Towards a Model of Positive Youth Development Specific to Girls of Color: Perspectives on Development, Resilience, and Empowerment

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Towards a Model of Positive Youth Development Specific to Girls of Color: Perspectives on Development, Resilience, and Empowerment

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Abstract This paper presents a feminist theoretical model of adolescent development for girls of color, a model that can be used to critique and resist the dominant deficit-oriented perspectives about girls of color that appear in research and educational contexts. We integrate ecological, phenomenological, and critical race feminist perspectives on development and socialization and emphasize that girls' emerging identities are complexly heterogeneous. Our model adapts the competencies of the existing positive youth development model (Lerner et al. in J Early Adolesc 25(1):10–16, 2005) by infusing them with a critical feminist lens that emphasizes critical consciousness, resistance, and resilience and allows us to specify the model to fit the experiences of and contexts in which girls of color develop. This paper includes a presentation of our conceptual model and uses qualitative data to examine how components of our model map on to the everyday experiences of Black and Latina adolescent girls and their development.

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Objectives

This paper builds on qualitative, participatory research with Black and Latina adolescent girls in an effort to articulate a critically informed theoretical model of development for adolescent girls of color, with an emphasis on socialization and educational experiences. Our model specifically speaks to those girls of color whose racial and ethnic groups have historically (and continue to be) marginalized and oppressed in U.S. society. While the model could potentially apply to all adolescent girls, we argue that there are specific competencies that are critical for the optimal development of girls who tend to consistently receive messages that they are 'less than.' We made the decision to use the term "girls of color" to reflect how the possession of non-White racial and ethnic identities marginalizes girls in the U.S. in a way that is different from the marginalization that White girls experience due to their gender. Our intention is not to view girls of color and their experiences as falling under one homogeneous umbrella, but rather to acknowledge the commonality of experiences that girls and women of color in the U.S. experience such as being targets of harsher disciplinary policies in schools [1], being disproportionately involved with the juvenile justice system compared to White girls [57], and experiencing gender-based violence at greater rates [10]. While we recognize that variations of experience occur between and within racial and ethnic groups of girls, our focus is on how society largely positions them due to the intersection of their racial, ethnic, and gender identities.

To effectively construct a model that captures the experiences of adolescent girls of color, we have integrated ecological, phenomenological, and critical race feminist perspectives into our conceptions of development and socialization. With these perspectives, we emphasize that girls' of color emerging identities are complexly heterogeneous, always rooted in context, and complicated by race, class, gender, and sexuality. With these understandings, we chose to adapt the positive youth development (PYD) model in a manner that specifically fits the experiences of and contexts in which girls of color develop [37]. Our intent is to provide a framework that will be useful for enriching academic and practical endeavors that seek to support girls of color.

The impetus for this paper is the relative lack of scholarship that speaks specifically to the developmental experiences of adolescent girls of color (see Fig. 1 for a timeline of literature on adolescent girls' development). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a surge of literature focusing on girls' adolescent development and educational experiences emerged [9, 25, 50]. Specifically, Gilligan's et al. [9, 25] groundbreaking work throughout the 1980s and 1990s illuminated the experiences of adolescent girls in the fields of psychology and education, which previously stemmed from theories built upon the male experience. However, during this early period of research about adolescent girls, the majority of the literature that evolved was often grounded in the experiences of White girls in suburban, middle class settings. This trend left the specific needs of girls of color out of the spotlight and illustrated how girls of color are often marginalized in society and the academy [12, 16, 33, 47]. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, some scholars began examining the development of girls of color in the attempt to bring their experiences to the foreground [15, 22, 35, 36, 43] and emphasized the importance of context and race, class, and sexuality in shaping girls' personal and academic trajectories [6, 8, 24, 29, 41].

Fig. 1 Timeline of literature on adolescent girls' development

Yet, most of this scholarship that has emerged has offered more empirical rather than theoretical perspectives on girls' of color development [15, 17, 26, 35, 36].

We call upon this important, seminal scholarship as we move towards a theoretical model of development for adolescent girls of color, one that can be employed by researchers, practitioners, and adult allies to better support and understand girls of color. In this paper, we first explain that we ground our model in two theoretical frameworks: critical race feminism and positive youth development. Next, we detail how we are re-positioning the positive youth development model to fit adolescent girls of color by presenting our descriptions of each competency complemented by qualitative data from our research. Finally, we explain the implications of this model for practice and scholarship, with an emphasis on supporting and empowering adolescent girls of color.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Feminism

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) is a multidisciplinary framework derived from Critical Legal Studies (CLS), Critical Race Theory (CRT), and feminist

jurisprudence [73]. Similar to CRT, CRF holds that racism is a fundamental part of U.S. society [71] and that people of color (in this case, women of color) have a 'distinctive voice' when it comes to describing their experiences of their own oppression [73]. CRF emphasizes that women of color experience a "multiple consciousness," meaning, "an awareness of oppression they face based simultaneously on their race/ethnicity and gender" [73]. Wing pushes back against additive conceptions of the identities of women of color, which view women of color as being women + people of color, so that depending on the circumstance, one aspect of their identity may be treated as more relevant than the other [72]. Instead, Wing explains that women of color are indivisible and conceptualizes their identities with the "multiplier effect" (p. 31). The multiplier effect claims that the experiences of Black women are layered in a multiplicative rather than summative manner: Wing explains, "multiply each of my parts together, $1 \times 1 \times 1 \times 1 \times 1$, and you have *one* indivisible being. If you divide one of these parts from one you still have *one*" (p. 31). Wing's statement illustrates that the identifiers of race/ethnicity and gender in women of color cannot be taken apart and evaluated on their own, but rather that being a woman of color is a sociocultural identifier or identity in itself [72].

In spite of the multiple oppressions that women of color experience, Wing emphasizes that the essence of women of color "is also characterized by a multiplicity of strength, love, joy… and transcendence that flourishes despite adversity" [72]. CRF intentionally places women of color and their experiences of adversity and perseverance at the center of its analysis. In addition to analysis, critical race *praxis* is a part of CRF. Through the CRF lens, praxis is defined as "seeking to identify ways to empower women through law and other disciplines" [71].

We frame our theoretical model of development for girls of color with CRF perspectives and emphasize that researchers must not only look at the individual environment of their participants, but also critically examine the interaction of the individual in the larger cultural and historical context. In support of this notion, Few explains that:

> Black feminism and critical race feminism require a critical analysis of these multiple layers as they relate to the individual and to the groups of which individuals are a part. An examination of the mesosystemic and macrosystemic levels may reveal not only historical institutional discrimination but also, to an extent, the evolution of collective identity development (i.e., standpoint) and adaptive group response. Thus, the utilization of ecological theories helps researchers to place into historical context individual and group standpoints, a vital component of critical race feminism and Black feminism (p. 460) [21].

Following this approach, our developmental model attempts to analyze the multiple contexts that influence how adolescent girls of color see themselves and the worlds in which they live. One contextual factor that drives our model is the focus on the developmental period of adolescence and the identity sense-making that occurs as girls of color become more aware of the significance of their different identities and related statuses in society [67]. Central to adolescence is the transition from

concrete thinking to gaining the ability to understand abstract concepts and the development of a critical awareness of people and forces outside oneself [44]. Because CRF is particularly grounded in the experiences of women of color, we view our model as way to begin a conversation about how CRF functions as a framework to understand the experiences of adolescent girls of color, who possess a different social location than women of color based on their age and cognitive and psychological development.

Additionally, because CRF emphasizes "not only the experience of discrimination, but also resilience, resistance, and the formation of solutions" [73], the core of our developmental model focuses on how adolescent girls of color can develop as social critics of the world around them so that they not only become aware of the discrimination that they may experience in their daily interactions, but also that they learn to use tools and strategies to push back against, question, and ultimately reframe the discrimination and stigmatization that they experience. As we discuss our adaptation and conceptualization of each competency in our model, we use critical race feminism to examine how power dynamics in society converge to oppress girls of color and complicate the development of each competency, as currently defined by Lerner and colleagues. Using this feminist framework, we add nuance to each competency to better fit the experiences of girls of color and the skills they will need to successfully navigate a society that so often discriminates against them.

Positive Youth Development

The positive youth development (PYD) model stands as a conceptual alternative to deficit models of adolescence and assumes that a developmental system can work to promote positive outcomes rather than focusing on avoiding negative or undesirable behaviors [37]. According to PYD scholarship, healthy development is dependent upon an individual's development of certain competencies that will enable her to productively interact with the different environments in which she is located. The PYD model originated from comparative psychological studies of development that emphasized brain plasticity (how neurological structure of the brain can change and grow dramatically, in response to positive and negative experiences) and relational aspects of developmental systems: the mutually influential relationships between the developing individual and her environment or ecology [39]. As the PYD model evolved throughout the 1990s and 2000s, two hypotheses emerged: (1) that PYD is comprised of "five C's", or competencies, that adolescents need for healthy development, and (2) that youth-context alignment promotes PYD.

The PYD model outlines five competencies that encourage the healthy development of youth: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring [19, 54]. In recent years, a sixth C has been suggested: contribution [18] (see Table 1 for the definitions of the PYD competencies). In this paper, we explain how we adapt these existing competencies to conceptualize a PYD model that is appropriate for the healthy development of girls of color.

The PYD model is ecological [7] in nature, in that the continual development and application of certain competencies are dependent upon context [61]. Thus, these

Table 1 Definitions of the PYD competencies

PYD competencies [37]	*Competence* (*domain specific*) 'A positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational' (p. 23)
	Confidence (*global*) 'An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one's global self-regard, as opposed to domain specific beliefs' (p. 23)
	Character A 'respect for societal and cultural rules, procession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity' (p. 23)
	Connection 'Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship' (p. 23)
	Caring 'A sense of sympathy and empathy for others' is also a necessary skill for youth to develop (p. 23)
	Contribution PYD requires that youth enact behaviors that are indicative of their possession of the other five competencies so that they are giving back to their communities and societies—'contribution' [37]

competencies may appear different in contrasting contexts and contribution to these contexts may also appear in varying ways. The PYD model, when modified by CRF perspectives, expands our understandings of identity development for girls of color. This framework will allow us to clearly recognize the strengths of adolescent girls of color, which is critical to making culturally informed suggestions for nurturing those strengths in a manner that encourages the development of adolescent girls of color as socially conscious thinkers who can make positive changes in society for themselves and others.

Methods

Participants and Contexts

We derived our adapted PYD model from our experiences working with adolescent girls of color in different contexts and educational environments. Though the girls that we have worked with vary in age, ethnicity, and social location, we find that across these differences there are also similarities of experiences as a result of their status as adolescent girls of color in U.S. society. We drew on these common experiences found in the data from our most recent work to develop our model.

Black Girls in Elite High Schools

One source of data from this paper is drawn from Author 2's qualitative research study that explores the critical lenses that high school Black girls in independent schools[1] use to examine experiences of race, class, and gender in their schools. The

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[1] Independent schools, according to the National Association of Independent Schools, the accrediting body for over 1400 independent schools in the U.S., are "non-profit private schools that are self-determining in mission and program. They are governed by independent boards and are funded primarily through tuition, charitable contribution, and endowment income" [30].

site of this research study was a predominantly White, elite, co-ed, independent school located in the northeastern part of the United States. Grace School[2] reflects the general racial demographics of independent schools in the U.S., with the student body population comprised of roughly 6.2 % African-American, 4.1 % Latino, 7.9 % Asian American, 6.4 % Multiracial American, and 65 % European American students [45]. The average tuition for a school of this caliber is $23, 673 per year [45]. Relatedly, an average of 22.9 % of students who attend a school similar to Grace School receive financial assistance from the school [45]. The participants for this study were 15 adolescent Black girls in grades 9–12 who attended weekly discussion sessions over a period of 3 months, facilitated by Author 2. Most of the participants also participated in one-on-one interviews with Author 2.

Latina Girls in the New Latino Diaspora

The second site of this research is Marshall, a New Latino Diaspora (NLD) town of 35,000 in the Northeastern U.S. that has only recently been populated by large numbers of Latinos, the majority of them Mexican. From 1990 to 2010 the percentage of students of Mexican origin in Marshall increased from 2 to 28 % [74]. The focal school is Marshall Middle School (MMS), where 24 % percent of students are Latino, 40 % are Black, 32 % are White, and 3.4 % identify as belonging to some other racial or ethnic group. Since January 2012, Author 1 has conducted ethnographic research at MMS, including participant observation with Latina girls in classroom and social settings and interviews conducted with Latina girls and school staff. At the request of MMS educators, Author 1 also created an after-school girls' group for Latina girls in January 2012, which provides the girls with a safe, supportive space to share and analyze their experiences, and Author 1 with greater insight into their lives.

Towards a Conceptualization of a Positive Youth Development Model for Adolescent Girls of Color

As we adapt the existing PYD model developed by Lerner et al. [37] we consider a previous research study in which the characteristics of positive development among urban girls were assessed with the PYD framework [38]. Lerner et al. [38] found that when urban adolescent girls (36.7 % Latina, 27.3 % European American, 16.9 % African American) were asked to describe the characteristics that contribute to doing well, their responses aligned with the different elements of the PYD competencies. These authors also found that the urban girls in their sample described additional characteristics that were not within the existing PYD framework, suggesting that "the Five Cs model of PYD indicators is a necessary but also an incomplete frame for depicting the dimensions along which urban girls may thrive" (p. 45). Following this finding, we hold fast to the theoretical underpinnings of PYD, but we question the universality of the application of the

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[2] In order to maintain confidentiality, all site names and participant names have been given pseudonyms.
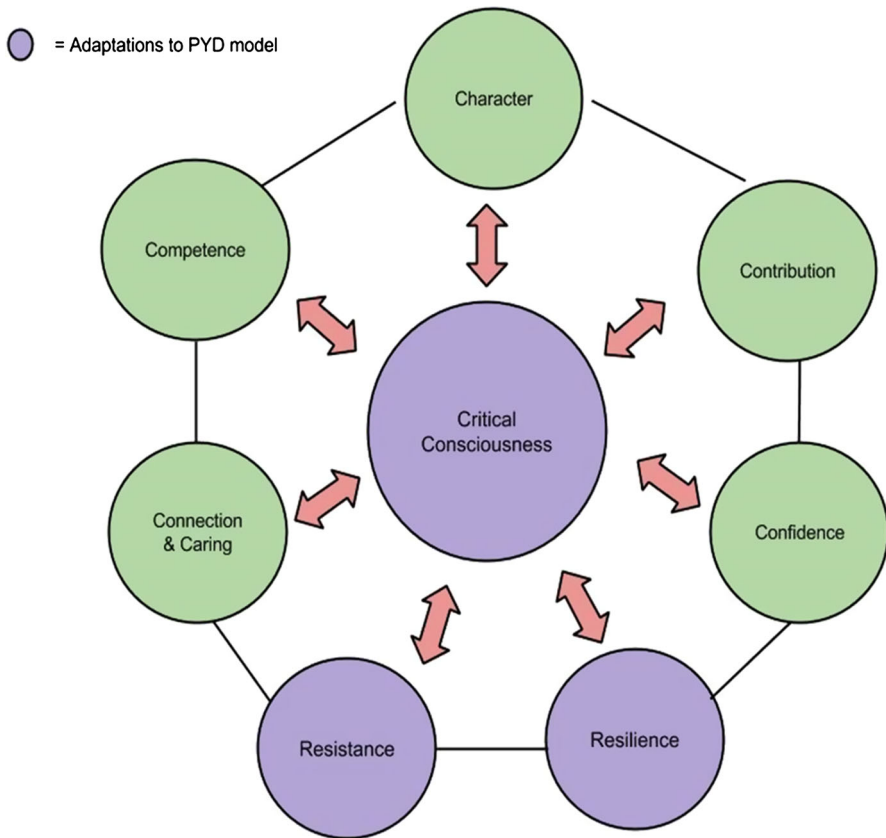
Fig. 2 Adapted PYD Model for girls of color

model in relation to adolescent girls of color. The goal of our model is to offer revisions to PYD perspectives so that the model is a better fit for adolescent girls of color. In this section of the paper we will present our conceptual model and describe each of the adapted competencies in detail (see Fig. 2 for a visual representation of the adapted PYD model).

Critical Consciousness

Our most significant adaptation to the PYD framework is placing critical consciousness at the center of our developmental model. The conceptual roots of critical consciousness are found in the work of the Brazilian educator and theorist Paulo Freire [23], who claimed that the thinking subject exists in relation to others in the world and that critical consciousness involves a reflective awareness and analysis of the differences in power present in social relationships and institutions. Such an engagement in the critical examination of the social world should foster a "reorientation of perspective towards a commitment to social justice" [33]. The

development of a critical consciousness is "both cognitive and affective and leads to engaged discourse, collaborative problem-solving, and a 'rehumanization' of human relationships" (p. 783).

The notion of critical consciousness has been further developed within feminist literatures to specifically discuss how women and girls can develop such a consciousness to critique and respond to the power structures within their lives. Asher explains that the achievement of critical consciousness may allow girls and women to resist domination, negotiate self-representation, and work towards transformation [2]. Carter explains that CRF may offer a framework for adults who work with youth, such as teachers, mentors, and counselors to examine race and gender as it intersects with systems of domination in order to transform learning opportunities and, more importantly, the lives of young females of color [11]. Nakkula and Toshalis explain that by creating safe spaces that nurture the development of critical consciousness, girls can have "safe exchanges of ideas, intimate discussions of desire, and expressions of anger and frustration felt in response to the external world" [30]. Furthermore, these types of spaces offer girls the opportunity to deconstruct "the messages floating in the culture about gender, race, sexuality, and class" [48].

Our model holds that the development of a critical consciousness is fundamental in order for adolescent girls of color to fully realize the potential of the central competencies of the PYD model. We envision critical consciousness as a core competency through which the other competencies of the PYD framework are mediated to form a more complete and culturally authentic model of development for girls of color. Adolescent girls of color often experience "multiple marginalities," cultural dissonance, and role confusion, which can prevent the development of a positive sense of identity [60]. Developing the skills to critically question and analyze power relationships in the social world, and more subtle and interactional forms of gendered and racial/ethnic marginalization, will empower adolescent girls of color to navigate these multiple marginalities.

Like adolescent identity development, the development of a critical consciousness is dependent upon context: one's local social environment, individual experiences, and the presence (or lack of a presence) of adult allies who nurture emerging seeds of critical consciousness. Similarly, like all developmental competencies, the mediating competency of critical consciousness evolves and develops. Unfortunately, most feminist literatures that refer to critical consciousness as an important competency are specific to women of color who are college-aged, and we do not have a good picture of how adolescents experience developmental waves of critical consciousness. Similar to critical thinking skills, we posit that in early adolescence, critical consciousness would be more concrete, while in later adolescence, it would be more abstract and oriented towards future action. As we introduce the following competencies, we will emphasize what specific competencies might look like if mediated by less and more fully developed skills of critical consciousness. In the future, we hope to examine developmental waves and descriptive levels of complexity of critical consciousness.

Throughout this paper, we adapt each "C" in the PYD model to demonstrate how it can be mediated by critical consciousness and how each "C" can, in turn, enrich

girls' critical consciousness. As we discuss each "C", we explain these adaptations and how they can promote positive youth development, specifically, for adolescent girls of color. We begin our discussion of each competency with a vignette from our research studies to provide a snapshot of how the adolescent girls with whom we worked embody elements of each of the adapted competencies focused on the optimal development of adolescent girls of color.

Competence

> But you know as I grew older and kind of got a mind for myself, and you know, I kind of portrayed myself as how I think Black women should be portrayed…And my mom really kind of helped me along in that journey, seriously like then was young teenage years, you just want to like fit in and my mom's just like, you know, like, "Stand by what you think and stay true to yourself," basically. So I think that helped me a lot especially in this [her school] community. So just to be myself, and myself is just you know—it's like I go to school here, you know I consider myself smart, and…you know to make a point of me being here, being my best self here, which I think it says a lot for you know like, all Black women everywhere, just like showing people who just do what needs to be done.- Renée, 12th grade

Renée's multi-layered reflection on her status as a Black adolescent girl attending an elite predominantly White school and the mindset of how she approaches "doing school" illustrates our conceptualization of the competence competency [51]. In the existing PYD model, Lerner et al. [37] define competence as a "positive view of one's actions in domain-specific areas including social, academic, cognitive, and vocational". We extend that definition by drawing on Clausen's description of the factors that contribute to competence [12]. In Clausen's perspective, competency entails: an awareness of one's intellectual, social and emotional abilities and skills; knowing one's interests and how to develop and pursue one's goals and desires; an awareness of available options and choices in life and knowing how to maximize those options; and an awareness of the intents and actions of others in order to "interact responsibly with them in pursuit of one's objectives" (p. 808). Our adaptation of "competence" includes the acknowledgement that a "positive" and realistic view of one's actions and the knowledge to accurately assess one's academic, social, and emotional skills requires one to think critically about her position in these domains in relation to those around her and relative to her social status in society.

Renée's description of how she has grown to consider herself smart and how she defines herself as a person who "just do[es] what needs to be done" in order to pursue her academic goals speaks to her developing a particular manifestation of competence in that she has figured out how, as a Black female student, to navigate the context of her elite predominantly White school so that she can be successful. In her response, Renée's comment that she intentionally portrays herself a certain way so as to be emblematic of Black women everywhere speaks to a critical awareness of the fact that in society Black women are not always viewed as being smart or

accomplished, a perspective that Renée also experiences as part of the culture of her school.

As part of our modified conceptualization of competence we also draw on Belenky et al. [5] descriptions of *subjective knowledge* and *constructed knowledge* connected to women's competence. We hold that subjective knowledge and constructed knowledge define two epistemological stances that are part of the critical consciousness that girls of color need to adopt in order to competently navigate the worlds in which they live. *Subjective knowledge* privileges the personal or local knowledge that each person has based on her individual experiences. Girls of color have a unique and intimate knowledge of their experiences, identities, and (often marginalized) positions in their social worlds. With these forms of knowledge, adult allies can support girls to learn to "speak in a unique and authentic voice" and to push back against the dominant societal institutions that work to silence and oppress them [5].

We argue that girls of color can (and should) learn from others and should be competent in knowing how to integrate their subjective knowledges with the knowledge that they learn from others with whom they interact. This epistemological stance is what Belenky et al. [5] term *constructed knowledge*: "a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing". Renée's vignette not only illustrates her subjective knowledge that is particular to her experiences as a Black girl at her school, but also demonstrates how she incorporated her mother's advice to "stand by what you think and stay true to yourself" into a form of constructed knowledge that she uses as a guide to move closer to accomplishing her goals.

Our model presents the idea that for girls of color competence requires *subjective* and *constructed knowledge* and the knowledge that their experiences and intuitions are legitimate and valuable. Such forms of knowledge are essential to how girls of color critically view their academic, social, and emotional worlds, and for allowing them to work with and against the limitations placed on them by society in order to attain their desires and goals. We recognize that the development of this complex knowledge competency will vary depending upon the level of cognitive development for particular adolescent girls of color and on their experiences of socialization related to the skills that are part of this competency. Therefore, we subscribe to the notion that this competency, like the others in our model, requires specific types of scaffolding and modeling [64] so that girls of color learn how to develop these competencies in a manner that is appropriate for them. Such scaffolding is likely to draw heavily upon the experiences of women and older girls of color who themselves have cultivated the critically informed competencies required for optimal development among girls and women of color.

Confidence

Now because I'm kind of aware, I think it [the messages she receives as a Black girl] doesn't affect me quite as much, and I think you know, me now

being 16, I have more confidence than when I was like 11 or 12. And I always thought, "Oh, I need to be like light skinned and have straighter hair," so I was always straightening my hair, and during the summer I didn't want to go outside for fear of tanning and stuff like that. And I think now when I see those messages I'm like, "Wow! That's a shame that we teach the young Black girls to not be themselves right from when they were young" so that they grow up, especially if they're in White communities, going to school like mine, it's like, I don't know, it's kind of even more pressure to be perfect, to be like what you aren't in a sense. – Jennifer, 10th grade, describing the messages she's experienced about being a Black girl

Jennifer's comments of her evolving sense of confidence connected to her Black female identity capture how we envisage the confidence competency for girls of color as situated at the intersection of critical consciousness and positive racial or ethnic identity. Jennifer not only points out how when she was younger she lacked confidence and positive identification with being a Black girl, but also, now at the age of 16, is able to identify the ways in which our society oppresses Black girls at a young age and equates being perfect with being White. Jennifer depicts our conceptualization of confidence through her ability to bring a critical lens to her experiences of growing up in U.S. society, in her predominantly White community, and in her elite predominantly White school. She rejects the negative messages that exist about Black girls in those contexts in favor of positively embracing her Black girl identity.

The traditional PYD model defines the confidence competency as "an internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy; one's global self-regard, as opposed to domain specific beliefs" [37]. We hold that the presence of a high sense of self-worth and self-esteem is influenced in particular ways for adolescent girls of color. In conceptualizing self-worth and self-esteem, we draw on Susan Harter's definition of global self-esteem, which is "the level of global self regard that one has for the self as a person" [30]. Research shows that for girls of color, self-worth and self-esteem are often connected to their sense of belongingness and acceptance in their communities and schools [20, 48], their sense of feeling respected and their experiences validated [69, 70], and their sense of others' seeing them as having intelligence [67]. Since girls of color live in and interact with a society in which both women and people of color often are oppressed, the self-worth and confidence of girls of color can be continually under threat. Due to the fact that research has shown that self-esteem (and its contributing factors) has been found to be positively correlated with overall psychological well-being [49], our model of positive development for girls of color requires that we explore sources that promote confidence and high self-worth and self-esteem in girls of color.

Ethnic identity is a central aspect of the identities of youth of color that has been shown to be influential in various areas of adolescent lives, including the domain of self-esteem [63]. A sense of positive ethnic and/or racial identity has been found to serve as a protective factor against experiences of racism and discrimination [32, 42, 55]. Phinney conceptualizes ethnic identity as "a complex construct including a commitment and sense of belonging to the group, positive evaluation of the group,

interest in and knowledge about the group, and involvement in social activities of the group" [49]. Janie Ward's work with African-American parents and their adolescent daughters underscores the importance of African-American girls developing the skills to critically analyze the negative ways African-Americans are portrayed in society, and particularly in the media [67]. The development and maintenance of a positive ethnic identity, then, not only draws upon a connection to positive experiences within and images of one's ethnic group, but also requires looking critically at the ways in which one's ethnic group is portrayed in society and resisting the negative images of the group to which one belongs.

Character

My friend, Rocio… her family is very different than mine. When Rocio's family lived in Mexico, her mom was a coyotero, and helped people cross the border for money. Now, in Marshall, Rocio's family owns a store, where her mom makes and sells tamales and other Mexican foods. Her mom also does all the cooking and cleaning, and takes care of Rocio and her siblings. It just does not seem fair. Rocio's dad is very traditional and controls the house and all of the money. When Rocio asks permission for something, her dad always makes the decision. I definitely do not want to ever be in a family like that. I want to have a husband, but I want to make decisions and have control, you know? I don't want to be disrespectful of Rocio's family, but sometimes it is hard to watch her dad control everything in the house. - Gladys, an 8th grade Latina girl, describing family and cultural practices that she has observed in her community.

Gladys's comments illuminate our adaptation of the character competency and the tension implicit in developing one's character and a critical consciousness as an adolescent. Lerner et al. [37] define character as "respect for societal and cultural rules, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong (morality), and integrity". Lerner et al. [38] also include interpersonal skills, valuing diversity, personal values, and social conscience in this definition of character. Our model holds that the multiple identities that girls of color possess inherently place them in undervalued positions in society. Thus, respect for societal and cultural rules and expectations for behaviors, often determined by White-middle class standards and norms, which can devalue girls of color and their forms of cultural capital, complicates the notion of respect. Our adaptation to "character" suggests that girls of color not only must have respect for societal and cultural norms, but also that they critically analyze how these norms and associated rules support or work against girls and women of color. In this way, a critical consciousness allows them to enrich their awareness of power dynamics at play in their identities and social worlds. By critically respecting societal and cultural norms, while creating their sense of right and wrong, youth can self-direct their analytical and behavioral responses to these norms as they enhance their character.

Lerner et al. [37] emphasize that "a major source of diversity in developmental trajectories are the systematic relations that adolescents have with key people and

institutions in their social context; that is, their family, peer group, school, workplace, neighborhood, community, society, culture, and niche in history". Thus, adolescent girls' notions of character are intimately tied to the character traits that their families, cultures and sociopolitical contexts value. Sometimes these contextual value systems can be problematic or disempowering for girls of color, like the practices upheld in Rocio's family. For example, the Latino cultural value of *marianismo,* which some families hold and practice, incorporates "suffering as a part of the female identity," maintains that sex is solely a function of the sacrament of marriage and a "source of pleasure for males," and expects women to be subservient and submissive [28]. In line with this value system, female character is in part defined by subservience and obedience to males. Within our model, positive youth development requires that adolescent girls of color learn to understand key aspects of sociopolitical and cultural histories relevant to definitions of character in their families, but to resist and reject definitions of their character, like components of marianismo, that limit their self-determination and personal, academic, and economic opportunities.

Connection and Caring

> …Because you are the first, like, Black female…you know you're not, like, an employee here, you're just like a person that we can go to, like, that means a lot. Well to me it does, and I know it matters to all the other girls because we've never had a Black woman that's like, "You know, you are empowering, you can do this, you can do that, you can do anything that you set your mind to." It's mostly like, White males telling you what you should and should not do, in this community. So, thank you. - Jennifer, 10th grade, talking with Author 2 during a one-on-one interview

Lerner et al. [37] define "connection" as "positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship". The "caring" competency, related to connection, holds that "a sense of sympathy and empathy for others" is also a necessary skill for youth to develop (p. 23). Critical consciousness is an important attribute of these competencies in that girls of color must be critical of the relationships they have with their peers, schools, and communities to ensure that the relationships serve their positive development. To achieve positive development in these contexts, girls of color must maintain positive bonds with educators and their school while simultaneously critiquing the structural inequalities and power dynamics that prevent their educational institution from best serving their needs. This is a tall order for any young person, but uniquely important for girls of color.

Jennifer's remarks during her interview with Author 2 exemplify how critical consciousness can mediate and enrich the connection and caring competencies. Part of why Jennifer and the other Black girls who were in the discussion group find Author 2's (a Black woman) presence so important is that there were no Black female teachers in their school. As Jennifer describes, most of their interactions with

adults in her school consists of "White males telling you what you should and should not do." Jennifer's awareness of the fact that the Black females who are employed in her school are staff (administrative assistants, food service workers, etc.) and not faculty members serves as a larger critique of the structure and power relations present in her elite predominantly White school.

Our developmental model stresses the importance of girls of color forming relationships with older women of color who can serve as role models in how to navigate through the various worlds of which women of color are a part. Rhodes et al. [52] explain that "nonparent adults and other extrafamilial sources of support have been consistently identified as contributing resilience among youth faced with a wide array of challenges". Nonparent adults can play a critical role in "mediating adolescent girls' dual needs for both independence and guidance" (p. 143). In the Black and Latino communities, intergenerational ties to older women are an important community resource. Community *other mothers* in the Black community or *madrinas* or *commadres* (godmothers or co-parents) in the Latino community provide adolescent girls of color with guidance, encouragement, and multiple forms of support [14, 40].

In the vignette above, Jennifer's statement about how she feels that Author 2 is one of the few Black women that she has come in contact with in her school community who emphasizes the power and potential that they as Black girls have to create changes in their school community and beyond is significant. We hold that non-parent, adult women of color mentors can contribute to adolescent girls' self-esteem, resistance and resilience, and sense of possibility. Safe spaces and relationships with older women can enable girls to explore their own hopes, values, and choices with their mentor and build resistance and resilience [3]. Such relationships, characterized by trust, mutual respect, and reciprocal support, offer alternative ways of being in relationships that could be seen as a model for other relationships—peer, romantic, and familial. Furthermore, when adolescents sense that their "mentors hold them in positive regard, they may internalize this positive appraisal, perhaps contributing to their own feelings of self-worth" [52]. As adolescent girls grow up, they can serve as these types of mentors, modeling how to critically connect with and care for younger girls in their communities.

Contribution

Everyone in Marshall thinks that Mexican girls are the sluttiest girls at school. Both teachers and other students. Teachers may be less obvious about it, but they think it too. I wish I could talk to younger Mexican girls about having sex. It sucks to be a Mexican girl and have sex or get pregnant- boys pressure you, people at school think you are a slut, and if you get pregnant, your family will kick you out of your house. If I came into the middle school girls' group, I could talk to them about protecting themselves from those things, and about standing up for themselves. It's so important. - Valeria, a 10th grade Latina girl, commenting on how she wants to support younger Latina girls in navigating the tricky terrain of sexuality.

After youth develop the first "Five Cs", PYD theory holds that the sixth C, "contribution" has the potential to be developed as well. PYD requires that youth enact behaviors that are indicative of their possession of the other five competencies so that they are giving back not only to themselves and their families, but also to their communities and societies [37]. Valeria's comments above align with our perspective that it is important that girls of color not only contribute to society, but also work to promote the development of and awareness within the girl of color community. Within our model, the "contribution" competency is rooted in social activism through the ideals of CRF and reflected in Robinson & Ward's [53] resistance for liberation strategy.

As Basow and Rubin [4] point out, "What seems critically important is for girls of all ethnicities to learn not only about discrimination but also about activist strategies to confront conditions of injustice". Through the adoption of a feminist stance, girls of color contribute to society by not only looking critically at their status as women in society, but also by sharing that information with other girls of color so that they are moved to action in some way. This socially conscious action is represented in the resistance for liberation strategy in that girls of color move from individual resistance to discrimination and oppression to that of recognizing the collective struggle of girls and women of color and push for societal change. The quest for and participation in societal change is the enacted form of praxis espoused in CRF. As Wing reminds Black women in her discussion about CRF and praxis, "all of us with multiple consciousness must help society address the needs of those multiply burdened first" [72]. This appeal to contribute meaningfully to society through helping those in multiply oppressed situations is a request that we argue can be applied to all women and girls of color. Through the discovery that their voices and experiences are valid, and the development of a critical consciousness that is woven through the skills derived from the competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring competencies, girls of color are well-positioned to add their voices to the collective fight against the continued oppression and marginalization of women and girls of color.

Additional Competencies

In order for this model to best fit the needs of adolescent girls of color, we believe that two competencies should be added to the existing PYD model that speak to the unique experiences of girls of color whose racial/ethnic groups have been historically marginalized in the U.S. These competencies are as follows:

Resistance

With this organization we want to foster a fun and safe environment that engages our students in discussion on issues affecting students of color and our surrounding communities. We hope to educate our members then challenge them to take action, whether it is internal or external. The goal is to lead by example and push students to be better than their best. Hopefully, this will to

show older generations that we will take charge of our future, dismantle the negative stereotypes, build and secure our sense of community, and influence the world. - Excerpt from the Mission & Vision Statement of the Black Student Union, drafted by the girls that Author 2 worked with at Grace School

In contrast to previous research that highlights the phenomenon of primarily middle and upper-class White girls going 'underground' as they enter adolescence [9], the girls of color in Niobe Way's [69] study were willing to speak their minds and express their feelings in most of their relationships, which they felt enhanced rather than endangered those relationships. We hold that the willingness of girls of color to speak their minds is one of the main sources of resistance for their demographic group. Ward defines resistance as "the development of a critical consciousness that is invoked to counter the myriad distortions, mistruths, and misinformation perpetrated about the lives of Black women and men, their families, and communities" [68]. Ward also views the affirmation of one's self and cultural group as part of the resistance process. Similar to our discussion of "confidence," a strong tie to one's cultural group not only instills confidence in youth of color, but also aids girls of color in resisting negative messages about different aspects of their identities [13, 34, 65].

The excerpt at the beginning of this sub-section speaks to Way's and Ward's findings about how girls of color tend to enact resistance through their willingness to speak their minds and affirm their belonging to their racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. At the time of Author 2's study, the participants used the discussion group meetings to work on creating a Black Student Union at their school. After talking with each other about their experiences as Black girls at their school and the things they wanted to change, the participants decided that forming a Black Student Union would be a way to sustain momentum in creating change in their school regarding the status and treatment of Black students. Their vision of creating a space in which Black students can come together to share about their experiences on a regular basis, and spread awareness about issues affecting Black people through events and hosted discussions, and forming a Big Sister/Little Sister program with the lower school students, all serve to push back against the norms of their school in which their needs are typically ignored.

Central to the resistance competency is the development of a critical consciousness in girls of color. Robinson and Ward [53] hold that Black girls (and we argue all girls of color) can develop a critical consciousness through "consciously prepar[ing] [the girl] for the sociopolitical environment in which she will live by fostering the development of a resistance that will provide her with the necessary tools to think critically about herself, the world and her place in it". We believe that resistance as a competency also requires the knowledge of understanding when and how to effectively resist so that others seriously consider the voice and actions of adolescent girls of color. As Ward explains, "resisting for survival" provides short-term solutions to experiences of discrimination and injustice by employing strategies that stem from anger, fear, or guilt [68]. These strategies typically require that youth "toughen up, mask your feelings, disguise your thoughts, and whatever you do, never let them see you sweat" [66]. By adopting these types of

strategies, youth distance themselves from the unjust event or situation instead of critically engaging with the problematic facets of the encounter. Our model advocates for the development of "resistance for liberation." Adolescent girls of color should learn not only how to view their experiences with a critical eye, but also learn how to strategically deploy actions of resistance that work toward the larger goal of dismantling the dominant power structures and practices in our society that exist in person-to-person interactions as well as in larger forums such as the media and institutional structures (for example, education and the law) [31]. This is not work to be done alone, of course, but with the ample support of developmental allies, such as older girls and women of color. These allies might be teachers, parents and siblings, or natural mentors encountered through formal and informal activities.

Resilience

> Stuff has been hard, you know? Sometimes I just want to take pills or cut, just to forget everything. It is too overwhelming. But I try to be strong. I try to turn to my friends, and to people like you [speaking to Author 1, her former girls' group leader], to try to feel better. I want to be something, and I know that if I do that kind of stuff [pills or cutting], I won't be able to be a great chef one day. - Maria, an 11th grade Latina girl, commenting on her own trajectory of persevering through pain.

Maria arrived in Marshall from Mexico when she was in elementary school. In fifth grade, two of her brothers were deported. That caused her to have a depressive episode, she started cutting, and the event initiated a long battle for mental wellness for her. However, she advocated for herself. Maria met Author 1 in her school's middle school girls' group, and realizing that Author 1 was an adult she could trust, she sent Author 1 a facebook message and confessed to self-harming. Author 1 and school counselors connected Maria to the school clinical social worker and they entered into a positive therapeutic relationship. Maria invested in her own mental health and in improving her grades.

Today, Maria is in high school. Her family has faced a series of traumas, including one of her brothers trying to cross the border back to the U.S. and being caught and placed in a Mexican jail. Her trajectory of resilience is not straightforward or smooth: it is bumpy. When these types of stressful events happen, she often contemplates drug use or cutting and feels depressed. However, she continues to fight to control her mental wellness and has advocated for herself by getting in touch with therapists. Today, she is one of the best culinary students in her vocational program and she is a finalist in the national high school vocational culinary competition. Although she struggles with major challenges, she continues to resiliently push forward. Having had these experiences also makes her very critical of the policing of Mexican folks in Marshall and the relationships between the U.S. and Mexico and Latino family practices regarding mental health. As she resiliently moves forward, she is also developing her critical consciousness.

Our model incorporates resilience as a competency because we believe that it is unavoidable that adolescent girls of color will experience situations of adversity (including challenges related to racism, classism, and gender- and ethnic- discrimination) and therefore need to develop attitudes and behaviors that prevent them from internalizing these experiences. Smith and Carlson [58] characterize resilience as "the presence of protective factors or processes that moderate the relationship between stress and risk, on the one hand, and coping or competence, on the other". Spencer et al. [59] define resilience as the ability to utilize self-righting tendencies (avoiding or downplaying the importance of certain people, places, or activities) during sensitive periods or in response to negative feedback and explain that resilience is shaped by the phenomenological experience of race, gender, physical status, and many other factors. These conceptions of resilience involve two factors: (1) a risk or threat to development, and (2) adaptation success. These authors emphasize that resilience is not a static concept, but a dynamic one, since people's lives and the threats to development they encounter are always changing [56]. Zambrana and Zoppi [75] explain that by nurturing resilience and hope in young girls of color, positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development are more likely to occur.

As exemplified by Maria's story, our model emphasizes a few key points about resilience, development, girls of color, and the contexts in which they develop. First, although certain scholarly works on resilience still invoke cultural deficit models, which imply that something is "wrong" with the individual; our model stresses that girls of color need to develop the competency of resilience because something is "wrong" with the dominant society. Critical race feminism emphasizes that societal institutions and power dynamics marginalize and oppress girls of color in unique ways, and it is critical for girls of color to possess the coping skills and abilities to navigate resources that allow one to persevere through such oppression and adversity. Second, resilience is a process, not a trait. Girls of color should not be characterized as "resilient" or "not", in specific developmental moments. Rather, adult allies should recognize girls' actions, beliefs, and statements that represent emerging and maturing resilient processes and nurture them accordingly.

Third, assessing risk and resilience is complex. Although girls need to develop the skills to critically assess and avoid risks to their development and academic and personal success, researchers/practitioners/adult allies also need to critically examine perceived risks and problematic outcomes and girls' rationales and strategies for the choices they make. Shaffer et al. [56] explain that risk factors are "established predictors of negative outcomes, such as poverty, single parenthood, or premature birth, which means that the chances of certain problematic outcomes are higher among people with the risk factor". However, "risk factors are predictive of problems for large groups of people, not necessarily in individuals," and risk and resilience must be considered on the level of the individual (p. 56). For instance, Harklau demonstrates this complexity with the case of Izzie, a first-generation Latina immigrant girl who decides not to go to college in order to get a job after high school. While some may assess forgoing college as a risk or a decision that may lead to negative outcomes, Izzie became financially independent from her family and many structural constraints, which was a resilient and agentic pathway [27]. As researchers and adult allies, we can not measure girls' success or resilience

against only dominant, neoliberal, and positivistic scripts for success: we must consider the local, contextual factors that shape their decisions and life trajectories.

Additionally, we argue individuals should not be judged as resilient or not based on moments in their developmental trajectory. Rather, longer stretches of individuals' trajectories should be examined for maturing processes of resilience. Maria's story provides a good case for this argument. If one was to examine a moment in her trajectory when she was depressed, cutting, and contemplating drug use, they would describe her as "at-risk," and not resilient. When one considers Maria's longer, developmental trajectory, though, one can see that Maria has resiliently persevered through traumatic hardship and although she often wavers under stress, she consistently engages in self-righting practices in order to advocate for herself and support her own positive development.

The competencies in the existing PYD model do not address this complexity in risk, protective factors, or the ability to utilize self-righting tendencies in response to adversity and forms of discrimination. Our model emphasizes that critical consciousness mediates the competency of resilience by empowering youth to critically examine the roots of the adversity they face, rather than internalizing such adversity and attributing it to oneself. Critical consciousness can enable girls to critically use resources to promote their resilience: ideally, girls would develop the skills to navigate relationships with school personnel, family, and peers to seek out the support that would nurture their existing strengths and allow them to overcome periods of hardship.

We view resilience and resistance as related but distinct competencies that mutually promote one another. Many facets of the resistance competency, such as practicing resistance for liberation, operate as self-righting tendencies or protective practices that allow one to persevere through adversity and challenging experiences. Similarly, as girls of color develop as critically conscious thinkers and continually engage practices that support their resilience, their ability and confidence in resisting will be bolstered. From our perspective, then, the competencies of resistance and resilience are interrelated but unique. Resilience involves effective coping behaviors and strategies that enable girls to continue to pursue their goals and maintain a positive sense of self-worth in the face of adversity: Sometimes these behaviors and strategies involve resistance, but other times they may involve reading an encounter in a particular way (so that the negative encounter is not attributed to the self), seeking counsel and support from a mentor or ally, or learning from a negative experience. As adolescent girls of color develop the competency of resilience and the ability to engage with their peers as youth social critics who collaboratively analyze their lives within the context of their social worlds, they will be able to nurture each other's abilities to self-right and resist in the face of adversity and discrimination and maintain hope for their futures.

Implications for Practice

Our model builds on findings from positive youth development studies, which suggest that if the strengths of youth are aligned with the resources for "positive growth found in families, schools, and communities… then young people's healthy

development may be optimized" [39]. We argue that if researchers and practitioners adopt a model of integration of PYD and CRF perspectives that combine the knowledge, skills, and capacities derived from each to provide a nurturing, positive milieu for girls of color, their strengths may be enhanced and positively directed toward a heightened critical consciousness as a crucial mediator of healthy development.

This model has practical implications for researchers, educators, and girls themselves. First, education and human development scholars who teach courses in teacher-training programs can utilize this model as an instructional tool to help their students (future teachers) reframe conceptualizations of their own future students, specifically girls of color and their particular needs for healthy development. Specifically, the CRF component in our model holds the potential to encourage teachers and pre-service teachers to acknowledge the different histories, social contexts, and axes of identities and oppression that impact their students' experiences, concept of self, and actions in the classroom/school context. As such, the model holds the potential to reframe how actors at the microlevel (those who have direct contact with youth) and in the mesosystem (interactions among those who have direct contact, such as parents and teachers) of girls' social ecologies respond to girls of color. The goal would be for these actors to respond to the girls in ways that seek to understand their identities, experiences, and the roles they enact in school spaces in order to more effectively nurture their critically mediated positive development [7, 44].

Second, our model offers unique insights for the construction of girls' groups, whether formal or informal, as environments in which adult allies (applied researchers and practitioners) can nurture the development of the adapted PYD competencies and girls can empower one another in a critically supportive manner. Because mainstream education often values White, middle class cultural capital, girls' groups can serve as spaces that value girls' of color funds of knowledge and culture, promote understanding of the social contexts in which they develop, and examine the specific forms of oppression that they experience [21, 46]. Our work builds on Ruth Nicole Brown's [8] and Bettina Love's [41] research findings that highlight the powerful potential of girls' groups to encourage the creativity, critical gaze, and activism of girls of color. By framing girls' group spaces with integrated CRF and PYD understandings, such groups can encourage the development of critical consciousness that serves to enrich the PYD competencies. Groups with this orientation can serve as a particular "homeplaces" where girls can have "safe exchanges of ideas, intimate discussions of desire, and expressions of anger and frustration felt in response to the external world" [67]. By developing relationships within groups that are characterized by trust, mutual respect, and reciprocal support, girls can more fully explore their frustrations, values and ambitions and optimize the development of their strengths [3].

Scholarly Significance

In addition to the practical implications that are posed by conceptualizing adolescent girls of color with a CRF–PYD model, this work suggests multiple places to build on academic conversations around the development of adolescent

girls of color. Our use of CRF as a theoretical framework for our model is significant in that it takes a theory that has existed mostly within the legal discipline and illustrates its potential for interdisciplinary application within the fields of human development and education. Furthermore, this paper continues to shift the conversation about adolescent girls of color from focusing on problems and their sole status as receivers of racism, sexism, and discrimination to their assets and capabilities. In popular and academic discourses, adolescent girls of color are often characterized as vulnerable to their developmental context and as at-risk for problems such as early engagement in sexual activities, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school. In taking an assets-based stance regarding girls of color, we see our model contributing to a vision of girls of color that aligns with the work of scholars such as Gaunt [24], Evans-Winters [20], Brown [8], and Love [41] that emphasizes the power, potential, and resilience of this sub-population. The PYD perspective, as applied to girls of color, shifts the scholarly focus from problems and deficit to identifying key assets and sub-competencies that can be enhanced in order for girls of color to develop optimally. Furthermore, by adopting phenomenological and CRF perspectives, we intentionally highlight girls' of color perspectives, which are often silenced, on their development and the ways that they persevere through challenges and multiple forms of oppression through the development of a critical consciousness. Additionally, our ecological perspective of development calls attention to the fact that the experiences of adolescent girls of color are context-specific and multilayered within the micro, meso, and macro interactions of their worlds.

Finally, as Tuck explains, it is important to change our traditional research patterns concerning girls of color, which focus on damage-centered research [62]. Such research "intends to document peoples' pain and brokenness to hold those in power accountable for their oppression. This kind of research operates with a flawed theory of change: it is often used to leverage reparations or resources for marginalized communities yet simultaneously reinforces and reinscribes a one-dimensional notion of these people as depleted, ruined, and hopeless" [62]. Tuck encourages researchers to "reformulate the ways research is framed and conducted and to reimagine how findings might be used by, for, and with communities" [62]. Much of the literature on the experiences and development of adolescent girls of color focuses on damage, relies on assumptions about cultural deficits, and invites girls of color to speak but to "'only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing' to only speak their pain" [62].

This project aims to push scholars who conduct research on, with, and about girls of color to stray from damage-centered research and to amplify girls' of color voices and stories of complexity, contradiction, and self-determination [62]. Our PYD and CRF analysis of development for adolescent girls of color suggests an important direction for developmental and educational research, one that changes the conversation of damage and deficit, and while stressing real political, economic, and socio-cultural constraints that girls of color face, it is a direction that emphasizes their strengths, resilience, self-determination, and positive contributions to society.

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