened. I didn't know about whiteness or misogynoir as a child. Although I experienced these psychic and physical assaults, I could not name them or put them in context with other acts of erasure and violence.

The cruel irony is that much of the language I have to speak on these issues came from the classrooms at predominantly white colleges and universities. As an undergraduate student at Hampshire College, I could design my major, and I chose to explore representations of Black identity through the arts. I took classes on Caribbean history and poetry, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Black feminism, and Black women writers. My senior thesis took me to London to explore the music and cultural productions of Jamaicans in Britain. In college, I also made lasting friendships with women of color as we banded together in efforts to thrive in a space where we were few. We were trying to make sense of our encounters with white supremacy and patriarchy on the campus, in our respective communities, and within the larger society. These educational experiences collectively made available histories, identities, and perspectives that were always present but not entirely within reach. My desire to become an educator is rooted in the schooling experiences I detail above. These experiences catalyzed my commitment to ensuring that youth of color have access to learning opportunities where their identities and experiences are centered.

I had a rude awakening when I began teaching in New York City public schools. The task I had set out to do was much harder than I imagined. I quickly became frustrated and discouraged by the insurmountable pressure to ensure students scored well on standardized tests. Most of the joy I experienced was from the work I did with young people outside of the classroom. I worked with students and like-minded teachers to facilitate book clubs, dance

classes, and spaces specifically for girls. I worked with students to write rap lyrics and create elaborate routines for pep rallies. I found joy in all those things, but not so much in the teaching.

As a schoolteacher, I felt pressure to enforce rules I vehemently objected to, and when I refused, I was accused of eroding structures that were vital to maintaining order in the school. I disagreed with policies that indicated students who needed academic support did not earn the right to participate in extracurricular activities. These toxic and dehumanizing policies and practices stole the joy I thought I would find in teaching and strained my relationship with some of my students. But I never stopped showing up for them and their families. I defended them fiercely when they were being treated unjustly, and I apologized and took accountability when my actions harmed them. I wanted to do less harm, but I wasn't sure how. I also know that I failed many times. And like many of my students, I felt powerless within an oppressive educational system. I left the K-12 classroom for graduate school with plans to further examine and develop strategies to combat the oppressive and inequitable dynamics I encountered in schools. While I learned so much through my role as a student, instructor, and research in teacher education, my most transformative experience occurred through teaching at a community-based organization.

In 2016, I was hired to teach Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP) in the Sadie Nash Leadership Project's Summer Institute faculty. During the first day of orientation, I knew SNLP would be significantly different from the schools where I previously taught. I knew this because, during orientation, faculty and staff were explicitly told that if we had a problem with how the girls and young women dressed, we were the ones with the problem. The statement stood out to me because, as a Black girl and Black woman, my body was under constant surveillance. As a

student, I remember being called out by teachers and school leaders for wearing clothing they deemed inappropriate. During my time as a middle and high school teacher, the clothing worn by my fellow Black women colleagues and I was also subjected to scrutiny and reprimand. Meanwhile, our white and non-Black colleagues of color could freely wear clothes of their choosing. Therefore, I found SNLP's stance on dress codes refreshing. I was grateful because it signaled that policing the bodies of girls and women of color would not be tolerated.

Teaching PIP within the context of SNLP made it possible to cultivate a space where girls and women of color could "talk about what it means to expect erasure, to prepare one's self for invisibility" (Paris, 2017, p. 8). We could talk about the silence around our pain, our hopes, and our desires. The girls could name the things that harmed them and confidently claim identities rendered invisible in their school context. I was grateful and humbled to facilitate critical inquiries and discussions that opened up new ways of seeing and being in the world. I walked away from my experience teaching PIP, feeling rejuvenated, and encouraged by witnessing the possibilities for teaching and learning that could be fostered in a humanizing educational environment.

For me, teaching and learning about power, identity, and privilege with girls of color was a life-giving experience, and so, I decided to return the following summer. Although the physical site was different, the fellowship and centering of women of color remained ever-present. For example, in the office shared by faculty and staff, I was introduced to the work of South Asian American poet, Pavana Reddy. In red marker, against the backdrop of a dry erase board, read the words:

> Melanin in my veins,
> this heart pumps stars.
>
> they said,

What unfortunate mother
With a daughter so dark

To them
My mother replied,

I'm so sorry
The sun did not
love you enough

Since then, I've seen various iterations of this poem, but my first encounter with these words remains fresh. I remember feeling an overwhelming sense of gratitude to be in a space where Blackness and Brownness were affirmed and written on the walls. The poem is a powerful display of resistance and love that has the potentiality of healing generational wounds. This asset-based narrative, coupled with the overwhelming presence of women of color, makes SNLP different from the K-12 educational schools where I previously taught and attended.

At the same time, SNLP is not a utopia completely void of the ideological ills that plague the larger society. After all, SNLP staff, faculty, and participants are people in the midst of our individual journeys toward unlearning the oppressive ways of thinking and being rooted in white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and heterosexism. Most importantly, the people involved in the organization need not be perfect because perfection is not a precursor to pursuing social justice endeavors. Levins Morales (2019) proclaims, "All social movements harbor the injustices we need to dismantle in order for our lives to be possible. This is the work. To turn ourselves into the people we don't yet know how to be" (p. 25). At SNLP, girls and women of color could see "love is possible even in a world that teaches us to hate ourselves and the selves we see waiting in each other" (Gumbs, 2016, p. 19). The love and community I found through teaching PIP significantly informs my pedagogical practice and orientation towards a humanizing praxis grounded in the needs, concerns, and desires of youth of color.

My commitment to cultivating critical consciousness-raising learning opportunities for and with youth of color is central to my work. In 2019, I collaboratively designed and taught a course in the Telluride Association's critical Black and Ethnic Studies college preparation program housed at the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor. The students in the program were Black and Brown high school sophomores from cities across the U.S. with one student from Canada. The course entitled Reconceptualizing Black Geographies: The Politics of Race, Space, and Home, drew on Black feminist geographies and critical literacies to engage students in critical discussions concerning housing discrimination, gentrification, and other forms of erasure/displacement and their impact within Black communities. We also prioritized humanizing narratives of joy and resistance as we examined the histories and representations of predominantly Black cities such as Detroit and New Orleans alongside our own home(s), to understand the politics of anti-Blackness. While the students were from different parts of the country, they expressed that the issues covered in the course were never mentioned or thoroughly discussed in their schools. Further, for many of them, my colleague and I were their first Black teachers. The opportunity to spend six weeks with Black women educators learning about racist policies and practices and struggles for justice and social change was an experience they may never have again. But we were free in that space. Free to be unapologetically Black and Brown. Free to ask questions suppressed in schools. Free to not know the answers. And most importantly, free to imagine.

My decision to pursue an investigation of PIP is grounded in my desire to examine and amplify curriculum, pedagogy, and spaces where youth and educators of color are engaged in humanizing and transformative teaching and learning. Through teaching PIP and working in

SNLP, I learned that it takes a collective effort to create the equitable and socially just learning

communities our youth need to thrive. As Shalaby (2017) eloquently proclaims:

> No single one of us has the creativity, the courage, or the skill enough to teach love and
>
> freedom alone. This is work that requires an imagination developed together, the courage
>
> of a community, and the combined skills of each member of that community. (p. 243)

At SNLP, I found a learning community where women of color feminist theories and practices

read and discussed in academia are enacted. I continue to pay it forward by sharing the lessons I

learned from the Nashers as well as SNLP faculty and staff. My work explores questions that

help us envision schools where girls of color and women of color are not in constant battles

against oppressive systems and structures. I do this work alongside youth, educators, and

scholars seeking to create educational spaces that prioritize the holistic well-being of youth of

color. While I continue to mourn and heal from the trauma and pain I endured as a young person,

I also reflect on my role in contributing to the harm youth experience in schools. Making room to

grow from these experiences is vital to envisioning and manifesting schools that are liberatory

and transformative.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framing

Theoretical Frames

The overwhelming majority of participants in the Sadie Nash Leadership Project (SNLP)

Summer Institute are girls of color from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. In this study, I

center their individual and collective experiences as it pertains to the curriculum and pedagogy

employed in SNLP's foundational course on Power, Identity, Privilege (PIP). In particular, I am

interested in what knowledge and experiences PIP offers girls of color in their understanding of

power and oppression. In pursuing this line of inquiry, I proceed with the awareness that the

experiences of girls of color are often essentialized without attention to how historical and contemporary socio-political realities uniquely shape their experiences (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). With the awareness of the distortions, silences, and erasures that girls of color experience in schools and society more broadly, I draw on politicizing socialization (Brown, 2007), and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) as theoretical frames that center their multiple identities and social, political, and cultural experiences. Alongside these theories, I use ideas relevant to women of color, feminist pedagogy, and social justice-oriented teaching and learning. The theoretical and conceptual frames that guide my analysis are in alignment with humanizing methodological stances that ungirded this study.

Politicizing Socialization

Ruth Nicole Brown (2007) offers politicizing socialization as a theoretical framework that undergirds the role of power in shaping Black girls' political experiences. Brown argues that "negotiations young girls make as girls becoming women has everything to do with power, taking action, and using political skills" (p. 128). While Brown intended to center Black girls, I argue politicizing socialization is a lens that can also work to engage inquiry about girls of color and how they utilize examinations of power to make sense of their social and political realities.

The theoretical perspective of politicizing socialization also lends itself to investigations of the purpose and goals of organizations, programs, and policies intended to serve girls of color. Too often, these programs operate with a deficit narrative of girls of color and are fixated on changing their behaviors and ways of being. Organizations whose programming seeks to alter participants' dress, actions, or speech, implicitly, or explicitly communicate that girls of color are problems that need fixing. Even with the best intentions, programs struggle to conceptualize working with girls of color "in a way that is not about controlling their bodies and/or producing

White, middle-class girl subjectivities" (Brown, 2009, p. 2). Programs focused on critical consciousness-raising and fostering the agency of girls of color instead emphasize examining systems and structures. According to Brown (2007), "programs aimed at politicizing socialization illuminate how relations of power shape and influence girls' self-definition" along with staff's intentions and decision-making (p. 134). These types of programs operationalize an orientation grounded in accountability, transparency, and the concerns and desires of the girls they serve.

Intersectionality

As a theoretical framework, intersectionality foregrounds an analysis of power with a focus on how "our identities are shaped by our experiences in social groups and how we as members of those groups encounter institutionalized social structures" (Tefera, Powers, and Fischman, 2018, p. viii). In the context of SNLP, the participants represent diverse racial, ethnic, religious, national identities. Through the use of intersectionality, I draw connections between how the girls understand issues of power and oppression, their lived experiences as informed by their multiple identities, and their critical consciousness. Given the prevalence of SNLP participants that are first-generation or recent immigrants, an intersectional lens engages the experiences and perspectives of those "whose lives are not rooted in any single nation-state" and "imagining[s] of the past, present, and the future span national borders" (Vellanki & Prince, 2018, p. 314). Simultaneously, by way of their experiences within schools and social communities within the U.S., they "learn how to belong to hyper-diverse spaces and learn new ways of participating in transcultural communities of practice across ethno-national groups and languages" (Malsbary, 2018, p. 1240). With attention to the aforementioned factors, I draw on

intersectionality as an analytical tool that considers the interplay of identity and systems of power, which makes room for the realities and commitments transnational identities manifest.

The girls' racial and ethnic backgrounds also play a role in shaping their identities as they are both essential to the formation of cultural ways of knowing that are cultivated with the context of family and community. For example, South Asian girls of Bengali descent are often raised in Islamic households. In this case, Bengali, as an ethnic identity, offers religious and cultural insights that inform how South Asian girls understand and navigate the U.S. cultural, social, and political milieu. At the same time, within educational discourse and scholarship, there is a tendency to treat race and ethnicity as if they are the same. When ethnicity is collapsed and conflated with race, students' diverse realities, and the circumstances that impact their lives are not fully considered. Valdez and Golash-Boza (2017b) assert this conflation renders invisible "the differences between them or their distinct dynamics and consequent contributions to neighbourhoods, organizations, the language community, [and] the media" (p. 2258). These spaces and places play an integral role in the socialization and the perspectives that are taken up by the girls and young women involved in SNLP.

The lack of targeted and nuanced analysis of race and ethnicity as related yet distinct categories lends itself to erasures that obscure how socialization within and across these groups work collectively "to shape inclusion and exclusion within the U.S. social structure" (Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2017a, p. 2182). For example, erasure is at work when Black is used interchangeably with African American when a group is multi-ethnic. This usage begs the question, what does the racial and cultural identity of Black encapsulate? Who is included/excluded from that category? Furthermore, what assumptions are we making about the identities and experiences of Black people? For example, Dache, Haywood, and Mislán (2019)

argue that research centered on Latinx students' schooling experiences glosses over and ignores Latinx students of African ancestry and how their racial and ethnic backgrounds shape their experiences. While the authors focus their analysis on the absences in higher educational literature, their critique can also be leveled at the K-12 scholarship. Research about issues of power and identity that considers the types of questions, critiques, and absences above would assist in offering a more sophisticated analysis that resists simplistic and essentialist presumptions. I pursue an intersectional analysis that considers the role of ethnicity along with race, gender, class, sexuality, and other salient identities in how girls of color understand and navigate interpersonal and institutional power dynamics.

In this study, intersectionality also operates as a lens for "examining how critical analysis and social action inform one another" (Hill Collins, 2018, p. 3). In particular, I explore the connectivity between the multiple identities girls of color embody and the meanings they derive from discourse that centers examinations of power and oppression. I ask how they utilize the knowledge from their lived experiences and the learning opportunities provided through PIP in processing and responding to issues of justice. I offer insights into the individual and collective ways of seeing and being that become possible when girls of color openly share and engage in critical dialogue. These conversations reveal racism, sexism, and other isms as interlocking systems of oppression that rely on each other for viability (Hill Collins, 1991). I explore PIP as a site of unveiling and the individual and collective possibilities it creates for girls of color in confronting issues of power.

Conceptual Framing

With attention to the learning experience manifested through PIP, my conceptual framework brings together teaching philosophies, epistemologies, and instructional practices

grounded in pedagogies that are critical, intersectional, and feminist-oriented. Case (2017) identifies critical self-reflection, attention to positionality, and coalitional thinking and acting as vital elements of intersectional pedagogy for social justice teaching. These approaches coupled with the ideas from women of color feminist pedagogues support the concept I employ within my conceptual frame.

Pedagogical Love

The concept of pedagogical love is defined and explored within Caraballo & Soleimany's (2019) work focused on the experiences of preservice teachers working collaboratively with high school youth. The authors view educators' examinations of their positionality and along with their facilitation of dialogue that engenders critical consciousness as components of pedagogical love. These elements are dependent on each other and should coincide in contexts where youth and educators are working together to interrogate and respond to issues of power and justice. Further, their framing of pedagogical love, "seeks to disrupt dominant understandings of who gets to identify and practice being an educator, knower, or agent of change, and allows the possibility of a collaborative space [that fosters] the co-construction of critical knowledges" (p. 89). Given this frame, pedagogical love points toward instructor and youth participants' dynamics as part and parcel to the educative, agentic, and transformative possibilities that lie within social justice teaching and learning. I view pedagogical love as an approach that gives rise to politicizing socialization and intersectional analysis considering the centrality of examinations relating to the identities and positionality of the Nashers and PIP instructors. With this view, I examine what PIP instructors and SNLP participants convey in their descriptions of the relational dynamics that undergird the PIP learning experience.

Pedagogies in the Flesh

Hanna (2019) defines pedagogies in the flesh as the actualization of theory towards the embodiment of decolonizing frameworks that "actively combat[s] the always multiplying constituted faces of heteropatriarchy, racism, capitalism, ableism, and imperialism" (p. 233). Andreotti (2016) makes the case how we teach, learn, and problem solve are limited by the head heavy approach often taken to knowledge sharing and production. Similarly, Cariaga (2018) exemplifies the efficacy of feminist of color epistemologies that "places the personal and collective body at the center of healing, theory, and praxis, and challenges the over-rationalization of knowledge by reconciling multiple dichotomies (i.e. individual/ collective, emotional/rational, spiritual/material) to embrace interconnectivity and difference" (p. 104). In the context of social justice-oriented education, an awareness that moves beyond binary logics affords possibilities for multiple modes of knowing and situating ourselves within the world.

As an embodied practice, pedagogies in the flesh holds space for visceral responses to critical dialogue concerning issues of power and oppression. Hanna postulates through "reading our bodies (e.g., noticing when we are not breathing, when we are frowning, when our heart beats faster), we learn about how we relate to knowledge rather than simply learning the knowledge itself" (p. 239) Thus, instructors' attention to students' emotions, trepidations, and triggers serves as a humanizing pedagogical practice that values experiential understanding and ways of knowing. As a course that engages in discussions around topics like racism, colorism, and sexism, PIP is rife with content that elicits passionate responses. In PIP, an orientation towards pedagogies of the flesh values noticing and learning from the breadth and depth of emotions shared by the girls and instructors. In this study, I'm interested in the knowledge and

understanding honed through PIP instructors and Nashers' sadness, fear, anger, joy, and excitement.

Taken together, pedagogical love and pedagogies of the flesh highlight the humanizing and transformative capacity of social justice teaching and learning rooted in the feminist practices of women of color. Bringing together these practices, I view the curriculum and pedagogical practices employed by PIP instructors alongside the girls and young women's experience within and beyond the course. In doing so, I explore and magnify elements of the course content and learning experiences that deeply resonated with the girls involved in this study. In this way, the findings from this study consider PIP instructors' pedagogical intentionality in shaping the learning experiences that occur within the course and what participants' takeaway in relation to their critical consciousness and social action.

The theoretical frames I employ address the prominent role identity plays in how individuals experience and navigate various forms of oppression. In relying on the frames of politicizing socialization and intersectionality, my analysis proceeds with the awareness that the experiences of girls and women of color are often essentialized without attention to how historical and contemporary socio-political realities uniquely shape their experiences. As a Black woman researcher, I take seriously Alexander's (2005) acknowledgment that, "We are not born women of color. We become women of color" (p. 269). The process of becoming rests in our intentional efforts to resist white supremacist, xenophobic, patriarchal, and misogynistic narratives that girls and women of color internalize and project onto each other.

This process of forming socio-political identities is implicated within the construction of SNLP participants' worldviews. SNLP is unique insofar as the majority of instructors are women of color when compared to formal school settings where white women make up the majority of

the teaching force. Given this fact, PIP instructors reflect the racial and ethnic backgrounds of SNLP's participants. Because the people who constitute SNLP are girls and women of color, it is imperative that I center theoretical and conceptual frames that are designed by women of color to speak directly to their lived experiences.

The findings chapters that follow offer insights into the affordances of PIP as a course that utilizes critical social justice curricula and pedagogy and centers the knowledge and experiences of girls and women of color. In recognizing that PIP is not the only source that informs their critical consciousness, my analysis engages the "multiple histories and events, multiple geographies, multiple identifications" that inform their perspectives (Alexander, 2005, p. 265). The theoretical frames of politicizing socialization and intersectionality along with the concepts of pedagogical love and pedagogies of the flesh make possible analysis focused on the knowledge and experiences of girls of color concerning examinations of power, identity, and commitments to justice.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters. This first chapter provides an introduction to the purpose and goals of my study and its importance relating to the schooling experiences of girls of color and the affordances of social justice-oriented educational spaces. In this chapter, I also describe the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the data collection and analysis of my investigation. The second chapter serves as a review of the literature on critical literacies and pedagogies that bolster the critical consciousness and activism of youth of color. I also examine the literature focused on the utility of critical consciousness-raising programming for girls of color. Chapter three details the methodology of the study, including the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis. In the fourth chapter, I

present findings that answer my first research question focused on how the girls and women make sense of their racialized and gendered experiences. Chapter five responds to the second research question centered on the knowledge the Nashers gained through participating in PIP. Chapter six provides findings that answer my third research question concerning how PIP informs the Nashers' agency and social action. The seventh chapter concludes the dissertation and offers implications for teaching and learning and future research that builds on the study's findings.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This dissertation builds on the existing literature centered on critical literacies and pedagogies and their impact on the critical consciousness and identity development of youth of color and, more specifically, girls of color. In particular, I focus on the work of scholars that investigate the potentiality of critical civic and critical media literacy in fostering spaces where youth of color can examine and challenge institutional oppression in various forms. Given that the girls and young women involved the Sadie Nash Leadership Project range from 14-21 years of age, this review includes literature on the experiences of middle and high school-aged youth of color in formal school spaces and community-based settings.

Consciousness-raising through Critical Literacies and Pedagogy

Drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, scholars Watts, Diemer, & Voight (2011) define critical consciousness as "how oppressed or marginalized people learn to critically analyze their social conditions and act to change them" (p. 44). They ascribe critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action as its three defining components. Much of the research centered on critical consciousness addresses how critical engagement and reflection on issues regarding institutional oppression and social change contribute to the psychological well being and self-efficacy of youth of color (El-Amin et al., 2017; Wallin-Ruschman, 2018; Watts & Hipolito-Delgado, 2015). Further, scholars argue that awareness of systemic injustice and inequities aids youth of color in grappling with and healing from the ways these systems impact their everyday lives (Ginwright, 2011).

Critical Civic Literacy

In the context of formal school spaces, opportunities to engage in critical dialogue about issues of power remain uncommon even in civic education courses dedicated to understanding governmental power structures and notions of democracy. Nicole Mirra and Antero Garcia (2017) argue that school-based civics education often operates from the "core assumption that the infrastructure of our democracy is sound—that all citizens enjoy equitable access to opportunity and can use the tools of self-governance to remedy any threats to such opportunity" (p. 137). These assumptions often lead to the promotion of civic education that places an overwhelming emphasis on sets of behaviors conducted by citizens of the U.S. nation-state. Consequently, actions such as voting, engaging with local elected officials, or volunteering, are held up as exemplars of civic participation. This understanding of civic engagement echoes in the literature focused on the "civic achievement gap," which addresses concerns around disparities in civic and political knowledge, skills, and behaviors based on race and socioeconomic status (Levinson, 2005; 2009).

Scholarship focused on closing the "civic achievement gap" calls for increased engagement with school-based civic education that prepares students of color to operate within the confines of the existing political structure. For example, Levinson (2005) cites knowing when and how to speak "Standard American English at appropriate times, to dress according to mainstream norms (no baggy pants or do-rags when talking to a city councilor), and to interact in ways that accord with the cultural practices of those in power" (p. 9) as desired civic behaviors. This sentiment reinforces the notion that the civic aspirations of students of color must be approached through actions and means prescribed by white middle-class standards and ideals. Woodson and Love (2019) push back against the deficit narratives around Black youth and civic

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engagement. Instead, they elicit a "call to action for family and folx who insist that Black children are enough, and for those who seek further precedent for describing Black children's enoughness in civic education research" (p. 91). The lens of enoughness is part and parcel to redefining the way civic education and engagement is perceived, envisioned, and enacted.

In recent years, there has been a growing body of literature that takes a critical lens in seeking to redefine what is understood as civic learning and engagement (Banks, 2017; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007; Hope, & Jagers, 2014; Love, 2014; Mirra & Garcia, 2017; Mirra, Morrell, Cain, Scorza, Ford, 2013; Morrell, 2008). This view is supported by Pollack (2013), who defines critical civic literacy "as an alternative approach to the traditional civics curriculum that emphasizes the role that social power plays in facilitating or inhibiting meaningful participation by individuals and/or groups in public processes" (p. 231). I draw on Pollack's definition of critical civic literacy along with Mirra and Garcia's (2017) notion of critical civic learning in highlighting relevant empirical, theoretical, and conceptual literature concerning the critical civic literacy, critical consciousness, and the identity development of youth of color.

Woodson's (2019) critical race ethnographic study, brings attention to the influence of dominant narratives about the 1960's civil rights movement and notions of whiteness and respectability in activism. As a participant-observer in their role as a facilitator of a ten-week writing and journal workshop with Black teenaged youth, Woodson explored how their schooling, communities, and popular culture informed youth's understandings and perceptions of civil rights leadership and activism. The findings from this study illustrate how the internalization of respectability politics and deficit narratives about predominantly Black

communities contribute to Black youth perceptions and feelings of disassociation with civic

engagement and activism. Woodson posits,

> As students sift through and organize patterns of curricular representation, they begin to
>
> adopt dominant historical shorthand: civil rights leader becomes code for black activists
>
> who dress in this particular way, talk in this particular way, and resist in this particular
>
> way. (18)

The findings from this study highlight the need for a critical civic literacy praxis that offers

multiple perspectives and engages with various forms of Black activism from past to present.

Harrell-Levy, Kerpelman, & Henry (2016), offer a unique investigation into the identity

development of Black catholic high school alumni who were participants in a transformative

social justice class. While acknowledging that enrollment in a private catholic school did not

shield Black students from systemic racism, the authors were interested in how attending a

private catholic school "may confer a distinction of privilege to Black youth" (p. 101). The

authors found that through participation in the transformative social justice class, Black students

developed a more sophisticated awareness of the resources and opportunities that were available

to them in comparison to their peers attending traditional public schools. Additionally, the

learning experiences fostered in the course bolstered participants' critical consciousness and

agency. This shift was evidenced in their expressed commitments to personal growth and change

regarding "situations endemic to their own lives," as well as "larger conditions external to them,

such as institutional injustice" (p. 106). These findings highlight the potential of social justice

education as a vehicle for the promotion of critical civic literacy.

Moya (2017) utilizes a sociocultural lens to analyze and better understand the "processes

by which youth take on various kinds of critical civic identity trajectories through participation"

(p. 450) in the figured worlds of a high school social studies classroom and community-based youth organizing group. In this work with mostly Latinx students from a low-income urban community, the author found that in both contexts, "exposure to critical content and dialogue fostered students' development of a critical consciousness and a motivation to address social injustices" (p. 464). However, the author noted that participants in the community-based youth organizing group had more definite leanings towards expressions of civic agency and activism. Moya's argument that "the goals of figured worlds mediate how opportunities for civic action influence these identity processes" (p. 471) adds another layer of analysis to consider regarding the existing as well as future research in this area.

Critical Media Literacy

Critical media literacy is another domain of focus in the literature on critical consciousness-raising and the self-efficacy of youth of color. The literature in this area explores different forms of media literacy, which encompasses print, visual, and digital media. For example, Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, and Everett (2017) illustrate the need to engage Black youth in critical examinations of mainstream media that span across various mediums. The authors provide examples of the perpetuation of white supremacist ideologies and anti-Black rhetoric through media images and narratives. They illustrate the psychological toll repeated encounters with dehumanizing messages have on Black people. They express urgency for English educators to employ critical media literacy pedagogy as a means of facilitating opportunities for Black youth to examine, critique, and create counternarratives. The authors view Black youths' creation of their own stories as a source of healing and activism that promotes social change.

In the same vein as the authors above, McArthur (2016) emphasizes the necessity and utility of critical media literacy pedagogy specifically for Black girls. McArthur details how the

Black Girls' Literacies Collective (BGLC) "espouse activist epistemology and pedagogy" in their use of critical media analysis as a tool to engender Black girls' activism and self-advocacy through authoring individual and collaborative just oriented works (p. 371). The manifestations of Black girls' engagement with critical media literacy is situated alongside the rich legacy of Black women's activism. Critical media literacy developed with Black girls in mind generates intersectional examinations of oppression which McArthur argues should occupy a foundational position within civic education. In this way, McArthur builds on the work of scholars arguing for critical civic literacy pedagogy in the K-12 school setting.

Serrano, Ybarra, and Bernal (2019) build on Anzaldúa's (2002) notion of conocimiento to offer a nuanced understanding of "the messy journey of critical consciousness, including the ways we resist and, at times, take up oppressive discourses" (p. 246). Based on their investigation of two first-year Latina undergraduate students' experiences participating in an ethnic studies course, the authors explore four themes that illustrate the fluidity of the participant's critical consciousness. The themes shed light on how the ethnic studies course created space for participants to engage their contradictions, capacity for self-transformation, emotion and inclinations toward social action. When viewed in totality the findings from this study demonstrate conocimiento as a humanizing approach that views critical consciousness a non-linear process that ebbs and flows. With this awareness, the authors implore educators and researchers to refrain from applying deficit perspectives to youths' understanding and responses to the learning that occurs in ethnic studies and other courses that examine issues of power.

While critical consciousness-raising can lead to empowering results, it may also increase feelings of anxiety and helplessness. Watts, Diemer, & Voight (2011), speak to this concern in their work and call for educators and researchers to exercise a practice of working with youth of

color that emphasizes critical consciousness along with social action. In turn, this approach will serve as a means of "filling the gap between youth socioemotional development and political competence" (p. 55). El-Amin's et al. supports this perspective., (2017) in their mixed-methods longitudinal study of the experiences of 50 Black students across five urban high schools. Informed by this research, the authors suggest concrete ways schools can support students in developing their critical consciousness. El-Amin's et al. state, "Through providing a framework and a language for analysis, making space to talk about inequity, and teaching students how to take action, schools can integrate students' sociopolitical realities into their ongoing work and contribute to critical consciousness development" (p. 22). These supports are concrete examples of how educators can support youth of color in developing critical awareness and strategies to push back against systems of oppression.

Fostering Youth of Color Agency and Activism

Scholars have argued that participation in actions towards social change such as community organizing, activism, and participatory action research promotes the civic identity development and agency of youth. This finding is especially true for youth of color whose experience of discrimination and marginalization conflicts with U.S. democratic ideals of equality. Kirshner (2009) examines the impact of youth organizing on the civic identity of participants within the context of a non-profit advocacy program. Kirshner argues that youth organizing is a cultural practice that emphasizes "interest-based political action rooted in a critical understanding of their surroundings" (p. 433). Similarly, Ginwright (2011) views community organizations as sites of civic engagement that provide youth in urban areas opportunities to develop "a sense of purpose, important relationships, and skills necessary to create neighborhood or school change" (p. 37). Ginwright, along with the scholars above, signals

that the critical civic literacy and engagement fostered in community organizations and through youth organizing is not a matter of happenstance. Instead, the authors suggest that it is the intentional creation of space and opportunities for youth of color to examine and make sense of the operation of power within their schools and across other institutional and interpersonal contexts that makes youth organizing and activism agentic. Further, critical civic literacy that fosters critical consciousness centered on individual and collective agency is crucial for youth of color as they have and continue to be disenfranchised and marginalized within sociopolitical and civic discourses.

Soo Ah Kwon (2013) ethnographic work about the youth activist group, Asian/Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Advocacy and Leadership (AYPAL), draws attention to the ways the strategic foregrounding of youth's racial and cultural identities informed the issues and social action pursued by the group. The AYPAL's pan-ethnic solidarity and activism were developed "through workshops, projects, and cultural arts projects that were designed to connect their cultures with political histories in ways that did not fall into the trap of a 'wishy-washy' multiculturalism" (p. 92). In this way, the AYPAL critical civic literacy praxis created opportunities for youth to learn more about their own and others' cultural identities and while also rendering visible oppressive colonial and white supremacist logics that have impacted their communities.

Similar to the learning and organizing that occurred in AYPAL, Nguyen and Quinn (2018) investigate the affordances of a Philadelphia community-based program in engaging the critical consciousness of Vietnamese youth specifically regarding the interrogation of anti-black sentiments and prejudice. Through the program, the youth engaged in lessons focused on Vietnamese history, immigration, and race relations in the context of the US. They also had the

opportunity to design and execute a "comprehensive assessment of priorities and issues facing Philadelphia's Vietnamese community" (p. 630). The authors argue that the programs' curriculum and critical pedagogy provided opportunities for the youth to examine and critique problematic narratives that undergird interracial conflict between the Vietnamese and African American communities. In doing so, the authors further evidence the role of a community-based program in fostering the critical consciousness of youth of color and their commitment to pursuing social change in their communities.

In recent years, scholars have taken an interest in youth organizing efforts that draw on hip hop music and culture (Kuttner, 2016; Love, 2016). Kuttner makes a significant contribution to the literature by offering a culturally sustaining approach to civic engagement and youth organizing. Kuttner defines youth cultural organizing (YCO) as a form of civic engagement that:

Engages young people in catalyzing change in their communities through the arts and other forms of cultural expression. It emphasizes cultural change as an integral part of social and political change while drawing on, and seeking to sustain, the dynamic cultural resources embedded in young people's multiple, overlapping communities. (p. 530)

YCO is a theoretical framework that allows for a better understanding of youth engagement in contemporary political movements such as Black Lives Matter and the Me Too movement. Both forms of civic engagement challenge the institutional normalization of racism and sexism. These movements also use social media platforms to inform and organize local as well as national calls for action. Similarly, Bettina Love brings Hip Hop civics in the digital area through **GET FREE**; an online Hip Hop civics multimedia platform focused on issues, perspectives, activism, and art by and for youth and young adults interested and committed to redefining conceptualizations of democracy and ideas of justice. In this way, GET FREE is a

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space that supports youth cultural organizing and honors the modes of civics participation often utilized by historically marginalized communities.

Critical Examinations of Power in Spaces for Girls and Young Women of Color

Clark's (2016) work in Vancouver, Canada, centers on the well-being of indigenous girls that have experienced physical and psychological acts of violence. In this work, Clark stresses the importance of "A violence-informed and Red intersectional girls' group locates the source of girls' challenges within structural and systemic problems such as racism, poverty, sexism, and the intersections of these in their lives" (p. 55). In Clark's work, critical consciousness-raising shifts blame away from the girls by rendering visible the operation of power in the perpetuation of violence against them. This shift works to disrupt the cycle of internalized oppression that people from marginalized communities often experience.

Jacobs (2016) argues that "curriculum grounded in the tenets of Black feminist thought and critical media pedagogy" strengthens Black girls' ability "to develop their oppositional gazes of resistance and resilience in connection with media images and messages" (p. 234). This argument stems from the findings of a study centering the racial and gender identity development of Black girls attending predominantly white high schools. In this work, Jacobs views Black girls' development of an oppositional gaze is the embodied enactment of critical consciousness. This critical lens encourages Black girls to identify, critique, and challenge white supremacist, anti-black, and misogynistic narratives that foreground institutional policies and practices.

Critical consciousness-raising is a pursuit that has also taken up in programs designed around an academic specialization and the development of technical skills. COMPUGIRLS is a social justice-oriented program for girls of color that moves away from the dominant STEM education approaches that prioritize technical skill development and are void of critical

interrogations power and oppression in STEM fields and by-products. Instead, COMPUGIRLS teaches "girls to analyze how technologies are gendered, raced, and classed" and to utilize the technological skills they develop to challenge institutional injustices and foster equity-oriented innovations (Scott & Garcia, 2016, p. 70). These studies illuminate the diverse range of academic disciplines and multiple mediums employed to engage girls of color in critical inquiry around issues of systemic oppression.

Collectively, the existing literature offers a range of insights into the means, modes, and affordances of varying learning experiences that help develop and shape the critical consciousness, agency, and social action of youth of color. While there are studies examining the impact of school and community-based programs that promote the critical consciousness-raising of youth of color, there is a dearth of literature specifically focused on the experiences of girls of color. Additionally, scholarship about girls of color concerning the enactment of critical literacy curriculum and pedagogy often center analysis focused on girls from the same racial background. Given the reality that marginalized communities are impacted by institutional oppression in varying ways, there remains a necessity for research and pedagogy that is attentive to the issues and needs of specific racial groups. With the recognition that racism and sexism are deeply ingrained within society, this study offers an intersectional analysis that considers how race, gender, and the intersections of other identity makers shape the experiences of girls of color and their and responses to encounters with different forms of oppression.

The Sadie Nash Leadership Project (SNLP) is an out of school context with a demonstrated commitment to programming that supports the holistic well-being of girls of color towards the aim of bolstering their capacity to become leaders, activists, and agents of change. For this reason, SNLP Summer Institute course on Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP) serves as

an appropriate context to examine the potential insights and implications of critical literacy and social justice education praxis designed with girls of color in mind.

This study builds on the existing scholarship by investigating how girls of color from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds make sense of and draw from the learning experiences cultivated within a critical social justice course. I take an intersectional approach that pays specific attention to how the multiple identities girls of color hold, shapes, and informs their critical consciousness and agency. In particular, I offer insights into the affordances of critical consciousness-raising curriculum and pedagogy that offers space for girls and young women from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to collectively engage in interrogations of power and oppression and the social and political realities that impact their lives.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Research Design

This critical qualitative dissertation is an instrumental case study designed to better understand the experiences of girls of color participating in a course focused on Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP). An instrumental case study, as described by Wiebe, Durepos, & Mills (2010), provides a rich description of a specific context to undergo an in-depth exploration of a particular phenomenon. It also draws on the characteristics typical of a qualitative study in that multiple points of view and data sources are used to "increase the trustworthiness of their representation of the case" (Wiebe, Durepos, & Mills, 2010, p. 560). This methodological approach allows for a robust investigation into the experiences of PIP participants in relation to the research questions and aligns with the theoretical perspectives and conceptual framework that foreground this study.

I draw on a range of qualitative data collection methods in order to "trouble taken-for-granted understandings or assumed common meanings of constructs by incorporating a diversity of perspectives, voices, values and stances […] and thereby resists simplification of inherently contextual and complex human phenomena" (Greene, 2006, p. 97). The data collection methods were carefully selected and aligned with the study's aim to explore PIP's utility as a course that informs the critical consciousness, agency of girls of color, and identity development of girls of color.

Research Site

The Sadie Nash Leadership Project

The Sadie Nash Leadership Project is a nonprofit organization that operates inside and outside of school spaces in New York City and Newark, New Jersey. SNLP is committed to

working with young women and gender expansive youth between the ages of 14-21 years old in efforts to build their capacity to be change agents. The term gender expansive refers to youth whose gender identity and expression exist outside of binary notions of gender ("PFLAG National Glossary of Terms," 2019). Participants in SNLP are lovingly referred to as Nashers by themselves, faculty, staff, and other members of the SNLP community. The organization's philosophy states:

The Sadie Nash Leadership Project community—the young women, staff, and Board—seeks to examine and challenge unequal power dynamics based on different systems of oppression. The young women of SNLP work together to understand and alter the undemocratic culture and structure of society and to improve the lives of those, *including themselves and their communities*, who have been marginalized or oppressed. (**http://www.sadienash.org/philosphy-model**)

The ideas expressed within the organization's philosophy are embodied and taken up across the multiple sites where the organization's programs operate. At SNLP, teaching and learning are taken up by all members of the community. This approach is only possible when each individual begins to see themselves as a part of a collective. In doing so, the learning communities that we build are not done solely in the service of others because everyone plays an integral role within the community and contributes and benefits in myriad ways. In this way, SNLP participants, staff, and faculty work together to create a space that represents their collective visions, desires, and identities.

SNLP Summer Institute takes place in various sites across the five boroughs of NYC as well as Newark, New Jersey. In 2017, I conducted a pilot study focused on the experiences of six

high school girls of color participating in SNLP's Summer Institute located in Queens, New York. The participant demographics at the Queens site are available below (See Table 1).

Table 1: Racial Demographics Breakdown of SNLP Queens Summer Institute 2017

Race	# of Participants
Black (African-American, African, Afro-Caribbean, etc.)	13
Asian (Asian-American, Indian, Bengali, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese. etc.)	14
Latina/Hispanic (Dominican, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, etc.)	5
White (European- American, Middle-Eastern, North African, etc.)	1
Multi-racial	1

The racial and ethnic diversity of the Queens Summer Institute participants is representative of the overall demographics of SNLP participants. However, based on the demographics of the borough or city (in the case of Newark) of the site, specific racial and ethnic groups may have higher representation. I based this observation on my experience teaching at SNLP's Summer Institute in Brooklyn (2016) and Queens (2017). At the Brooklyn site, the majority of participants were Black and represented multiple ethnic backgrounds, while the Queens site had a significant number of participants that identify as Asian. Although, I do not have an updated comprehensive breakdown of SNLP Summer Institute demographics at this time, based on the SNLP 2012 annual report, 98% of the participants were young women of color between the ages of 14-22 (Sadie Nash Leadership Project, 2012).

The participants involved in the pilot study mentioned above were enrolled in a section of Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP), where I served as their instructor. I developed three findings based on my analysis of the transcript from a focus group I conducted with the six girls and field notes I collected in my role as the course instructor and researcher. The first finding explored

participants' desire to take part in critical discussions about issues of power, which were often seen as "taboo" in their schools. They viewed opportunities to engage with these topics (e.g., racism, sexism, colorism) as critical to understanding and navigating systems of power. The second theme addressed the knowledge and perspectives participants gained through PIP lessons and activities that allowed for the exploration of multiple aspects of their identities. Lastly, the third theme engages with SNLP's community practice of taking space and making space. This community norm encourages participants to take up space in discussions and the world. In this way, faculty and staff assure participants that everyone's voice and experiences are essential to the knowledge and understanding fostered in the space. The SNLP community also asks participants to be thoughtful in discussions by making space for others to speak, un/learn, and grow. Participants involved in the study, identify the practice of taking space and making space as central to the development of a caring, humanizing, and transformative learning environment.

My dissertation study builds on the insights from the pilot study by investigating SNLP Summer Institute participants' experiences in and beyond PIP. This study examines the curriculum and pedagogical practices utilized in PIP and what it offers girls of color in developing their critical consciousness, agency, and analysis of social, cultural, and political issues relating to their multiple identities (racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality). Considering the centrality of PIP in this study, I provide a detailed overview of the course in the next section.

Summer Institute

SNLP's six-week Summer Institute that operates five days a week from 10 am – 4:30 pm. During this time, the Nashers attend two core courses (Power, Identity, and Privilege, and Leadership Seminar). In addition to the core courses, Nashers attend an academic and creative class along with workshops, field trips, and discussions with guest speakers that include

community activists and academics. The academic and creative course options available at each site differ, given that the instructors that design and teach these courses do so based on their varied areas of expertise. As a result, the content of the classes is not static but everchanging. Past academic courses touched on topics such as reproductive rights, mass incarceration, and environmental racism, while creative classes focused on different art forms, including visual arts, poetry, and dance. Although the academic and creative courses span across the six-week program, the workshops offered change each week. Thus, throughout the entirety of the program, Nashers participate in various workshops addressing issues related to popular culture, higher education, and mental and sexual health. Overall, the robust learning opportunities offered within the Summer Institute, provide multiple entry points and pathways into discussions that center social injustice, self-exploration, and holistic wellness.

Power, Identity, and Privilege

The Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP) and Leadership Seminar are the two core courses taught during SNLP's six-week Summer Institute. PIP is taught twice a week by one instructor who is assisted by a dean who works closely with the Nashers throughout the entire course of the Summer Institute. Thus, the dean has a more intimate knowledge of participants' needs, concerns, interests, and other issues that arise in the courses, workshops, and other aspects of Summer Institute. PIP is designed to deepen SNLP participants' understanding of critical concepts and issues regarding power, oppression, privilege, and identity at the interpersonal and institutional level. Some of the course topics include gender, sexism, race/ethnicity, racism, colorism, and classism. PIP also seeks to foster critical thinking, collaborative learning, self-examination, and actualization.

PIP has a written curriculum that provides an outline of central themes, concepts, suggested activities, and discussion questions. The aims of PIP are articulated in the curriculum course description, which states, "We work to cultivate a critical mind to become conscious and sensitive to the systems of oppression that work to stifle our freedom, and a loving heart that is brave enough to resist!" While the curriculum exists, instructors are encouraged to adapt and change the material as they see fit, so long as the course themes, concepts, and objectives remain intact. This approach acknowledges the expertise the instructors bring to the work while simultaneously ensuring that SNLP participants gain a foundational understanding of social justice terminology, key concepts, and issues.

Recruitment and Participants

My dissertation recruitment and data collection process occurred over a ten-month period in 2019, with recruitment beginning in February. As a former PIP instructor, I have cultivated relationships with SNLP staff, participants, and other PIP faculty. Drawing from my connections with members of the SNLP community and the pool of interested participants, I employed purposeful sampling in my recruitment and selection of the participants involved in this study. At the onset, I worked closely with SNLP's Executive Director, Chitra Aiyar, and other staff members to recruit participants for this study. The staff sent out emails to the organization's listservs and also informed Summer Institute participants that were currently involved in other programs offered by SNLP. At the same time, I reached out to girls and young women that I had personal connections to through my experience teaching PIP for two consecutive summers.

I aimed to recruit participants that were representative of multiple cohorts (2014 – 2018) and sites as well as the diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds of SNLP participants. My focus on cohorts within a five-year time frame was to increase the likelihood that participants could recall

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their experiences participating in PIP and Summer Institute more broadly. I also wanted to ensure the inclusion of participants currently enrolled in high school, college, as well as those that have entered the workforce or are pursuing other endeavors. This selection was purposeful in that it provides a window into how the girls and young women are making sense of and addressing issues of power in varying contexts and across different stages in their lives.

As a result of our combined efforts, we were able to recruit 27 girls and young women of color for participation in the Critical Conversation Spaces (CCSs). In the next section, I will further describe CCSs as a qualitative research data collection method. Between April and June 2019, I facilitated six CCSs, five of which were held at SNLP's New York City headquarters and one at the organization's Newark, New Jersey site. The length of each conversation differed, ranging between 33-72 minutes (see appendix for more information regarding the CCSs). The participants represented Summer Institute cohorts between 2013 and 2018 and multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds. All participants were asked to complete a short demographic survey, which was used to gather information about their race/ethnicity, grade, type of high school. A detailed breakdown of the background of the girls and young women involved in the CCSs is available in table 2.

Table 2: Identity Profiles of Critical Conversation Spaces Participants

Characteristic	*n*
PIP Year	
2013	1
2016	3
2017	6
2018	17
Age	
15	3
16	6
17	5
18	11
19	1

Table 2 (cont'd)

21	1
Grade in High School	
9	1
10	6
11	3
12	15
(First Year of College)	1
N/A	1
Type of High School	
Public	23
Public/Specialized	1
Charter	1
College (City University)	1
N/A	1
Race & Ethnicity (Based on U.S. Census Categories)	
Black or African American	16
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	4
Asian	6
Black, Hispanic	1

While the survey included the racial/ethnic demographics categories available on the U.S. Census, I provided additional space for participants to write-in their self-defined racial/ethnic identity. I made this decision with the understanding that "Although conventional race categorization systems may influence individual's self-identification, many people's self-defined race/ethnicities may differ from externally defined conceptualizations" (Harris, Ravert, & Sullivan, 2017, p. 777). Nine of the 27 girls and young women chose to write-in their self-defined race and ethnicity which is available in table 3.

Table 3: Self-Identified Race/Ethnicity of Critical Conversation Spaces Participants

Race/Ethnicity
South Asian
Bangladeshi (Bengali)
Afro-Latina

Table 3 (cont'd)

Latina/Dominican
Black Caribbean
Black/West Indian
African Nigerian
Black/Caribbean American
Mexican American

Data Sources

Critical Conversation Spaces

Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2013) make the case that focus groups are a useful tool for "gaining access to and saturating one's understanding of certain kinds of social phenomena" (p. 6). While focus groups can generate knowledge and perspectives from multiple points of view, participants' inclination towards socially acceptable viewpoints is heightened (Smithson, 2000). In the context of a focus group, the researcher's role is to pose questions and moderate the discussion amongst the participants (Wilkson, 1998). In doing so, the researcher is positioned on the periphery of the discussion. Critical Conversation Spaces (CCSs) as a methodological approach draw from "the logistical structure of a focus group but mirrors the cultural framework unique to sister circles" (Carter Andrews, Brown, Castro, Id-Deen, 2019b, p. 6). Sister circles were developed to provide a supportive space where Black women (researcher/s and participants) could learn from and with each other through discussion that center their ways of knowing and being (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011; Johnson, 2015). Similarly, in CCSs, the identities of all involved are seen as essential in the process of sharing knowledge and developing a more in-depth understanding of the specific issues being discussed. A CCS differs in that participants' shared experience within a particular setting (e.g., school, work, organization, etc.) is central. In

this study, I employed a CCS approach to amass a robust understanding of the knowledge, experiences, and perspectives of girls of color that were participants in SNLP's Summer Institute course on Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP). In their reflections on the ethical struggles of facilitating CCSs, Carter Andrews et al. (2019b) expressed trepidations about maintaining a calculated distance within the conversations despite participants' sincere requests for their input.

As a researcher and facilitator of the CCSs in Carter Andrews et al. (2019b), I considered the concerns above when deciding to use CCSs in this study. I sought to bridge the gap between my role as a researcher, facilitator, and former PIP instructor. I also entered CCSs with the awareness that as a Black woman, born outside the U.S., and raised in the Bronx by a working-class immigrant family, my identities mirrored the identities of many SNLP's participants. The socio-cultural milieu of New York City, along with the vernaculars and linguistic patterns used by youth of color are ways of being and knowing that resonate with my lived experiences. However, social science research practices "appropriates the voices, stories, and histories of [marginalized communities] thus limiting their representational possibilities" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 235). Through the CCS and my understanding of our identities, I see their expression as "epistemological paradigms in themselves," opening up space for the possibilities for other ways of knowing and being (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 235). With the recognition that girls of color are "experts of their sociopolitical locations" (McArthur & Lane, 2019, p. 77), the CCSs offered an invaluable opportunity for me to learn from and with them. I honored the knowledge and experiences of CCSs participants shared by leading with openness, honesty, and humility. This approach "allowed a humanizing ethos to permeate the research process" (Edwards, McArthur, Russell Owens, 2016, p. 433) and actualized my commitment to showing up and engaging with people and communities in ways that magnify the fullness of our being.

The CCS participants and I were familiar with the context of the course, albeit from different standpoints, I as an instructor and they as participants. Our collective familiarity with course curriculum made it possible for participants to avoid laborious explanations of specific activities and instead engulfed in candid, lively, and inquisitive discussions centering individual and shared reflections of their experiences in PIP and beyond. The CCSs were semi-structured with set core questions primarily focused on participants' major takeaways from their participation in PIP. With attention to my theoretical frames of intersectionality and politicizing socialization, the questions provided opportunities for the Nashers to reflect on their socialization, identity development, critical consciousness, and engagement with political and social issues. For example, they were asked, "What topic or concept did you find most interesting to discuss? And why?" as well as "How, if at all, did your experience in PIP impact the way you think about different parts of your identity?" I also asked follow up questions for further clarification and restated my interpretation of their statements to ensure I correctly understood what they were trying to communicate. In order to ensure the conversational of the discussion, I also contributed to the conversation by offering insights that amplified statements made by participants. Participants in the CCSs also amplified and affirmed each other's voices through choral responses (e.g., yesssss, facts) finger snaps and compliments in adoration of the perspectives and confidence they conveyed. When one of the Nashers struggled in search of a specific word or phrasing, others would assist in an attempt to complete their statement. These examples illustrate the supportive dynamic that was fostered in the CCSs.

PIP Creator and Instructor Interviews

In order to better understand the impetus behind the creation of PIP, I sought out the creator of the curriculum. I was placed in connection with her through SNLP's Executive Director, Chitra Aiyar. Moreover, while she is no longer at SNLP, she continues working in the

service of youth of color as director of the New York branch of a national non-profit organization. I also reached out to several PIP instructors via email and text message. Some of these contacts were made possible through SNLP staff, and others were established through personal connections. Ultimately, I was able to recruit three instructors who taught PIP between 2016 – 2019. The PIP instructors and creator's experience teaching the course represents a range of experiences that begin with the inception of the course in 2003. The racial and ethnic background of the PIP creator and PIP instructors are also reflective of the participants and faculty in SNLP's Summer Institute. The PIP curriculum creator, Sahana identifies as South Asian and is originally from India. The three instructors are Celina who is Afro Dominican, Makayla is Black/African American, and Nadine is Black of Caribbean heritage. The PIP creator and instructor names are pseudonyms.

I conducted 30-45 minute semi-structured phone interviews with each participant. Scholars have highlighted the potential challenges of conducting and utilizing phone interview data such as the inability to rely on body language or disengagement, resulting in shortened interview durations (Shuy, 2003; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013). While these concerns are valid, phone interviews allowed for more flexibility and accommodated the demanding schedules of the PIP curriculum creator and instructors. Phone interviews also removed the barrier of location as the participants, and I were living and working in spaces across and outside of New York City. Trier-Bieniek (2012) posits that phone interviews can disrupt the power dynamics between the researcher and participant by prioritizing the needs and comfort of the participant, which can facilitate an open and honest discussion. In the case of the phone interviews I conducted, each participant expressed enthusiasm and overwhelming interest in the study. The questions I asked instructors concerned their teaching philosophy, pedagogy, and perspectives on

the PIP curriculum and Nashers' experiences within the course. In consideration of both my

conceptual frames of pedagogical love and pedagogies in the flesh, I asked questions such as

"How would you describe the purpose and goals of Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP)?" and

"Did you make any changes to the curriculum? If yes, what were the changes? If no, why not?"

In addition, I asked questions similar to those posed to Nashers. For example, "Based on your

experience, what topic/concept did the Nashers find most interesting? How do you know?"

The instructors I spoke with eagerly shared stories and experiences that evidenced their

commitments to social justice education and the holistic well-being of girls and women of color.

As a former PIP instructor, I also shared similar experiences that propelled the conversations

forward into directions that were reflective of our common interests. Through these interviews, I

gained insights into their curricula and pedagogical approaches in teaching PIP and their

rationale for employing them.

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Data Analysis

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I used the MAXQDA software in the process of undergoing several stages of coding.

Initially, I used an open coding approach in which I analyzed each CCS transcript line by line

and created codes based on what I was noticing in the data. Through the open coding process, I

was able to identify a wide range of patterns by way of analyzing the CCS participants'

statements and interactions. I aimed to highlight patterns that appeared across the CCSs. I

proceeded to refine and narrow the codes by employing concept and value coding. I applied a

concept coding approach to "represen[t] a suggested meaning broader than a single item or

action" (Saldaña, 2015, 119). For example, *sexism*, *gender norms*, and *colorism* were codes

referring to social issues the Nashers had intimate knowledge of before participating in PIP. The

use of value coding as an analytical approach allowed for the development of codes based on my

interpretation of participants' "motivation, agency, causation, or ideology" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 132). The codes, ***being a girl/woman of color, school-based oppression, racial and cultural consciousness,*** and ***learning from and with other Nashers*** were connected to Nashers' statements about the insights they gained concerning their most impactful PIP learning experiences. I replicated this coding approach in my analysis of the PIP creator and instructor interviews. Codes such as ***community building, care, and culturally sustaining*** were used to relate the PIP creator and instructors' views and approaches that serve to "honor, extend, and, at times, problematize [Nashers cultural] and community practices" (Paris & Alim, 2014).

In my second cycle of analysis, I looked for a salient connection across each data set in relation to my research questions. During this process, I placed the codes associated with the CCSs into three major categories, 1) Understanding and Reflecting on the Processes of Socialization, 2) Critical Consciousness-raising through PIP, and 3) Agency & Action. These three categories captured Nashers' critical reflections on their racialized, ethnic, and gendered socialization, how they described and made sense of their experiences within PIP, and their approaches to engaging in discourse and actions concerning issues of power across contexts. In my final stage of analysis, I proceeded to make connections between the PIP creator and instructor codes and the three categories mentioned above. I explore each category within the three findings chapters that follow.

A Note on Trustworthiness

In this study, the use of multiple data sources lends itself to the validity of the research findings through the visibility of common themes across different types of data. It is also essential to consider how the context and relationships shape the interactions between everyone involved in the study. For example, my positionality as an insider within the SNLP community

offers unique opportunities and perspectives that may be perceived as a hindrance to my ability

to present an unbiased analysis. However, I reject the notion of researcher objectivity, which is

supported by scholars committed to upending the legacy of white supremacist and colonialist

ideologies and practices that permeate academic research (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Smith,

2012; Patel, 2014; Tuck, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Instead, I openly communicate and trouble

how my insider perspective and assumptions contribute to my understanding or lack of

awareness concerning Nashers' experiences within PIP, the community of SNLP, and about other

aspects of their lives.

CHAPTER FOUR: UNDERSTANDING AND REFLECTING ON THE

PROCESSES OF SOCIALIZATION

Introduction

Our lived experiences play a fundamental role in shaping the way we view and navigate the world. The girls that enter into the Sadie Nash Leadership Project's Summer Institute are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. They come into the program with an array of experiences, stories, questions, and ideas about the world. In this chapter, I draw attention to examinations of power and issues of justice occurring within and beyond the confines of the classroom. Whether in the context of a youth organization, with family at the kitchen table, on social media, or through daily passing encounters, girls of color learn about and experience the impact of interpersonal and institutional oppression on the conditions of their lives. Drawing from our discussions within the Critical Conversations Spaces (CCS), I highlight the girls' familiarity with issues of power and oppression as understood through their socialization process, or "systematic training into the norms" of the specific cultures they belong to as well as the dominant society (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, pg. 36). More specifically, I explore the lessons and forewarnings that undergird their understanding of social constructs and systems of oppression such as race and racism and patriarchy and sexism. With the lens of politicizing socialization, I examine the "negotiations, influences, and structures" that shape how girls of color make sense of their racialized, ethnic, and gendered experiences (Brown, 2007, p. 124). Other aspects of their identity become central as the girls in the CCSs share stories that reveal "that no single social label... can ever exhaust what it means for an individual to travel in the world" (Harris & Leonardo, 2018, p. 5). My analysis of their reflections demonstrates the utility of intersectionality as a theoretical framework that accounts for the myriad ways oppression

manifests in the lives of girls of color and the commonalities and differences stretching across

their experiences

Reflecting on the Prevalence of Racism and Colorism

When asked about the social issues they were most aware of before participating in

Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP), several Nashers reflected on their encounters with forms of

oppression grounded in white supremacist ideologies. In particular, they conveyed varying

degrees of familiarity with racism and colorism. One of the Nashers stated, "I feel like where we

grow up, we learn in New York City about race and racism" (CCS#1). Following her statement,

another Nasher expressed, "I knew [about] racism, but I've never personally experienced it

firsthand" (CCS#1). As girls of color coming of age in NYC, both Nashers were familiar with

racism through various means whether by way of personal experience, witnessing it occur,

hearing about its effects, or learning about historical injustices in school. Alternatively, one

Nasher from Haiti shared, "I was ignorant when it came to color, because I didn't get to

experience that where I used to live" (CCS#1). Her statement is indicative of the reality that race

and racism are not the center of discussion in a country with a majority Black population.

As Nashers traverse different communities in the US or their familial home country, they

experience the ways in which white supremacist ideologies function within communities of

color. One Nasher from Bangladesh expressed her close familiarity with colorism, stating "that

happens in my country, and it happens within my family, so I understand all of that." She went

on to explain that she also knew about racism "from first-hand experiences being a person of

color" (CCS#6). Landor and Barr (2018) define colorism as "a racialized, and often gendered

and classed, system through which skin-tone bias thrives" (p. 339). Further, colorism is an

outgrowth of white supremacist ideology and is grounded in the notion that European facial

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features, complexions, and hair textures are the most appealing and, therefore, highly valued. As a global phenomena, colorism impacts communities of all different races and ethnicities. In another CCS, a Nasher discussed the prominence of colorism within the South Asian community,

> It's like people definitely prefer lighter skin over darker skin. You'll be favored if you're more white. And you know, my mom always gave me creams and stuff to keep my skin from going dark. So, yeah that was very much part of my life growing up (CSS#2).

Her reflection speaks to the normalcy and everyday use of skin lightening products within her community and family. Her experience, however, is not uncommon, as the use of skin lightening products is promoted within the advertising and popular media in countries like Jamaica, Ghana and India (Brown-Glaude, 2013; Blay, 2011; Prolongeau, 2015). For example, over several years, famous Jamaican dancehall artist Vybz Kartel has become several shades lighter. In his music, he also brags about washing his face with a laundry detergent referred to as "cake soap" (Roache, 2011). According to Hope (2011), working-class Jamaicans found "the cheap and easily accessible cake soap was more than just laundry soap, but also a dermatological wonder with the capacity to reduce the dreaded "shine and greasy" or "tarry look" (p. 183). *Fair and Lovely* is an India based skin lightening cream that has been on the market for over 40 years. This widely used product benefits from its high visibility by way of billboards, magazines, film and television (Shevde, 2008). Companies that market and sell skin lightening products capitalize on the measures people will take to obtain lighter skin.

Colorism at the institutional level has material consequences for darker skin individuals, which include discrimination in the workplace, increased likelihood of being targeted by law enforcement, and longer prison sentences (Banks, 2015; Monk, 2019). Thus, the Nasher's

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statement, "you'll be favored if you're more white" rings true across different sectors of society. Another Nasher, spoke to her familiarity with the issue of racism and colorism in the entertainment industry and names it as a form of white supremacy,

> I would say [I knew about] white supremacy. Like growing up my mom would watch different TV shows and would notice [there weren't] Black dark-skinned girls or just Black girls in general. And she would really question it. But I didn't really see it until I started learning about it now. And I realize that I've been growing [up] around it so that just stuck with me. (CCS#1)

Her early awareness of racism and colorism is attributed to witnessing her mother verbalize her critiques concerning the lack of representation of dark skin Black girls on television. While, as a child, she did not fully understand the pervasiveness of the issue of colorism, the memories of her mother's critiques are etched into her consciousness. These early lessons about colorism, along with her recent engagement with similar topics, work collectively to inform how she presently makes sense of the issues pertaining to white supremacy.

Other Nashers highlighted the role of non-profit organizations and community-based programs in exposing them to critical examinations of social and political issues.

> I was previously a part of the YWCA and their girl group kind of thing, and we explored a lot about institutional racism and how it affects us in our daily lives and then also kind of a little bit about the topic of gender. (CCS#5)

Following her statement, another Nasher chimed in, "I think for me it was the four I's of oppression. We had gone over that in this [Asian American Student Conference] group I was a part of (CCS#5). Both girls speak to the ways out-of-school programs help bolster their knowledge of various forms of oppression. Building on this conversation, one of the girls shared

that her schooling experience was a critical factor in developing her understanding of institutionalized racism.

> I was already thinking about institutionalized racism and how that affects my schooling as a Black woman. So, a bit of backstory. For most of my life, I went to schools where it's like 90 percent Black population. So, it's like when I went to those schools, it was diverse in the sense that I could see people that look like me, but in another sense, there weren't really voices from other people of color. Because of that I was already thinking about how this affects me and how different it would look when I go to college because for colleges that's not always the norm. Unless you go to an HBCU, and I was already kind of thinking about how that will affect me when I go off to college. (CCS#5)

From her perspective, the ability to "see people that look like [her]" in the schools she attended was a valuable experience. At the same time, she recognized that Black students are underrepresented in colleges and universities. Ashkenas, Park, and Pearce (2017) analyze student demographic data at higher educational institutions across the US to reveal that the Black student population at elite private and public universities has remained relatively unchanged in over 35 years. Institutionalized racism and inequities in K-12 and higher education create obstacles to recruiting and retaining Black students at the university level (Nathan, 2017). Although she is still in high school, her awareness that most higher educational institutions are predominantly white signals her concern about the reality that awaits her.

Patriarchy as a Socializing Force

When asked about topics or issues they were familiar with before attending SNLP, several Nashers spoke of patriarchal norms as a socializing force that significantly impacts their lives. More specifically, their responses detail the restrictive gendered expectations placed on

girls and women and how they were communicated and reinforced within their household, extended family, and communities. In effect, the Nashers vocalized their awareness of "the process by which cultural information about gender is transmitted from one generation to the next" (Best & Luvender, 2015, p. 743). Through verbal messages and as modeled by the women in their families, the girls and young women expressed an intimate understanding of gendered norms within their respective sociocultural context. Despite varying racial and cultural backgrounds, there were striking similarities in their reflections on the behaviors that exemplified girlhood and womanhood. One of the Nashers stated,

> As somebody from an African background, they already put it like the father is the
> top. You have to kneel down to feed your husband. They teach us to be able to cook or
> clean the house so we could satisfy our husband and he is not going to go for somebody
> else when it's something we both should do to make the house comfortable. But they
> don't have that mentality. They have the mentality where you have to be sustainable. You
> have to wake up at 4:00 AM in the morning to make breakfast for your husband going to
> work and you stay home and clean. It doesn't make any sense, but still, I didn't know any
> better. (CCS#1)

In this statement, the home is described as women's primary domain, and their role is to fulfill the duties that make the space habitable for all occupants but, more specifically, their husbands. Interestingly, the term "sustainable" is used in reference to the desired mentality in which women should aspire. In the Merriam Webster dictionary, sustainability is defined as "using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged." In using this term, she could be implying that she was socialized to believe that a woman can ensure her value by attending to the maintenance of the household dutifully. Contrary to what has been messaged,

she views household work as the responsibility of all parties within a marriage. To this end, she expressed genuine confusion about the viability of these gender norms while simultaneously acknowledging the limited access she had to alternative messages.

The pervasiveness of the expectations above is further revealed by other CCS participants in speaking about gender dynamics that exist within their respective communities. When discussing social issues that were important to them, one girl who identifies as South Asian, ethnically Bengali, and Muslim stated,

> I'm South Asian and in my community, it's like women, they should just stay home be the wife and not be empowered and men they have power, they're the head of the house. And there are stereotypes like [women] can't go outside alone, they have to be accompanied by somebody. Men, you know they could do whatever they want. I guess that affects me a lot because my mom she's really strict on that. She's like, oh no, you should stay home. Why are you going outside by yourself? And why this and that. And she never says anything to my brother. She was raised that way, so I try to tell her times are changing; this isn't how you should raise us to be. And I see where she's coming from. I wish she had a more open mindset. (CCS#2)

In this reflection, she emphasizes that the rules and limitations placed on the girls and women in her family and community "affect [her] a lot." This is a circumstance that contributes to the conditions of her daily life. While she makes attempts to shift the status quo through discussions with her mom, she also understands her mother's perspective as a product of her lived experiences and socialization. Building on the above statement, a Nasher with the same racial, ethnic, and religious background shared,

Similar to that, growing up South Asian as well, it's very hard. And my mom, I think

she's more progressive than most because I think [she is] feminist. She cares about me

and wants me to do just as much as any man can because she was forced to put down her

dreams and raise a family. So I feel that she still has that in her mind. She's like, I don't

want that for my daughter. I'm very lucky to have that kind of mom. But then I go to the

rest of my family, and they're all very much like how you described your mom. I mean a

lot of the time it is the women who are being sexist towards the girls in these families

because you trust them. That's your gender, that's your aunt, that's your mother, you're

supposed to be able to trust them and trust their opinion. You might trust them more than

your uncle or your father because you can relate to them. But when they say all these

sexist things you don't know what to do. (CCS#2)

Motivated by the experiences of being "forced to put down her dreams," her mother operates

with a feminist approach, which is illustrated by the insistence that her daughter pursues goals

and opportunities denied to girls and women. Further, in stating, "I'm very lucky to have that

kind of mom," she recognizes the stark contrast between her mom's views on gender roles and

norms when compared to many of the mothers within her community. The role women play in

reinforcing and perpetuating sexist gender roles that restrict girls' and women's autonomy is

evidenced in the latter part of her statement. Habiba, Ali, Ashfaq (2016) use the term

neopatriarchy to describe a form of governance at the household level where internalized

patriarchy and explicit/implicit pressure from men, encourages older women in the family to

exert power and control over the girls and young women through their words and actions.

Because many of the older women have experienced the lasting trauma of being a girl/woman in

a male-dominated society that devalues their humanity and suppresses their agency, the girls under their care may look to them for understanding, protection, and solidarity.

Listening to the Nashers' stories brought me back to my childhood experiences of hearing Black women in my community use the term "fast" to chastise Black girls (myself included) for behaviors they perceived as signs of promiscuity. These behaviors included everything from body movements to speech and style of dress. The worst offense was hanging out with boys. Visible proximity to boys helped shape perceptions about what kind of girl you were and what kind of woman you were destined to be. In this way, we were sexualized before our bodies fully developed, before losing our virginity, before we could even articulate what it meant to be a sexual being. However, the boys and men who preyed upon us were given a pass for their behavior. They were shielded from the vitriol leveled against us. For this reason, I deeply resonated with the sense of betrayal expressed in the Nasher statement "you're supposed to be able to trust them...but when they say all these sexist things you don't know what to do." I knew that in our families and communities, the relationship between women and girls is too often fragile and fraught with intergenerational trauma. Echoing a similar sentiment another Nasher followed up,

> I would agree. I also think that sexism plays out in my family because my mom and my grandma will always choose my brother over me. And they think boys are more superior than girls. My mom will always give my brother the better things and it's still happening right now. But I can't change anything. I talked to her about it, but she thinks the traditional way. And like my family in China they think this way, like boys are more superior. (CCS#2)

Her statement draws attention to patriarchal and sexist perspectives that elevate boys and men above girls and women and the preferential treatment they receive as a result. She identifies her mother and grandmother's ways of thinking as traditional and fixed. She also highlights the transnational nature of the gendered norms established within her family in referencing the shared views between her family in the US and in China. The Nasher who previously commented above, chimed in to reiterate her point about women playing a significant role in adhering to and promoting patriarchal gender roles within families.

> It's very in your face. You have your aunts being like oh why you dress like this, oh you should be doing this, you should go help support your mom in the kitchen blah blah blah you know. You're a woman, why are you dressed like that, you should be dressed more conservatively. (CCS#2)

The last sentence of her statement also touches upon respectability politics and notions of modesty pertaining to what is deemed as appropriate attire for girls and women. Respectability politics are based on unwritten rules that marginalized people are expected to adhere to in hopes of gaining respect within the dominant society (Landor & Barr, 2018). These arbitrary rules are enforced through community and self-policing. In the context of South Asian communities, women are tasked with the role of upholding cultural tradition and their family's honor which engenders a dynamic where their families and husbands have a vested interest in restricting and dictating how they dress and act (Srinivasanm, 2018, p. 413). Women who do not adhere to the prescribed rules run the risk of being perceived as "a threat not just to her own future, but also to the future of a family, community, and ethnic or religious group" (Subramanian, 2013, p. 312).

In another CCS, two Nashers discussed the messaging they received within their families and members of their cultural communities that signaled male children are more valued and desired than girls.

What pisses me off is when people in my culture think men are more acceptable than women. I really hate whenever me and my family go out and some random Chinese person just says, Oh My God! You have two sons. I have two daughters. And they say [my parents are] pretty lucky they have more boys than girls. [Having daughters is] pretty bad, because you're not going to carry on your family name and I'm like who cares. When I get married, I'm not going to change my last name. I'm just going to keep it so I can show off like hey, so my last name, I still have it. (CCS#1)

Here, she expressed disdain for sexist rhetoric that positions men above women along with the casual and unsolicited comments made by strangers that uphold these narratives. Her refusal to change her last name illustrates her commitment to pushing back against the patriarchal norms that are deeply embedded within her community and the larger society. In response to her statement, another Nasher commented,

I connect with that. I'm African and my mom told me she actually wanted two kids, but when she started having kids, she had three daughters. So there was pressure on her to make a boy. She was going to stop at two but she had to keep trying until she could have a male child. And I'm like, it's so messed up the way they feel a family has to have a male child, blah blah blah. The mentality is so dumb. I'm not trying to throw shade, but even the females of the family that make y'all so proud.

Interrupted by a wave of finger snaps from the Nashers, she briefly paused before continuing. "But y'all still don't see the um, the..." As she searched for the word, a Nasher chimes in "the value." She responds, "Yeah in us," and continues,

> You have a female child, believe and invest in this daughter but nah, they just want to make the daughter stay home and the boys go to school. So it's just really crazy because they need to do better. There's a lot of things families need to unlearn and be like, okay, now we know better. (CCS#1)

Her statement critiques the reasoning families use when they choose to ignore the accomplishments and potential of the girls and women within the family. In her view, failing to invest in daughters and denying them access to education is a practice that should be left in the past. Her perspective is supported by organizations like the Malala Fund who argue an investment in girls' education as a major factor in improving family health outcomes, the environment, and the economy (Malala Fund, n.d.). Malala Yousafzai, whom the organization is named after, was nearly killed by the Taliban for her activism in supporting girls and their right to an education. Her story and activism, illustrates the active resistance girls face concerning access to education. The Malala Fund and other like minded organizations contribute to girls' access to free and safe education in countries like Brazil, India, Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Education activism also plays a role in disrupting dominant narratives that justify keeping education away from girls. Shifting the narrative speaks to the last point made by the Nasher above about families needing to unlearn problematic ways of thinking that hinder girls' opportunities and overall well-being.

The pressure placed on her mother received to birth a male child encapsulates the ways in which patriarchal beliefs supersede women's wants and needs which includes their reproductive

agency. The Nashers' statements are reflective of the academic scholarship and journalistic reporting focused on worldwide prevalence of interpersonal and institutional ideologies and practices that promote a preference for boys over girls. Over 60 years of Gallup survey data indicates that people in the US favored having a male child (Miller, 2018). Being African of Nigerian background, the Nasher above, comes from a cultural context where daughters and wives are restricted from receiving inheritance which exacerbates the pressure to have male children (Nnadi, 2013). In this way, patriarchal laws and traditions contribute to families' preference for sons. In countries across Asia, Southeastern Europe, and in the Middle East, abortion, neglect, and infanticide are strategies used to reduce the population of female children (Brink, 2015; Bongaarts, 2013). According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights along with several other United Nations agencies, women who give birth to "an unwanted girl child" may face grave consequences which "include violence, abandonment, divorce or even death" (UN News, 2011). The laws, practices as well as the psychological and physically violent consequences mentioned above confirms the overwhelming influence patriarchal institutions and cultural norms have on a family's preference for sons.

The types of stories and conversations the Nashers describe are also written about in fictional texts. In Rum's (2019) novel *A Woman is No Man,* the protagonist Isra is expecting her first child, and throughout the pregnancy, her mother-in-law Fareeda repeatedly verbalizes her wish for a grandson. In the following exchange, Fareeda reiterates her preference for boys in the company of her daughter Sarah, and daughter-in-law Isra.

> "A boy is better, trust me. They'll care for you when you're older, carry on the family
> name—"

"Are you saying you weren't happy when you had me?" Sarah asked sharply. "Because I

wasn't a precious boy?"

"I'm not saying that," Fareeda said. "But everyone wants a boy. You ask anyone, and

they'll tell you."

Sarah shook her head. "I don't get it. Girls are the ones that help their mothers (p. 117).

While the characters in the text are Palestinian Americans, the Nashers' experiences evidence

that similar conversations occur between grandmothers, mothers, daughters, and aunts from a

host of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Collectively, the Nashers' statements provide a window

into the perceptions of the messages and expectations that shaped their girlhood. The criticality

and nuanced understanding they offer highlights patriarchal ideologies that give men power and

privileges over women as pervasive and deeply rooted within and across cultures and societies.

Summary and Discussion

In this findings chapter, I presented data that responds to my first research question: *How

do girls and young women of color -- who were participants in a social justice leadership

program -- make sense of their racialized, ethnic, and gendered identities in relation to their

sociopolitical realities?* The reflections shared by the Nashers across the CCSs reveal varying

aspects of their racialized and gendered socialization. They map the overwhelming presence and

influence of white supremacist and patriarchal ideologies within their communities and society.

Drawing on politicizing socialization as a theoretical framework for understanding how girls and

young women of color make sense of sociopolitical factors that shape their experiences, I

emphasize the Nashers critical and nuanced accounts of their experiences and their acute

awareness of the socializing forces that influence their lives. Given the diverse racial and ethnic

backgrounds of the Nashers, an intersectional lens offers insights into the differing ways patriarchal and white supremacist beliefs and practices are upheld and challenged.

As the Nashers articulate, a patriarchal mindset facilitates sexist and rigid notions of gender norms that are passed down from generation to generation, making this thinking challenging to unlearn. Their acknowledgment and criticism of these expectations, along with a host of other issues, were already forming before they participated in Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP). One of the Nashers explains, "I thought I knew a lot about certain topics, but then seeing it through a different lens with PIP, it kind of broaden what I had already believed, which allowed me to come to a different perspective" (CCS#2). Another Nasher shared a similar sentiment, stating, "We talk about [racism] in school, but then when I [came] to Sadie Nash and participated in PIP, I got to know the deeper concept and the more complex" (CCS#2). Thus, while their understanding of issues like racism and sexism began taking shape through interactions with their families, at school, community organizations, and other interpersonal and institutional relationships, PIP offered breadth, depth, and complexity, which will be explored more thoroughly in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER FIVE: CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING THROUGH POWER, IDENTITY AND PRIVILEGE

Introduction

This findings chapter brings attention to the knowledge and learning experiences that the girls and young women of color in this study described as significant to their participation in Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP). The reflections they shared within the Critical Conversation Spaces (CCS) highlight PIP as a space that promotes critical consciousness-raising by cultivating a deeper awareness of how social injustice affects them individually and collectively. The girls and young women speak to three prevailing themes, (1) *PIP curriculum and interactive learning opportunities, (2) naming and making sense of complex concepts concerning social identities and power, and (3) fostering confidence through confronting various forms of oppression with girls and women of color. Each theme* sheds light on the curricula and pedagogical practices that shaped their experiences with PIP. Interspersed throughout are statements from PIP instructors, which offer an additional perspective focused on their rationale for the instructional approaches they employed.

PIP Curriculum and Interactive Learning Opportunities

The PIP curriculum features several interactive lessons where Nashers pursue examinations of power and oppression through games and activities that engender cooperative learning, critical reflection, and explorations of their individual and shared identities. Club Candy and Oppression 101 are two key activities both of which engage Nashers in role playing scenarios. The purpose of Club Candy is to explore the issue of colorism through examining how it occurs and affects intragroup and intergroup dynamics within communities of color. The Oppression 101 activity is also referred to as the Domination Game. This activity presents a

scenario that begins with a meteor crash that erases the memory of all the men in society. As a result, the women and non-binary people are now in a position of power and are tasked with remodeling society in a way that avoids the replicating the patriarchal structure that once existed. The main objective of Oppression 101 is to identify and understand societal institutions as entities of socialization and factors that perpetuate the cycle of oppression. In the CCSs several Nashers mentioned Club Candy and Oppression 101 in their discussion of PIP lessons and activities that were most engaging and impactful. Given their prominence in our discussion, the next section takes a closer look at Nashers' experiences and main takeaways from participating in both activities.

Club Candy

Several Nashers spoke to the impact this activity had on their understanding of issues of power and privilege concerning skin tone discrimination. One Nasher describes her experience, stating,

> I vividly remember we had a class where there was a party going on, and then they had a paper bag. If you were lighter than the paper bag, you don't get to go to the party. We had so much fun, music, food, dancing, and then we looked through the window, and the people that were lighter than us were outside, like what's going on? After like 10-15 minutes, the party was over, and they said everyone could come in. They asked the people outside, what was your experience? How did you feel being outside? And then the people inside, how did you feel? I feel like it made us aware of how colorism is really prevalent in our society. I actually did like it [because] people who are lighter than me got to experience what I experience on a daily basis, and now they can connect with me. (CCS#4)

As alluded to in her reflection, Club Candy is an activity based on the paper bag test, which was historically used as a means to exclude darker skin Black people from organizations, parties, and other activities intended for Black people of high social and economic status (Kerr, 2005). For example, Black fraternities and sororities would restrict membership to individuals of light complexion, and this approach was also used in the selection of homecoming queens crowned at Black colleges and universities (Hill & Burger, 1998). With attention to this history and in efforts to not cause further harm to those already negatively impacted by colorism, the instructor flipped the concept around. Thus, as a girl with darker skin, this particular Nasher had an overwhelmingly positive view of the activity as it provided a rare opportunity for her to engage lighter skin peers with her experiences. Although other instructors facilitated the activity true to how colorism operates in society, the value of the experience was not diminished in the view of several Nashers. "It really opened my eyes because I didn't know there was racism within color," one Nasher stated (CCS#2). Similarly, another Nasher expressed that the activity illustrated, "Even though we are all black, a person with a lighter shade has more privilege than me with a darker shade" (CCS#1).

Unlike her peers, one Nasher had a unique approach to participating in the Club Candy exercise. She explains,

> I was one of the people let in. And I realized really quickly what was going on. So, I decided to use my privilege to begin letting other people in, and I tore up the separation. After they let everyone in, they created a VIP section. The people that were let in first were let in that area, and I decided to rip up the VIP section and begin letting other people in. And then, it led the classroom and the PIP lecture that day into a different direction on how to use our privileges to help other people (CC#4).

She was aware of her privilege as a Latina with a light skin tone and proceeded to share access with the Nashers of darker skin excluded from the party. Her singular action shifted the dynamics of the activity and led the instructor to facilitate a discussion that simultaneously addressed issues of power, privilege, and allyship. The instructor's responsiveness maximized the learning opportunity opened up by the Nasher's quick and intentional move to disrupt the discriminatory practices the activity sought to highlight. On the whole, the Nashers' description of her Club Candy experience exemplifies the critical consciousness-raising possibilities that emerge by way of the decisions made by Nashers amid the activity and the questions the instructors raise during the discussion that occurs afterward.

While several Nashers viewed the Club Candy activity as a valuable lesson on colorism, there were instructors that made the decision to scrap the activity altogether. Celina has taught PIP three times and explains her decision-making process surrounding the Club Candy activity.

> So the first time I did exactly what it said in the curriculum and I had to console a bunch of crying people and I didn't have enough time to unpack all of that. So what I did the [following] year is explain the game and my refusal to teach that game. And what I did instead is actually just posed questions around how do you feel about your skin tone? Has there ever been a time in your life that you were made to feel less than? So I changed it from the game into a discussion and that was actually more fruitful because even though there were emotions that came up, I didn't trigger them in this fantasy game structure. I brought up celebrities that were having these colorism and race conversations in the media and I showed them this video that one of our fraternity brothers made about racism and how it broke down all the different races and the history that came from.

In witnessing the intense emotions stirred up by the activity and the minimal time left to unpack them, Celina chose an alternative approach that considered the well-being of all the Nashers in her class. While roleplaying scenarios offer members of the dominant group a peek into the experiences of the marginalized group, Celina believed the harm it caused outweighed the benefits. At the same time, Celina ensured that the curricular and pedagogical changes she employed aligned with the original lesson's goal of exploring the historical and contemporary influence and impact of colorism on communities of color.

As a PIP instructor for two consecutive summers, my approach to teaching about colorism closely mirrored Celina's. Prior to PIP, I taught a course about issues of power at the university level. The perspective I gained through facilitating numerous activities about race, racism, and privilege with college students was the driving force behind my decision not to do the Club Candy activity with my Nashers. My stance was much like Celina's in that I recognized that the potential for harm was far greater than what could be learned from the activity. Further, I knew that as girls of color they already face the harsh realities of living in a racist and sexist world. As an educator, my commitment to their holistic well-being led me to adapt an existing lesson within the PIP curriculum that explores colorism on a global scale. I used the accompanying images and additional visuals which collectively included advertisements, statistics, pages from magazines and social media memes focused on the manifestation of skin tone discrimination in different countries to facilitate a gallery walk activity where Nashers could explore the social, economic, and psychological impact colorism has on communities of color. This activity and the space I provided Nashers to share and unpack how colorism shows up in the media, their families, and communities was intellectually generative and cathartic. Taken together, the pedagogical stances and instructional strategies Celina and I used to discuss the

issue of colorism promoted "a culture of caring relations [that] take into account dialogue, critical thinking, reflection, and contextualization" (Caraballo & Soleimany, 2019, p.84). Ultimately, Club Candy, along with the activities Celina and I used, extends Nashers' critical consciousness toward the recognition of our collective roles in mitigating colorism in our respective communities and society at large.

Oppression 101

When discussing activities that were significant to their PIP learning experience, multiple Nashers mentioned one of the main activities used to examine the process of socialization and systems of oppression. One of the Nashers gave a recap of the activity as it unfolded within her PIP class,

> So basically, we were [asked] if we could recreate the format of society and women were
> in power, what changes would we make to affect the way it's structured. I remember
> when I was doing this activity, the people with me wanted to make women the leaders
> and restructure education to be women centered. But then what happens to the male
> perspective? So, it was kind of that challenge of trying to find a balance. It's kind of like
> even though [society] is very male dominated, if we did have the choice to change it,
> would we make it vice versa or would we try to have a balance. Even with race, you can
> say that's applicable too because if it was switched, would we want to make it vice versa
> or balanced, that challenge of trying to make it inclusive of everybody (CC#4).

Her statement highlights some of the difficult questions that were raised as Nashers worked together to envision a world where women were in power. This experience led her to the realization that power struggles can make it challenging to formulate societal structures that are 'inclusive of everybody." She saw Nashers use the activity as an opportunity to exert power in

ways that relegated men to the margins of society. Another Nasher shared a similar experience with the activity and the lessons she learned from it.

> It really showed me that though equality is possible, it's not really practical...I was in a group that wanted to brainwash the men, but then I went to a different group because I was like that's not really fair because that's what women are fighting for now, equality. But after that, I realized equality isn't that practical because as much as we would like to think that we could all be on the same page, at some point, there is going to be one group of people or one person that feels they are better than someone else (CC#2).

Her assessment that equality is possible but perhaps not practical manifested as a result of witnessing Nashers propose extreme policies and practices to ensure the oppression of men. Although there were Nashers that were committed to establishing a more just and equitable society, hearing the lengths others would take to hold onto their power was an eye-opening experience for both of the Nashers cited above. Some Nashers did not get to experience the activity as laid out in the curriculum, because their instructors chose to take a different route. One Nasher explained,

> [Our instructor] said she didn't feel right doing it, so we did something else where we created our own community. And then I realized I don't want to be that person who picks and chooses the social justices that I'm in (CC#3).

Her reflection indicates how her instructors' pedagogical approach to teaching about power and oppression influenced her declaration not to be selective in pursuing social justice. In other words, her instructor's decision to navigate the lesson on oppression differently modeled how our individual choices can contribute or take away from our commitments to equity and liberation. In turn, she consciously chooses to embrace a humanizing perspective undergirded by

the awareness that systems of oppression are intricately linked by holding space for issues of power that do not directly impact her.

PIP instructors also shared their perspectives on the insights cultivated through the Oppression 101 activity, which they refer to as the Domination Game. Celina stated,

> I really like being able to teach power and oppression in a way that was more than just getting people definitions. And I feel like that was less triggering because they were the people who feel oppressed in the world able to exert power…. I had never seen power and oppression explained that way. And so, I always did that game with them, and the discussion afterward was usually very rich. Like, oh, I understand when we were able to flip the script, I was going to be just as abusive as it had been done to me. So, I think that was more effective than just being like, this is power, this is oppression, this is how we oppress people oppress other people.

Celina expressed an appreciation for how the Domination Game moves beyond defining terms towards an examination of how marginalized people may uphold the very systems they seek to dismantle. Alinia (2015) posits, "Depending on their positions in social structures and hierarchies, individuals and groups can become part of oppressive systems and reproduce domination" (p. 2335). When given the power to shape society as they see fit, some of the Nashers chose to foster a matriarchal society rooted in the subordination of boys and men. In contrast, others chose to implement more humanizing and equity centered institutional structures that consider the fundamental needs of all members of society. Celina highlights how the varying perspectives taken up by the Nashers contributes to the rich discussion that emerged following the activity. Nadine also shared her experience facilitating the Domination Game and what it offers Nashers in their understanding of issues of power. She stated,

I could see in real-time how their understandings of oppression were evolving at

that moment. So, anything that requires them to use [their] imagination to role

play to rewrite laws or challenge what we already are complicit to in our current

society seems to be the most useful. It really communicates how power, identity,

and privilege shape society and what we can do within our respective interests or

careers, whatever they may be, how we can inform what it will look like going

forward. So, the Domination Game...showed them just how vicious it could be if

someone isn't interested in sharing power and really unpacking what power is and

how it shows up on a mass and micro scale.

Nadine's reflection encapsulates the ways in which the Domination Game engages Nashers in an

analysis of oppression that explores how dominant groups utilize "Institutions of power [to]

define the world in ways that maintain hegemonic social orders" (Camangian, 2013, p. 131). At

the same time, the task of building a society from scratch presented the Nashers with endless

possibilities in shaping the foundational elements of a more just society. As with most PIP

activities, the culminating discussion provides a space for critical discourse and reflection. The

discussion also serves as a conduit for Nashers to share their questions, thoughts, and feelings

openly. In doing so, Nashers gain a more nuanced understanding of socialization and

institutional oppression that exposes myriad ways systems of power inflict harm on marginalized

people and how and why these communities may participate in upholding inequitable practices.

Naming and Making Sense of Complex Concepts Concerning Social Identities and Power

Across the CCSs, the girls and young women repeatedly spoke about the terminology

they learned in PIP and how this knowledge gave them a deeper understanding of issues of

power in relationship to marginalized social identities. Nashers engaged in critical interrogations

of power from an intersectional perspective through participation in several activities that explicitly focus on the exploration of different aspects of their identity. Collectively, the insights gained in PIP assisted Nashers in naming and making sense of their social and political experiences at the interpersonal and institutional levels. The following three sections focus on Nashers' reflections on their learning pertaining to gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and terminology used to discuss issues of power.

Gender as a Social Construct, the Expansive Nature of Sexuality, and LGBTQ+ Advocacy and Allyship

Through participation in PIP, Nashers learned that gender and sexuality are complex and expansive categories of identity. Their knowledge on this subject matter was formulated through lessons and activities that explore the "difference between gender, sex, and sexual orientation and interrogate gender as a social construction, including gender roles, and gender identity" (PIP Curriculum, 2017, p. 9). "We learned what LGBTQ stands for and then all the pluses like pansexual, demisexual. And I didn't know about any of that before. So, it was eye-opening to me, and I feel more informed," one Nasher explains (CC#6). In the series of exchanges that follow, the Nashers in CCS#1 describe the significant takeaways from their PIP lessons on gender and sexuality. One Nasher discussed how learning the difference between gender identity and gender expression informs her thoughts and actions,

> I learned different terms and how to actually have a conversation without saying anything that would offend someone. I would sound like a hypocrite sometimes before PIP, but now, I don't use derogatory words. For example, the word Dyke, I know that is a derogatory term, and unless the person associates themselves with the term, then I don't feel comfortable calling them that. (CCS#1)

Her reflection spotlights how PIP's focus on the acquisition of key vocabulary about social justice concepts and issues strengthened her knowledge of homophobic slurs that are commonly used. She also articulates an awareness that individuals may reappropriate derogatory terms and describe themselves using terms like Dyke. Through re-appropriation of the word Dyke, lesbians may seek to "revalue it, transforming the very words designed to demean into expressions of self-respect" (Galinsky et al., 2013, p. 2021). Her acknowledgment of these nuances is credited to what she learned in PIP. Building on her statement, another Nasher responds,

> I resonated a lot with you talking about gender expression and gender identity and learning the terminology because I think educating yourself is extremely powerful because you carry that with you every day and the way that you interact with other people. I think it just shows how educated you are about certain topics. And personally, I think PIP kind of helped me figure out my identity as well. That was the same year I came out as queer. (CCS#1)

In her reflection, she stresses the importance of "learning the terminology" as not only a means of being self-aware but also to interact with others more thoughtfully. The learning experiences fostered within PIP also provided a supportive space where she could further explore and affirm her queer identity. Immediately following her comment, one of the Nashers asked, "Can somebody define what being queer is to me? I'm ignorant," (CCS#1). At this point, the word queer was brought up in the conversation several times. Thus, her question was a genuine attempt to get a better understanding of what the girls meant in their use of the word queer. In response, one of the Nashers explains,

> It's basically you're in the LGBT community, but you don't want to specify which letter you consider yourself. So, like me, I'm bi, but I'll say I'm queer. If you don't feel

comfortable actually saying the exact term, the exact identity that you associate yourself

with, then you could just say that you're queer. (CCS#1)

In her view, queer serves as an umbrella term for members of the LGBT+ community. By using

the word queer, she avoids specificity and explicitly naming herself as bisexual. Adding to that

description, another Nasher offers her perspective,

I'm more on a fluid spectrum, so that's why I identify as queer. I know that I'm interested

in cis girls and cis guys but nonbinary people, I've never had an instance where I'm

attracted to somebody who's transgender. So that's why I use queer because I don't want

to exclude that maybe I might have that experience. So that's why I use queer because I

don't fit into bisexual, but I don't fit into pansexual. (CCS#1)

While both Nashers identify as queer, their reasons for using the term differ with the second

Nasher's insights tied to an understanding of her sexuality in the present and an openness toward

romantic partners of varying genders in the future. Adding to what was already said, another

Nasher relays her initial surprise in learning about the existence of multiple genders and

sexualities. She went on to share a piece of knowledge that she found extremely eye-opening. "I

forget what it's called, but like when you have female internal [organs], but you're male. I forgot

what that's called, intercourse, inter, inter something." As she struggled to recall the correct

word, several Nashers call out in unison 'intersex.' "Yeah," she responds and continues, "it blew

my mind because I never knew [there were] more genders or sexualities" (CCS#1). The Intersex

Society of North America defines intersex "as a general term used for a variety of conditions in

which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical

definitions of female or male" (2008, para.1). The animation in her voice conveyed her genuine

appreciation for the insights she gained through PIP. Following her reflection, another Nasher

shared her perspective on the utility of learning terminology concerning marginalized identities,

> Imagine if I identify as one of the terms that I didn't know, I would kind of feel bad
>
> because we know about [the] heterosexual community, but everyone else is kind of left to
>
> the side. Like, you know intersex wasn't always called intersex. I mean because the old
>
> term was her- (whispers) hermaphrodite (CCS#1).

Amidst murmurs from the Nashers, I quickly respond, "Yeah, and it's derogatory." She

continues, "And there are a lot of people who are like that. But imagine if I didn't go to PIP and I

didn't know the actual terminology. I could have possibly offended someone while having a

conversation" (CCS#1). She adamantly addresses the issue of heteronormativity and the lack of

recognition and consideration of people whose identities don't fit into the prescribed norms. She

makes the point that the lack of access to different terminology can also hinder our ability to

fully claim identities rendered invisible within the dominant discourse. What is most telling is

her dismay at the thought of "possibly offend[ing] someone" by using terms that can diminish or

offend. Her response demonstrates the empathy she extends towards others who experience

marginalization and discrimination. She also shared, "Being a woman of color, people who are in

[the LGBT] community would think I am closed-minded because within the black community

there's a lot of negativity put upon the LGBT community. So, I wouldn't blame them." Her

statement is rooted in the prevailing perception that the Black community is largely homophobic.

This assumption fails to consider Black people who "live out the intersectionality of multiple

identities as black and queer" and "are simultaneously present and excluded in the

neighborhoods where they live, and in mainstream LGBT organizations" (Hill, 2013, p. 210). As

a Black and queer young woman, her experiences within and across the LGBT and Black

community offer insights from an intersectional perspective. Further, her experience within the racially diverse and queer-friendly community of Sadie Nash provided a welcoming atmosphere to examine and challenge problematic assumptions.

When discussing their prominent insights focused on gender and sexuality, several girls discussed learning about allyship. One Nasher stated, "I used to think that you were either straight or queer. I didn't think those identities or those communities mixed, but I feel like at Sadie Nash my identity as a straight ally started" (CC#6). A similar reflection was shared by another Nasher, "It made me more open-minded to the LGBTQ [community]. I consider myself an ally. I support the LGBT community and stand up for their rights" (CCS#1). Through participation in PIP, both Nashers became aware of the vital role allies play in advocating for LGBT rights and amplifying their issues and concerns.

PIP also calls attention to gender as a social construction and the gender norms that are ever-present in society. Several of the girls spoke to the personal revelation that manifested as a result of their PIP experience. One Nasher shared,

> My mom is a stay at home mom. There is nothing wrong with that, of course; you just have to be open-minded to other people's decisions. But my mom also kind of pushed it on me being a stay at home mom or depending on the man. But I always wanted to do something else. But being at PIP, you realize that it's okay to stray away or not be the same as you were brought up to be (CCS#1).

Her reflection makes room for various representations of womanhood, even those she has no desire to emulate. This is evidenced by her simultaneous acknowledgment of her mother's decision to be a stay at home mom and her appreciation of PIP in presenting alternative possibilities of what girls and women could be and become made available in PIP. In this way,

PIP bolstered her sense of agency in making her own choices about her future as a young woman of color.

Nadine, a former PIP instructor, provides a window into activities PIP instructors use to engage Nashers in discussions around gender norms, gender identity, and gender expression. She also expounds on the unique approaches she utilized and the rationale behind them.

For explaining gender, I like the gender unicorn and the genderbread person. For some of them, I just felt the image itself was a little elementary, at least for the folks I was teaching. I had students coming in at 14, 15 years old and shirts saying eat pussy; it's organic. So, I'm not sure how you're going to respond to a genderbread person or work out your gender assumptions and presumptions. So, what I would do is incorporate music. I remember one song in particular I played was Leikeli47, "Girl Blunt." Instead of solely doing the gender box to break down binaries, I [asked them] so what do you think this person looks like? And then we got into the conversation about [why] Leikeli47 wears a mask, and why would this person in an industry that sells image try to hide their face. And that really got them to grapple with institutions again and how that informs our understanding of gender.

While Nadine's lessons draw from the PIP curriculum in her use of the gender unicorn, genderbread person, and the gender box, she added additional layers in efforts to meet the Nashers where they are. Her use of music served as a vehicle to examine the ways mainstream media works to promote particular images of womanhood while obscuring others. In her song Girl Blunt, Leikeli47's proclaims, "he got it going on, he just graduated college 'bout a week ago, you can work at CVS long as you don't keep me stressed." Based on her lyrics espousing attraction to men and her high-pitched voice, some of the Nashers assumed her appearance

would model the idealized feminine aesthetic of most women rappers. However, Leikeli47 not only wears a mask, but she also dresses in loose fitting hoodies and sweatpants, adorns painted nails, and a range of hairstyles from braids to pigtails. Her style exemplifies the ways her music and persona disrupt dominant beauty standards and notions of femininity. Through unpacking Leikeli47's music and image in the context of the larger music industry, the Nashers were able to examine some of their assumptions about gender norms, gender expression, and sexuality.

Race and Ethnicity

Several Nashers spoke to PIP's role in strengthening their sense of pride in their race and ethnic identity. One Nasher stated, "It made me more confident about my race, and it got me started being natural" (CCS#6). Her decision to stop using chemical hair relaxers is significant and an experience relatable to many Black girls and women. Phelps-Ward and Laura (2016) argue "wearing one's hair in its natural state is not only symbolic of an internal struggle with the dominant discourse of a Eurocentric standard of beauty" it is a "visible action that challenges such a deeply reified notion of beauty" (p. 817). Thus, despite the overwhelming presence of images and messages that communicate "You ain't posed to love yourself Black Girl," (Browne, 2015), the Nasher above chooses to embrace her blackness lovingly.

Similarly, a Nasher that identifies as Mexican American shared, she gained a stronger appreciation and desire to learn more about her cultural heritage and history. She explained, "It actually made me value who I am more," (CCS#6). Her reflection alludes to how PIP encourages Nashers to learn more about who they are and to take pride in it, which is of particular importance considering there is limited opportunity to learn about their culture and history in school. The prevalence of Eurocentric curriculum lends itself to the marginalization of the

identities and experiences of students of color. The absences in the school curriculum was noted by one of the Nashers. She stated,

> I kind of realized that the school system is broken because there's a lot of things that they don't teach us in school and like a lot of people go their whole lives without knowing but like PIP really helped me learn. (CCS#2).

The insight she offers is supported by advocates of Ethnic Studies curriculum as it "centralizes the experiences and narratives of people of color, thus legitimizing them as evidence to challenge and reframe dominant narratives about race, culture, language and citizenship" (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2015, p.113). While PIP is not labeled an Ethnic Studies course, its focus on issues of power from an intersectional lens fosters critical awareness and unlearning of the deficit perspectives students of color encounter in schools.

Participation in Sadie Nash and PIP, in particular, also helped Nashers think more deeply about their racial and gender identity. One of the Nashers stated, "I think it helped me a lot because before I would always ask who am I? Those are things that are always behind your head" (CCS#4). A few of the Nashers snapped their fingers in agreement. She continued, "I felt that the program helped me redefine or pinpoint exactly who I am. So, I was able to know the depth of what being a black woman means to me" (CCS#4). In her reflection, she credits the Sadie Nash Leadership Project's (SNLP) and PIP for giving her space to explore questions she had about different aspects of her identity. The supportive finger snaps from Nashers is a testament to the commonality of the identity-based questions being explored by girls and young women of color participating in the SNLP's Summer Institute. Following the Nasher's statement above, one of the young women reflected on her journey grappling with questions about her racial and ethnic identity.

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I'm Dominican and Puerto Rican [and] when I was going through the college process,

and I was going in PIP there were a lot of times the question [came up] like what box do I

check when I'm filling out an application for the SAT or when I'm doing my census. I

don't consider myself white because I was raised to be Latina, and for me, that's not

something that correlates. But then you go deeper, and it brings up a lot of emotional

questions. And it wasn't something that I had really sat down and thought about prior to

[PIP] (CC#4).

The sense of confusion she describes in her experience completing official documents is familiar

to many who identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Based on findings from the 2010 U.S. Census data,

Gonzalez-Barrera and Lopez (2015) report, "standard U.S. racial categories might either be

confusing or not provide relevant options for Hispanics to describe their racial identity" (para. 2).

Individuals from places like the Dominican Republic may have African, Indigenous, or European

ancestral roots or any combinations of the three and for this reason may "define their race in

terms of language and ethnolinguistic heritage, referring to their race variously as "Dominican,"

"Spanish," "Hispanic," or "Latino," and not as black or white" (Bailey, 2001, p. 680). The

decision to identify with one of the terms above, reflects the Nasher's view that white does not

accurately define her Latina identity. One of the activities in the PIP curriculum leads Nashers

through an examination of the U.S. Census form. With particular attention to the categories of

race and how it has changed over time, this activity engages Nashers in a discussion about race

as a social construction and explores the difference between race and ethnicity. This activity,

along with a few others, created an environment where Nashers could access terminology, ask

critical questions, and gain deeper insights concerning their racial and ethnic identities.

Learning Terminology Related to Power, Privilege, and Oppression

As girls of color, the Nashers face challenges that arise as they traverse through various contexts grounded in "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2013, p. 4). While issues of power, privilege, and oppression impact their daily lives, they credit PIP with exposing them to the language that helps them make sense of their experiences. One Nasher expressed,

> I kind of knew a little bit about education activism because I was dealing with that in my school district. But I never really had any of the right words to use. And when I went into PIP, I learned a lot about intersectionality. (CCS#4)

Several Nashers enthusiastically responded "Yessssss" to signal their agreement. "And different things of that nature. That really helped me kind of break everything down," she continued (CCS#4). One Nasher shared what she learned through participating in an activity focused on defining and identifying different forms of oppression.

> We were supposed to classify what kind of oppression it was based on the scenario. It was institutionalized, internalized, and something else. It made me realize there's so many ways, because I'm black and also a woman, I'm being held back. (CCS#5)

Similarly, one of the young women in the same conversation group stated, "It also opened my eyes to my school as an institution and how there's a lot of racism and sexism within my college" (CCS#5). Collectively, the Nashers' statements above reveal that the social justice terminology they learned in PIP, deepen their understanding of systems of power and strengthen their ability to draw connections to their experiences and "larger societal issues, at micro and macro levels, local and globally" (Welton et al. 2015, p. 551). The power that rests in naming oppression was passionately described in the following reflection,

I grew up in a Ghanaian background [and] sexism is very prevalent in our culture. So,

sexism was something that I was used to, but I didn't know it was sexism. I experienced

it, but I couldn't pinpoint why I was feeling a certain way about it or why I would always

ask questions [or] why am I being disobedient but Summer Institute was a place where I

could pinpoint what is happening to me, and now I know more information about what I

went through and how to navigate my space now (CC#4).

In asking herself "why am I being disobedient," she conveys that the normalcy of sexism within

her community led her to believe that her adverse feelings and attempts to question the treatment

and expectations placed on girls and women were problematic. She compellingly articulates the

life-changing insights PIP precipitates as girls of color acquire vocabulary that "simultaneously

unveil, name and dismantle oppressive structures that have impacted their identities, lived

experiences and ways of being in the world" (Butler, 2016, p. 316). PIP's potentiality as a course

that supports critical consciousness-raising of girls of color is evidenced by her journey to

naming the gendered expectations ever-present in her familial and social environment as sexism.

One of the Nashers in the first CCS detailed an example of sexism she was able to further

examine in PIP. "I knew about the wage gap, but I didn't know it affected women in different

lines of work. But with PIP, we started talking about the amount that each person has on a dollar

by race," she paused and questioned whether or not that would be considered misogyny or

sexism. I responded, stating, "Yeah, that would be sexism because it's based on gender, and it's

[also] racialized." She continued, "But as you can see, we are always on the bottom when you

consider wages." To follow up, I added, "It goes back to your saying about intersectionality

because when you factor in gender and race, then you see that there are even more disparities

depending on your race." In closing, she stated, "So, it's being a woman, but also being" several

Nashers join her and call out in unison "being a woman of color." This exchange exemplifies the affordances of the CCSs in promoting open dialogue that allows all participants to contribute to the meaning-making process.

When asked about the PIP topics they found most interesting to discuss, one of the Nashers shared her affinity for exploring privilege, because it incorporates different aspects of identity. She stated,

> For example, me being a black girl that comes with a lot of disadvantages. However, the fact that I am cis and I'm hearing, and those certain factors give me more of a privilege than somebody else if they're disabled and not cis gender. I really like studying that because you always hear [about] privilege, and you think of somebody who is white, cis, and male (CC#3).

The examples she offers in explaining how privilege works is an indication of her thorough understanding of the concept. Further, she addresses the misconception that white men are the only people with privilege by acknowledging the privileges she holds.

Fostering Confidence and Validation through Confronting Isms[1] with Girls and Women of Color

A majority of the Nashers credited PIP with boosting their overall confidence and comfort voicing their opinion on sociopolitical issues. As the youngest member of her family, a Nasher stated, "when we're together they talk about everything, but I'm not saying [anything]

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[1] I use the term isms in "describing any attitude, action or institutional structure that subordinates (oppresses) a person or group because of their target group, color (racism), gender (sexism), economic status (classism), older age (ageism) religion (e.g., anti- Semitism), sexual orientation (heterosexism), language/immigrant status (xenophobism), etc" (Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative, 2001, p.33).

because I thought I'm too young to talk and when I participated in PIP I realized that [if] you think something you got to speak up" (CC#2). While her family did welcome her opinions, she felt that at her age, she didn't have anything to contribute. However, the knowledge she gained during PIP and the encouragement to take up space in discussions led her to realize that her thoughts are valued. A similar reflection was shared by a Nasher who grew up in a household where discussions about politics were the norm. She stated,

> I swear every single day my mom would turn on CNN just to see what Trump is doing this time. And then she would yell to my uncle about it, and they would have arguments, like 'I think he's such an idiot' or whatever. So, we're really open about talking about politics and stuff. And my family are all raging liberals. But with PIP, I feel now I can talk to my friends about it more. It's shown me how to breach those discussions with people I'm not necessarily close with and why my voice matters (CC#5).

In her case, PIP served as a vehicle for developing the skills and knowledge to engage in critical discussions beyond her familial context. The Sadie Nash Summer Institute brings together girls and young women with different cultural backgrounds, experiences, and personalities; thus, PIP models discussions with peers with similar and divergent perspectives.

When asked in what ways PIP informs how they make sense of their schooling experiences, one of the Nashers shared that she became more confident in voicing her disagreements. She relayed a story from a situation that occurred in one of her classes, stating,

> So, my school is like 40% white and also 40% Latino, and the rest is Black and Asian. So, a while ago, this one girl went on a rant when we were reading *Between the World and Me*. [She said] he was exaggerating the extent of his experience... But I'm like you're rich, you wouldn't know the experience he had, and you live in a very safe environment.

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After that happened, I felt like I should have said something, but nobody else was arguing

with her. And this happened before I attended PIP... I felt I'm truly alone in this, so

there's no point in me trying to voice anything because I'm probably going to get vilified.

After PIP I felt comfortable saying what I have to say, even if I may be wrong, I'm

willing to discuss it and see how I can change, and I was able to take that energy outside

of PIP and bring it to school and be comfortable in what I believe (CC#5).

Her statement reveals that before PIP, she would back away from challenging classmates,

especially in the absence of support from peers. Although she was agitated by the comment made

by her classmate, she was reluctant to respond due to fear of being ridiculed for stating an

opinion her classmates would find unfavorable. Participation in PIP helped her become more

comfortable in voicing her thoughts and being open to shifting her perspective when presented

with new information.

PIP instructors also noticed the rise in Nasher's confidence throughout the program.

Nadine shared a thoughtful reflection on her experience teaching and learning with girls of color

in PIP. She states,

I think PIP instills confidence in them because it allows them to feel empowered, to feel

seen, to feel worthy of not only exploring these topics but in themselves. It provides them

with language and community. I found a lot of friendships were forming in that

classroom because it was like, oh, me too, or oh, I never had to go through that could you

tell me a bit more? You know? And I think it allowed them to more willingly engage in

the heavier conversations or the unpopular conversations. And to understand that it's okay

if this seems a little nerdy, or this seems uncool to point out the anti-blackness in this

song, but you know they and 17 others are ready to declare that it doesn't make me feel

good and I've gotten the validation from those who look like me or do not look like me, that how I feel is valid. So, I can show up and know that I'm not the only one who is understanding these types of oppression. So now, I feel like I can actually soundly identify it and stand my ground in that.

Her thoughtful reflection highlights the affordances of confronting isms in a learning community with people that share similar sociopolitical realities. Through being immersed in each other's stories, the girls receive confirmation that their view of the world is not a figment of their imagination. This confirmation is of particular importance for girls and women of color whose thoughts and emotions are routinely cast aside. The prevalence of their encounters with individuals and institutions that refuse to acknowledge their experience as real and valid, "can evoke a vicious cycle of anger, self doubt, and anxiety— often based around the question, 'Am I crazy?'" (Hanna 2019, p. 236). In PIP and the larger SNLP community, girls and young women of color receive validation through learning terminology that names oppression, verbal affirmations, and stories that mirror or stand adjacent to their experiences.

The community fostered within PIP is reflective of pedagogical moves made by the instructors. Further, the overwhelming majority of PIP instructors are women of color and bring with them an understanding and view of the world that allows them to relate to the Nashers more readily. The following reflection from Carmen details a moment that is firmly etched in her memory.

My first summer was the summer that Mike Brown got killed, and I remember that I felt that viscerally in my body like I had a reaction as a Black woman. I had a reaction that a Black woman would have to this. Not to say that a white person can't have an emotional or sad reaction to it, but you have a different reaction to this type of violence when you're

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a Black person. So, I got to work, and I was also able to identify that pretty much all my

Nashers were having this experience too. And as soon as I walked in, I was like we're not

doing anything today but talking about how we feel about what happened last night. I

don't think I could have done that had I not been positioned as a Black woman having the

same emotional and mental experience as most of them. Most, if not all, the Nashers.

Period. Like there's no way I could have done that as a white person. Not that I can't be

compassionate, but I didn't want to talk to a white person that day, not about my feelings.

Carmen's decision to attend to Nashers' feelings instead of going through with the lesson she

had planned is an enactment of humanizing pedagogy that prioritizes the social and emotional

well-being of all participants within the learning community. Carmen's focus on her Nashers'

immediate emotional needs and concerns actively acknowledges that "humanizing pedagogy is

inclusive of the psychological and emotional dimensions of the human experience" (del Carmen

Salazar, 2013, p. 129), and this element of praxis is of critical importance when teaching and

learning about issues of power. As a Black woman, she felt the weight of the state-sanctioned

antiblack violence that took the life of Mike Brown. As girls of color, she knew the Nashers were

experiencing similar feelings and sought to ensure they would not have to carry the load on their

own. By creating a dedicated space for Nashers to unpack their thoughts and feelings, she

employed a pedagogy of healing by "acknowledging that the wound exists and identifying its

culprit" (Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, and Everett, 2017). Additionally, her approach normalized

venting and discussing acts of dehumanization within educational contexts which is significant

considering that the Nashers involved in my pilot study experienced school as a place where

conversations about racism, oppression, and white supremacist acts of violence were often

suppressed. Carmen's validation of their embodied responses to the prevalence of police

brutality operates as a catalyst in developing the confidence to passionately speak up and out about issues that harm them and their communities.

While PIP makes spaces for Nashers to process publicized acts of police brutality and other forms of institutional violence, as a course focused on issues of social justice and analysis of systems of power, the daily discussions can also be emotionally taxing. Nadine explains how she supported Nashers through difficult conversations. She stated,

> Certain topics landed a little heavy for folks, and you have this curriculum, but also as an educator, you want to hold space for these young people who may have been triggered by whatever before they enter your room. So, you never know if the topic is going to reagitate them [and you want] to make sure folks don't feel singled out if they responded to something unfavorably because you know they come in with different understandings. They come in from different literal walks of life…. I would set the curriculum aside and be like, hey, so what's going on? What will make you feel better right now? What will make you feel more grounded in yourself right now? And then, fortunately, thank the ancestors, I could find a way to incorporate the curriculum back into whatever conversation we were having so that they could engage academically in addition to finding ways to feel more comfortable in themselves.

By checking in with Nashers and using moments of tension to stir the direction of the discussion, Nadine facilitates teaching moments that draw connections to their lived experiences.

Instructors like Nadine and Celina utilize pedagogical approaches that ask girls and young women of color to take up space, to show up as their full selves, and to bring with them their joy, disappointment, frustration, anger, and the full range of their emotions. Nadine signals that PIP also makes room for difference, and as the girls pose questions to each other like "I

never had to go through that could you tell me a bit more." In this way, Nashers and PIP instructors recognize, "The understanding of difference is a shared responsibility, which requires a minimum of willingness to reach out to the unknown" (Minh-Ha, 1989, p. 85). The following statement captures the dynamics of the conversations that occur within PIP from a Nasher's point of view.

> In [PIP] there were people who kind of get what I'm talking about and understand, and then we get to sit down and talk about it. There were some outliers who didn't agree with some of the things we were saying. And that's fine, you don't have to agree, and also the good thing is that no one would make you shut up about it. It wasn't like oh, shut up, you don't know what you're talking about it. (CCS#3)

Her reflection points to some of the disagreements and tensions that arose during PIP discussions. As a PIP instructor, I am privy to these occurrences, and I have experience facilitating difficult conversations between the Nashers. For instance, during a lesson focused on racism and cultural appropriation, several of the South Asian Nashers experiences were casually dismissed by an African American Nasher who expressed that aspects of South Asian culture were fashionable and wearing these items should not be considered cultural appropriation. While she spoke candidly about her disdain for white girls wearing African prints and adornments, she minimized South Asian Nashers' concerns about how fashion trends and popular culture exploited their culture. I made room for the discussion to continue because, despite the tension, the perspectives the Nashers shared opened up more questions and dialogue about how we as people of color engage with each other's culture and the difference between appropriation and appreciation. There was no neat conclusion to this discussion. However, the valuable lessons unearthed through this conversation exhibited that sharing stories of sameness, difference, desire,

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and everything in between works to cultivate critical consciousness as "the exchange of stories is the currency of transformation" (Levins Morales, 2019).

The stories brought into PIP and those formulated through a weaving together of Nashers' collective narratives are vital to the learning that takes place within and beyond SNLP's Summer Institute. A Nasher explains, "we take lessons from within the space, and we express them or teach them outside." As she took a brief pause to recall the words to a phrase used in SNLP, one of the girls in the background responded: "yeah, lessons leave, stories stay." She then continues,

> And I feel like people at Sadie Nash, that's what *we* are doing... It's just like you see, you hear the wrong [but] before Sadie Nash I really wouldn't care or think of it as wrong, but PIP [and] everything about the whole organization was an eye-opener for me. (CC#4)

Her statement affirms the personal and community transformations that have been made possible through PIP and SNLP more broadly. While the lessons Nashers learn travel with them, the unique community that is SNLP is one that many Nashers long for once they enter back into the school spaces. A Nasher recounts her experience transitioning from SNLP's Summer Institute back into her school setting.

> Our last couple of days were super sad. One thing we kept on talking about is how we didn't want to go back to school because Sadie Nash is a really welcoming community; it was obviously a safe space. Everyone was so open and free. I felt like I could trust everyone like everyone was my best friend. We talked about everything and anything. Everyone would be super considerate…. And then I have to go back to this school that's like 85% Asian people, 10% White, and 5% black, what's going to happen? I was like I

don't have the energy to go back to this school because now you have kind of like a third

eye. Now I can see all of these microaggressions, and I see all these things (CC#3).

The caring, considerate, critically conscious and racial and ethnically diverse community she was

a part of at Sadie Nash was unlike what she had experienced at school. The heightened

awareness she developed through participating in PIP, fueled her concerns about how to cope

with the onslaught of microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007) she could now more easily see and

anticipate. The sense of exhaustion she conveyed in stating, "I don't have the energy" can be

attributed to racial battle fatigue or "the physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain

exacted upon racially marginalized and stigmatized groups" from dealing with daily encounters

with microaggressions (Smith et al., 2011, p. 66). While she may not be able to avoid these

encounters, being able to name them and respond as she sees fit is a form of agency, she and

other Nashers discuss in the chapter that follows.

Summary and Discussion

In this findings chapter, I presented data that answers my second research question: *How

do the girls and young women describe their experiences participating in a course on Power,

Identity, and Privilege (PIP)?* The statements shared by Nashers and PIP instructors illuminate

the affordances of PIP as a course that bolsters the critical consciousness of girls and young

women of color. In particular, their reflections demonstrate how access to terminology focused

on systems of power and oppression helps them to name, understand, draw connections to their

identities, and lived experiences. PIP instructors' intentional efforts to foster a community of

care and criticality created space for girls and women of color to learn from each other in

meaningful ways. The diverse perspectives shared through their individual and collective

narratives, along with the concepts they learned, provided Nashers with an intersectional understanding of issues of power.

The Nashers' descriptions of the curricular content, activities, and the community dynamics they encountered in PIP, makes visible PIP instructors' application of "epistemologies and pedagogies [that] guide young women of color students to reclaim an unconditional love for their whole selves (Cariaga, 2019, p. 102). The loving and affirming environment fostered in PIP and SNLP more broadly was also present within the CCSs as Nashers routinely completed each other's sentences and enthusiastically communicated their support with cheers and finger snaps. Further, the Nashers involved in the CCSs shared reflections of PIP that paralleled Celina and Nadine's explanations of their curricula and pedagogical decisions. Celina, Nadine, and other PIP (myself included) all play a role in facilitating the types of experiences the Nashers described in this chapter. The acts of pedagogical love they facilitate, "encouraged [Nashers] to ask questions about the human condition, reflect on their lived experiences, and even interrogate the very power structures that surreptitiously work to marginalize them" (Caraballo & Soleimany, 2019, p. 97). Collectively, the knowledge they gained and the validation they received from their peers and PIP instructors strengthened their ability to critique and confront social injustice at the interpersonal and institutional levels.

In the next findings chapter, I map out the different ways Nashers utilize the knowledge and learning experiences they gained in PIP in the context of their daily lives.

Introduction

In this findings chapter, I highlight the multiple ways Nashers utilize the knowledge and learning experiences from Power, Identity, Privilege (PIP) to critique, inform, and respond to issues of social injustice. I draw attention to exchanges within the Critical Conversations Spaces (CCSs) where the girls and young women speak directly to the power dynamics and dimensions of oppression that exist and occur within their schools and interpersonal relations. In particular, I explore how they make sense of, and react to, these occurrences given their insights from PIP. In marking PIP as a site of learning and unlearning, I ground my analysis within politicizing socialization, which places emphasis on girls of color and their experiences with educational processes that counteract dominant ideologies, systems, and practices (Brown, 2007). To this end, I track how critical consciousness-raising through PIP catalyzes agentic attitudes and behaviors.

In the Context of School

Curriculum

Across the CCS, the Nashers credited PIP with heightening their awareness of the inequities that exist within their schools. In addressing the question, in what ways did PIP impact their perceptions of their schooling experience, the Nashers identify concerns associated with the curriculum, teachers, peers, and school policies and practices. One of the Nashers stated,

> It made me realize how fixed our curriculum is in schools, especially in urban
>
> communities since minorities are the main population in urban schools. It made me
>
> realize that we don't really learn enough about our history. And I used to think Black
>
> History Month was enough but it's not and people of Latinx and Hispanic origin learn

less than we do about their historic origins. And I realized that it was set up for us to

believe that we can't succeed because we don't see people in our history succeeding, so it

makes us think that we can't reach for certain goals. (CCS#4).

Her statement calls attention to the lack of representation in the school curriculum, specifically

concerning the histories and accomplishments of Black and Latinx peoples. Moreover, the

absence of racial diversity in the curriculum of urban schools is especially problematic since the

majority of students are unable to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. The lack of

representation can lead students to internalize feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy especially

when coupled with exposure to damaging and deficit narratives about people of color within the

mainstream media (Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, & Everett 2017; Scharrer & Ramasubramanian,

2015).

In CCS#4, another Nasher furthered the first girl's assessment of the school curriculum

by drawing connections to the terminology she learned in PIP, stating, "institutional racism came

to mind". The Nashers in the room responded with a chorus of finger snaps. Their enthusiastic

response signals their collective understanding of terminology concerning power and oppression,

which is a vital component of PIP's critical consciousness-raising goals. She proceeded,

It's not teachers or staff members but people in higher authority have already put things

and systems in place. So, it's kind of difficult to change around the curriculum. I

remember learning about the Holocaust during Black History Month, and I was like okay

(with an expression of confusion). And then you don't have teachers that look like you so

they can't really relate and understand why you're upset. (CCS#4)

By identifying the lack of representation in the school curriculum as a form of institutional

racism, she recognizes it as intentional but also a prevailing issue that extends beyond individual

teacher decisions. Her questioning of why the Holocaust was being taught during Black History

Month signals her frustration with the disregard for Black people even at a time where their

histories should be centered. In response, another Nasher expressed,

> And like how she said about the Holocaust thing, some people make jokes about slavery.
>
> But then when you make a joke about the Holocaust, they're like, oh, that's not funny.
>
> Why would it be funny about slavery though? I don't get that (CCS#4).

Here the Nasher juxtaposes perceptions of the holocaust and slavery and problematizes the

indifference toward Black people, Black experiences, and Black life. A similar observation is

made by Sharpe (2016) who expounds on her college students' lack of empathy towards

enslaved Africans and their descendants in comparison to Holocaust victims and survivors:

> Students would say things about the formerly enslaved like, "Well, they were given food
>
> and clothing; there was a kind of care there. And what would the enslaved have done
>
> otherwise?" The "otherwise" here means: What lives would Black people have had
>
> outside of slavery? How would they have survived independent of those who enslaved
>
> them? (p. 11).

Sharpe poignantly conveys the dehumanizing perceptions held by her students as their questions

casually dismiss the conditions of enslaved Africans' lives along with their right to personhood.

Thus the confusion expressed by the Nasher regarding why some would laugh about slavery and

not the Holocaust is perhaps rhetorical given the curricula erasure the Nashers critique, thereby

signaling their awareness of antiblackness or the "broader antagonistic relationship between

blackness and (the possibility of) humanity" and "the continual reinscribing and re-justification

of violence on and against Black bodies" (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 429). As PIP helped expose

the white supremacist ideologies that undergird school-based oppression in its myriad forms, the

prevalence of antiblackness becomes more apparent to the Nashers.

Echoing the sentiments conveyed by the girls and young women in CCS#4, the Nashers

in CCS#6 expressed discontent with their schools' delay in introducing lessons focused on

systems of oppression. One Nasher shared,

> I'm more open to bringing up certain topics in school. For example, in my school, they
>
> wait until senior year to talk about things that we should have been learning since
>
> freshman year like right now we're reading a book called *Just Mercy*. And it has to do
>
> with the justice system. And we're just now talking about racism and how corrupt our
>
> jails and our prison system is. So, I feel like I'm more open to opening up the
>
> conversation. (CCS#6)

In her view, discussions about social injustice and institutional racism are topics that should be

covered earlier in high school. In stating, "I'm more open to bringing up certain topics in

school" she indicates that the insights she gained in PIP bolstered her willingness to start

conversations about the aforementioned topics despite limited engagement with them in her

school context. In response, another Nasher shared her thoughts on the reasons why topics about

power and oppression are covered in more detail towards the latter part of high school. She

states,

> I think teachers think we're not ready to hear that type of stuff until we get to the 12th
>
> grade or that we can't understand it but it's your job as a teacher to teach us these things
>
> that we might not understand at 14 when we come into high school. But I feel like they
>
> don't take the time to do that and that's damaging (CCS#6).

In suggesting that age should not be a barrier to introducing topics that might be difficult to comprehend fully, she places the onus on teachers to assist in cultivating foundational knowledge of social injustice and to provide opportunities to investigate these issues further throughout their tenure in high school. Counter to what teachers might think, she makes clear that the lack of investment in developing students' critical consciousness ultimately hinders their overall well-being. Building on this perspective, another Nasher follows up,

> Especially history teachers, I feel sometimes they'll skip over some things or when explaining the topic, they don't go in-depth. I kind of wish that they went in-depth about slavery and all that like we want to learn more. We want to know. Maybe they don't want to because we're not supposed to talk about political things or politics in class. But there are a lot of things that I feel should be discussed more in school and they aren't (CCS#6)

Her experience with history teachers' haphazard approach to covering lessons and important topics already included in the curriculum further speaks to the shared experiences of the Nashers. She repeatedly emphasizes her own, along with her peers' eagerness to learn more about topics like slavery. Her perception that teachers are to refrain from discussions about political topics had been previously stated by the Nashers involved in the pilot study I conducted. However, teaching and learning about the realities of transatlantic slavery and its lasting impact is central to understanding the white supremacist and colonialist foundations of U.S. institutions and structures and is not equivalent to teachers imposing their political views onto students. Taken together, the Nashers passionately communicate their frustration with their schools' lack of a robust approach to teaching about historical and contemporary sociopolitical issues. They emphasize teachers' responsibility to inform and engage them in dialogue about topics that are paramount to making sense of and navigating society.

Lack of Representation within the Teaching Force

The Nashers also brought attention to their concerns about the overrepresentation of white teachers in their schools. One Nasher shared the following observation,

> White people are hired for higher positions than black people...You will see more white teachers than Black teachers in school and most of the Black people would be like a lunch aid or a janitor…. You don't see a lot of Black teachers in my school at all. All of them are white. Most of the Black teachers left (CCS#4).

Her statement is based on her observation that at her school, the support staff positions were primarily held by Black people while the teachers and administrators were overwhelmingly white. She also noted that the Black teachers that were once there made the decision to leave. While she may be unaware of their reasons for leaving, the literature cites poor work conditions, inadequate compensation, and lack of support from administrators as factors that contribute to Black teacher attrition (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond 2017; Farinde-Wu & Fitchett, 2018). Another Nasher immediately responded:

> I want to build on that because we are in an urban community you expect there should be more people of color as teachers and it's totally the opposite. You have white teachers that are in Black schools. And it's really weird sometimes especially in history classes you can't really relate with the teachers. And when we're learning things about race and slavery, it's like I don't really get the connection from the teacher. I'm just like, I'm just sitting there it's not as impactful compared to when a Black teacher teaches it. And also, I feel when white teachers are teaching, they try to restrict themselves and it doesn't feel authentic (CCS#4).

The perspective she offers reiterates an earlier point made by one of the Nashers concerning the unfortunate reality that the racial makeup of the teaching staff in urban schools is not reflective of the students they serve. She also highlights the ways the racial dynamics between white teachers and students of color can affect the quality of learning and student-teacher relationships. In her experience, the pedagogical approaches used by white teachers and their demeanor, especially when teaching about issues concerning race, appear inauthentic, thereby making it difficult for her to connect with the lesson thoroughly. Furthermore, her words reflect the findings from Cherng and Halpin's (2016) study, which suggests that students of all racial backgrounds have a more favorable view of teachers of color compared to their white counterparts. They propose one of the underlying reasons for this preference is that teachers of color are more readily able to "translate their experiences and identities to form rapports with students that do not share the same race or ethnicity" (p. 416). More specifically, in referring back to the Nasher's reflection above, Black teachers' presence and pedagogy can positively impact Black students' learning experiences. The wealth of racial and cultural knowledge Black teachers bring to the classroom is especially beneficial for Black students in that their needs and concerns as Black people in the U.S are more likely to be considered alongside the academic content (Milner & Howard, 2004).

As several Nashers denote, students in urban schools are deprived of the opportunity to learn from teachers that look like them. They also speak to how the lack of teacher diversity adversely impacts students of color regarding school discipline. The following scenario presented by one of the Nashers details this concern and calls attention to her engagement with efforts to advocate for more teachers of color:

You had to drop off your little sister or brother in the morning and then you're late. You

get detention and you can't go to after school extracurricular activities or anything. It's

setting you back. But if you have a teacher who can understand this student isn't normally

late but there's something wrong, it makes it easier. It makes the learning environment

suitable for all people. So a group of students and I were asking questions. Why don't we

have teachers that look like us? . . . You need more people who kind of understand who

you are as a person. And since we did that now my school is hiring more Black and

Brown teachers, more teachers who can relate to us…So it's becoming a more inclusive

environment. (CCS#4)

She makes clear connections between teachers' ability to relate or consider students' life

circumstances when enforcing disciplinary consequences. From her perspective, teachers of

color are more equipped to mitigate these concerns by enacting culturally relevant approaches

that would provide more flexibility in how violations of school rules are assessed and enforced

(Gregory & Mosely 2004). The questions she and her peers posed to school administrators

display her sense of agency and commitment to increasing the presence of teachers of color at

her school. Their collective efforts help to usher in necessary changes to the teacher

demographics, which will benefit current and future students attending her school.

In CCS#1, a Nasher spoke of another instance where she felt empowered by PIP to

confront racism in her school. This Nasher participated in a section of PIP where I was her

instructor and reflected on a memorable moment from the course. She stated,

During PIP class, I remember we had this discussion about my teachers. I just remember

you were saying the way that teacher was treating me was not [respectful]. He was a

white male, and I don't remember the exact scenario, but I just remember I became more

knowledgeable about the ways that he has slight[ed] me. (CCS#1)

As she spoke, I began to recall the discussion she was describing. To refresh her memory on the

details of the scenario that occurred with the teacher in question and to provide more context for

the Nashers participating in the CCS, I responded, "He made a comment about the Black student

group meeting. He said some stuff about Jewish people going through more things than Black

people." I vividly remember being upset when she told me this story, because I recall the teacher

attempting to invalidate Black students' experiences and diminish their concerns as unwarranted.

She proceeded to share what she took away from that PIP conversation:

Yeah. So I carried that experience with me throughout these past two years. In my junior

year, I had my first Black male teacher. So I automatically was proud, because I've never

seen this representation at my school before. And it just felt good to have a teacher that

looked like me. [Then] I had this one interaction with this girl in the class who said, "Oh

wow, gosh, he's so Black." He literally just handed out a worksheet. And I was one of the

two Black people in the whole class, and this was a white girl. And I'm like what is that

supposed to mean? Like *he is,* I mean (all the Nashers begin laughing) you didn't really

expect me to sit here and be like, okay. It just came out of nowhere, and I felt I had to

speak up. And just the fact that I've never had a teacher who looked like me before. I

don't know, that just rubbed me really wrong. I had to speak up, and that was partly

because of that class (PIP). I just felt I had the power and the opportunity to speak up, so

why would I just let a remark by someone ignorant pass by? So I spoke that into power at

that moment. (CCS#1)

In her reflection, she passionately articulates the monumental significance of having her first Black teacher. Given that Black students are the minority in her school, a Black teacher reflected an aspect of her identity that was missing in both the student body and teaching staff. The actions she took in this scenario elucidates how the learning experiences in PIP bolstered her critical consciousness and sense of agency. By immediately addressing the white student, she made it clear that she would not tolerate inappropriate comments leveled at the only Black teacher in the school. The recognition of the power she possessed at that moment, and her determination to use it, signals her development of an agentic mindset. The reflections from the Nashers exhibit that the learning experiences within PIP increased their awareness of institutionalized racism and school-based inequities. The support and validation they received from instructors and other Nashers also contributed to their ability to confidently stand firm in their critiques and actions towards advocating for more teachers of color.

Critiques and Responses to School-Based Policies and Practices

Throughout the CCSs, the Nashers extended their school critiques towards policies and practices they found to be oppressive and a hindrance to students' learning and holistic well-being. In doing so, they credited PIP with helping them develop a more complex understanding of school based oppression and its impact on students of color. On this topic, a Nasher shared, "I think I'm more aware of the different types of oppression that happen in school" (CCS#6). To get more clarification, I asked, "What do you mean by that?" She further explained,

> Like the dress code thing. We can't come to school in tank tops or ripped jeans…or that
> girls' shoulders can't be shown…. and also the ways that kids get disciplined. You say a
> curse word in class or maybe get upset and storm out, you know normal things that
> happen with teenagers. And then you get suspended from school for a week. I don't think

that's good. As an example, something I was upset about the other day was that I came to

school in ripped jeans, and I got sent back to my house to change. So I missed three

periods that I could have been doing work in. (CCS#6)

The story she shared is a common experience for students of color who are disproportionately

reprimanded for their hairstyles and attire, which are often perceived as inappropriate for a

school setting (Pavlakis & Roegman, 2018). These policies are laden with racist and

discriminatory undertones that serve to criminalize the self-expression of youth of color and

Black youth in particular (Barrett, 2018). Her criticism of the class time she missed from being

sent home to change her clothing calls attention to how penalties for dress code violations

negatively contribute to students' academic outcomes. This Nasher's experience is not in

isolation as it mirrors the experience of Black girls in schools across the country. For example, a

report by the National Women's Law Center (2018) makes visible the extent to which Black

girls in D.C. are more likely to be punished and removed from class or school as a result of

"adults' stereotyped perceptions that they are more sexually provocative because of their race,

and thus more deserving of punishment for a low-cut shirt or short skirt" (p. 1). The Nashers'

acute awareness of how the enforcement of racist and sexist dress codes policies adversely

impacts Black girls is conveyed in the following reflection:

When I got back to school, there was an issue with this girl; she was a senior. We have

this wall, and you can take a professional photo and put your picture up. And her picture

sort of looked like she wasn't wearing a shirt underneath her fur coat and they took her

picture down, they said it was inappropriate. They sent out a letter to families [and] we

had this college discovery day where they reveal what school they got accepted to and

which they're going to, and they didn't let her do it. I was just so upset about it because

she didn't look inappropriate at all, but the fact that they could see a little part of her

shoulder was a big problem to the point where they embarrassed her in front of the whole

school. And she wrote a letter about it and sent it out to everybody, and we were all on

her side. We were printing out her letter and picture and posting it everywhere, and [the

school administrators] were ripping it down. This made me so upset; they just felt her

body was inappropriate in any way, shape, or form. It made me realize [that] PIP opened

my eyes to [how] certain aspects of the structures in schools are not right and even being

in an all-girls school where you're supposed to be empowered, they still don't care

(CCS#3).

The scenario the Nasher describes sheds light on the lengths school administrators and teachers

will go to punish and shame Black girls. In stating, "they just felt her body was inappropriate in

any way, shape, or form," she clarifies that their objection was not merely about what she was

wearing but a condemnation of her body in and of itself. Thus, through the schools' actions, "the

implicit message being delivered to Black girls….is that their bodies are innately flawed"

(Nyachae & Ohito, 2019, p. 19). Her consciousness of the white supremacist and patriarchal

culture of schooling "in which Other (non-White/nonmiddle- class/female) bodies are defined as

disruptive, dangerous, or distracting" (Aghasaleh, 2018, p. 104) is at the forefront of her critiques

of the schools' treatment of the student in question. To this end, her show of solidarity and

concerted efforts to push back on the school's discriminatory and oppressive actions is a rejection

of problematic messages about Black girls, and the ostracization of their bodies. In her

concluding point, she disrupts the notion that all-girls educational settings unequivocally produce

empowering results. Given the experiences of girls of color and Black girls more specifically, it

becomes clear that educators and administrators are overwhelmingly invested in "controlling

their bodies and/or producing White, middle-class girl subjectivities" (Brown, 2009, p. 2). As this Nasher highlights in the above quote, exposing and challenging this agenda is a critical aspect of the learning that takes place within PIP.

At school, Nashers also experienced conflicts with teachers, and they offered examples of how PIP helped them name and respond when these moments arise. One Nasher shared:

In my school, ageism is really big, and we talked about it in PIP. [It's] basically like when you were little and adults [told you] to stay out of a grown person's conversation, that's ageism. It's like saying the older you are, the more you know, the wiser you are [and] that's [why] more people should listen to you rather than somebody younger. So, I finally put a word to adults speaking down on me because I'm younger…. This year we have this one ignorant teacher. She teaches in my boyfriend's class and she told him to write about social issues that they think are important and one person said LGBTQ rights. And she was like LGBTQ people; they cannot marry the same sex, they don't have anything to go through. When my boyfriend told me, I [said,] we need to have a conversation with her. So I went to go speak to her, and she [said] well I'm an adult, and I was like just because you're an adult does not mean that you know more than me….I [told her] students should be able to have their own social issue thoughts (CCS#1).

In her reflection, she attributes her understanding of ageism and its manifestation in schools to PIP. As a result, she was not dissuaded by the teacher's attempt to use her status as an adult to silence criticism of how students' perspectives were being minimized in her class. Instead, the Nasher confidently asserted her opinion as a means of advocating for her peers' thoughts and experiences to be taken seriously.

PIP instructors also take notice of how the course supports Nashers' growth to become more confident and courageous in responding to oppression within their schools and other aspects of their lives. In an interview with one of the PIP instructors, Celina, she explains:

> I see a lot of my Nashers become more bold during it and afterward in terms of being more comfortable speaking in front of other people and also feeling more comfortable to name an injustice. I had one Nasher reach out to me after the program and just like, hey, this is going on in my school and this is what I'm doing about it. . . . I could tell that before they may have not taken a step to actually say something about it. And I think that at least when I teach, I'm also making it clear that yes, these things are happening in your life and you don't have to take it lying down.

Celina's experiences provide additional confirmation that the agentic attitudes and behavior Nashers cultivate within PIP are transferred into their school spaces. This behavior is promoted by the pedagogical approaches she employs, which exposes Nashers to social injustices and encourages them to challenge oppressive policies and practices. Celina's observations are further evidenced in one Nasher's detailed reflection on PIP's role in her journey in becoming a change agent in her school. She states,

> I became more of an advocate and youth activist because there were some things I saw in my school system that didn't work. For example, the dress codes or the consequences they give us, punishments, and stuff. I started to question authority like where did this come from? What is the purpose behind this rule or is this supposed to limit us and in what ways is it connected to the school to prison pipeline? . . . I just became a new person in terms of how I navigate the world and my school and being a change agent at my school. I started asking questions and getting my friends to also talk about race, gender,

sexuality. . . . So you get to educate your peers and then they also start asking questions. It's like starting a whole revolution at school. Now I don't have to be the only person questioning stuff. I hear my peers like, oh, why did you do that? And I'm like ohhh it's kind of rubbing off (several Nashers laugh in response). I feel like that was really good, because it did change me and now, I'm also a change agent to other people. (CCS#4)

She describes that following her summer in PIP, she returned to school with a heightened awareness of oppressive school-based policies and practice. The questions that she poses, "What is the purpose behind this rule, or is this supposed to limit us and in what ways is it connected to the school to prison pipeline?" directly connects to an earlier point made by one of the Nashers discussing how the predominance of white teachers in urban schools gives rise to discriminatory application of disciplinary consequences that negatively impact students of color. She also addressed how the development of a more complex and nuanced understanding of power and oppression at the institutional level motivated her to investigate the root causes of the issues in her school more closely. What is most telling of her commitments is how she contributes to the critical consciousness-raising of her peers. As a self-identified change agent, she recognizes the importance of sharing knowledge and encouraging her peers to question and take action in response to social justice issues.

Collectively, the Nashers offered a variety of examples illustrating how they utilized the knowledge and experiences fostered in PIP to interrogate and challenge oppression in their schools. The reflections they share, exemplify their critiques, and efforts to enact social change. They advocate for themselves and their peers by addressing the lack of representation concerning their histories and cultures in the curriculum, the need for more teachers of color, and the prevalence of discriminatory school policies and practices.

Approaches to Critical Dialogue with Peers and Family

In addressing the question, in what ways did PIP impact how Nashers engage in conversations about social and political issues, several of them describe their commitment to informing and engaging in critical dialogue and social action. They also discussed their approaches to doing so with peers and family. The Nasher in the previous section who identified herself as a change agent briefly explained PIP's role in facilitating her transformation,

> I became aware of the ignorance around me and how education is really important, and I wasn't like that last year. [Now] I hear conversations and I'm like, oh, you can't say that but [wonder] how am I supposed to explain to them that you can't say that? How am I supposed to educate them without getting them offended? Or what are the right words to say. I feel like Summer Institute did equip me with some of those things. (CCS#4)

At the beginning of her statement, she expresses her attempts to intervene and inform peers. This is grounded in the knowledge that she once lacked the awareness of particular issues, and her own understanding is still in formation. She communicates mindfulness regarding her word choice when initiating difficult conversations with her peers about their use of harmful words and phrases. Her thoughtful approach can be attributed to the language and skills she developed in PIP and SNLP Summer Institute more broadly. For example, PIP instructors model strategies for calling attention to problematic language and behaviors. Nadine shared the strategies she uses with the Nashers to offer a window into the approaches utilized within SNLP and by PIP instructors. She states,

> Sadie Nash doesn't police language and neither do I. But if there was something potentially harmful, I think they were more receptive to hearing it from me because it wasn't like a finger wagging delivery. I think it was just like oh you're right, so how else

could I say that? And then I offered my suggestion, and then I could see them

implementing that vocabulary going forward.

Instead of admonishing Nashers for using derogatory and potentially harmful words or phrases,

she steps in to inform and offer alternatives that produce more empowering results. Using these

moments as an educational opportunity, Nadine enacts a humanizing pedagogical approach that

aids Nashers' development of critical literacy skills that promote awareness, healing, and

individual and community transformation (Camangian, 2015). In forwarding a more humanizing

model of engaging in critical dialogue, one Nashers asserts,

> I'm definitely more open minded and I can have an actual discussion or debate with
>
> somebody without it going overboard on my end, without it getting to screaming. So I've
>
> also learned when to stop, like when to stop trying to change somebody's mind when they
>
> have a mindset that's kind of oppressive or ignorant, because some people you just can't,
>
> you just can't reach them that way. (CCS#6)

Her statement reveals that her approach prioritizes being open minded and also maintaining a

level of calm especially when engaging with someone with a willfully ignorant perspective and

an aggressive stance. She concedes that her time and energy is better spent elsewhere, because

certain individuals will be resistant no matter the approach she utilizes. Building on her

statement, another Nasher chimes in,

> I agree and I also think that PIP [offered], I don't want to say correct opinions, but the
>
> non-oppressive opinions [and] explained why people believe in and think ignorant
>
> thoughts and the reasons behind that. So for me, it's like I understand where the person is
>
> coming from so I'm not going to attack their point of view, but I'm going to tell them the

evidence for why what they're saying is not correct because my point in having the

discussion is to inform. It's not to argue with you. It's not to get you upset. (CCS#6)

Echoing the previous reflection, she enters conversations about issues of social injustice with an

open mind by giving consideration to the socializing influences that inform the person's beliefs

and actions. Given that her intention is to contribute to the critical consciousness of others, she

avoids using a combative approach in pursuing this endeavor. To this end, another Nasher added,

I feel like that's kind of a good point like we discussed in PIP that you can never be too

woke. And if that kind of applies in how people use the term. But you can never know

everything. So even if you're very well educated, there are people who are well educated

but they don't know about a lot of things that are going on in other countries all over the

world. (CCS#6)

Her statement brings attention to the concept of being "woke" and acknowledges that there is no

limit to being critically aware. In essence, she asserts that there is always room to grow and to

learn more. She makes the point that even those who are well informed may be unfamiliar with

social justice issues outside of the U.S. context. This assessment also speaks to the reality that

many of the Nashers lead transnational lives, and the issues that concern them exist within and

beyond the U.S. borders (Erevelles, 2018).

The Nashers' commitments to sharing the insights they learned in PIP with others was

also their way of paying it forward and helping their communities mitigate the harm we do to

ourselves and each other. One Nasher stated,

I feel like I noticed ignorant comments more and tolerated it less and had stronger

opinions about it. Because before, I didn't really want to say anything...It was like ok

people are like that sometimes but you can't just allow someone to say something and not

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correct them because they are going to go the rest of their lives saying the same thing and they are not going to change their opinion. And I feel like it's our responsibility to change their opinion about it because they are not going to just change on their own. And you know, I feel like being in my school especially there are a lot of jokes made and people don't think about the extent to which you can joke about something and sometimes you can trigger someone and hit someone's sensitive spot. (CCS#6)

In her statement, she identifies her school as an environment where derogatory and offensive comments are prevalent. While these comments are masked as jokes, they adversely impact those on the receiving end. From her point of view, those who are more informed about social injustice issues have the responsibility to intervene, to help disrupt the forwarding and normalizing oppressive discourse. Expressing a similar sentiment, one Nasher shares,

Ever since PIP and Sadie Nash in general, I put more effort into issues that I care about and I really try to get my friends and my family members to stop saying derogatory terms and stuff that seems normal but it's not nice. (CCS#2)

In stating that people use damaging words which "seem normal," she alludes to the role of socialization in shaping our understanding of what is appropriate and acceptable. Thus, her efforts to encourage friends and family to refrain from using derogatory terms is an action that contests the normality of the problematic practices deeply embedded within society.

Conversely, the two Nashers involved in CCS#3, were particularly against the idea that it was their responsibility to inform white people about racism and other manifestations of white supremacy. The perspectives are exhibited in the following exchange which begins with one of the Nashers stating, "I'm really like, I don't want to say radical because I am myself, so what if they call me radical but I don't like the whole let's sit down and teach white people the right

things to say." Her comment implies that others have labeled her as radical because of her stance on educating white people. In response, the other Nasher proclaimed, "I was educated by the world, y'all need to do the same thing. The same way that we can look certain things up ourselves. Google it! It's free to do it. Google is free!" (CCS#3).By stating, "I was educated by the world," she speaks to the reality that as a Black girl, her lived experience was the primary teacher as far as racism is concerned. Extending this point further, she explains,

> That's the thing, why am I going to go through it? I'm not getting paid for that. I'm not your teacher, I don't have to do that. I think it's not even just the sharing of knowledge, that's emotional labor and I don't want to have to go through that and talk to you about that. And then have these arguments where you disagree with me for free. *For free?[emphasis added]* No! (CCS#3)

She passionately attests to expending emotional energy towards educating white people about racism. She makes clear that it's not the sharing of knowledge she opposes, it's the energy expended in the process of trying to educate white people who will resist and discredit her insights and experiences. On the topic of white fragility, DiAngelo (2015) argues, "white people have extremely low thresholds for enduring any discomfort associated with challenges to [their] racial worldviews" (para 7), which illustrates why the Nashers would rather avoid discussions about racism with them. In agreement with the statement regarding emotional labor, the Nasher that opened the conversation on this issue echoes, "I'm tired. I get exhausted and so heated." (CCS#3). On the whole, this exchange between the Nashers reveals their refusal to engage in critical dialogue about racism with white people is a result of their investment in protecting their own mental and emotional well-being.

While most of the Nashers in the CCSs were in high school, one of the Nashers shared

her experience transitioning to college and engaging in critical dialogue with her peers,

> When I first went to college I had an orientation group. And the first thing we did was
> make a list of rules of what we can do to make it a comfortable space. And most groups
> would just say, let's just not talk about politics but our group, every single person was
> like let's talk politics. And that made me really happy because we were able to talk about
> this stuff. And even though there were so many disagreements, we didn't attack each
> other.…I think that helped with my transition, just be able to talk to people about a lot of
> the things that we discussed in PIP. (CCS#5)

Her excitement to find a space where discussions about social and political issues were

encouraged is indicative of the supportive learning environment she experienced in PIP. As her

reflection purports, most students strive to avoid these discussions, perhaps to reduce exposure to

potential conflicts and the difficult conversations that may arise. On the opposite end, the

Nashers have previously addressed their disappointment with sociopolitical issues being treated

as taboo in their school context. Thus, the supportive community she found within her

orientation group was much appreciated, especially given her commitment to engaging in

discourse that provokes critical consciousness-raising. By stating, "even though there were so

many disagreements, we didn't attack each other," she makes it clear that the content and

approaches are both vital aspects of participating in these types of discussions. This point is

further explored in Nadine's thoughtful reflection on PIP's capacity to support Nashers in further

developing their ability to enact humanizing ways of engaging in critical dialogue. She shares,

> [PIP] allows them to feel empowered in their differences so that they can show up fully
> wherever they may go, whether it's to high school or if it's in their social groups or even if

it's at home...At least in my experience, I would oftentimes be quieted by the beliefs of

my family even though they weren't in alignment with my own. And I knew that

oftentimes [Nashers] were just regurgitating something they were told….So being able to

identify all of those things that keep us splintered, that keep us unaware of how we show

up and impact others, and also how we are impacted by oppression. I think [PIP] largely

wishes to have folks be able to improve their leadership skills by tak[ing] away judgment

so they [are] able to see what is informing why others show up that way. Cause if they

can identify their own, I don't want to use the word shortcomings but identify their own

challenges, they'll have more grace for others, and they'll be more willing or more

capable of engaging with folks to get to not just common ground but braver ground.

Nadine highlights PIP instructor's purposeful facilitation of activities and discussions that allow

Nashers to confront and examine their positionality and socialization. The aim of these internal

examinations is to make visible the core assumptions that undergird Nashers' individual and

shared beliefs. In doing so, Nadine and other PIP instructors operationalize pedagogical practices

that "recogniz[e] plurality, names the silences that surroun[d] so much of our lived experience

and necessitates a mobile intersectional analysis" (Cruz, 2019, p 138). As a result of their

immersion in a critical consciousness-raising environment that prioritizes emotional well-being,

Nashers are more readily able to approach conversations about issues of power with humility. In

the next section, I take a closer look at examples of Nashers engaging in critical dialogue with

their peers and family members.

Engagement with Peers

Throughout the CCSs, the Nashers discussed their motivations for engaging peers in

conversations about power and oppression. One Nasher stated,

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I was able to inform more people about the things that we learned about in PIP. And I

think that's helpful because those classes are not taught in school. And there's a lot of

things that I hear on a daily basis, like ignorant things that people say and I feel better

when I put out the correct information to them. (CCS#6)

In this brief reflection, she indicates that courses like PIP are not taught in schools. This absence

fuels her commitment to sharing the insights she gained with her peers. In particular, she

receives satisfaction knowing that the perspective she offers may positively shift someone's

understanding and behaviors.

Similarly, one of the Nashers detailed a scenario where she opened up a conversations

with her classmates about their use of homophobic terminology. She explains,

They were extremely ignorant, especially when it comes to sexuality. They were saying

things like, no homo, or yo bro that's mad gay…. I had to press them to understand that

when you say things like no homo, that's offensive. I had to sit down and tell my

boyfriend when you say no homo, I get upset… having platonic intimacy with your

friends isn't gay. Girls can do it, guys can do it, fluid people can do it. Everybody can do

it. Nobody thinks you're gay if you hug your friend or tell him I love you. Some of the

responses from others [were] like oh, we just do it because that's how we're taught. I was

like a learned behavior can become unlearned. Like me as a queer friend, I feel offended

when you say that shit, don't say it. And so they stopped. But in the past, I would've never

spoken up about it because, like when I went into PIP, I just came out as queer a month

before. So being in PIP gave me the energy to not only speak up for myself but also

speak up to others. (CCS#1)

Throughout the conversation with her peers, she "pressed them" by posing questions and offering different perspectives to help them unpack their reasons for using homophobic words and phrases. By stating "platonic intimacy with your friends isn't gay," she aims to disrupt problematic notions of masculinity that pathologizes physical touch and emotional vulnerability between heterosexual boys and men (Oransky & Marecek, 2009). She also makes clear that the homophobic language used by her boyfriend and classmates is personally offensive to her as someone who identifies as queer. Her understanding of the socialization processes that normalize oppressive speech and behaviors prompts her assurance that "a learned behavior can become unlearned." To this end, she implies that critical consciousness-raising opportunities help facilitate counter socialization or "reflective analysis of their beliefs and collective deliberation of significant social problems" (Conrad, 2018, p. 104). In this way, PIP served as a learning environment where she and other Nashers could examine their assumptions, increase their critical understanding of systems of power and oppression, and bolster their confidence to confront social injustice. Her closing statement, "PIP gave me the energy to speak up for myself but also speak up to others," speaks to PIP's role in strengthening her sense of agency and greatly expanding the influence that PIP has, not just on these Nashers but also the communities in which they live.

Related to conversations that occur between peers in the school context, one of the Nashers relayed her experience conversing with a friend who diminished concerns around a political issue important to her. She details,

There was this talk at my school but for me since I'm in 10th grade I was not allowed to go. It was about DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and how it's affecting a lot of immigrants and their families. And my friend told me that for her it was really

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boring and that a lot of her class was falling asleep and she didn't really see the point in

stopping class to go and hear this lecture. And to me that really hurt and I brought that to

her attention because it's affecting a lot of people in my community and a lot of families

are being ripped apart and they don't know how to deal with that. So for me, if my

teacher would have taken me down, I actually would have enjoyed the lecture . . .

because based on how you were raised and what type of community you grew up in, it

affects the kind of mentality you have going into hearing different types of lectures and

the way that you fight for certain social issues" (CCS#2).

As an Afro Dominican living in New York City, she has an intimate knowledge of the hardships

experienced by undocumented people and their families. Therefore, her friend's disregard for

DACA and its importance triggered feelings of hurt. Given their friendship and her closeness to

the topic of DACA, she decided it was necessary to share her thoughts and feelings with her

friend. In the latter part of her reflection, she explains that a person's positionality and

socialization have a prevailing influence over the social justice issues they perceive as important.

One of the Nashers shared her efforts to support the identity exploration and development

of younger girls in her church. She explains,

I'm more of a mentor now because I remember when I was in a certain position when I

was younger. So when my little sisters come up to me and ask me questions, I'm able to

answer them and create a safe space [for] them. I'm currently a senior and in my church I

have this little sister and she was bicurious and being that I'm associated with being

Christian and also being queer, there's always a battle between those. I know I have that

battle, so when I speak to my little sister I bring up both. So I was like, okay, you want to

be comfortable, cause I am [comfortable] with the association of being Christian. I feel

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like I came to a [place] where I could be myself as long as it's not affecting others or

disrespecting myself. (CCS#1)

As a mentor, she aims to create a safe environment for girls to ask questions about topics or

issues they find concerning or that pique their curiosity. She also speaks to her familiarity with

the internal and external conflicts that may arise from being queer, Christian, and a member of a

church community. With this awareness, she guided one of the girls through coming to terms

with their Christian and bicurious identity. By sharing her journey, she communicated that being

queer and Christian are not inherently opposing identities. In doing so, she opened a space for

her mentee to find comfort in being and expressing herself fully. The conversations the Nashers

engender contributes to shifting perspectives in their school context and broader communities.

Engagement with Family

The Nashers' desire to inform and promote critical awareness around issues of oppression

is also evidenced in the discussions they facilitate with family members. One of the Nashers

relayed a conversation that occurred between her and her grandmother. She explained,

I don't know about you but when you're in a household and when you're right then it

becomes you're [being] disrespectful [Nashers and I say hmmm, in agreement]. I

remember on the news they were talking about Catholic priests molesting children and I

remember my grandma saying why they waited until now, why didn't they say something

about it earlier….I had to explain to her whether it's said earlier or later it's still wrong

because the people did it. And being they're a religious person, or a Pope or whatever,

you're supposed to be the more sanctified one. People are supposed to come to you to tell

their sins and you're molesting them. And I explained to her why it's not right, but then

her problem was that it can be right or wrong but why are they now saying it. So even

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when people in your family are being racist or sexist, you still have to be willing to stand

your ground. And I think PIP did impact my decision making and being able to stand my

ground and be like okay, this person is family, but this person is wrong and find a way to

explain to them in a respectful manner, why they're wrong (CCS#4).

The alternative view she presents in response to her grandmother's insensitive remarks displays

her commitment to disrupting the normalcy of derogatory statements and victim-blaming

mindsets that impede sexual survivors' pursuit of justice. She decries that priests who commit

and/or cover up sexual assault, violate the trust of their parishioners and should be held

responsible regardless of when the incidents are reported. At the beginning of her reflection, she

calls attention to elders' attempts to evade critical dialogue or reexamination of their perspectives

by equating differing thoughts and opinions presented by youth as a form of disrespect. In

stating, "even when people in your family are being racist or sexist, you still have to be willing to

stand your ground" she passionately proclaims that individuals should hold their family members

accountable for their problematic statements and behaviors. A similar sentiment was expressed

by another Nasher, who states,

I've been more outspoken. I didn't really speak much on [these issues] at all before. Like

my family, especially, I just hear them say, like sly, racist, sexist comments and I'd be

like whatever, [that's] the way it is. But now I try to actually talk to them and maybe

explain to them and try to educate them (CCS#2).

She explains that before PIP, she would refrain from addressing discriminatory and offensive

comments. This approach was primarily due to her acceptance that this way of speaking and

behaving while troubling reflected the status quo. However, following her participation in PIP,

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she became more inclined to interrupt and inform family members about the harmful messages perpetuated by their comments.

Some of the Nashers describe particularly contentious interactions with their parents and detail how PIP helped them decide how to navigate conversations with them. One Nasher shared,

I feel more confident debating with my father because he's sexist, like he's *SEX-IST*. Like yesterday he actually [said] how come I'm here in the kitchen and I have to wash thes dishes when there are three women out there. Your mom, you, your sister, I don't understand. I'm the man here, why do I have to wash dishes? It's so messed up that he says these things. But now I feel more confident bringing it to his attention [because] what he's saying affects the way I grow up...I want to have a career but [what] he say[s] makes me feel like he thinks I shouldn't have one. So I'm trying to educate him as to how to speak and say his point of view, he could have said, you were sitting here all day, you could have washed the dishes, instead of saying you're a woman, so why didn't you wash the dishes. (CCS#2)

In her reflection, she conveyed a firm awareness of her father's sexist mindset and provided an example that illustrates his comfort with relaying sexist comments towards girls and women in the family. She also speaks to the role of her father's sexist attitude in her socialization and creates concerns about her educational and career aspirations. While her father's sexist behaviors persist, she feels more confident in approaching him and offering alternative ways to communicate his thoughts. A different perspective was offered by one of the Nashers concerning conversations with her parents, and her mother specifically. She states,

My parents think that if I don't think the way they do then I'm rebelling or they're just really scared for me to have my own point of view, even with Sadie Nash, they think

[being a] feminist is a bad thing. So I don't discuss it with family members because [my mom] she'll try to end the argument with oh I'm older or your mother so that's enough for me to stop talking. And she also doesn't like Black people, she doesn't like African American or Jamaican people, or Trinidadian people. So yeah, she just embedded this internalized racism in me and I know it and I try to always fight it like, yeah I'm not going to think that way, but she has really bad internalized racism. And, I don't try to discuss it with her because I feel like it's pointless and I don't need her approval to do certain things. I don't need her to move forward in social justice (CCS#3).

She cites her parents' disapproval of her holding opinions different from theirs and the feminist perspective she developed through SNLP as factors that make it challenging to engage in critical discussions with them. She is also acutely aware of her mom's strategy of using her age and status as an adult/parent to shut down conversations she finds unfavorable. In doing so, her mother ascribes to the behavior referenced in an earlier statement by a Nasher describing older family members and their attempts to silence the opinions of young people by labeling them as disrespectful. Given her Nigerian background, she refers to her mother's dislike of Black people of African Americans, Jamaicans, and Trinidadians as a form of internalized racism. Her mother's prejudicial views are perhaps a product of stereotypes that facilitate tensions between Caribbean, African, African American people, and communities (Adeyemo, 2018; Nsangou & Dundes; 2018). Given her mother's overall resistance to participating in discussions where dissenting perspectives are presented, she takes a hard stance against engaging in conversations about social and political issues with her. With this knowledge, she exclaims, her mother's approval is not a factor in her ability to "move forward in social justice." Her stance exemplifies

an agentic mindset and commitment to social justice despite messaging from dominant

socializing forces in her life.

Summary and Discussion

In this findings chapter, I presented data that answers my third research question: *How do the girls and young women utilize the content and learning experiences fostered through participation in (PIP) to engage in discourse and action about issues of power concerning their schooling, social communities, and interpersonal interaction?* The Nashers' reflections provide clear examples of how they utilize PIP insights and learning experience to critique, inform, and act in the service of challenging social injustice in varying aspects of their daily lives. More specifically, the girls and young women of color describe how PIP increased their awareness of school-based oppression. Given this knowledge, they offer critiques and examples of their advocacy concerning the absence of their histories and cultures in the curriculum, the need for more teachers of color, and discriminatory policies and practices in their schools. They also revealed the ways in which PIP informed their approaches to engaging in critical dialogue with their peers and family members.

As thoroughly evidenced in the previous chapter, in the context of PIP, the Nashers' diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, along with curricula and pedagogical practices employed by the instructors, lends itself to intersectional analysis that cultivates "coalitional understandings of identity and consciousness" (Taylor, 2018, p. 123). With an analysis grounded in the theoretical framework of politicizing socialization, I draw attention to how the Nashers make sense of and respond to the operation of power and oppression in their lives. The scenarios the Nashers detail, shed light on PIP's role as a counter socializing entity that bolstered their critical consciousness and confidence to question and challenge the normality

of the oppression they encounter at the institutional and interpersonal level. The decisions they make regarding when and how to engage in discussions with peers and family members about their use of oppressive language and behaviors illustrate how they take up the humanizing approaches utilized in PIP. Collectively, their agentic perspectives and actions illuminate PIP's affordances as a social justice-oriented learning environment that prioritizes examinations of power, care, criticality and the lived experiences of girls and young women of color.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This case study aimed to understand how girls and young women of color make sense of their sociopolitical realities in relation to various aspects of their identity. More specifically, I investigate their experiences in a social justice leadership program's course on Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP) and the learning opportunities it affords concerning their critical consciousness, identity development, and agency. In this chapter, I summarize my findings and offer implications in the areas of teaching and learning which I breakdown into five categories: teacher education; recruiting and retaining teachers of color; learning from community-based educators; social justice and Ethnic Studies curriculum; and the affordances of spaces for girls of color. Lastly, I provide implications for future research that are useful for researchers of color and other people committed to utilizing humanizing methodological practices. My aim is that teachers', teacher educators', and researchers', intentional and thoughtful application of these suggestions will contribute to the academic and socioemotional well-being of girls and young women of color in K-12 and community based educational spaces.

Summary of Findings

As girls of color, the Nashers are cognizant of the ways in which their socialization has been shaped by white supremacist and patriarchal ideologies that manifest within their respective cultural communities and society more broadly. Their knowledge of and exposure to racism, colorism, and sexism contributed to their awareness of the people and bodies that are most valued along with the behaviors and expectations placed on girls and women of color. While their critiques of the aforementioned forms of oppression were already forming prior to participation in PIP, the course content and pedagogy deepened their understanding of the

operation of power and oppression in their lives. The terminology they learned in PIP helped

them to name varying dimensions of systems of power and explore different aspects of their

identity. The humanizing pedagogical approaches PIP instructors employed contributed to the

cultivation of a learning environment rooted in care, critical self-reflection, and coalitional

understandings of social justice. Collectively, the insights and learning experiences fostered in

PIP served to bolster their critical consciousness, confidence, and ability to identify and respond

to social injustices. Further, the critiques, critical dialogue and social action the girls and young

women engage in within the context of their schools, families, and broader communities,

evidence the influence of the knowledge and approaches they developed through PIP. In the

following section, I provide insights pertaining to each of the findings.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

Teacher Education

The girls and young women involved in the study repeatedly addressed the need

for the school curriculum to incorporate more opportunities for them and their peers to

interrogate and contribute to the discourse about power and oppression within institutions and

interpersonal interactions. While teacher education programs often include a critical

multicultural education or social foundations course that focuses on issues of power and

oppression, the social justice lenses utilized in these courses are inadequately taken up in

methods courses (Carter Andrews et al., 2019a). The findings from this study suggest that

teacher education programs must emphasize critical examinations of power, oppression, and

issues of justice and equity within methods classrooms and clinical experiences. A focus on these

issues in methods courses will support preservice teachers in their ability to analyze and develop

discipline-specific content using a social justice-oriented lens. Additionally, methods courses can

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support their cultivation of skills, strategies, and instructional approaches that engender critical consciousness.

Given that schools are socializing institutions, teachers can play a vital role in helping students develop critical perspectives that allow them to recognize and resist white supremacist, patriarchal, heterosexist, and other dominant ideologies that are normalized in society. Teacher education programs can aid in this endeavor by working with preservice teachers to identify resources and to develop a social justice-oriented disposition and humanizing pedagogical moves. For instance, teacher educators can work in collaboration with organizations like the Sadie Nash Leadership Project (SNLP) and other community-based spaces that engage girls and youth of color in programming centered on interrogations of the social and political matters that impact their daily lives. In doing so, teacher educators can facilitate preservice teachers' awareness of community-based assets and the important contributions they make concerning the education and socio-emotional well being of youth of color.

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers of Color

Students of color are the primary demographic in urban schools in major cities across the U.S., yet the teachers in these settings are predominantly white (Goldenberg, 2013), which the girls and young women in the study identify as an issue that significantly impacts their schooling experiences. The Nashers also communicated concerns about the lack of racial diversity within the teaching force and how it connects curricula absences and discrimination in school disciplinary practices. One of the Nashers and her peers even went so far as to take up these issues with their school's administrators, which resulted in more intentional efforts to recruit teachers of color. Unlike the majority-white teaching staff that exists within formal school spaces, the instructors of PIP are mostly women of color and what they offer by way of their

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racial and ethnic identities, lived experiences, and ways of being and knowing, impact the self-concept of girls of color and how they make sense of their sociopolitical realities.

In order to shift the demographics of the teaching force, leadership in teacher education programs along with district and school-based leadership must develop and implement strategic plans to recruit and retain preservice and in-service teachers of color. For example, one of the girls stated that the Black teachers in her school left. Thus, school district leaders and administrators must actively work to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the dissatisfaction of teachers of color at the schools under their leadership and figure out approaches that work to mitigate these issues. The district and school-specific solutions are vital to addressing the attrition of teachers of color at the macro and micro levels.

Leaders of teacher education programs must take a similar approach by investigating and adopting practices that allow them to be more intentional with their recruitment efforts and that aid and address problems that adversely impact students of color and their ability to complete their program and gain certification necessary to teach. While the existing literature points to affordability, standardizing testing related to teacher certification, and institutional climate as contributors to the attrition of students of color, they exist and manifest differently depending on the university and program.

School district leaders, administrators, and teacher education leadership should also consult with novice, mid-career, and veteran teachers of color. Collectively, these teachers have a wealth of knowledge concerning the challenges that impede their ability to thrive. (Kohli, 2019; Pitts, 2019). Their insights can assist in providing ways forward that facilitate concrete solutions that benefit teachers of color and the students they serve.

Learning from Community-Based Educators

The majority of PIP instructors teach primarily within out-of-school settings such as community-based organizations, youth detention centers, and adult prisons. The critical and humanizing perspectives and pedagogical practices they bring into PIP could support the professional development of K-12 educators in strengthening their ability to enact equity and justice-centered instructional practices. Teachers and students in urban schools are more likely to feel pressure concerning high stakes testing as there are consequences that come with being labeled low performing, including loss of funding, school closures, and takeovers (Au, 2016). As a result, teachers working in these settings are more susceptible to the adoption of narrow and scripted curricula that emphasize tested subject matter (Milner, 2014). As a former NYC middle and high school educator, I know how being socialized to teach under the above pressures and constraints can stifle educators' imaginations of the possibilities of learning environments outside of dominant, academic achievement-based notions of teaching and learning.

The critical and caring approaches PIP instructors employ illustrate how they simultaneously work to bolster the girls' and young women's critical consciousness and attend to their emotional and social well being. The insights shared by the Nashers and PIP instructors detail the curricula and instructional interventions the instructors enact as a means of mitigating emotional and psychic harm. Pedagogical love and pedagogies in the flesh are humanizing approaches PIP instructors utilize to center the perspectives, experiences, and the embodied knowledge of girls and women of color (Caraballo & Soleimany, 2019; Hanna, 2019). For example, Celina scrapped the lesson she prepared to allow the Nashers to process their emotions surrounding the state-sanctioned antiblack violence that took the life of Mike Brown. As a Black woman, she was physically and emotionally triggered by Mike Brown's murder and anticipated

that as girls of color, many of the Nashers would feel the same. Her decision to prioritize the Nashers' immediate needs is indicative of a disposition that is humanizing, critically aware, and attentive to the individual and collective needs of participants in the learning community. Thus, community-based educators and teaching artists can assist K-12 educators in expanding their pedagogical repository concerning teaching and learning about issues of power and adopting humanizing pedagogical practices oriented towards care, love, and criticality.

Social Justice Education and Ethnic Studies Curriculum

The girls and young women involved in this study revealed how PIP supported their critical consciousness, identity development, and agency. They also expressed appreciation for learning opportunities that exposed them to terminology that helped/will continue to help them to name, examine, and explore different aspects of their identity and their experiences with social injustices. Several of the Nashers revealed that PIP bolstered their racial and ethnic consciousness and confidence. For example, one Nasher stated, "It made me more confident about my race, and it got me started being natural" (CCS#6). A few of the girls shared that PIP lessons focused on gender and sexuality help them to name and fully express their queer identity. These experiences were especially significant because, in their school settings, interrogations of power, oppression, and identity are rarely taken up. Thus, the findings from this study suggest that girls and youth of color need more school-based opportunities to learn more about various aspects of their identity and to participate in discussions about social justice issues. As stated in the previous section, administrators and teachers need to be more cognizant that schools function as a socializing institution and consider the messages conveyed by the histories, cultures, identities, and perspectives that are excluded and included in the curriculum.

Educators are doing students of color a disservice when we treat social justice-oriented teaching and learning as an aside and not an essential component of school-based education. The education literature has shown that Ethnic Studies curriculum and disposition contribute to students' "development of literacies of power, agency, social awareness, civic engagement, and academic achievement" (de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015). Although the benefits and empowering results of Ethnic Studies and social justice education courses like PIP have been evidenced, these courses remain a rarity in K-12 schools/educational spaces. Students of color represent more than 75% of the students in the New York City public school system and over 90% of students in Newark public schools ("District Information," 2019; "DOE at a Glance", 2019). Despite the overwhelming presence of students of color, their histories, cultures, and sociopolitical realities remain absent from the curriculum - this is a concern raised by the girls and young women of color in this study. These absences lend themselves to the erasure, dehumanization, and injustices students of color experience in schools.

While spaces like SNLP exist, young people spend the bulk of their day in school and should have access to critical consciousness-raising curriculum in those settings. If we are committed to the education of students of color and value them as whole people, then their emotional and social wellness is a more than viable reason to enact school curriculum that centers their identities and experiences. To this end, social justice and Ethnic Studies curriculum make possible learning opportunities that facilitate joy in multiple forms, as Love (2019) notes:

> Joy that originates in resistance, joy that is discovered in making a way out of no way, joy that is uncovered when you know how to love yourself and others, joy that comes from releasing pain….and joy in teaching from a place of resistance, agitation, purpose, justice, love and mattering. p. 15)

Furthermore, the full impact of these curricular inclusions can only be felt when enacted by teachers that approach this work with a humanizing, liberatory, and justice-oriented disposition.

The Affordances of Spaces Specifically for Girls of Color

As a course taught in an organization that serves girls of color, PIP offers insights on the affordances of teaching and learning about issues of power in spaces for girls of color. The Nashers and PIP instructors involved in the study brought attention to the individual and collective transformations that were made possible through exchanging stories and experiences with girls of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. One of the girls expressed the joy she experienced in learning from and with "people that have the same struggles as me and girls of color that are my age and have the same or different perspectives than me" (CCS#5). The validation the girls received in that space played a significant role in building their confidence and strengthening their ability to analyze issues through an intersectional lens.

The findings from my investigation suggest that schools and community-based organizations that serve youth of color should invest in cultivating spaces where girls of color can openly vocalize their experiences and show up as their full selves. For instance, one of the Nashers shared that PIP played a pivotal role on her journey to rejecting antiblack notions of beauty which led her to begin wearing her hair in its natural state. PIP and SNLP more broadly, also provided Nashers with a safe environment to name and explore their queer identity. In addition, the findings revealed how patriarchal and white supremacist ideologies and practices shaped Nashers' girlhood, further supporting the need for spaces where girls of color can unpack and make sense of their experiences with sexism, heterosexism, and racism.

Implications for Future Research

In this study, I facilitated Critical Conversations Spaces (CCSs) to gain insights concerning the experiences of girls and young women of color who were participants in PIP. As mentioned in the methods chapter of this dissertation, I have experience facilitating CCSs focused on the racialized and gendered experiences of Black girls across multiple high schools (Carter Andrews et al., 2019b). Throughout these conversations, I witnessed how cathartic it was for Black girls to reflect, critique, and make sense of their schooling experiences in the company of Black girls and women which motivated my decision to use this approach in the dissertation study. Based on my collective experiences with CCSs as a qualitative data collection method, I highlight several implications for researchers of color interested in examinations that center the experiences of youth of color.

While semi-structured questions guided the direction of the conversations, CCSs allow all participants to fully engage in and direct the dialogue's flow, including through the use of verbal and non-verbal gestures (i.e., finger snaps, laughter, and affirming phrases). CCSs also offer a space where the researcher and participants can freely engage in discussions about different aspects of their identity and lived experiences. As a former PIP instructor, my familiarity with the course lessons and activities allowed us to go deeper into their individual and collective experiences in and beyond the course. My identities as a Black woman and a former PIP instructor made this a familiar context for both myself and the girls of color in the study. In this space, the Nashers and I were able to express our thoughts without fear of judgment.

While I have spoken here about how CCSs were transformative for me as one researcher of color, this work has further implications for researchers of color broadly. I specifically speak to researchers of color, because we must be mindful of the level of trust given to us when we

enter communities of color; we must not exploit that trust to benefit academia. As researchers of color, we must divest from damaged centered scholarship rooted in "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2013, p. 4). With this aim, we must seek to employ a humanizing research praxis that "involve the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness-raising for both researchers and participants" (Paris & Winn, 2014, xvi). In doing so, the questions we explore should center the desire, joy, resistance, and humanity of the people and communities involved in our work. Future research must look to spaces where teaching and learning for liberation and justice are already in progress. Researchers can examine the curriculum, pedagogy, and other elements that shape the learning experience. Some of the questions researchers might consider: What experiences are youth of color having in these spaces? What matters to them? What do they want from educators within and beyond K-12 schools? What are their visions for a more just society? And in what ways are they already manifesting these visions?

Implications for research regarding the findings from this study suggest future research should explore the insights, contexts, and experiences that inform the agency and activism of youth of color. For instance, the girls and young women of color involved in this study thoroughly conveyed their commitments to fostering awareness and social change by sharing the critical and humanizing insights they gained in PIP with peers, family members, and other members of the school and social communities. Given this finding, future research should explore the insights and actions made possible by way of K-12 and community-based educators learning from and with youth of color who are knowledgeable about social injustice issues. Research with this agenda contributes to calls for work "authorizing students' perspectives in

conversations about schooling and reform—to move toward trust, dialogue, and change in education" (Cook-Sather's, 2002, p. 12).

The context of SNLP and PIP is unique in that it brings together girls of color from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Further, the analysis of interlocking oppressions that occurred in PIP strengthened their ability to think and act with intentions to foster coalitions with individuals and groups similarly impacted by systems of power and oppression. While coalitions forged by women of color are documented (Alexander, 2005; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015; The Santa Cruz Feminist Of Color Collective, 2014), there is a dearth of scholarship focused on the cultivation of solidarity between Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous girls of diverse ethnicities. Therefore, more research is needed about the feminist knowledges and practices that facilitate bridge-building and opportunities for girls of color to foster genuine solidarity. With the awareness that social identities can play a prominent role in shaping an individual's self-perception (Leaper, 2011), investigations with the focus above contribute to understanding how girls of color draw on critical discussions about their individual and collective socializing experiences and examinations of issues of power to define, interrogate and enact being and becoming girls of color.

Conclusion

The reflections the Nashers shared in the Critical Conversations Spaces offer insights into their learning experiences and significant takeaways from Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP). Although the PIP curriculum and instructors' pedagogical practice significantly contribute to PIP's critical consciousness-raising dynamics, the numerous educational opportunities SNLP's summer institute provides elevates the affordances of the course. The wide range of courses, workshops, and field trips the Nashers attend and the guest speakers they engage with, expose

them to content and discussions that deepen their understanding of the topics and concepts examined in PIP. Further, the structural elements of SNLP serve to encourage girls and young women of color to show up as their full selves. In this context, they are free to dress how they desire, they can learn from and with women of color educators and be immersed in content that affirms their experiences. At the same time, they are loving and held accountable for making and taking space as they work to unlearn oppressive ways of thinking and contribute to the creation of a more just society.

Presently, people in cities across the U.S. are insisting that the police be defunded, and the money diverted towards community-based initiatives and social services. The call to defund the police comes with the recognition that no amount of implicit bias training or diversifying the force will change that, as a white supremacist entity, law enforcement is designed to oppress Black and Brown people. In the same vein, while courses focused on social justice and Ethnic Studies are needed in schools, as long as the oppressive and dehumanizing policies and practices persist, these spaces remain harmful educational environments for youth of color. The insights the Nashers shared concerning their schooling experiences speak to the aforementioned point and the need to reimagine the purpose and goals of school-based education.

The findings from this study highlight how PIP, as a key aspect of SNLP's summer institute programming, fosters critical consciousness-raising and transformative teaching and learning. However, my intention is not to suggest that SNLP and PIP are examples to be replicated wholesale. Instead, I implore those who read this work to consider the reflections and perspectives offered in their process of envisioning, exploring, and enacting material changes within the educational spaces and communities they serve. There are no one sizes fits all solutions, but what we know for sure is that a radical transformation of schooling in its current

form is needed to ensure youth of color have access to the learning environments they need, desire, and deserve.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table 4: Critical Conversation Spaces Information Table

Date of Critical Conversation	Number of Girls	Length	Location
04/19/2019	6	71 minutes	NYC
04/22/2019	6	72 minutes	NYC
04/26/2019	2	64 minutes	NYC
05/13/2019	6	51 minutes	Newark
06/04/2019	3	44 minutes	NYC
06/06/2019	4	32 minutes	NYC

APPENDIX B

Critical Conversation Spaces Protocol

<u>**Agenda**</u>
Welcome
- Collect Consent forms, hand out demographic sheet, introduce myself and the purpose of the study
- Welcome. My name is Tashal Brown and I'm a PhD student in Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education at Michigan State University. Thank you for participating in this research study. The purpose of this study is to examine how the Sadie Nash Leadership Project's participants make sense of their experiences in Power, Identity, and Privilege (PIP) as it pertains to schooling and their everyday lives.

Explain Focus Group Set-Up
- 90 mins max
- Confidentiality (No names will be used in the process of transcribing or writing that utilizes the contents of this focus group discussion)
- I will ask a question in which each of you will have a moment to respond
- Speak one at a time.
- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. You do not have to agree.
- It's "ok to disagree" and have another opinion about the same topic.
- Do not blame, shame or put each other down or debate each other. Notice if you are letting yourself be swayed or snowballed by how the rest of the group thinks or feels and feel free to share your different point of view.
- Although I want to hear from everyone, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Do you have any questions? Is it okay for us to start?
Have the Nashers introduce themselves
- Name and pronouns

Begin Discussion

<u>**Introduction and PIP Topics**</u>
- If you could describe your PIP experience in one word what would it be? Why?

- What topic or concept did you find most interesting to discuss? Why? (race/ethnicity, colorism, gender, power, oppression, privilege, sexism, etc.)

- What activity did you find the most interesting? Why?

- What topic/concept were you most informed about prior to your participation in PIP? Where did you learn or engage in discussion about this particular topic/concept?

<u>**Identity Development and Social Interactions**</u>
- How did your experience in PIP impact the way you think about different parts of your identity?

- How, if at all, did your experience in PIP impact the way you think about your schooling experiences?

- How, if it all, did your experience in PIP impact the way you think and discuss political and social issues with your peers and adults?

- Do you think a class like PIP would be beneficial for your peers? (high school/college/social community) Why or why not?

Engagement with Issues of Power Outside of PIP
- What social issues are important to you? Why?

- In your everyday life, how do you engage with the social issues that you care about? (school, home, community, social media)

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