Article

'It's About the Way I'm Treated': Afro-Latina Black Identity Development in the Third Space

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Abstract

Through an ethnographic study of an afterschool program serving girls of color in the New York City metro area, this study examines how girls who are ethically Latina and racially Black embrace and articulate AfroLatinx identity. It asks, what are the contexts and institutional processes that facilitate the development of a Black identity among Latina youth? I find that while the Latinx home and school contexts produce a mestiza identity that erases and subjugates Blackness, study participants find viable and affirming representations of Afro-Latinidad through their participation in this afterschool program. Specifically, I argue that the programs' Black staff members and social justice-centered curriculum produces an increased identification with Blackness among Latina youth. Understanding how Afro-Latina girls learn to embrace their Black identity challenges us to examine how to leverage curriculum and pedagogy to affirm the racial identities of all Black girls.

Keywords

education, racial/ethnic identity, identity, race/ethnicity, Latino

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Introduction: On the Production of an Afro-Latina Youth Identity

The big chart paper in the front of the room read,

> "we don't know what afro-latino is because schools only teach that there is only black, white or latinos. They don't teach where they intersect. There are different types of Black, culturally (caribbean, african)."

I must have been helping another group when the students wrote this because by the time I saw it they had moved on to another prompt. It was a typical hot summer day alleviated by the fact that we held our workshops in a basement. Still, the lack of sunlight made it difficult to keep track of time. "Alright let's come back together y'all" I said, as the girls put down their markers and made their way to a circle of chairs arranged in the middle of the room. I had been leading a workshop where they could learn about Black artists and activists that are seldom taught in schools. Among Black figures like Audre Lorde I had included Miriam Jiménez Román, the co-founder of the Afro-Latin@ Forum, along with the prompt: "What do you know about Afro-Latinidad?" As I watched them grapple with this question, it was immediately clear that the majority of nashers, as we call participants—all of them only a couple of days into our summer program—were not familiar with the term.

As a facilitator at the Sadie Nash Leadership Project, a community-based organization serving high-school aged girls and gender-expansive youth of color, I became curious about how the young people made sense of their racial identity. Specifically, I began to wonder why some nashers who were phenotypically Black and ethnically Latinx left the program self-identifying as Afro-Latinx, even if they were not previously familiar with the term. Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores define Afro-Latinx identity as "those Latin@s of visible or self-proclaimed African descent" (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010, p. 4). This suggests that regardless of whether Latinxs racially identity as Black, those with visible Black phenotypes navigate the world as Afro-Latinxs. This is increasingly important in the study of identity and inequality within Latinx communities, since social scientists agree that although race is socially constructed, its meaning has real consequences for how people move through the world (Omi & Winant, 1994). After completing Sadie Nash programming, the Latinx nashers in this study seemed to adopt this definition of Afro-Latinidad and Black Latinidad—terms I use interchangeably to refer to the embodied experience of navigating the world as a Black Latinx.

Anti-Blackness is endemic to every institution in the United States (Hartman, 1997; Wilderson, 2010). Yet, its pervasiveness is not restricted to U.S. borders, as scholars have demonstrated how legacies of colonization and imperialism in Latin America have made anti-Blackness a foundational aspect of Latinx identity formation (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010). Research has long documented how Latinx households maintain the ideology of mestizaje, or race mixing (Wade, 1993), through practices that encourage young people to reject Black identity (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019). Afro-Latinx youth then, encounter anti-Blackness everywhere, from schools (Dumas, 2016), to the home (Cruz-Janzen, 2001), to the neighborhoods they live in (Shedd, 2015). So, what is it about the particular context of Sadie Nash that produces an increased identification with Blackness among Latina youth?

I take up this question in a study of how multiple educational contexts inform the racial identities of Afro-Latina girls ages 15 to 20. Through an ethnographic study of 20 Afro-Latinas at Sadie Nash, I examine how this community-based educational space (CBES) promotes the Black Latinx identity development of high school-aged Latinas. Specifically, I draw on previous work on CBES (Baldridge, 2019; Brown, 2013; Ginwright, 2007; Gutiérrez, 2008) to show how Sadie Nash's position as a CBES, allows it to contextualize and affirm Black Latinx identity in ways that Latinx families and NYC and Newark public schools often fail to do. I argue that the development of a positive Afro-Latinx identity has critical implications for the healthy adolescent development of these girls, as they learn to valorize and celebrate an identity they already embody (Jiménéz Román & Flores, 2010; Llorens, 2018). Additionally, I argue that Afro-Latina girls who embrace and are proud of their Black identity are better positioned to challenge anti-Blackness and engage in their own projects of Black Latina girlhood self-makings.

Blackness as a Problem for Latinidad

Mestizaje is a pervasive and enduring factor in Latin American racial ideology. Although narratives of mestizaje claim that Latinxs have "transcended" race to become a "perfect mix" of white, Black, and "Indio," it remains a deeply hierarchical system, one where blanqueamiento or racial whitening, is privileged (Wade, 1993, p. 21). Due to the privileging of the white mestizo, Black Latinxs in Latin America often exist outside the borders of Latinidad. For example, scholars have documented how Black Latinxs are often assumed to be migrants who come from elsewhere (the coasts, the Caribbean, Haiti), and never fully Latinx (Hernández, 2003; Llorens, 2018). As a result, studies

show that many Latinxs reject Black/white racial categories in favor of a racialized "Latinx" category even as the U.S. Census insists that Latinx is an ethnicity (Roth, 2012).

When trying to make sense of Latinx racial identity, it is important to account for how colonial and imperial legacies have shaped racial projects in Latin America. For example, in the Dominican Republic, national elites purposefully distanced the nation from Haiti in order to avert the sanctions and surveillance enacted on the first free Black nation (Garcia-Peña, 2016). The Dominican national project then, has relied on the covert and overt suppression of Blackness for its full realization (Garcia-Peña, 2016). The consequences of mestizaje racial projects like those found in the Dominican Republic make Blackness an often unviable, undesirable, and dangerous racial category for Latinxs.

In response, mestiza identity is carefully constructed in the Latinx home through messages about "bettering the race" (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010) and informal lessons about personal grooming and relationship choices (Candelario, 2007; Cruz-Janzen, 2001). Yet, despite these enduring practices, some Latinx *do* claim and value their Blackness. Scholarship suggests that education, and in particular, conscientization campaigns can help foster Black identity among Latinxs (Llorens, 2018). For some Latinxs, educational spaces like universities can be places where they explore Black Latinidad and challenge the myth of mestizaje (Haywood, 2017; García-Louis, 2020; Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019). Yet, the realities of the U.S. education system suggest that Afro-Latinxs are also likely to encounter these anti-Black messages at school.

Anti-Blackness and Identity Development in Schools

Christina Sharpe argues that anti-Blackness is so inescapable that it is "as pervasive as the climate" (Sharpe, 2016, pp. 104–106). Although non-Black Latinxs confront racism in the United States, this racism is different from the anti-Black racism experienced by Black people, including Black Latinxs, due to the construction of Blackness as outside of humanity (Hartman, 1997; Wilderson, 2010). This construction of Blackness as non-human means that Black people are always assumed to be property that needs to be disciplined, technologies that are disproportionately applied to Black youth in education (Dumas & Ross, 2016; Shange, 2019). Black youth, for example, encounter culturally irrelevant curriculums (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and disproportionate punishment and surveillance (Shange, 2019; Shedd, 2015) in schools, facing so many insidious and alarming technologies of anti-Blackness that

Dumas has theorized schools as "sites of Black suffering" where "the Black is constructed as always already problem—as nonhuman; inherently uneducable, or at very least, unworthy of education" (Dumas, 2016, p. 16). This positioning of anti-Blackness as foundational to educational policy and practice has had devastating consequences for Black students, and as I later argue, for the Black racial identity of Afro-Latina girls.

If young people primarily draw from their home and schooling experiences to develop their racial and ethnic identities (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014), what lessons about the meaning and value of Black identity are they taught in schools? Ruth Nicole Brown argues that Black girls experience "pervasive nonrecognition" in schools, where compliance is valued above all else (Brown, 2013, p. 100). In this context, Black girls learn to attach negative meaning to their Blackness, where their identities are always dehumanized.

Yet, Black youth don't only navigate schools, they also draw from their experiences in other spaces to make sense of their Blackness. In her study of West Indian girls in New York City, Oneka LaBennett argues that participants draw from their experiences in different museums to understand the racial landscape of the city, where "white" museums are better resourced than the ones in their Black neighborhoods (LaBennett, 2011). Anti-Blackness then, becomes a primary lens through which Black youth are forced to make sense of their Black identity, and yet, they can also draw from other experiences to negotiate, resist, and developing affirming alternative narratives.

Fostering Critical Consciousness in Third Spaces

The "third space" refers to spaces where students and adults draw on their own experiences to co-create positive learning environments centered on collaboration (Gutiérrez, 2008). Typically envisioned as "third spaces" CBES function differently than schools because they are not always subjected to the same strict curriculums (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Gutiérrez, 2008; Rogoff et al., 2016). As a result, many youth of color turn to CBES as alternatives to the racist and anti-Black practices found in schools (Baldridge, 2019; Ginwright, 2007). Although the landscape of youth programs can vary greatly, with some CBES engaging in neoliberal practices (Baldridge, 2019), others attempt to disrupt racist patterns by fostering the "critical consciousness" of youth of color (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Kwon, 2008; Ventura, 2017). Freire (1996) defined "conscientizacao" or consciousness as the ability to "perceive oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (p. 31). For Black youth in particular, critical consciousness becomes an important

pathway to critique systems of oppression and tap into their agency to promote social change (Ginwright, 2007).

CBES are uniquely positioned to function as third spaces because they have more curricular flexibility than schools, offering staff members more latitude in curriculum development, more time to dedicate to informal check-ins with young people, and less emphasis on controlling student movement (Rogoff et al., 2016). CBES are also well-positioned to foster positive relationships between peers (Wiggins, 2018) and to enact practices that allow them to foster "authentic youth-adult partnerships" (Medina et al., 2020).

When Black youth develop a critical consciousness, "politicized racial identities" also emerge (Ginwright, 2007, pp. 412, 413). As they reframe "personal challenges into political issues" Ginwright writes, Black youth feel empowered to "critique and resist the status quo" (Ginwright, 2007, p. 413). Considering the multitude of anti-Black messages and practices Black youth encounter, CBES that foster critical consciousness can offer young people affirming narratives about Black identity. For Afro-Latinxs youth who grow up with the ideology of mestizaje at home and experience anti-Blackness at school, these third spaces offer critical insight into how different educational contexts produce specific racial identities.

Methods

Fieldsite

As soon as you enter Sadie Nash, you realize that you're not in school. The walls are filled with posters from past workshops. An image with the words "Free Bresha" referencing Bresha Meadows, a Black girl who was incarcerated for killing her abusive father, is prominently displayed in the Newark office. The chairs are set up in a circle, with a few cushions and blankets mixed in for those that prefer to sit on the floor. The Sadie Nash Leadership Project, a CBES serving teenage girls and gender expansive youth of color in New York City and Newark, New Jersey was founded with the goal of promoting leadership and social justice activism among high school-aged youth. Through five core programs, Sadie Nash staff foster the critical consciousness of participants by conducting workshops where nashers learn about how issues of power, racism, and heterosexism impact their lives. At the end of every program, nashers create their own social justice projects where they address these issues in their communities. Staff and volunteers are also trained in these core principles of critical consciousness and activism through workshops and professional development trainings. Most critically, these adults are encouraged to tap into their own experiences so that they can

co-foster an environment centered around the power and knowledge already held by young people. This attention to critical consciousness and activism places Sadie Nash among a small group of CBES that encourage young people to critique and dismantle the oppressive systems that shape their lives (Baldridge, 2019; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002).

Data for this study come from weekly participant observations of Sadie Nash programming in Newark and NYC. Specifically, I gathered data on its Sisterhood and Summer Institute programs because they serve as nashers' first entry point into the organization. During the school year, a group of 15 to 20 young people who join Sisterhood meet once a week for 2 hours to discuss topics related to power, inequality, and social justice. In the summer, Summer Institute runs for 6-weeks but meets every weekday. Here two cohorts of 15 nashers participate in a core class whose curriculum overlaps with the Sisterhood curriculum. Although all Sadie Nash workshops have one facilitator and a "dean," who is a typically a college student, co-lead these sessions, I became the third co-facilitator in these spaces while collecting data for this study.

Positionality

As a young, Black, light-skin Latina with a Spanish accent, nashers often came to me with questions or thoughts about Afro-Latinidad. This triple identity of researcher, co-facilitator, and Black Latina had important implications for my fieldwork. I knew that my identity coupled with my existing role as a volunteer at Sadie Nash meant that I couldn't, as Aimee Cox describes, "just sit there and take notes" (Cox, 2015, p. 35). This meant being an active co-facilitator by helping lead activities, set up and clean up the room, and engaging in informal conversations with nashers. Additionally, recognizing how often researchers enter field sites with the idea that they are "saving" communities, I paid close attention to how my weekly trips to Sadie Nash helped me cope with and navigate my own graduate school experiences. As Ruth Nicole Brown argues, my research wasn't about "saving the girls" but about "saving [my]self" (Brown, 2013, p. 43). Being in this in-between space of researcher and Black girl, meant taking responsibility not only for accurate data collection but also for co-creating a space where Black girls, including myself, could authentically show up.

Participants

Taking up the definition of Afro-Latinxs as "those Latin@s of visible or self-proclaimed African descent" (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010, p. 4), I

recruited study participants through a two-tier process. First, I asked for consent and assent forms from all nashers. This allowed me to record observations from Latina youth who did *and* did not identify as Black at the beginning of the program. Months later, I recruited interview participants who self-identified as Black Latina or Afro-Latina. I use the terms Black Latina and Afro-Latina interchangeably because they refer to people who are both Black and Latinx and because these are the terms that nashers and staff members used to refer to Black Latinx people.

In total, 14 interviewees were current program participants while six were recent Sadie Nash alumni. Additionally, 13 participated in Sadie Nash's New York City office while seven were from Newark. All but two participants had parents who were both Latinxs (the others had one African American and one Latinx parent) and eleven identified as Dominican, seven as Puerto Rican, one Panamanian, and one Colombian. I use pseudonyms throughout this paper to protect the anonymity of all participants, including nashers and staff members.

Data collection and analysis. In addition to ethnographic observations, I also collected and analyzed workshop materials such as concept maps where nashers brainstormed their ideas about race. Additionally, I conducted in-depth interviews with 20 Sadie Nash participants and alumni. These interviews gave me an opportunity to inquire about observations or patterns observed in the field. All field notes, workshop materials, and interviews were analyzed using flexible coding methods in NVivo (Deterding & Waters, 2018). I then categorized these codes into sub-themes based on repetition and salience.

Limitations

Previous research shows how particular places "produce" certain types of racial and ethnic identities and the NYC metro area is no different due to its position as a place of encounter for many Black ethnic groups (Hunter & Robinson, 2018; LaBennett, 2011). The NYC metro area boasts a vibrant and diverse Latinx population. In addition to having significant Afro-Latinxs (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010), residential segregation also means that these groups are likely to live amongst and go to school with African Americans and West Indians, leading Afro-Latinx youth to grow up in diverse Black cultural contexts (Ramos-Zayas, 2007). Because of these regional particularities, I do not claim that this study is generalizable to all Latinxs. Instead, my goal is to highlight the particular contexts in which Afro-Latinx identity emerges in NYC and Newark and to examine why Latina youth who

grow up in these cities do not articulate Black Latinx identity until they arrive at Sadie Nash. Additionally, while this study is not generalizable to non-Black Latinx youth, it offers insight into the experiences of a group that has been understudied in Latinx literature: Afro-Latina girls.

Findings

Becoming Mestiza in the Latinx Home

The Latinx household is an important place where narratives of mestizaje and anti-Blackness are constructed, as Latinx youth are taught to straighten their hair, stay away from the sun, and choose romantic partners in ways that "better the race" (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019; Llorens, 2018). For the nashers in this study, growing up in a Latinx household meant learning to become mestiza through grooming practices and informal lessons about Blackness always existing elsewhere. For example, many of the girls described feeling pressure to style their hair in ways that hid their Black features,

> "Oh and when I decided that I wouldn't straighten my hair anymore it was a problem. Scandalous [laughs]. My mom told me that I was embarrassing her. . . every time I would wear braids it was a problem."

When Julissa began wearing her hair natural, her mother framed it as a transgression of Latinx beauty norms. Because hair is a critical part of how Latinxs "do" mestizaje (Candelario, 2007), the young women in this study encountered extensive criticism from their families if they did not conform to beauty practices that hid their Blackness. In these families, "doing" their hair correctly meant, as Kara said, "hiding the kinks." It is through these grooming practices, a pivotal ritual in Black girls' experiences growing up that the Latina girls in this study learned that to become mestiza you had to become non-Black.

Interviews with nashers also reveal that disidentification with Blackness is taught through informal family conversations where Latinxs youth learn to distance themselves from Black identity. For example, Barbara, the daughter of an African American mother and Dominican father recalls how some family members implied that she was not Latina enough because her mother is African American,

> "My dad's side has always just—they just identify as Dominican . . . And when I would come around they would make comments about my hair, or like the fact that my older sister is lighter skinned than me . . . even though some of them are the same or even darker than me [laughs]"

Barbara illustrates how Black identity is framed as always outside of the perimeters of Latinidad regardless of what one looks like (Llorens, 2018). Dominican scholars have argued that colonial and imperial ideologies encourage misidentification with Black racial identity even among Dominicans who are phenotypically Black (Garcia-Peña, 2016). Hearing negative comments about her racial features from family members who "were darker than [her]" teaches young people like Barbara that you can look Black and still reject Black identity.

Jessica, a Dominican-American also described how her parents emphasized racial distinctions between themselves and other Black ethnic groups, "yeah my family was always very anti-Black. . .they always told me that I was like [pause] separate from Haitians or other Black people on our block." Jessica's reflection is representative of the mestizo ideologies that purposefully distance Dominicans from Haitians, even as these groups share many phenotypical and cultural traits (García-Peña, 2016). Through these informal lessons, Latina youth like Jessica and Barbara learn to create distance between themselves and other Black groups, learning that Black Latinidad is an impossible and unviable racial category.

From the Kitchen Table to the Classroom: Invisibilizing Black Latinidad in Schools

Interviews with nashers reveal that schools reinforced these racial ideologies through the silencing of Afro-Latinidad in the curriculum. Research has long documented how the lack of culturally relevant curriculum in urban schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and increased focus on testing (Sojoyner, 2016) has deleterious effects on the academic engagement of Black youth by erasing their own histories from the curriculum. I extend these arguments by arguing that the lack of exposure to Black culture, history, and identity in urban schools also has implications for Black racial formation of Afro-Latina girls.

Nashers in NYC and Newark reported never having learned about Afro-Latinx figures, histories of Black people in Latin America, or Black Latinx issues in school. It is through these silences of Afro-Latinx identity in the curriculum that schools played a role in the production of a de-racialized Latinx identity. For example, when I asked nashers to talk about how their social justice perceptions might overlap with those of their peers at school Marisa, a light skin Afro-Latina, and Farah, the daughter of West African immigrants, quickly jumped in to recount an argument between her peers,

> "yeah, they told [our friend] that she can't speak on colorism or racism cause she's Dominican. . .and like that kinda stuff makes me so mad because her nationality has nothing to do with her race."

Farah mentions that nationality "has nothing to do with [] race" to argue that her peers should understand why her Dominican friend has the authority to speak about racism. Probing further, I asked why they thought that their peers had different viewpoints on race and ethnicity than they did, Marisa responded,

> "[students] are taught to just focus on the strict curriculum and to avoid thinking outside of the lines. . . [the curriculum] is not flexible. . . so[students] don't engage with the type of stuff (implying social justice issues) that we do here."

Marisa critiques the narrow school curriculum for not exposing her peers to social justice issues that might promote more nuanced understandings of race and ethnicity. Specifically, she emphasizes that her school has not taught them to recognize that you can be Black *and* Dominican. By differentiating what they learn at Sadie Nash (social justice) from what they learn at school ("strict curriculum"), Farah and Marisa underscore previous research that argues that CBES can affirm the racialized identities of young people through more flexible and culturally-aware curriculum (Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2002; Kwon, 2008).

Even when schools do engage with the histories and contexts of Black identity, they tend to do so through dehumanizing lenses (Dumas & ross, 2016). "All we learned about was slavery" Chanice, an NYC nasher said, "we never learned about like the activists and the people who created change." Here Chanice uncovers an important process through which schools dehumanize Black students' identities. When schools barely incorporate Blackness into the curriculum except for a few token stories of Black oppression, they teach students that Black identity is undesirable and marginal. For Afro-Latina girls, these lessons underscore the invisibility and negation of Blackness that they encounter at home further promoting their disidentification with Black Latinidad.

Articulating Afro-Latinx Identity at Sadie Nash

In New York City alone more than 10.2 million children and young adults are involved in CBES, with Black and Latinx students being more likely to enroll than other youth (Afterschool Alliance, 2019; Afterschool Alliance, 2013). In what follows I analyze how Sadie Nash's position as a third space enabled it

to foster the Black identity development of Afro-Latina youth. I argue that two elements of Sadie Nash were particularly important in these racial identity constructions: the racial identities of its youth workers and the curriculum and pedagogical strategies of the program.

Youth workers and the multiplicity of Black identity. Unlike too many urban schools, Sadie Nash has a very diverse staff with all youth workers identifying as people of color and over 75% as members of the Black diaspora—including African American, Caribbean, African, and Afro-Latinx. Research shows that when youth workers and youth share racial identities, they are able to develop more positive relationships (Nygreen et al., 2006). As I argue in this section, these benefits extend to racial formation where, through exposure to Black staff members who embody the multiplicity of Black identity, Afro-Latina nashers find affirming models of Black Latinidad.

From Bushwick, Brooklyn to north Newark, the NYC metro area is full of Black people who speak Spanish. Yet, nashers reveal that Sadie Nash youth workers were often the first adults they met who articulated and celebrated Afro-Latinx identity. Amanda, a Puerto Rican nasher from New York City, says,

> "[Afro-Latina staff member] was really helpful in [pause] in how I identify because she was always so proud of being Afro-Latina and she wasn't like ashamed of it. . .so I realized that if she could be proud of who she was, I could too."

Witnessing an Afro-Latina staff member be proud of her Black identity encouraged Amanda to identify with her own Blackness. Similarly, Amaya also recalled how her interactions with an Afro-Latina youth worker helped her understand and contextualize this identity,

> "One of the staff members [when I was a nasher] was big on [Afro-Latinidad] and identified as an Afro-Latina and she was always talking about it . . . so she explained it to me but also the oppression of how we're taught to hate that aspect of it. How we're taught to hate our race . . . and that helped me understand why my family was always so against [self-identifying as Black]"

Amaya recalls how this Afro-Latinx staff member not only embodied Black Latinidad but also helped her understand why she grew up in family that discouraged this racial identity. Much like how developing a critical consciousness helps young people reframe personal failures into political analyses (Ginwright, 2007), Afro-Latinx staff members like the ones Amaya encountered, provided nashers with the tools to make sense of her family's

(and perhaps her own initial) rejection of Afro-Latinidad by exposing her to knowledge about colonialism and racism in Latin America. As a result, Sadie Nash youth workers served as mentors who used curriculum and pedagogy to highlight the centrality of race in nashers' lives.

Promoting critical consciousness and Afro-Latinx identity through curriculum. "As you can see, there are pieces of paper around the room that name one of our identities. I'm going to read off a prompt and I want you to stand next to the identity that answers that prompt for you." Sam, an African American facilitator, was leading the group through one of the foundational activities in the Sisterhood curriculum: social identity walk. In this activity, nashers are asked to move around the room and select social identities that answer prompts like: "stand next to the identity that you think about the most" or "have the most questions about." After reading each of the social identities out loud, Sam asked the group if they had any questions, but as the room fell silent, she (like all facilitators did) defined four terms: gender and sexuality, and race and ethnicity. "Race is about what you look like. It's like the physical features that make someone 'look' white, or Black." Sam continued, "ethnicity is like your culture, what you like to eat, what language you speak. So, for example, you can be racially Black, ethnically Latinx, and from the Dominican Republic." Although social scientists agree that race is socially constructed, there's also widespread consensus that the arbitrary meanings attached to phenotype have real consequences (Omi & Winant, 1994). What Sam, Sadie Nash, and social scientists convey in saying that race is "about what you look like" is a sense of the lived experience of race, one that is grounded in how others perceive someone's racial group membership and how they treat them based on this perception (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Omi & Winant, 1994). The social identity walk, then, as one of the first workshops in the Sisterhood and Summer Institute curriculums, sets the foundation for a conceptualization of race and ethnicity that opens up space for reflecting on the lived experience of Afro-Latinx identity.

In workshops, nashers learned terms, definitions, and facts about social inequality that made them increasingly aware of the lived experience of race and anti-Blackness in their lives. By developing "politicized identities" (Ginwright, 2007) where they connected their experiences to those of their Black non-Latinx peers, Afro-Latina nashers began to articulate their racial experiences. Nami, for example, said that learning about the school-to-prison pipeline helped her see herself as a Black girl,

> "when [pause] when I think about the way I'm treated at school, [pause] I was always treated like my African Americans friends. . .like I was overly-disciplined and overly like watched"

Nami makes an explicit connection between her experience at school—that of being disciplined at similar rates as her African American peers—and her Black identity. She continues, "and that helped me understand that like yeah I can be Latina but I'm also Black. Because race is about how we're treated." In emphasizing that racial identity is an embodied experience, nashers like Nami used their treatment in school to think about what racial category they occupy. Research by Oneka LaBennett and Carla Shedd demonstrate that Black youth's experiences in multiple educational spaces give them insight into their position in society (LaBennett, 2011; Shedd, 2015). Latinx nashers at Sadie Nash extend these racialized meanings to the very racial categories that have been made (un)available to them at home and school by creating and embracing Black Latinx identity.

Importantly, Latinx nashers also encountered affirming narratives about Black girlhood and Black Latinidad at Sadie Nash. In particular, Sadie Nash youth workers were intentional about exposing participants to a diversity of women of color activists who created change in their communities. For example, workshops included activities that introduced nashers to artists like Audre Lorde and Carrie Mae Weems, scholars like Miriam Jiménez Román and Kimberlé Crenshaw, and activists like Alicia Garza and Shirley Chisholm. These Black women not only represented the diversity of the Black experience but also served as examples of Black women who pursued their passions and worked toward creating better worlds. Through multiple representations of Black women, Sadie Nash's curriculum and pedagogy not only encouraged Afro-Latina nashers to embrace their Black Latinidad but also to see it as something to be proud of and celebrate.

Conclusion

Scholarship about young people's educational experiences tends to emphasize their school-based academic outcomes. Yet, young people learn a lot about who they are and how the world sees them through their educational experiences in and outside of schools. These racial identities and meanings have important implications for their identities and sense of belonging as well as their orientations towards challenging injustice (Ginwright, 2007; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Hence, for the Afro-Latina girls in this study, who experience anti-Blackness in school and mestizaje ideologies at home, CBES like Sadie Nash are powerful sites where they can explore and develop affirming narratives about their racial identity.

I have argued that Sadie Nash's position as a third space enables Afro-Latina girls to see and valorize Blackness as an increasingly central part of their lives. Specifically, I have identified two program strategies and practices.

First, I find that the racial makeup of its staff is significantly different than that of urban public schools. As a result, youth workers mirror the racial and ethnic backgrounds of nashers *and* model the diversity of the Black diaspora in important ways. Second, because Sadie Nash's curriculum is centered on critical consciousness, participants are encouraged to explore and reflect on their racialized experiences. This attention to the lived experience of race fosters Afro-Latina girls' reflections on how they move through the world. Additionally, because its curriculum incorporates overlooked Black women from the diaspora, Afro-Latina nashers learn to see themselves as part of a lineage of Black changemakers who celebrate and embrace their Blackness.

For Black Latinx youth who encounter anti-Blackness as "the climate," (Sharpe, 2016) this is important for several reasons. First, I contend that Afro-Latina girls encounter invisibility and subjugation regardless of whether they self-identify as Black. This is often a source of dissonance for Afro-Latinx youth, who grow up with the emotional impact of anti-Black policies and practices but without the concepts to name this experience (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019). Thus, I suggest that Afro-Latina girls who see themselves as Black subjects are better positioned to make sense of these lived experiences. Second, Afro-Latina girls who embrace and celebrate their Afro-Latinidad may find community and healing alongside other Black girls. Through these communities of care, Afro-Latina girls may be encouraged to challenge anti-Black racism, carrying messages of Black pride to their homes, schools, and other spaces they inhabit. Perhaps most critically, Afro-Latinas who know and embrace being Black are also positioned to create alternative narratives about Black Latina girlhood; thereby engaging in Black girl self-makings that reimagine a world that celebrates all that they are.

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