THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Girls of Today, Leaders of Tomorrow: A Case Study on Alternative, Public, Single-Sex Schooling and Identity Formation

By

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August 2022

A Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Supporters of single-sex schooling maintain that coeducational schools have a "hidden curriculum" which socializes boys and girls into traditional gender roles that hinder achievement, particularly for girls. However, research suggests that single-sex schools have little to no impact on academic achievement at all, and some research contends that single-sex schools promote traditional ideals of femininity, masculinity, and heteronormativity. This leads me to the questions: 1) What is an alternative model of single-sex schooling that empowers students to break free of hegemonic gender norms, and can it be powerful enough to challenge the traditional model of single-sex schooling? And 2) How do public, single-sex schools shape girls' identities? To explore this topic, I conducted semi-structured interviews with alumni and past faculty from the Young Women's Leadership Charter School (YWLCS), a public, all-girls charter school in Chicago that operated from 1999-2019. By synthesizing existing research on how schools promote a hidden curriculum of traditional gender norms, I propose that YWLCS is an example of an alternative model of public, single-sex schooling that can disrupt this hidden curriculum and empower girls' identities. Through using an identity experience framework to understand how identities are performed within schools, I argue that this case study on YWLCS can offer insight into how other public, all-girls schools can support the identities of their students.

Keywords: public single-sex schools, girls, gender, identity

PREFACE

"The Young Women's Leadership Charter School of Chicago inspires urban girls to engage in rigorous college preparatory learning in a small school that is focused on math, science, and technology and that nurtures their self-confidence and challenges them to achieve" (YWLCS 2006-2010).

In 1999, the Illinois Board of Education issued a renewable charter to the Young Women's Leadership Charter School (YWLCS) in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois. Based on the flagship campus in New York City, YWLCS in Chicago aimed to be a public, college preparatory, single-sex school for predominately girls of color that would prepare young women for careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). YWLCS opened its doors in the summer of 2000 and served thousands of girls from the North Side, South Side, and West Side of Chicago throughout its history. In 2008, 1/3 of YWLCS students lived within two miles of the school, and students were from 33 out of Chicago's 90 neighborhoods (YWLCS 2006-2010). At its founding, YWLCS was run by two female Co-Directors and overseen by a predominantly female Board of Directors. While the school was more racially and socioeconomically diverse at its conception, most students were Black or Latina and from low-income backgrounds by the 2007-2008 school year (See Table 1; Farrington and Small 2008). The school motto was "Girls of today, leaders of tomorrow," and the school mascot was fittingly the Phoenix to symbolize students rising out of their low-income backgrounds and flying into broader horizons.

As a non-selective, public, charter school, YWLCS accepted students through a lottery system. In the beginning years of the school, YWLCS outperformed other neighborhood schools in student graduation and college enrollment rates. In 2005, the five-year cohort graduation rate

for all districts in the Chicago Public School (CPS) system was 52% (Farrington and Small 2008). In comparison, the YWLCS graduation rate was 78.6% during that same year (Farrington and Small 2008). According to the University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School research, students with similar academic achievement levels and backgrounds were 1.7 times more likely to graduate if they attended YWLCS than an average Chicago public school (Farrington and Small 2008). In 2005, 87% of YWLCS graduates attended college, and in 2007, YWLCS's graduation rate was 26.4% higher than a comparable neighborhood school (Farrington and Small 2008). When looking at the amount of CPS freshmen that graduated from high school within five years, YWLCS was in the top 15% of all Chicago public schools in 2010, including selective magnet schools (YWLCS 2006-2010).

Table 1: YWLCS Demographic Information, 2007-2008 (Farrington and Small 2008)

Young Women's Leadership Charter School (2007-2008) **at a glance**:
Student Body:
348 female students in grades 7-12
77% African American, 15% Latina, 6% White, 1% Asian, 1% multi-racial/ethnic
81% low-income, 15% special education
Admission based on lottery, with primary entry in grades 7 and 9
Current waiting list for 2008-2009 academic year: 400 students
Faculty and staff:
32 teachers, 9 administrators, 10 support staff, 4.5 custodial/security
The School:
$4.3 million annual budget (72% from public funds, 28% from private contributions)
Located in a public school building in the Bronzeville neighborhood, South Side of Chicago
Initial charter granted by the Chicago Board of Education 1999, currently renewed through 2011

In 2000, YWLCS was first located in the basement of the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). The inaugural student body consisted of one sixth-grade cohort and one ninth-grade cohort, and classes were held in one of IIT's former office spaces. A few years later, YWLCS moved to their own location in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood. The school's curriculum consisted of math, science, technology, humanities (which was a combination of English and history), and reading/writing courses, and the school had a strong college preparation and internship component as well. Students were also required to take art, health and fitness, and world language classes. While the curriculum did not provide students with much choice as to which subjects and which levels they could take (the school did not have tracked classes such as honors courses or Advanced Placement classes), eleventh and twelfth-grade students had the opportunity to enroll in classes at local universities to receive both high school and college credit. Similar to traditional public high schools, YWLCS had extracurriculars such as sports teams, student government, chess club, gay/straight alliance, yearbook club, poetry slam, and others. Unlike traditional high schools, YWLCS did not grade students with the standard letter and number scale. Instead, students were graded qualitatively with YWLCS's unique outcomes-based assessment system, where students received outcomes such as "High Performance," "Proficient," and "Not Yet." YWLCS (or YDub, as community members affectionately called it) was open for 20 years; however, the school recently closed its doors in 2019 due to a lack of enrollment and funding.

INTRODUCTION

"I really love my school, and I don't think I would be who I was, who I am today, if it weren't for being around all those women" (Jeanie, YWLCS alum).

Jeanie started YWLCS as a freshman in the class of 2000 during the school's inaugural

year. During our interview, her excitement was visible as she was eager to talk about her experience at YWLCS and about how the school impacted her. As Jeanie mentions, she feels as though YWLCS gave her an identity, a feeling that most of my participants share as well. What is it about this small, public, single-sex charter school in Bronzeville, Chicago that led students to have such long-lasting, positive, and fond memories about their time as a student? How does the fact that the school was an all-girls school contribute to shaping students' identities?

Since the late 20th century, supporters of single-sex schools believe that same gender classrooms[1] will increase students' achievement by providing learning opportunities free from the distractions and biases of the opposite gender (Cumings-Mansfield 2013). Supporters of single-sex schooling maintain that coeducational schools have a "hidden curriculum" which socializes boys and girls into traditional gender roles that hinder achievement, particularly for girls (Salomone 2004). Some proponents of single-sex education even believe that same-gender schools can fix the racial, gendered achievement gap.[2] However, research suggests that single-sex schools have little to no impact on academic achievement at all (particularly for girls),[3] and public, single-sex schools are not strong enough indicators on their own to address the racial,

[1] For the purpose of this study, I will use the terms "sex" and "gender" interchangeably when discussing "single-sex" or "same gender" classrooms. However, I want to acknowledge that these concepts are very different and have different implications for individuals' identities.

[2] Most research on the racial achievement gap that includes the intersection of race and gender focuses primarily on boys, with good reason: Black boys are less likely to graduate from high school and are more likely to be suspended than white boys and Black girls (Lopez 2003; Gewertz 2007; U.S. Census 2019). As a way to combat the high drop-out rates, criminalization, and lower test scores for Black boys, one solution researchers proposed was single-sex schooling, which led to the creation of all-boys schools designed for predominately boys of color (Salomone 2004:72; Gewertz 2007; Benham et al. 2019). Some schools were exclusively designed for Black boys, such as the African American Immersion Schools in Milwaukee in 1990 and Afrocentric schools in Detroit. Proponents believed these schools were necessary because of the failure of the Civil Rights Movement to improve Black boys' quality of life, while opponents believed these schools were too acutely reminiscent of racial segregation (Cumings-Mansfield 2013).

[3] According to the 2021 United States census, girls outperform boys academically regardless of classroom configuration, and this has been a consistent trend across different races throughout recent years. In 2019, 91% of white girls graduated from high school in comparison to 89.7% of white boys, while an estimated 88.1% of Black girls graduated from high school in comparison to 85.9% of Black boys (U.S. Census Bureau 2019).

gendered achievement gap for low-income students of color (Hubbard and Datnow 2005; Hayes et al. 2011; Pennington et al. 2018). In addition, some research contends that single-sex schools promote traditional ideals of femininity, masculinity, and heteronormativity (Glasser 2011; Erarslan and Rankin 2013; Love and Tosolt 2013).[4]

I argue that single-sex schools have failed to increase academic achievement and disrupt hegemonic gender socialization because of issues in their design. Historically, single-sex schools have not been specifically designed to tackle socialization into traditional gender roles. The underlying logic and rationale for single-sex schooling upholds traditional gender roles and heteronormativity through its assumption that boys and girls perform better without distractions from the opposite gender. However, as recent research suggests, this assumption is not enough to increase academic achievement and counter the "hidden curriculum." This brings me to the following questions that will guide my research: 1) What is an alternative model of single-sex schooling that empowers students to break free of hegemonic gender norms, and can it be powerful enough to challenge the traditional model of single-sex schooling? And 2) How do public, single-sex schools shape girls' identities?

To examine these questions, I conducted a retroactive case study on YWLCS by speaking to former YWLCS faculty and alumni. In this paper, I briefly discuss the history of single-sex schooling in the United States and why it is so controversial. I then highlight various literature on how single-sex schools do not accomplish their goal in challenging a "hidden curriculum" within

[4] Traditional gender roles of femininity include the idea that women should be passive, nurturing, and innocent, whereas ideas of traditional masculinity dictate that men should be leaders, aggressive, and dominant. Since these constructs operate in a white supremacist society, race also impacts the perceptions of these gender roles. White women are viewed as traditionally feminine, whereas women of color are viewed as deviant to traditional femininity. Heterosexuality is closely tied to these traditional ideas of gender. Heteronormativity is a social phenomenon based on the expectation that men and women are sexually attracted to each other, and, therefore, all practices in men and women's lives should rotate around this assumption. Institutions and individuals can uphold heteronormative practices either implicitly or explicitly.

their classrooms. My findings demonstrate that YWLCS is an example of a public, single-sex school that does counter this "hidden curriculum" through its school design, school culture, and teaching philosophy. To ground my research, I draw from and combine Pascoe's (2011) theoretical understanding on gender and sexuality in schools, Bettie's (2014) discussion on class and femininity, and Lopez's (2003) race-gender experience framework to create an identity experience framework that incorporates the impact of schools on students' gendered, sexual, class, and racial experiences and outlooks. By utilizing this theoretical framework to understand YWLCS's design, I draw conclusions on how YWLCS shaped girls' identities, which has implications for how other public, single-sex schools can influence the identity development of young girls of color.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLING IN THE UNITED STATES

Single-sex schooling was largely the norm in the United States (with some exceptions) until the early 19th century. Cumings-Mansfield (2013:4) describes the rise of single-sex schooling in two waves: "first-generation" and "second-generation" single-sex schooling. First-generation single-sex schooling refers to the historical period where all-male academies were the norm. The all-girls schools that existed at the time sought to preserve the innocence of wealthy, white girls and protect them from working class, immigrant boys. Private, religious schools for girls existed since the early 18th century in the United States, but public high schools for girls were not made available until the early 19th century (Lopez 2003). In the 18th century, education for white women was based on the Puritan notion that women, "under male guidance," should learn to read religious texts; those who pursued independent, intellectual pursuits were considered "deviant" (Conway 1974:2). While the Revolutionary War era in the United States

introduced the idea that women should be educated under the notions that "all men are created equal" and the "pursuit of happiness," women's education taught women that their happiness lay within the bounds of marital and domestic life (Conway 1974:2). In the late 18th century and early 19th century, shifts in the labor market placed responsibility on women to be "guardians of moral standards" within the home, which confined them to a patriarchally approved mode of intellectual development and a career that served the purpose of educating boys and girls within the confines of patriarchy (Conway 1974:4). Regardless of the increase in education for girls and the participation of women as educators, girls were socialized in school to hold subservient positions in society, which confined them to the bounds of marriage and domesticity.

As a result of the feminist revolution in the early 20th century, second-generation single-sex schooling refers to the feminist shift in single-sex schools as places to counteract social and academic disadvantages experienced by boys and girls in coeducational schools (Cumings-Mansfield 2013). Early coeducational institutions accepted women under the assumption that their presence would be beneficial to the mental, social, and academic well-being of male students. In these spaces, women were still trained within the confines of early 18th and 19th century patriarchal values of how they could best serve men at home (Conway 1974). However, as a stark shift from the strictly religious, Puritan education in the 18th century and the confining, sexist education of the 19th century, second-generation single-sex institutions were meant to provide girls with an education that countered socialization into hegemonic gender roles as well as provide an equal education to boys. Some of the main arguments supporting single-sex education that developed during the second-generation include: 1) Boys and girls have distinct neurological differences that cause them to learn differently; and 2) Single-sex schools prevent boys and girls from being distracted by the opposite sex and remedy the different ways boys and

girls are treated in coeducational classrooms (Benham et al. 2019). For example, some supporters of single-sex schooling claim that boys need more physical space and opportunities for movement in classroom settings that girls might find distracting, whereas girls need more opportunities for collaboration with peers than boys (Hughes 2006).

However, second-generation single-sex schooling was met with political controversy in the post-Civil Rights era in the United States. Because of the feminist movement in the late 20th century, the United States government took a stance against sex segregation, which they extended to single-sex schooling. In 1972, the United States Congress passed Title IX, a federal civil rights law that prohibited sex discrimination in any educational institution that received federal funding. The 1974 Equal Educational Opportunity Act specifically addressed elementary and high schools and declared that "all children enrolled in public schools are entitled to equal educational opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, or national origin" (Benham et al. 2019:509). Despite numerous Supreme Court rulings between the 1970s and 1990s that prohibited the creation of single-sex institutions, the Young Women's Leadership Charter School in East Harlem, New York opened in 1996, which spurred the creation of affiliate YWLCS's in other cities (Benham et al. 2019).

In the early 21st century, the U.S. Supreme Court later ruled that single-sex schooling does not violate Title IX if all-boys classrooms and all-girls classrooms share similar resources and curricula (Hughes 2006). In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) provided federal funding to create robust single-sex public schools in compliance with Title IX (Hughes 2006; Benham et al. 2019). Faced with critiques that the NCLB Act was too broad, President Obama passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, which rewrote NCLB to give more power to state governments (Benham et al. 2019). According to the Education Week Research

Center, single-sex opportunities were offered by an estimated 283 public schools in 2014-2015 (Benham et al. 2019). However, the legitimization, proliferation, and funding of public, single-sex programs did not quell its opponents.

The legacies of these policies as well as the history of single-sex education still fuel current debates about the morality and merits for this particular type of schooling. On the one hand, proponents believe that a "hidden curriculum" exists in coeducational classes that prioritizes the education of boys and prepares girls to take on hegemonic, feminine roles in their futures (Salomone 2004). They believe that single-sex schools emphasize female empowerment and provide the appropriate socio-academic spaces that accommodate for the different learning styles of both genders (Hughes 2006). On the other hand, some women's groups and advocates (such as the National Organization for Women and the American Civil Liberties Union) believe that single-sex schools promote inequality and sex segregation which goes against the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision (Salomone 2004). Because of the history of sex segregation in the United States, many opponents of single-sex schooling refer to this legacy of discrimination as the reason why single-sex schooling remains unconstitutional to this day.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the history of single-sex schooling demonstrates, the second-generation of single-sex schools aimed to create equal learning environments for girls (and boys) so that girls could receive education outside the confines of hegemonic gender norms, which proponents argue inhibit girls' academic achievement. However, some researchers argue that single-sex schools, like coeducational schools, have a "hidden curriculum" (Salomone 2004) that promotes traditional attitudes towards femininity and masculinity. Schools mirror the racial, gendered, and economic inequality that occurs at a societal level, and schools also reproduce social inequality

within the classroom (Lewis and Diamond 2015). In addition to the stereotypical perception of gender in the classroom, the overvaluation of white culture in schools harms the identity formation, social development, and academic learning of both boys and girls. This can be seen in the literature on Black girls' experiences in public schools, where schools perceive the intersection of gender and race differently for Black girls than white girls (Morris 2015; Fordham 1993; Carter Andrews et al. 2019; Darby and Rury 2018). Boys are policed more for misbehaving while also given more opportunities to participate in class, whereas girls are expected to be passive, innocent, and perfect students (Lopez 2003; Ferguson 2000). This difference of treatment is magnified by the intersection of gender and racial identities, where Black girls are adultified, hypersexualized, and criminalized at much higher rates than white girls (Morris and Perry 2017; Morris 2015; Lopez 2003).

Schools are more than spaces for academic learning; they are spaces where students can navigate, strategize, and perform the intersection of their identities (Khan 2012; Carter 2005). If a school is not accepting of all identities and instead expects students to conform to an identity standard, then many students will be unsupported. Some social science research argues how single-sex schools, despite being formed with the intention of challenging structures of social inequalities, support normative, traditional gender norms through school rituals, teaching styles, and the promotion of heteronormativity.

The Hidden Curriculum

Researchers have gone so far as to categorize the overvaluation of traditional femininity and masculinity in schools as a specific agenda in coeducational schooling that serves to preserve society's gendered and racial hierarchy. Salomone (2004:72) describes this agenda as a "'hidden

curriculum' – a subtle, but nonetheless harmful, institutionalized program of male dominance in classroom interactions, uneven teacher expectations, and attitudes that prepare students for gender-specific roles in society." Some ways that schools promote traditional gender roles are through school rituals, teaching styles, and school rules. For example, teachers police but also simultaneously encourage teen sexuality that falls within the bounds of heteronormativity, and rituals such as school dances and homecoming kings and queens explicitly validate traditional gender roles (Pascoe 2011). There is also research that suggests schools encourage boys to be more assertive and rebellious in class while girls are encouraged to be more passive and conforming, which reflects stereotypical characteristics of hegemonic femininity and masculinity (Glasser 2011). Because of this, some researchers, policymakers, and school administrators believe that single-sex education will provide an equal opportunity for girls and boys to learn without the social distraction of the opposite gender and in environments specifically dedicated to girls and boys.

However, even this solution is cloaked in heteronormative and cisgendered assumptions,[5] and current research also demonstrates the ways that single-sex schools promote normative ideas of gender. Jackson (2010:232) argues that the reasoning behind sending children to single-sex schools "expose[s] underlying notions of normative heterosexuality." On the one hand, parents are simultaneously concerned about all-boys schools turning their sons gay as well as convinced that boys will concentrate better without the presence of girls. On the other hand, parents who send their daughters to all-girls schools do so out of fear that their daughter will be sexually harassed, sexually discriminated against, or sexually active (Jackson 2010). These

[5] "Cisgender" refers to a gender identity that corresponds with an individual's birth sex. For example, if an individual is born female and identifies with being female, they would identify as a cisgender woman. "Cisgendered" assumptions are the expectations that an individual's assigned sex corresponds with their gender identity.

heteronormative rationales assume that boys are sexually aggressive and unruly; in both single-sex and coeducational environments, boys are perceived as not able to control their sexual urges. Relatedly, girls are simultaneously perceived as sexual and academic victims due to the presence of boys. Opponents of single-sex education also argue that single-sex education reinforces and reaffirms gender performances that fall within the gender binary, which then depicts transgender, intersex, and gender-bending students as an "exception to the rule" (Jackson 2010:228). Because the "hidden curriculum" promotes hegemonic norms of gender, it is harmful for students who are exploring and discovering different identities during their adolescence outside the realm of heteronormativity and dominant femininity/masculinity (Khan 2012; Love and Tosolt 2013).

Traditional norms of femininity and masculinity are also closely intertwined with race. Research demonstrates how schools socialize Black girls to adhere to a specific definition of white femininity in order to succeed academically and socially. The notion of ideal femininity as "conformity, silence, passivity," and innocence (Lopez 2003:54) directly contrasts with how teachers, peers, and school administrators view Black girls: as disruptive, distracting, overly sexual, aggressive, and loud (Morris 2015; Fordham 1993; Carter Andrews et al. 2019). Being told to behave like a "lady" (Carter Andrews et al. 2019; Lopez 2003) is an example of how Black girls' identities are policed by schools and how schools expect Black girls to adhere to a hegemonic norm of white femininity. Black girls are taught to uphold this norm through the way their identities are disciplined in comparison to those of white girls. This, in turn, suggests that depictions of Black femininity are considered deviant by schools (Morris 2015). However, Morris and Perry (2017:144) point out a caveat to this argument in that it is difficult to determine whether "African American girls' behavior actually purposefully defies passive norms of femininity or if it is merely perceived as defying these norms." Research suggests that the latter

is true and that the location of Black girls in the social hierarchy dictates how schools perceive their behavior (Darby and Rury 2018). According to Carter Andrews et al. (2019), Black girls in both the classroom and extracurricular spaces are perceived through a dual lens of anti-Black misogyny that places whiteness and white portrayals of femininity as the norm. The difference in how schools discipline Black girls in comparison to white girls suggests that schools value white girls' gender displays more than Black girls' gender displays (Morris 2015).

In addition, the standard of white femininity in schools depicts Black girls as deviant, which penalizes the students academically solely based on their gender and racialized identity. Fordham (1993:22) discusses how Black girls are taught to "disassociate oneself from the image of 'those loud Black girls'" and "pass" as white in schools to achieve academic success. Fordham's (1993) research demonstrates that when Black girls do not conform to the rigid notion of white femininity, teachers perceive the students as unintelligent. Carter Andrews et al. (2019) argues that Black girls are socialized to maintain patriarchal and white supremacist notions of hegemonic femininity and whiteness in schools in order to succeed academically, and even then, their success is questioned. Because of white supremacist ideologies about Black people's intellectual ability, many teachers and school administrators subconsciously believe that Black students will perform worse than white students (Darby and Rury 2018). This research highlights how not conforming to these hegemonic notions of white femininity has academic and social repercussions for Black girls.

While current research argues that schools socialize Black students to behave in a way that is more closely aligned with dominant perceptions of white femininity, it is important to distinguish the structural forces of inequality that cause symbols of whiteness to be celebrated while symbols of Blackness are criminalized. Darby and Rury (2018) provide a historical

explanation on how white supremacist ideologies have persisted since the 18th and 19th centuries and how these ideologies shape how Black people are perceived in society, supporting the notion that structural forces of inequality that exist outside of the school permeate school walls and are reproduced through daily interactions. In discussions on how schools socialize students to adhere to a white identity and how to fix this issue, it is important to not place the responsibility on Black students, but rather to place the responsibility on school administrators who have the power to create structural and organizational change within their schools.

Does Single-Sex Schooling Disrupt the Hidden Curriculum?

In addition to the moral and legal arguments surrounding the constitutionality of single-sex schooling, some research demonstrates that single-sex schools fail to disrupt the "hidden curriculum" within coeducational schools, which is one of the main hopes that proponents had for all-girls schools. Single-sex schools have become a controversial topic in Europe as well as the United States, emphasizing the multiplicity of opinions and research conducted on the role of single-sex schools on an international scale. A study conducted on single-sex and coeducational schools in Turkey examines if students' gendered attitudes towards family life, career, and social life are related to school type (i.e., single-sex schools and coeducational schools). Erarslan and Rankin (2013) find that school type does not impact the gender role attitudes girls have towards their future work life or social life; instead, socioeconomic factors such as household income play a larger role in impacting these attitudes. If the purpose of all-girls schools is to specifically empower girls and disrupt the "hidden curriculum" of male dominance promoted in coeducational classrooms (Salomone 2004:72), then this study further implies that single-sex schools fail in this mission. While the social and cultural context of Turkey is different than the

United States, this study suggests that single-sex schools can play a role in the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, demonstrating the power of single-sex schools in socializing their students and creating further implications for single-sex schools in the United States.

Private, single-sex schools with a religious affiliation are especially prone to promoting traditional norms around gender and sexuality. Love and Tosolt (2013) focus on a private, Catholic all-girls school in their research, arguing that single-sex schools promote traditional gender roles for girls through policing students' gender and sexual identities to conform with heterosexuality. Queer students in this context must strategize their gender performance to exist within their school's rigid, heteronormative structure that promotes a traditional gender binary. Love and Tosolt's (2013) school simultaneously encourages and controls girls' sexuality to fit within the bounds of heteronormativity; girls are permitted to publicly show excitement when in the presence of boys, but girls are not even allowed to hug other girls at school. To cope with this, queer students either hide their gender and sexual identity or aggressively assert it (Love and Tosolt 2013). Love and Tosolt's analysis (2013) is also similar to how students in Khan's (2012) study treat a lesbian girl like an outcast for rejecting the school-sanctioned presentation of gender and sexual identity. Even though Khan (2012) studies students at a prestigious coeducational school, his mention of a queer girl's negative experience demonstrates how girls are treated when they do not conform to traditional presentations of gender within that school context.

The connection between femininity and heterosexuality in education spaces is reflective of early women's education in the 18th century, where women were educated solely to take on domestic roles in a heterosexual marriage (Conway 1974). This expectation of heterosexuality for girls continues today, as current day proponents of single-sex schools argue that same-sex

classrooms are beneficial because they remove any potential for distraction from the opposite sex (Hughes 2006). While Catholic schools carry a complicated relationship with homosexuality, by enforcing a heterosexual environment, the single-sex Catholic school in Love and Tosolt's (2013) study simultaneously reinforces traditional ideals of femininity where a woman's worth is tied to a man. The ostracization of the lesbian girl in Khan's (2012) study demonstrates the importance of shared, gender role dispositions in order to fit in within the school culture. These studies suggest that single-sex schools, and perhaps schools at a more macro-level, promote a traditional presentation of femininity, regardless of the gender composition of the classroom.

Research demonstrates how the "hidden curriculum" in single-sex schools is unintentionally similar to the "hidden curriculum" in coeducational schools (Salomone 2004). This suggests that the impact of single-sex schools lies beyond decreasing inequality between boys and girls in schools, and instead single-sex schools can unintentionally reinforce traditional gender roles by offering a similar education to coeducational schools through a differently gendered lens.

Identity Experience Framework

In order to understand the "hidden curriculum" in coeducational and traditional single-sex schools that prioritizes dominant gender norms, it is important to also examine the different implications this prioritization has on race, class, and sexuality. To do this, I consider Pascoe's (2011) conceptions of gender and sexuality, Bettie's (2014) analysis of class, and Lopez's (2003) understanding of how race and gender impact experiences and outcomes to form the theoretical framework for my research, which I will call the "identity experience framework." The identity experience framework is an expanded version of Lopez's (2003) race-gender experience

framework that incorporates an understanding on the differences in gender performance based on race, sexuality, and class. More specifically, this theoretical framework is an intersectional[6] approach that considers how the gender, sexual, class, and racial identities of students are both assigned and performed.

In order to understand the function of the identity experience framework, I will first describe Lopez's (2003) theoretical model. Using critical race feminist theory and racial formation theory, Lopez (2003:7,165) argues that individuals are "assigned racial meanings that are gendered," which later become "naturalized and institutionalized" across society. Instead of biological differences, Lopez (2003) believes that women and men have experiential differences due to how their social interactions and relationships to broader society are shaped by how they are racialized and gendered. Lopez (2003) defines race-gender experiences as social interactions in particular contexts, including the home and public spaces such as schools and the workplace, that are influenced by an individual's assigned racial and gendered meanings. These experiences then shape race-gender outlooks, which are "life perspectives and attitudes about how social mobility is attained" (Lopez 2003:6).

In Lopez's (2003) ethnographic study, she argues that experiential differences between women and men shape their outlooks on education. For example, women in Lopez's (2003) study were more optimistic about their futures, whereas men were more worried, which suggests a difference in their experiences based on their race and gender. Women viewed education as a way to challenge stereotypes about women of color, and their outlook was influenced by access to broader social networks, strong familial ties, and favorable relationships with teachers (Lopez

[6] The term "intersectionality" was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a way to understand how the racial and gender identities of Black women uniquely interact to impact social mobility and employment opportunities (Crenshaw 1991).

2003). These factors shaped the race-gender experiences for the women in Lopez's (2003) study, which led them to have more positive race-gender outlooks than the men. I will use Lopez's (2003) framework and findings on the different factors that influence girls' experiences and outlooks in school as the basis for my theoretical framework.

I argue that this race-gender experience framework can be extended to address sexuality and class in schools as well. Similar to how individuals are assigned racial and gendered meanings, Pascoe (2011) takes an interactionist approach to gender and sexuality by arguing that these assigned identities are fluid and are based on the often-racialized ways in which individuals perform, reaffirm, and reject traditional gender norms. In Pascoe's (2011) ethnographic study, she examines "f@g identity" to demonstrate the constant nature of gender performance and how gender and sexual identities are intertwined and negotiated. The students in Pascoe's (2011) study use this homophobic discourse of "f@g identity" and heterosexist discourses about girls' bodies to reject what they understand as a failed masculinity and to emphasize their own dominant masculinity. Even though Pascoe (2011) primarily examines masculinity and how boys perform their identities, her study has broader implications for how gender and sexuality are performed in schools and in relation to societal norms. While Lopez (2003) argues that society assigns specific identities to individuals, Pascoe (2011) expands on this by highlighting the individual's role in crafting these assigned identities through the performative, active process of affirming and rejecting.

Individuals have different experiences based on the intersection of their assigned and performed identities. According to Bettie (2014), gender performances are shaped by racial and class identities. In her study on working-class white and Mexican-American girls in high school, Bettie (2014) finds that girls perform different versions of femininity depending on their racial

and class displays. The working-class girls in Bettie's (2014) study perform a dissident femininity, illustrating Pascoe's (2011) interactionist beliefs on the ways that identities are negotiated through a process of affirming and rejecting dominant identities. This noncompliant femininity rejects the school-sanctioned version of femininity that aligns with white, middle-class characteristics such as behaving according to school rules, using Standard English, and dressing appropriately (Bettie 2014).

In my analysis, I argue that the intersection between students' assigned and performed gender, sexual, racial, and class identities shape their experiences and outlooks. I apply this identity experience framework in my case study to understand if YWLCS can challenge the "hidden curriculum" in traditional single-sex and coeducational schools by encouraging the full expression of girls' identities. Because YWLCS did not promote a dominant or traditional version of femininity, students had more freedom to negotiate their assigned and performed identities in a way that shaped their identity-related experiences and later outlooks.

METHODS

To explore my research questions on alternative, public, single-sex schools for girls and how they shape girls' identities, I conducted a retroactive case study on YWLCS. I decided to use this methodology because of the case study's ability to research a phenomenon in depth as well as consider the impact of real-life contextual factors on the research topic (Yin 2005). While case study methodology is widely critiqued as a form of inquiry because of its lack of generalizability and probability of bias, it is important to appreciate case studies from a qualitative lens and not from the language and expectations of quantitative research (Small 2009). Case studies contribute to broader theoretical understandings on particular social phenomena that are complex, context-specific, and varied based on individual experience. Even

though my retroactive case study on YWLCS only presents a small, unique picture of a particular school and geographic location during a specific time period, this case study can offer insight on how single-sex schools can shape girls' identities.

It is important to note that this study's findings rely on interview data from alumni and past faculty of YWLCS who attended or worked at the school between the years 2000-2010. Because of this, my study, findings, and conclusions are based on YWLCS's first decade. Additionally, multiple participants reported that the school culture and mission dramatically shifted after 2010 due to a change in leadership and new organizational management. By focusing on the first half of YWLCS's history, my study will capture the intentions and subsequent impact of how the school was originally designed.

After gaining approval from the University of Chicago's Institutional Review Board, I used a snowball sampling method to recruit participants for my study. My thesis advisor, Dr. Lisa Rosen, connected me with one of YWLCS's former school leaders who provided me with a list of alumni and past faculty. This list included email addresses and links to Facebook profiles. I used that preliminary list to reach out to potential participants, and I interviewed those who expressed interest in participating in my research. In addition, one of my participants posted information about my study on Instagram and Facebook, which led to a few participants contacting me from that as a result.

I conducted 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews over Zoom with past alumni and faculty of YWLCS. Seven participants were alumni, and nine participants were past faculty members. All the alumni and most of the faculty I interviewed identify as women; two of my faculty participants identify as cisgender men. Six alumni and six faculty participants in my study are people of color; one alum and three faculty participants are white. My study included

alumni representation from the following class years: 2000-2004, 2000-2007, 2001-2005, 2002-2006, and 2003-2007. Out of my faculty participants, two were Co-Directors, three were humanities teachers, one was a math teacher, one was a special education teacher, one was a science teacher, and one was a college counselor. On average, these interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes. A few of my participants also shared supplemental material on YWCLS, including research on the outcomes-based assessment system, the YWLCS Community Contract, past student work such as poetry journals, and a marketing magazine (see Appendix). At the beginning of each interview, I gained the participant's verbal consent to participate in my study as well as their verbal consent for me to record the audio and video of the Zoom call. To protect their identities, all participants were given pseudonyms, which participants either chose themselves or I assigned using an online random name generator. I gave students a pseudonym for their first names, and I gave pseudonyms to faculty for both their first and last names to account for students referring to faculty members as Mr. or Ms. "Last Name."

During the Zoom calls, I also used Microsoft Word's "Dictate" feature to transcribe the dialogue during the interviews. Since Word's "Dictate" feature is not completely accurate, I edited each transcript draft after I conducted my interviews to correct any spelling and transcription errors and to add in formatting. I also lightly edited the transcripts to take out filler words/phrases such as "like," "you know," and "right" as a way to make the responses flow better when reading them on paper. Following Saldaña's (2013) qualitative coding methodology, I uploaded all my transcripts into MAXQDA. For my first-stage coding method, I conducted summative coding on each transcript using the "Paraphrase" feature in MAXQDA (Saldaña 2013). This first round of coding allowed me to extensively review the transcripts and capture each piece of information that the interviewee shared. I then used the "Categorize Paraphrases"

function in MAXQDA to create a tentative category list based on my summative codes. Using MAXQDA's "Creative Coding" tool, I then went through this category list to condense, organize, and reconcile my categories. I repeated this process for each document I coded. I also uploaded the supplemental material I received from my participants into MAXQDA and coded those with the same methods. This qualitative coding process allowed me to make thematic connections between each of the interviews, form an understanding of the history of the school during its first decade of operation, and establish patterns.

It is important to briefly consider my positionality as the interviewer in this study. It is possible that my racial and gender identity (as a white, cisgender woman) influenced what participants said to me or felt comfortable disclosing to me. Some people I interviewed took note of my race and that I am not from Chicago to explain the city's racial makeup and to tell me about Chicago's history of racial segregation. One participant mentioned that she struggled to find the "politically correct" way to describe aspects of YWLCS; it is possible that my positionality made her feel uncomfortable in speaking completely candidly. However, it is also possible that my outsider identity helped make participants feel comfortable speaking to me. Since I do not have personal connections to or a history with YWLCS, participants may have felt encouraged to trust me.

FINDINGS

Using Your Voice

Previous research demonstrates how coeducational schools as well as single-sex schools can promote traditional gender norms of white femininity through teacher biases and school rituals (Erarslan and Rankin 2013; Glasser 2011). It is also important to recognize how these

traditional, racialized gender roles relate to class norms and how schools overvalue the characteristics of the white, middle-class student, which include behaving according to school rules, using Standard English, respecting teachers, participating in extracurriculars, and dressing appropriately. These characteristics, especially conforming and following rules, align with historical notions of white femininity (Lopez 2003; Carter 2005; Bettie 2014). While school-sanctioned, middle-class characteristics prepare students for future class mobility, they do not challenge the gender hierarchy in a way that prepares female students to be leaders. According to societal standards, female students should be quiet, docile, and passive in the classroom, which are not qualities that promote the development of socially accepted leadership skills such as strongly advocating for oneself and voicing knowledge. However, my findings suggest that alternative models of single-sex schools, such as YWLCS, can be intentionally designed to challenge this assumption.

One of the core values of YWLCS was to "value the contribution a single-sex education makes to educating the whole woman and promoting her leadership" (YWLCS, 2006-2010). Using a strengths-based approach to educating girls of color, YWLCS acknowledged that their students already had a voice and did not need help in finding it. Instead, YWLCS provided opportunities for girls to use, showcase, and promote their voices through their curriculum and unique grading system. YWLCS had an ambitious agenda to create more opportunities for their students outside of traditional gender roles as well as to promote class mobility for working-class girls of color through their college preparation and internship curriculum. All my participants mention that the mission of YWLCS was to empower young women and encourage them to believe in their capabilities to succeed. In interviewing alumni and past faculty, I learned that

YWLCS wove this message of empowerment throughout their curriculum, teaching philosophy, and school design.

Student-Centered Curriculum

At YWLCS, the teaching style in the humanities, math, and science courses was less lecture-based and more focused on discussion and collaboration. In one of Charles Hunt's high school classes, he conducted Socratic seminars and moderated student-led debates that gave students control in the classroom. Instead of teaching traditional Algebra and Geometry in math classes, YWLCS used the Interactive Math Program (IMP),[7] a collaborative, inquiry-based style of math that encouraged students to make applications between the curriculum and their daily lives. Incorporating IMP into the math curriculum allowed girls to become active participants in their learning where they were encouraged to work together to solve problems that connected to everyday life. Instead of encouraging the girls to align with the traditional gender roles of being passive in class, YWLCS expected their students to use their voices in stereotypically male-dominated disciplines such as math.

The curriculum was designed with the students' identities in mind. For example, YWLCS's science classes included lessons on female scientists such as Madame Curie[8] and Rachel Carson.[9] Incorporating female scientists into the science curriculum served as a way to highlight female voices throughout history and to expose students to different career paths in

[7] The Interactive Math Program (IMP) is a "four-year curriculum of problem-based, integrated mathematics designed to replace traditional Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II/Trigonometry, Pre-calculus sequence" (EDC 2001). The curriculum developed in 1989 in California, and it was designed with the intention of being an equitable, reformed curriculum that prepares all kids for either college or the workforce.
[8] Madame Marie Curie, a famous Polish-French physicist and chemist, is recognized as the first person to discover polonium and radium and for her pioneering research on radioactivity.
[9] Rachel Carson, an American marine biologist, is known as the "mother" of the United States' environmental movement because of how her influential book, *Silent Spring*, ignited environmental activism around the dangers of pesticides.

STEM. This representation was incorporated in different ways and across multiple disciplines at YWLCS. Because YWLCS was a charter school, the teachers had more freedom than in a traditional public school to design a curriculum that reflected the interests and identities of the students. Sarah Greene, one of the teachers, further explains how she created a curriculum that emphasized the mission of the school:

> I felt like it was important that if parents send their kids to an all-girl school, I think that they were looking to empower them. So, I wanted to make sure that I was giving them messages about their own power and trying to teach them to trust their own power…And so, I tried to find text that reflected them. I tried to make sure that we were reading Amy Tan[10] or Sandra Cisneros[11] or whatever. Trying to make sure that we had a representative voice for all of them.

In the humanities classes, teachers created a curriculum of empowerment that centered female authors from different cultural backgrounds so that the student body could identify and see themselves within the stories being taught in class. Through these lessons, Sarah hoped students would learn to "trust their own power," explore their own identities, and envision greater possibilities for their futures outside of society's prescribed gender norms.[12] Bethany, one of the alums, reflects on the impact the curriculum had on her:

> I think that the body of teachers as a whole, as well as the administrators, just made us feel powerful as women and made us tune into our femininity and what we wanted to accomplish as women. Yes, we were a collective of inner-city youth at an all-girls school, but they also wanted you to understand your own identity.

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[10] Amy Tan is an Asian American author most famously known for her 1989 novel, *The Joy Luck Club.*
[11] Sandra Cisneros is a Mexican American author most famously known for her 1983 novel, *The House on Mango Street*.
[12] See Appendix (Photos 2-4) for samples of student work that explored the topic of identity.

Bethany explains how YWLCS strove to empower students by explicitly helping them explore the multiplicity of their identities through incorporating representative voices into the course curriculum. Similar to Bettie's (2014) understanding of the diversity of femininities, YWLCS broadly defined femininity to include other identities, gender displays, and outlooks beyond the assigned identities of being "inner-city youth" and beyond the school-sanctioned femininity promoted in traditional schools. Because of this, YWLCS's curriculum of female empowerment and female representation directly challenged the "hidden curriculum" in traditional single-sex and coeducational schools.

Internship and Mentorship Program

In addition to the traditional school curriculum of math, science, and humanities, YWLCS also had a strong internship program that encouraged class mobility by preparing students for future careers, developing leadership experience, and gaining access to mentors who worked in fields they were interested in. Once a week, high school students would be dismissed early from class to travel to internships in Chicago. Students interned for a variety of organizations and professions, including law firms, nonprofit organizations, public libraries, and laboratories, but most of the internships had a STEM focus:

> Jeanie: We all went to internships every week at site somewhere in Chicago to shadow, and not only shadow, but assist people in the fields that we thought we wanted to go into. Some people had really cool internships where they were building robots with people in labs, and some of us had more clerical work or more work that had us using math.

Jeanie, an alum, interned for Deloitte in their information and technology department. Jeanie's

description of YWLCS's internship program illustrates how the school wanted to help students explore their passions, gain firsthand knowledge from working in a STEM field, and help expand what students thought could be possible for their futures. Adelyn, another alum, attributes her current career to YWLCS's internship program:

> I know for a fact that Young Women's kind of shaped who I am today…because I just feel like it prepared me for the real world. It definitely sparked my interest in nonprofits and in the nonprofit world. That first internship was my first real world experience with the nonprofit world…Even now when I apply for jobs, I talk about that first experience and where my passion and my love for the nonprofit world began, which was through that experience.

For Adelyn, her YWLCS internship was a transformative experience that influenced her future career path. The internship program gave her the skills, knowledge, and determination that "prepared her for the real world." By helping girls explore potential future careers while in high school, YWLCS challenged the constricting way that traditional femininity tracks working-class girls of color into working-class careers (Bettie 2014).

Through the internship program, students at YWLCS got paired with mentors who were professionals working in fields that students expressed interest in. Bethany, an alum, interned at a law firm in downtown Chicago for one of YWLCS's board members:

> …They dug into the passion of the students. For me at the time, I wanted to be a lawyer. And I was like gung-ho on being a lawyer…They created a mentorship program just by the connections that Ms. Schaeffer and Ms. Penley [school leaders] had. They gathered a lot of their friends, whether they would be doctors, lawyers, teachers, entrepreneurs, engineers, plumbers, bikers. Anything that us as

> students wanted to be, they created a mentorship program where we would actually go study and go intern under those people.

The internship and mentorship program supported students' futures and students' career exploration. YWLCS wanted their students to aim high when planning for their futures, so the internship and mentorship program helped students learn about themselves and their passions. Outside of the internship program, YWLCS strove to bring in strong women leaders as examples for students as well. This representation amongst the professional mentors and the YWLCS staff[13] inspired and empowered students to think outside of the box that societal structures and constraints placed them in:

> Jeanie: We met with so many different women who did so many different things, real jobs, good jobs that we weren't probably ever going to think was possible if it weren't for the strong leadership that we had within our teachers and our staff. I definitely know I wouldn't be who I was today if I weren't around so many strong women who set the example of what the possibilities are if you work hard or if you stay in science, technology, engineering, or math.

At different times while the school was in operation, Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama visited and gave commencement addresses. As Jeanie mentions, presenting successful women leaders to the students at YWLCS served as examples and encouragement for the students' futures. Research demonstrates how working-class girls of color are oftentimes tracked into working-class careers based on their identity experiences in school and broader society (Bettie 2014). Similar to how the connections to broader social networks positively influenced the girls in

[13] In 2010, more than 60% of YWLCS teachers had graduate degrees, and it is reported that YWLCS had the highest number of National Board Certified faculty (which is the highest teaching credential) of any Chicago charter school at that time (YWLCS, 2006-2010).

Lopez's (2003) study, the YWLCS internship and mentorship program provided students with examples of how women with similar identities to YWLCS students could succeed in professions that countered traditional gender roles and offered class mobility. Because of these experiences, the students at YWLCS developed positive outlooks on their identities and on the impact of education on their lives.

Outcomes-Based Assessment System

While YWLCS was unique overall, one of the most unique aspects of the school was their reformed, nontraditional grading system that they had in the early years of the school. Instead of grading students with the standard letter and number system, YWLCS developed an outcomes-based assessment model that aimed to increase students' success and take the pressure away from failure. Students were graded on a qualitative scale that included (from lowest to highest) "Not Yet," "Proficient," and "High Performance." If a student received a "Not Yet" on an assignment, it meant what the name suggests: the student had not yet mastered the material, but they were given opportunities to improve and demonstrate their progress.[14] Stephanie Penley, one of the school leaders, explains the student-centered and strengths-based philosophy behind the outcomes-based assessment system:

> Every grade was up for discussion. Well, whoever heard of schools doing that? It was so empowering to the girls. They always knew they could come to me because they knew I would side with them. Not in the sense of putting the teachers down, but I had to support them so that they had a voice to get their point

[14] YWLCS's outcomes-based assessment system reflects research on growth mindset in education, which is based on the understanding that learning and ability are malleable. When students persist towards accomplishing a goal and are resilient while facing failure, they will perform better academically (Hochanadel and Finamore 2015).

> of view out. And if their point of view was not substantial or it was not correct, it wasn't gonna win. But how do you have a debate between the power of a teacher and the lack of power of student? No way. So, that was a really important part of the process.

Jillian Mullen, one of the teachers, reflects on the impact the unique grading system had on the students:

> Overtime, one of the things that I think was really gratifying in all of that was – at the beginning when we laid out, "OK, here's what this whole system is gonna look like, and these are what you're gonna need to do to graduate from high school" – and the bar got kind of increasingly higher overtime. And to see, four years later, the group of young women who learned how to navigate that and really had become strongly able to advocate for themselves and to apply themselves.

As Stephanie and Jillian illustrate, the outcomes-based assessment system had an empowering impact on the girls. The grading system highlighted the voices of the students by intentionally focusing on their different learning styles and academic needs. By partnering with students and providing them with the space to reflect on and contest their grades, YWLCS taught girls how to advocate for themselves instead of encouraging passivity, obedience, and silence.

Development of Leadership Skills

In addition to the curriculum design, internship program, and grading system that challenged girls to be active learners in the classroom and in the real world, YWLCS also helped girls develop leadership skills by incorporating opportunities for public speaking, presenting in

front of an audience, and demonstrating knowledge throughout the school year. For example, YWLCS required eighth, tenth, and twelfth-grade students to give "promotion presentations" at the end of the school year to a panel of teachers and community volunteers as a way to demonstrate the progression of their learning. Overall, public speaking opportunities were at the forefront of the curriculum at YWLCS. Oftentimes, the math curriculum was combined with lesson plans that promoted leadership within the classroom. Brielle, an alum, recounts her experience from her math class:

> …I had a math teacher, Mr. Thomas, who was the bane of my existence. But he pushed me. That's probably why he was the bane of my existence. He wasn't all bad. He just pushed us. So, often what he would do was have us teach a lesson in the class…And I remember seeing my classmates kind of conveying a new topic or a new equation or something, and kind of seeing how they did it. And we had free range. However we wanted to teach it, he just needed to know that it was correct, that it made sense, that people could understand what we were talking about…I was nervous. And I was like, "I'm not really good at this." But he was like, "You can do this."

Not only did Mr. Thomas's curriculum give students valuable leadership practice, but it also countered negative stereotypes girls receive about their capacity to do math. In math classrooms, students at YWLCS were encouraged to take ownership of their learning, believe in their own capabilities, and practice leadership skills – all of which were tenets of YWLCS's design and teaching philosophy.

YWLCS gave students opportunities to develop these leadership skills outside of the classroom as well. Natalie Perella, one of the faculty members, had students create a college

application portfolio that they would then present to a panel of college admissions counselors. She also created an assignment for students to act as representatives from their college of choice for a day, where the students had to give informational presentations to their classmates about their chosen college. Students were also encouraged to give tours to school visitors, which oftentimes included governors, senators, and famous female leaders such as Michelle Obama and Oprah Winfrey. Aside from the fact that notable, strong, female leaders visited the school and the impact that representation had on the students, the YWLCS curriculum included intentional, empowering opportunities for the young women to develop leadership skills, which taught the students the importance of advocating for themselves and their passions.

Challenging Racialized Gender Norms

YWLCS's messages of empowerment throughout their curriculum, teaching philosophy, and school design provided girls with opportunities that specifically challenged traditional, racialized gender norms. Norms of white femininity dictate that girls are supposed to be quiet, passive, and obedient in classrooms (Lopez 2003), which then paints girls who do not behave within these bounds (or are perceived as such) as deviant. This narrow definition of femininity excludes girls of color, who are perceived as being loud, disruptive, overly sexual, and aggressive in the classroom (Morris 2015; Fordham 1993; Carter Andrews et al. 2019). Researchers argue that these racial assumptions about girls of color in school not only contribute to the adultification and criminalization of girls in schools, but also leads teachers to subconsciously expect girls of color to be unintelligent in comparison to their white peers (Morris 2015; Fordham 1993). YWLCS was an example of a public, single-sex school that disrupted the "hidden curriculum" that dictates that white femininity is the norm for classroom

behavior. Whereas a coeducational school or traditional single-sex school might expect discipline, silence, and passivity from their female students, YWLCS encouraged their students to take up space and be loud about their passions. Charles Hunt, one of the teachers, illustrates how the school's mission of leadership development encouraged girls to use their voices:

> We didn't have an explicit leadership curriculum. It was woven throughout every single class. So, the expectations when you came into the room: you are a young woman leader, so don't downplay yourself. Don't quiet your voice. Speak up. I mean, aw, man. My girls. They got up. They talked…The majority of the robust confidence in conversation came from the fact that they knew some stuff. And every opportunity that they had to show you what they know, they were going to do that. And so, the honoring [of] don't shrink back, don't underestimate yourself, take risks. All the things that are coming through in leadership programs now.

Natalie Perella, one of the faculty members, echoes this sentiment and describes how she observed students' growth in confidence over the years from being at the school:

> At the risk of sounding stereotypical…Things like girls not speaking up in class – that was not a thing for us. Or how when you're in traditional settings, the boys dominate in math or science. Because Stephanie and Veronica [school leaders] were so informed and they had such a vision for this school, our girls didn't go through that…And if they were shy, you would see this transformation. When they would first come in, whether if it was middle school or ninth grade, and if they were kinda [shy]…it was like releasing those shackles of gender roles in a way. And then by the time they ended ninth grade or whatever, they would be

> completely different in their own skin. And to hear them speak the way that they did without filters was so important.

As Charles illustrates, YWLCS teachers challenged racist assumptions by believing that all their students had knowledge that should be shared. By encouraging girls to actively demonstrate their knowledge, speak "without filters," and be leaders in the classrooms, the students were able to "release the shackles" of gender roles and assigned racial identities that dictate how girls (particularly girls of color) should behave in classrooms.

Because the teaching philosophy of YWLCS took a strengths-based approach to understanding the different knowledge that each student brought with them to class, some alumni describe having felt more comfortable to speak up in class as a result. Jeanie, an alum, speaks of this impact:

> I really felt comfortable being who I was. I didn't have to put on a persona or worry about being embarrassed when I get a question wrong or if I ask a "stupid question."

The combination of the student-centered curriculum, internship program, representation from strong women leaders, the grading system, and leadership development equipped YWLCS students to use their voices and challenge the racialized, gendered expectation for girls in classrooms. For Jeanie, this implicit leadership curriculum and teaching philosophy did more than just encourage her to participate in class. Instead, she felt comfortable to be her authentic self in the classroom. She did not feel like she needed to act a certain way to conform to gendered expectations of how girls should behave in classrooms. This leads to my second main finding, which is that YWLCS created a school culture that also challenged the heteronormativity that is attached to norms of white femininity.

Exploring Your Gender and Sexual Identities

Heteronormativity is closely tied with traditional norms of white femininity where the main purpose in a woman's life is to marry a man and become a mother (Cumings-Mansfield 2013). White girls are simultaneously sexualized and desexualized through being viewed and admired for their sexual innocence and sexual purity, whereas Black girls are hypersexualized and adultified by being perceived as both sexually aggressive and more sexually mature than their age (Morris 2015). In schools as well as in broader society, heterosexuality is the dominant sexual identity, which is reflected in school rituals such as homecoming king and queen, female cheerleaders for male sports teams, and school dances where boys are expected to take girls as their dates. These rituals and normative assumptions can make it difficult for students to fully express themselves and explore their identities (Pascoe 2011; Love and Tosolt 2013). YWLCS further challenged the gender norms of femininity through creating a school culture that supported the exploration of sexual identities outside the realm of heteronormativity.

"We Were Just Like a Big Family"

In my interviews, 13 out of my 16 participants describe YWLCS as a "family-oriented" environment. This culture of support was created by the relationships that faculty and school leadership would cultivate with the students as well as the community values of inclusion they instilled in the students. Brielle, an alum, describes how teachers created this feeling of family at school:

> …There was just a genuine care there...And they were like that with everybody…And if your parents had come and they met them, there was a [sense of], "You're good, you're fine here. This is your second home. Like, we got you

> here. So, if there's something going on at home, we will help you, we'll support you, whatever that looks like."

Because the teachers and school administrators demonstrated a "genuine care" for their students and actively supported students outside of the classroom, this contributed to YWLCS feeling like a "second home" for many students. Through my interviews, students spoke of how teachers would go above and beyond their job descriptions to support them socially, emotionally, or even financially. For many of the students, teachers became familial figures in their lives:

> Stephanie: Eventually, a lot of them called me "Grandma." That was really sweet because…I tried to play that role of being a wise, older person who loved you to death and would do anything for you, but really wanted you to develop yourself.

Stephanie Penley, one of the school leaders, illustrates the philosophy of care that teachers and administrators provided to their students and how YWLCS wanted to support the development of the "whole woman" (YWLCS 2006-2010). Karissa Rodman, one of the teachers, recounts how she let a couple of students live with her after their living situations with their families became difficult. Through that, their relationships strengthened, and Karissa considers those students her "goddaughters." Other teachers speak of buying grocery store gift cards for families so that they could buy holiday dinners. Some teachers would drive students to and from school, the doctor's office, and college interviews. Other teachers would volunteer to pay for the price of some students' prom tickets and prom dresses. When a few students got pregnant, teachers would visit them at their homes during their maternity leaves to make sure they were understanding recent assignments or to bring them baby supplies. Research demonstrates how having positive relationships with teachers contributes to the socioemotional and academic well-being of students (Lopez 2003; Bryk et al. 1993). By fostering a deeply supportive, family-like

environment, YWLCS created a community where students felt comfortable being their authentic selves.

Honoring Students' Sexual Identities

Because of YWLCS's supportive environment, students felt comfortable to explore their sexual identities without fear of being judged or disciplined by the school. In many occasions, teachers became confidants for the students:

> Charles: There was nothing more powerful than a student honoring me with their confirmation of their identity. And then them being able to ask for my support, how they navigate either coming out to their parents or coming out in public. I was stressed out by it, but I took it so sincere. I studied. I asked questions to members of the LGBTQIA community: "What do I do? As a straight ally, how do I support these young folks?" Because at the end of the day, for me, it was just deep agape love for my girls. It was – I keep saying girls 'cause not all of them identified as girls. But just deep agape love for my students.

Charles Hunt, one of the teachers, details the work he did to become a strong heterosexual ally for students who would trust him with coming out. The identities of the faculty and school administration at YWLCS also helped the students feel comfortable in expressing their authentic selves. Because multiple teachers identified as gay and were in visible, same-sex relationships, students felt comfortable confiding in teachers and in also exploring their own identities. By serving as role models and acting as a support system, teachers and school leaders created an environment at YWLCS that felt different than a traditional school. In fact, in 2010, 91% of

students reported feeling supported by the teachers and faculty at YWLCS (YWLCS 2006-2010).

However, the progressive values of YWCLS in the early 2000s were not implemented without some controversy. A few of my participants recount how some people feared that YWLCS was convincing girls to be gay. Elise Susman, one of the faculty members, recounts how that fear could sometimes result in dramatic consequences for the students:

> I remember my first year there, we had this amazing girl…And I remember she was great, really sweet kid, kind of tough sometimes. I think she was trying to figure out her sexuality. And I remember we were sitting in my office at the time, at a table…And the mother freaked out saying that she was pulling her daughter out because Young Women's was making her daughter gay.

Despite parents choosing to send their daughters to an all-girls school, some parents did not understand that teenagers were going to explore their sexuality regardless of the gender configuration of the classroom. In addition, some of the students at YWLCS came from religious backgrounds where they were taught to be unaccepting of homosexuality. To address this, YWLCS administrators and faculty created a culture of inclusivity that affirmed individuals' identities and firmly established community values around respecting each other's beliefs and lifestyles:

> Stephanie: …The first year, I do remember that the girls were worried that I was going to go to hell because, you know, if you're gay, you go to hell. And I said, "Well, I respect that that's what your family and your pastor believe, but I believe that I lead a good life. And even though I'm not religious, and I don't really believe in heaven and hell, I do believe that if you lead a good life, whatever

> comes after will be fine." And so, that would sort of bother them on some level, but at least it was an answer.
>
> Sarah: I think they were just encouraged to just try on these identities and be who you wanted to be. And as long as you were a decent human being to other people, we really didn't care. And it was more encouraged that you'd be a decent human being and that you were being a good person in the world. And all this other stuff, we just sort of [were] like, "OK, whatever. Do you."

By promoting messaging around "leading a good life" and being a "decent human," Stephanie Penley (one of the school leaders) and Sarah Greene (a teacher) illustrate how YWLCS cultivated a school culture of inclusivity by demonstrating to students early on how to be respectful of other people's identities (even if those identities went against a student's religious beliefs). Elise and Stephanie's accounts demonstrate how YWLCS was not a complete safe haven for girls to explore sexual identities outside of heterosexuality. Despite this, most of the alumni I spoke with still characterize YWLCS as a "family-oriented environment," which speaks volumes for the impact of the school design, networks of support, school culture, and community values on students' comfort levels in expressing themselves. Research points to how traditional single-sex schools and coeducational schools oftentimes promote school-sanctioned gender and sexual identities, which causes students to have to constantly reject, hide, or negotiate their sexual identity in ways that can be harmful to the student's identity development (Pascoe 2011; Bettie 2014; Love and Tosolt 2013; Khan 2012). At YWLCS, students still rejected and reaffirmed their sexual and gender identities, but they did so in an environment that encouraged this exploration of identity performance.

Safe Space

This creation of a family-like support network in school facilitated the creation of a safe space where students felt included, accepted for their authenticity, and comfortable expressing themselves. This safe space was also explicitly upheld through the creation of a Community Contract,[15] which outlines student and faculty rights and responsibilities as members of the YWLCS community. These "universal rights and responsibilities" were created with input from every member of YWLCS. For example, one of the responsibilities helps explicitly foster an inclusive, safe environment for identity expression:

> I have the responsibility to respect the rights of others to be themselves, whatever their race, religion, opinions, sexuality, physical appearance, or where they come from. This means that I will not hurt others by using rude or abusive language, violence, threats, or intimidation. I also have the responsibility to help those who are being hurt and to report any of these behaviors of which I am aware.

At the same time, one of the rights in the Community Contract outlines how community members should be expected to be treated:

> I have a right to be treated equally, fairly, and without prejudice by my peers and teachers.

The Community Contract outlines a set of shared values and expectations for all members and visitors of the YWLCS community. Because so many of my participants describe YWLCS as a family-oriented environment, this suggests that faculty and students took the Community Contract seriously and, therefore, fostered an environment of protection, inclusion, and safety for students to explore and discover their identities. Adelyn, an alum, illustrates how students relied

[15] See Appendix (Photo 1) for a full version of the Community Contract.

on this safe space and the support from teachers to explore their gender and sexual identities:

> I mean it was pretty open. You kind of had the opportunity to really be yourself. I would say our school was very open as far as like the LGBTQIA [community]. That was open before the world made it popular. All the teachers were receptive of it. It was a safe space. It was common ground. If you wanted to be gay, you could be gay. If you wanted to be a boy, you could be a boy. If you wanted to be a heterosexual girl, you could be a heterosexual girl…They allowed us to kind of be who we wanted to be and kind of go through that self-discovery phase.

The idea that not all students identified as girls demonstrates the extent that YWLCS challenged the "hidden curriculum" of traditional gender norms. Pascoe (2011) details a case of a traditional, coeducational school where dominant gender roles are so ingrained that students have to constantly reject and reaffirm their identities in contrast to the dominant norms for fear of harassment. In comparison, YWLCS was a "safe space" for students to perform gender and sexuality both within and outside of their assigned identities. The school did not promote or sanction a dominant version of femininity, which gave students the freedom and safety to express themselves authentically.

For many of the students, YWLCS was the first time they were exposed to other sexual identities outside of heterosexuality:

> Mariana: The school itself was welcoming to everybody. In terms of sexual identity, it was the first time I ever saw two women kissing. And I remember walking down the hall and I was like, [shocked facial expression]. Not because there was anything wrong with it, just because I had never been exposed. And it was like, "Oh, there's nothing wrong with that." And so, it was because

> everybody was so welcoming and so accepting of everything that…it was natural for me to learn. I mean, it was definitely liberal. There was no question about that. I mean it was just definitely welcoming and open for everybody.

Mariana, an alum, had not seen displays of other sexualities besides heterosexuality until she became a student at YWLCS. In 2001, the LBGTQ movement was not as prominent as it is currently; the use of pronouns outside of the he/she binary was not as mainstream, gay marriage was not legalized in the United States, and homosexuality was much less accepted than it is today. Despite the sociopolitical climate of homosexuality in the United States at the time that YWLCS opened, YWLCS challenged the stigmas through creating an inclusive, welcoming, and accepting environment for students to feel free to explore their normal teenage sexuality. This normalization also contributed to YWLCS feeling like a safe space for students to explore their sexual identities in a judgement-free environment.

One of the key components in the creation of this safe space for the young women was the lack of boys. This "lack of boys" argument is one of the reasons why second-generation single-sex schools were formed (Salomone 2004; Cumings-Mansfield 2013). While a critique of this argument is that it echoes heteronormativity through the assumption that girls get distracted by boys, the alumni I interviewed from YWLCS suggest that their success in an environment without boys can challenge, rather than contribute to, these heteronormative assumptions:

> Jeanie: We were all comfortable in our skin. I think us being comfortable without boys being around, without boys intimidating us, without boys teasing us, or whatever boys do at that immature age. We missed out on that.

> Ashley: At YDub, there were a lot of young women in the same space, tensions

> could run high, but it was also very freeing because nobody is concerned about what the male perspective on this is. There aren't boys around that you're like, "I have to act a certain way or look a certain way to be appealing to them." Your focus is really different.

Jeanie and Ashley, YWLCS alumni, highlight how they felt more comfortable to be themselves in a same-sex environment; Ashley even describes it as a "freeing" experience. Sarah Greene, one of the teachers, reiterates this point from a faculty perspective:

> I think, in a way, it allowed them to focus more on developing their identities. I think they felt far more at ease with exploring different parts of who they wanted to be and to figure out who that was. And it was a lot less pressure to conform to societal norms. They just really took advantage of the fact that we were all female. There were no boys in this building to impress. There were no boys in this building to fight over…We're just gonna explore this whole thing about what it means to be a woman.

While Jeanie, Ashley, and Sarah seemingly support the heteronormative assumption that girls will get distracted by boys, their revelations about the impact of the gender makeup of the school suggest otherwise. Students felt free to figure out what being a woman meant to them without outside influence, whether that meant presenting as traditionally masculine, identifying as a girl, or discovering their sexuality. Because of the impact that the absence of boys had on the students and their comfort in exploring their identities free from male judgement, pressures, or societal norms, this environment challenged heteronormativity through supporting the exploration of other sexual and gender identities.

The environment and community values at YWLCS also had a long-lasting impact on the

students after they graduated. Bridget, an alum, describes how YWLCS's inclusivity impacted her outlook and future values:

> You know what, I am very protective of the LGBTQ community and a variety of diversity. And I think that was partially because of Young Women's. Because people were people, you know. It didn't matter. Family is family. We protect each other. Whether we like each other or not, we protect each other. That was our character.

Bridget's remarks highlight some of the main takeaways from YWLCS's school culture and values. The family-oriented environment, network of support, teacher allyship and representation, and lack of boys at YWLCS cultivated a safe space that not only normalized the exploration and discovery process of sexuality, but also directly challenged the heteronormativity that is oftentimes paired with traditional norms of femininity. Students were personally impacted by the freedom at YWLCS to explore their identities, and these experiences impacted the outlook that alumni had on inclusivity in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented in my research offer insights into an alternative model of public, single-sex schooling for girls and how it can shape girls' identities. Research demonstrates that coeducational schools and single-sex schools for girls promote a "hidden curriculum" that reinforces students to conform to traditional, racialized gender norms. While some supporters believe that all-girls schools will counter this "hidden curriculum" through providing girls with opportunities to succeed outside of the biases and distractions in classrooms with boys, I argue that traditional single-sex schools are not designed to do this. Instead, research points to how

traditional single-sex schools can promote hegemonic gender norms and heteronormativity (Glasser 2011; Erarslan and Rankin 2013; Love and Tosolt 2013). My findings suggest that YWLCS can serve as an alternative model for how public, single-sex schools for girls can be designed to tackle dominant norms of femininity and heteronormativity. In particular, the school design, school culture, and teaching philosophy at YWLCS challenged traditional ideals of white femininity, promoted class mobility, and provided girls with an inclusive environment to explore gender and sexual identities outside of societally prescribed norms.

To analyze my findings, I employed an identity experience framework in order to consider the ways in which students performed their identities based on the intersection of their gender, race, sexuality, and class. In expanding Lopez's (2003) race-gender experience framework to include sexuality and class, I find that YWLCS created an environment where the racial, gendered, sexual, and class experiences of students of color were different than they would have been in a more traditional school. My findings mainly focus on the ways that gender and sexuality were negotiated, rejected, and reaffirmed at YWLCS. Because YWLCS became more racially and socioeconomically homogenous throughout its first decade of operation, it is possible that race and class were not as significant as gender and sexuality in the memories and the identity-experiences of my participants. Other reasons, such as my positionality as an interviewer or gaps in my interview questions, could have also influenced these findings. Despite this, my findings on how YWLCS shaped the gender and sexual identities of their students also have implications on race and class and point to the ways that an alternative, public, single-sex school impacted students' identity-experiences and future outlooks.

Promotion of Class Mobility

Operating with the knowledge that women of color are underrepresented in STEM careers (Collins et al. 2020), YWLCS was designed with the purpose of supporting the development of young women as leaders and giving young women of color opportunities to enter STEM fields. YWLCS's leadership development curriculum taught girls how to not be passive, silent, and submissive in their education as well as in preparing for their futures. Instead of expecting girls to conform to white, middle-class characteristics that aligned with dominant views of white femininity (Lopez 2003; Carter 2005; Bettie 2014), YWLCS empowered girls to be themselves in classrooms. While research points to the ways that girls of color, particularly Black girls, are told to "act like a lady" and are perceived as being "too loud," YWLCS encouraged their students to use their voices to advocate for themselves and to loudly share their knowledge (Lopez 2003; Morris 2015; Fordham 1993; Carter Andrews et al. 2019).

Similar to the findings in Lopez's (2003) study, YWLCS students' favorable, family-like relationships with teachers and social networks with professional mentors led to the development of optimistic outlooks on their future careers. During the first decade of YWLCS's history, students were given ample opportunities to interact with and learn from strong female leaders with similar identities who achieved advanced degrees in education or who were successful, working professionals in STEM fields. This mentorship program had class and racial implications for the girls' identity development, school experiences, and outlooks. Exposure to influential mentors is a key factor in adolescent racial socialization processes that shape racial identity, including how youths view themselves and their relationship to broader society (Lopez 2003; Butler-Barnes et al. 2018; Fhagen 2016; Minnear and Soliz 2018). My participants describe the empowering effect of having representation that served as examples for social

mobility into predominantly white male careers. This helped shape the girls' identity outlooks to be unconfined and oriented towards a future with a multitude of possibilities.

Exploration of Gender and Sexuality

Unlike traditional single-sex or coeducational schools, YWLCS did not promote a dominant form of femininity. While students still rejected and reaffirmed their identities in relation to the dominant identities in broader society, they did not feel constrained within YWLCS to identify with a school-sanctioned identity. My participants describe having felt comfortable at YWLCS to authentically explore different facets of their identities. Similar to the students in Bettie's (2014) and Pascoe's (2011) ethnographies, YWLCS students performed, rejected, and affirmed their identities in relation to other students. However, the YWLCS students had more space to do this in comparison to Bettie's (2014) and Pascoe's (2011) students who were operating firmly within the confines of a school-sanctioned gender binary. Even though YWLCS was an all-girls school with a mission of specifically empowering "young women," my participants saliently note how some students felt comfortable rejecting the "young woman" label and instead identifying as boys. While research demonstrates how school-sanctioned identities can be harmful to students' identity development (Pascoe 2011; Khan 2012; Bettie 2014), YWLCS offers a different perspective on how schools can become like a "second home" for students to have positive experiences based on the intersection of their identities.

Strong Community Values

In addition, research supports the positive impacts that shared community values and networks of support can have on student development and achievement. For example, Bryk et al.

(1993) argue that Catholic high schools are sustainable and have high rates of achievement because of their unique school design. Catholic school curriculum is college preparatory and standardized for all students (without tracking such as honors classes), teachers' responsibilities extend beyond the classroom, and there is a strong sense of community where students and faculty protect and genuinely care for each other (Bryk et al. 1993). Based on this description and on my findings, it seems as if YWLCS was designed similarly to late 20th century Catholic schools. This is a slightly paradoxical comparison given that YWLCS was non-denominational and inclusive of the LGBTQ community, whereas research has shown how Catholic schools can rigidly promote heterosexuality (Love and Tosolt 2013). However, YWLCS shares in these characteristics Bryk et al. (1993) find that make Catholic high schools successful.

As demonstrated in my findings, YWLCS teachers academically, financially, socially, and emotionally supported their students through acts of service that extended beyond their typical job descriptions. Having this network of caring adults within schools helps students, particularly students of color, have positive experiences in public schools (Archer-Banks et al. 2012). As demonstrated by the YWLCS Community Contract (see Appendix, Photo 1), the shared community values promoted by the whole YWLCS community included treating everyone equally regardless of their identity or beliefs and supporting students outside of academics. Most of my participants mention that these shared values created a family-oriented environment and a safe space for identity exploration and discovery. Similar to Catholic schools where communities share religious identities, YWLCS can serve as an example for how public, single-sex schools can develop shared community values that extend beyond a shared gender identity.

Incorporation of Culturally Relevant Education

My findings also highlight how YWLCS's design, curriculum, teaching philosophy, and culture intentionally affirmed and supported diversity within girls' identities rather than expecting girls to conform to norms of white femininity. For example, different cultures, ethnicities, and races were incorporated throughout the curriculum at YWLCS, particularly in the humanities courses. This supports literature on the academic and social merits of Culturally Relevant Education (CRE), where students benefit from learning about material that directly pertains to their identities and communities (Aronson and Laughter 2016; Dee and Penner 2017). One of the key tenets in CRE is the understanding that grades and test scores do not measure the full extent of student academic achievement (Aronson and Laughter 2016). YWLCS recognized this by having students complete "promotion presentations" that demonstrated their passions and by implementing an outcomes-based assessment system that qualitatively graded students and encouraged continuous improvement. Through teaching social justice, CRE builds on the strengths that students bring into the classroom from their own communities and backgrounds to create a learning environment that is collectively empowering (Aronson and Laughter 2016). By teaching lessons that focused on identities, power relations, and advocacy and by incorporating a robust mentorship and internship program, YWLCS utilized CRE to form culturally responsive leaders.

CRE also disrupts the "hidden curriculum" within schools because it explicitly discusses the effects of institutional racism and patriarchal structures and encourages students to be critical, active participants in their own learning (Aronson and Laughter 2016). By learning about systems of oppression and social justice in the classroom, students at YWLCS were not expected to conform to the oppressive idea that white, middle-class femininity is the preferred gender

display for female students. This supports the identity experience framework; because the curriculum had a CRE lens, students at YWLCS developed identity-related experiences that had a positive impact on their outlooks and their future social mobility.

This research aims to answer the following questions: 1) What is an alternative model of single-sex schooling that empowers students to break free of hegemonic gender norms, and can it be powerful enough to challenge the traditional model of single-sex schooling? And 2) How do public, single-sex schools shape girls' identities? Through conducting a case study on YWLCS, I conclude that YWLCS is a powerful example of how public, single-sex schools can be designed to empower and support the identities of their students. The alumni and faculty that I speak with highlight how YWLCS created a family-oriented, identity-affirming environment through the curriculum, teaching philosophy, and school design where community members felt safe to express and discover their authentic selves. In considering the identity experience framework, YWLCS impacted the lived experiences of its students in a way that positively shaped their future outlooks. The case of YWLCS has implications for how other schools can challenge the "hidden curriculum" in single-sex schools that teaches students to conform to norms of white femininity. Other single-sex schools (both public and private) can use YWLCS as an example of how to counter these norms, create a community without a school-sanctioned, constricting version of femininity, and cultivate a learning environment that is developmentally healthy for its students.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

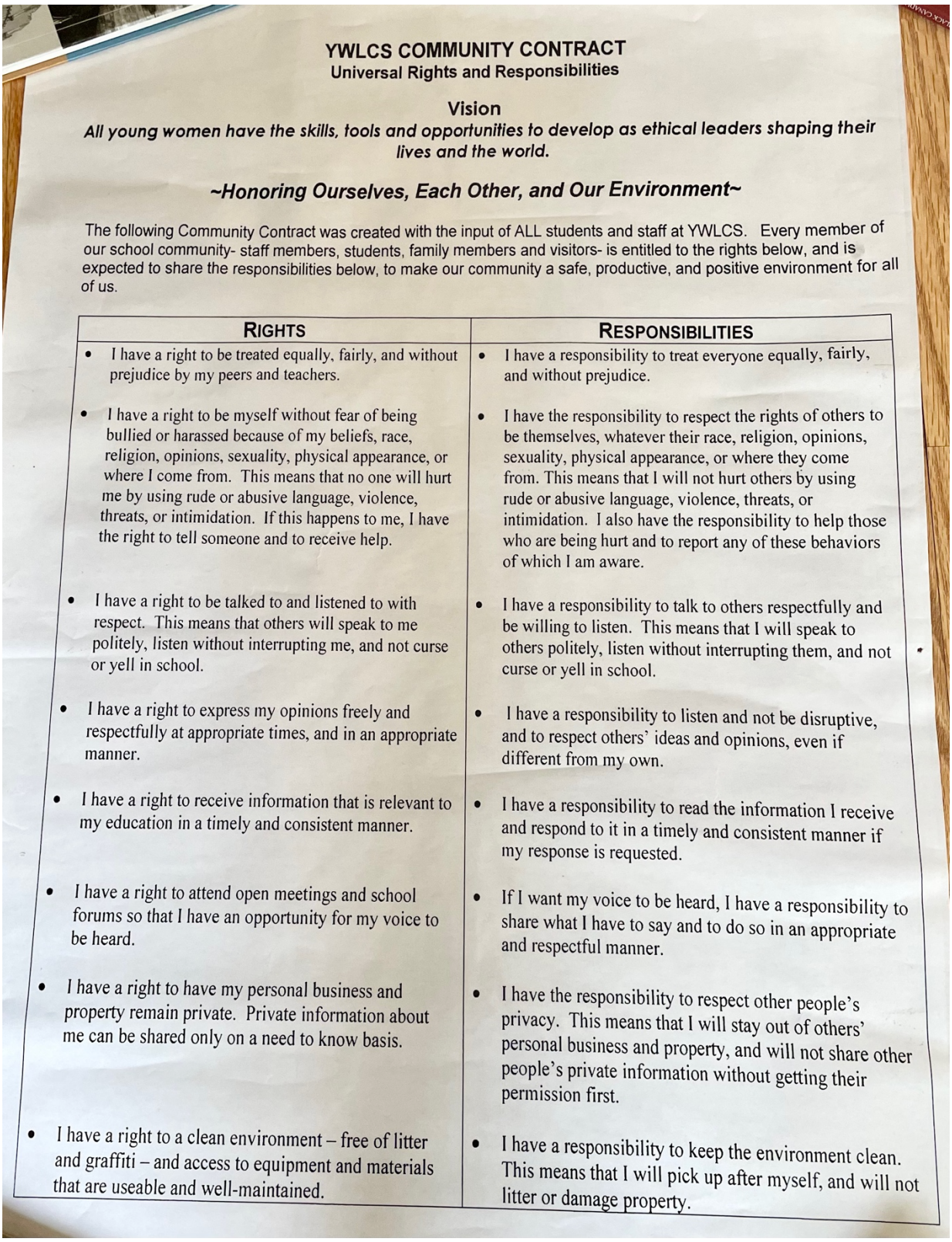
This study has several limitations. For instance, I only focus on one school, in one geographic area, at one particular period of time. I also only interview 16 people who may

remember their YWLCS experience through rose-colored glasses. It is likely that my group of participants wanted to speak with me because they wanted to reminisce about their positive experiences. If someone had a negative experience at YWLCS, it is more likely that they would not want to revisit those memories in an interview with me. In addition, because I use a snowball sampling technique to recruit my participants, the faculty and alumni I speak with personally know the other participants. Many of my participants remark that they remain close with members of the YWLCS community to this day. Because of the sampling technique and these long-lasting connections, it is more likely that my participants had positive experiences at YWLCS.

While this case study offers interesting insight into an alternative model of single-sex schooling and has implications on how other single-sex schools shape girls' identities, additional research should be conducted on this topic. My case study only focuses on the first decade of YWLCS's history. In order to understand its holistic impact on its community, deeper research on YWLCS's full history should be completed. Research on the history of the charter school movement and comparative research on charter schools versus public schools would also enrich any future findings on this topic. Comparative research between private, single-sex schools and public, single-sex schools should also be conducted to further understand their differences as well as to better understand if a particular model of single-sex schooling is more effective at countering traditional ideals of femininity. In addition, more research would need to be completed to understand if single-sex schools are better suited to support the racial and gender identities of girls of color than coeducational schools.

APPENDIX

Photo 1: YWLCS Community Contract



YWLCS COMMUNITY CONTRACT
Universal Rights and Responsibilities

Vision

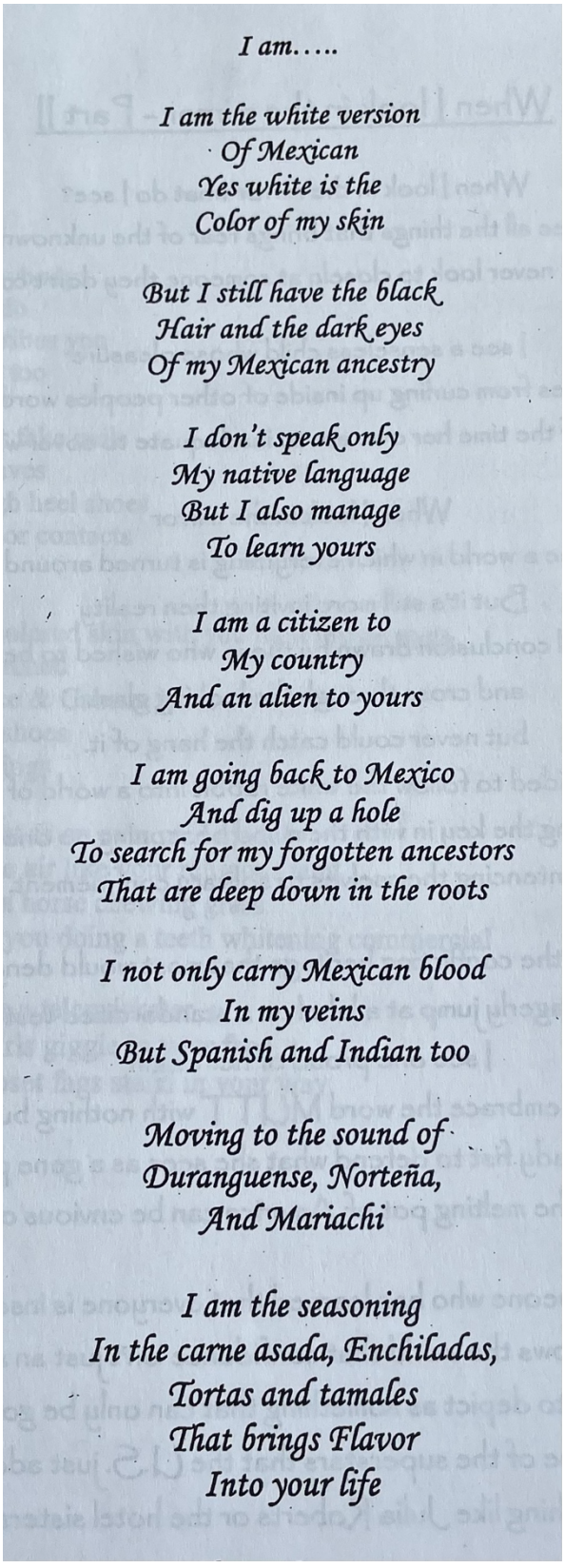
All young women have the skills, tools and opportunities to develop as ethical leaders shaping their lives and the world.

~Honoring Ourselves, Each Other, and Our Environment~

The following Community Contract was created with the input of ALL students and staff at YWLCS. Every member of our school community- staff members, students, family members and visitors- is entitled to the rights below, and is expected to share the responsibilities below, to make our community a safe, productive, and positive environment for all of us.

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
• I have a right to be treated equally, fairly, and without prejudice by my peers and teachers.	• I have a responsibility to treat everyone equally, fairly, and without prejudice.
• I have a right to be myself without fear of being bullied or harassed because of my beliefs, race, religion, opinions, sexuality, physical appearance, or where I come from. This means that no one will hurt me by using rude or abusive language, violence, threats, or intimidation. If this happens to me, I have the right to tell someone and to receive help.	• I have the responsibility to respect the rights of others to be themselves, whatever their race, religion, opinions, sexuality, physical appearance, or where they come from. This means that I will not hurt others by using rude or abusive language, violence, threats, or intimidation. I also have the responsibility to help those who are being hurt and to report any of these behaviors of which I am aware.
• I have a right to be talked to and listened to with respect. This means that others will speak to me politely, listen without interrupting me, and not curse or yell in school.	• I have a responsibility to talk to others respectfully and be willing to listen. This means that I will speak to others politely, listen without interrupting them, and not curse or yell in school.
• I have a right to express my opinions freely and respectfully at appropriate times, and in an appropriate manner.	• I have a responsibility to listen and not be disruptive, and to respect others' ideas and opinions, even if different from my own.
• I have a right to receive information that is relevant to my education in a timely and consistent manner.	• I have a responsibility to read the information I receive and respond to it in a timely and consistent manner if my response is requested.
• I have a right to attend open meetings and school forums so that I have an opportunity for my voice to be heard.	• If I want my voice to be heard, I have a responsibility to share what I have to say and to do so in an appropriate and respectful manner.
• I have a right to have my personal business and property remain private. Private information about me can be shared only on a need to know basis.	• I have the responsibility to respect other people's privacy. This means that I will stay out of others' personal business and property, and will not share other people's private information without getting their permission first.
• I have a right to a clean environment – free of litter and graffiti – and access to equipment and materials that are useable and well-maintained.	• I have a responsibility to keep the environment clean. This means that I will pick up after myself, and will not litter or damage property.

Photo 2: Student Poetry Journal Sample, 2002



I am…..

I am the white version
Of Mexican
Yes white is the
Color of my skin

But I still have the black
Hair and the dark eyes
Of my Mexican ancestry

I don't speak only
My native language
But I also manage
To learn yours

I am a citizen to
My country
And an alien to yours

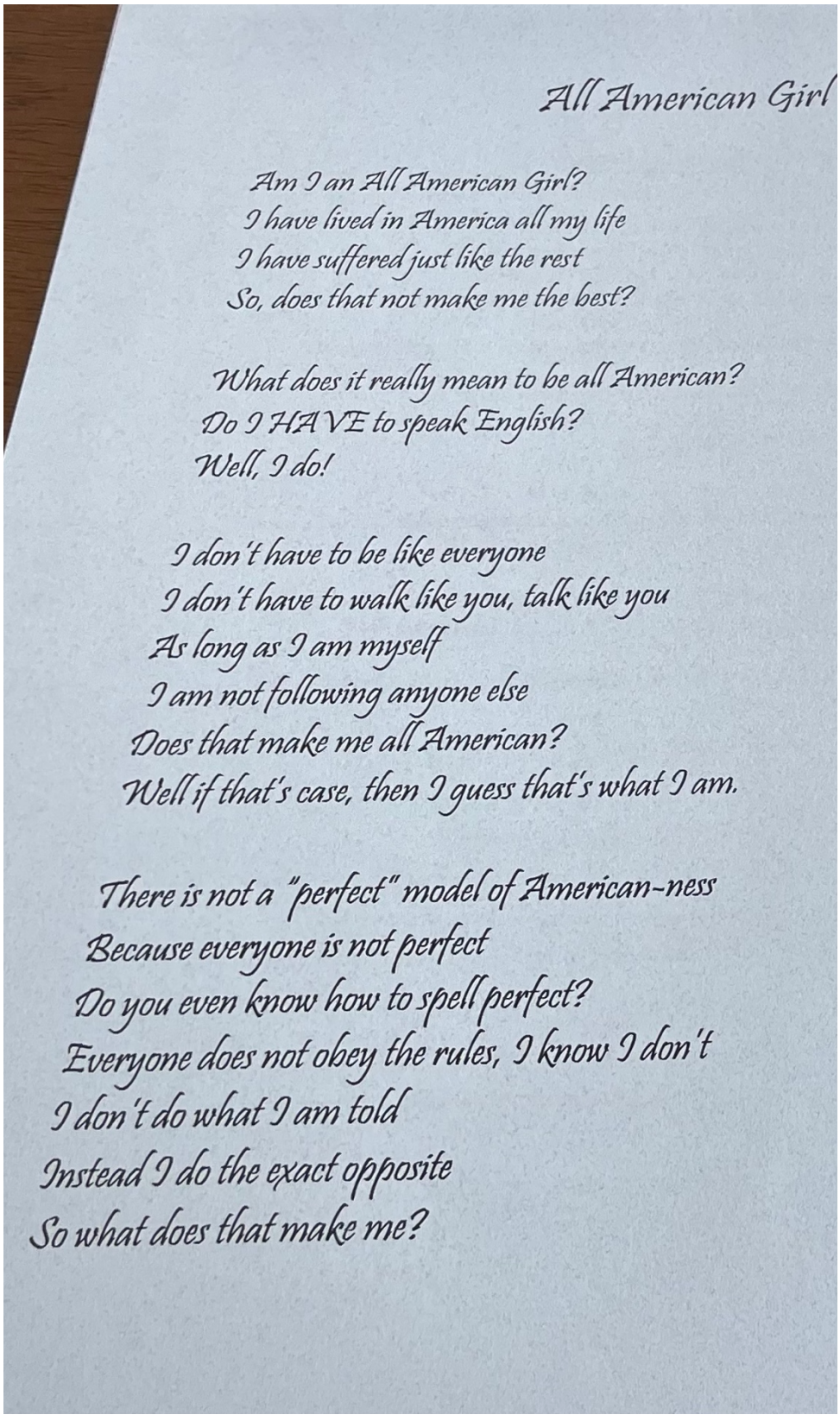
I am going back to Mexico
And dig up a hole
To search for my forgotten ancestors
That are deep down in the roots

I not only carry Mexican blood
In my veins
But Spanish and Indian too

Moving to the sound of
Duranguense, Norteña,
And Mariachi

I am the seasoning
In the carne asada, Enchiladas,
Tortas and tamales
That brings Flavor
Into your life

Photo 3: Student Poetry Journal Sample, 2002



All American Girl

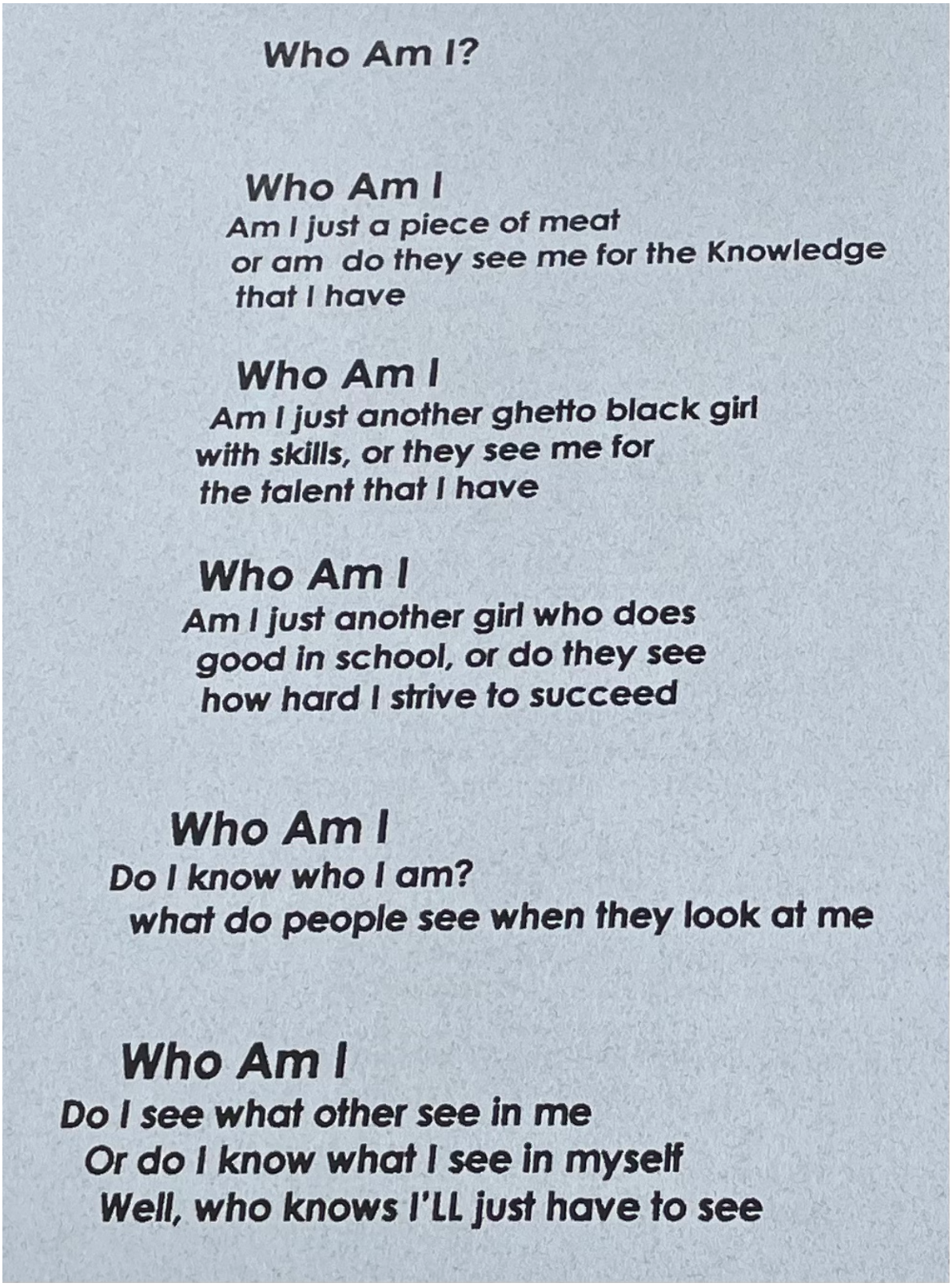
Am I an All American Girl?
I have lived in America all my life
I have suffered just like the rest
So, does that not make me the best?

What does it really mean to be all American?
Do I HAVE to speak English?
Well, I do!

I don't have to be like everyone
I don't have to walk like you, talk like you
As long as I am myself
I am not following anyone else
Does that make me all American?
Well if that's case, then I guess that's what I am.

There is not a "perfect" model of American-ness
Because everyone is not perfect
Do you even know how to spell perfect?
Everyone does not obey the rules, I know I don't
I don't do what I am told
Instead I do the exact opposite
So what does that make me?

Photo 4: Student Poetry Journal Sample, 2002



Who Am I?

Who Am I
Am I just a piece of meat
or am do they see me for the Knowledge
that I have

Who Am I
Am I just another ghetto black girl
with skills, or they see me for
the talent that I have

Who Am I
Am I just another girl who does
good in school, or do they see
how hard I strive to succeed

Who Am I
Do I know who I am?
what do people see when they look at me

Who Am I
Do I see what other see in me
Or do I know what I see in myself
Well, who knows I'LL just have to see

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