

SINGLE-SEX EDUCATION FOR GIRLS' SELF-WORTH

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS  
IN  
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

FALL 2020

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Keywords: Education, Educational sociology, Women's studies

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## Abstract

Adolescent girls currently face sexism, discrimination, and microaggressions in coeducational school from teachers, administrators, and peers, which can lead to unhealthy self-esteem, depression, and suicide. This study aims to determine if single-sex schooling is beneficial to girls' self-worth due to the removal of male students. To test the hypothesis that all-girls schooling leads to empowered students, an online questionnaire was submitted to Juniors and Seniors at one all-girls school. Responses were analyzed using a feminist methodology by placing female student voice in the forefront. The results showed that students at one all-girls school feel successful when their work is determined so by an authority figure within the educational institution. These results suggest that students at one all-girls school are not empowered to determine success for themselves, but instead rely on adults within the educational system to determine when they are successful. Within American society, schools – coeducational and single-sex – exist within a patriarchal society. On this basis, the entire social and educational system should be taken into account when designing an empowering educational setting for girls.

**Chapter 1:**  
**Introduction**

## *The Problem*

Increasingly, many Americans have come to view education as key to solving the inequities plaguing our world. Educators believe that a particular kind of education can transform individuals and societies into models of social justice. Parents believe that the right education will give their child a bright future as empowered leaders. This belief in the transformative power of education sets the backdrop for my project: a re-imagining of all-girls education.

Families are faced with numerous options for educating their children – public schools, private schools, charter schools, homeschools, college-preparatory schools, boarding schools, parochial schools, single-sex schools – and each spout the unique value of their setting, style, staff, and mission. When choosing a school, families want the best learning environment that will result in academic and professional success – typically understood as securing a college education and an upstanding career, as well as ensuring personal confidence for their child. Yet, in some regions of the United States, families struggle to find schools that provide the opportunities they believe are necessary for their children to achieve success and attain their goals.

## *Context*

The island of O‘ahu houses 168 public schools, 16 charter schools, and 67 private schools that serve students within the range of kindergarten through twelfth grade.<sup>1</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup> “Oahu Map,” *Hawaii State Department of Education*, (2020, accessed 10 July 2020); available from <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ParentsAndStudents/EnrollingInSchool/SchoolFinder/Pages/Oahu-Map.aspx>; Internet.

none of the public schools serve only girls, just four of the total number of private schools are all-female.<sup>2</sup> This number represents six percent of the island's private school offerings and less than 2% of the total school offerings. Thus, as these statistics unfortunately demonstrate, there are few opportunities for girls to receive an education in a single-sex environment in the state of Hawai'i.

Coeducational schools are the norm in the United States in both public and private institutions, and they are often associated with many benefits to student development as they offer a number of real-world social interactions. For example, many workplaces and most public spaces are co-ed. There is also some belief among researchers and non-scholars, alike, that students learn cross-gender socialization in co-ed school.<sup>3</sup> In addition, co-ed schooling is the proud result of activists who fought for girls and boys to have access to the same facilities and same courses, which some activists and scholars believe to be equitable.<sup>4</sup>

But, despite co-ed school being the norm in public and private schools, I believe coeducational settings provide a disservice for many girls by harming their self-worth. In co-ed learning environments, many girls learn to speak less, to exhibit behaviors that do not compete with boys, and to accept male dominance as normal.<sup>5</sup> The tragic result of girls learning these social norms is an adult society of men who are used to dominating public spaces and women who accept being treated as inferior. An education at a female-only

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<sup>2</sup> "List of Hawai'i Private Schools," *Honolulu Magazine*, (2020, accessed 23 April 2020); available from <http://www.honolulumagazine.com/Hawaii-Private-School-Guide/List-of-Hawaii-Private-Schools/index.php/island/Oahu/gender/Girls/>.

<sup>3</sup> Fred A. Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling: Relationships to Socioemotional and Academic Development," *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 68, no. 2 (1998): 104.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>5</sup> *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992), 71.

institution, on the other hand, can empower girls through an all-female environment to help them believe in themselves as capable, valuable individuals who are worthy of respect. These psychological benefits for female students who attend all-girls schools are reflected in their positive opinions of math and science, feelings of control over their circumstances, and overall greater satisfaction with their experiences at school and with their teachers.<sup>6</sup>

Of the four all-girls schools on O'ahu, only two serve students from kindergarten all the way through twelfth grade. The broad focus of my study is to investigate the reflections of students at one of these institutions, The Academy, about their educational experiences in an effort to learn to learn if a single-sex school environment offers a different kind of learning setting that positively impacts girls' social and emotional development and academic and extracurricular achievements more so than coeducational institutions. In addition, an overwhelming majority of the students at The Academy are Asian American, which adds another layer of interest to my study: investigating how these girls of color respond to a single-sex education.

It must be acknowledged that the label of Asian American (AA) is, itself, absurd. Historically, people from the continent of Asia, particularly Eastern Asia, excluding India and the Middle East, have been arbitrarily lumped together to form the racial category "Asian." Eileen H. Tamura, historian of education, explains that there is "tremendous diversity among Asian Americans and their histories" which makes the term itself problematic.<sup>7</sup> Historically, it had been used as an artificial label created by non-Asians to

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<sup>6</sup> Fred A. Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 112.

<sup>7</sup> Eileen H. Tamura, "Asian Americans in the History of Education: An Historiographical Essay," *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2001): 59.

categorize any person of Asian descent.<sup>8</sup> Although I recognize this label is problematic, it offers a common basis of understanding. As a result, I will be using the term AA in my project to refer to people of Asian ancestry. Nevertheless, when using the term AA, I do so understanding the challenges it presents when amalgamating many peoples, regions, languages, and cultures.

I situate this project within this system of racial classification along with the daily oppression, discrimination, and physical and emotional risks AA girls face in American schools in order to highlight how the intersection of race and gender defines their schooling experiences. This is important to establish as I have been limited to only investigating student views related to their gender. Nevertheless, the data for this study has been collected from The Academy's majority AA student population and still contains a wealth of information that informs and animates my project that contributes to and expand the literature in exciting and new directions. It shows how an all-girls educational setting can be beneficial to AA female students' self-worth and self-esteem in transforming them into adult women who are proud of themselves and satisfied with their lives. No matter what role these students choose to take on in their adult lives – motherhood, working professionalism, social justice activism, or a combination – they will have the skills and motivation to overturn the sexism and racism in society because of their foundation in a just educational setting.

As a mixed-race Asian American and Caucasian woman, I have faced racism, sexism, and neglect by peers, teachers, and administrators throughout my twelve years in a predominantly White, Midwestern, coeducational public school setting. Year after year, I

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 59.

was ignored by the primarily White adults within the school, bullied by my peers for my race, and sexually assaulted by male students in the hallways. I responded to some of these negative experiences by developing anorexia, battling suicidal thoughts, and suffering from chronic depression. Meanwhile, my teachers celebrated White male students who were loud, talkative, extroverted, athletic, and popular. Because White patriarchy dominates society, boys are often validated for their various movements and use of voice, meaning they are more freely allowed to act, move, and speak, while girls are not. I craved teacher attention, approval, and affection, but I feared bringing more negativity to my schooling experience by taking any intellectual or social risks. In short, I did not possess the self-confidence to speak out or step out of my comfort zone since school was not an emotionally safe place for me to experience failure should my risk-taking not succeed. Therefore, I had followed the “hidden curriculum” of my schooling that had taught me to stay quiet, behave obediently, and agree with the teacher. However, after reading about the educational experiences of female students of color as described by Rosalind Chou, Stacey J. Lee, Jennifer C. Ng, and Mae M. Ngai, I have learned I am not alone. The traumas and microaggressions I experienced in school are all too commonplace for female AA students, and students of color more broadly.

These traumas and microaggressions are examples of the widespread devaluation of girls by society and often leads to feelings of low self-worth in many girls. Abysmally low self-esteem in girls and women is a health crisis in American society. Low self-esteem can lead to depression and suicide and, as such, constitutes dangerous possible outcomes for girls who possess unhealthy self-worth. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the second most common cause of death for American youths, ages

10-19, and the suicide rates among young females have seen a sharp increase in recent years, rising at a greater rate than male youths.<sup>9</sup> In addition, after the onset of puberty, girls are 1.5-2 times more likely than boys to be diagnosed with depression – a gender gap that persists into adulthood.<sup>10</sup>

These devastating statistics are no surprise when one acknowledges the normalcy of sexist, even inhumane, treatment of girls and women. In person and online – at school, in the workplace, and at home – girls are routinely sexually and physically harassed and assaulted, objectified, mocked, and discriminated against. Tragically, girls are regularly ignored, and even blamed, as victims of these traumatic ordeals. While this is the reality for many girls and women, in general, experiences of harassment and objectification are often exacerbated for women of color because of society’s racial prejudices against them.

For AA girls and women, their experiences are racialized thereby revealing how the intersection of race and gender shapes and constructs popular understandings of AA women in American society. In social and mainstream media, they are commonly portrayed as petite and effortlessly skinny, as well as hypersexualized and stereotyped as submissive and available to the advances of White men.<sup>11</sup> This socially created view of their femininity patronizingly defines AA women as exotic, passive, docile, and small, which

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<sup>9</sup> “QuickStats: Suicide Rates for Teens Ages 15-19 Years, by Sex – United States, 1975-2015” (*Centers for disease Control and Prevention*, 2017, accessed 15 April 2020); available from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6630a6.htm>; Internet.

<sup>10</sup> Suzanne, Petroni, et al. “Why is suicide the leading killer of older adolescent girls?” *The Lancet* vol. 386 (November 2015): 2031-2032.

<sup>11</sup> Rosalind Chou, *Asian American Sexual Politics the Construction of Race, Gender, and Sexuality* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 21.

many White men find attractive as it maintains and affirms their contrasting ideas of masculinity – powerful, active, aggressive, and desirable.<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly, White women also struggle to achieve the impossible beauty standards set for women that maintain male supremacy, but it is truly unachievable for a woman of color to meet hegemonic beauty expectations because they are centered on White supremacy.<sup>13</sup> The psychological distress may be even worse for AA girls whose genetic makeup sets them even further back from society's gendered expectations than White girls from reaching beauty expectations that favor big eyes, blond hair, and large breasts and hips.

Furthermore, while there is a wide range of White female actors, artists, and celebrities, AA women are so underrepresented in popular media that there are few, if any, counter-frames (socially normalized models that oppose stereotypes) available for AA girls and women to see. For example, in a recent study of 60 AA, female college students, 100% of the participants could recall being teased because of their race in the past 12 months.<sup>14</sup> After knowing these physically and psychologically painful experiences, traumas, and microaggressions that AA girls face regularly, it is less surprising, yet still incredibly tragic, to learn that AA girls between the ages of 15-24 have the highest rates of depression and the highest suicide mortality rates of any racial or gender demographic.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to race-based discrimination, AA girls also face the same obstacles and stresses as many other non-Asian girls and develop eating disorders as well as other

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>15</sup> Tomoko Tokunaga, "'We Dominate the Basement!': How Asian American Girls Construct a Borderland Community," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 29, no. 9 (October 20, 2016): 1087.

psychological disorders. The physical and mental trauma that result from these constant attacks and critiques are embedded in social media, popular music, television, advertisements, and clothing brands that bombard girls and women with powerful and contradictory messages about how they ought to be small, sweet, and passive, as well as curvy, sassy, and sexually aggressive. In response to these messages, girls attempt to comply in a variety of ways – from being quiet and meek in school to starving themselves or getting cosmetic surgery to change their bodies.<sup>16</sup> Almost inevitably, girls feel shame and worthlessness for not achieving the impossible personality type and unattainable body shape and size deemed as “attractive” by American society that places enormous value on women’s appearance and sexual appeal. Girls often respond to this psychological and physical trauma with humiliation, confusion, and silence.<sup>17</sup> This lived reality of young American, in particular AA, girls motivates my study.

Although race is a major factor and influence of this study, my data does not directly reflect, include, or address race. While race is a critical component of The Academy students’ identity, it will remain in the background of this project. The Academy’s Head of School did not approve any questions pertaining to race to be submitted to students. As a result, the primary focus of my project will be on gender, specifically the mindsets and perceptions held by girls within a single-sex school. I will address these matters in greater detail in the data section.

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<sup>16</sup> Rosalind Chou, *Asian American Sexual Politics*, 78.

<sup>17</sup> *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992), 12.

## *A Solution*

A potential solution to the injustice of inequitable treatment of female students of color is social-justice-oriented single-sex schooling for girls. This is a rare type of institution that competes with the common model of co-ed schooling, which is inherently patriarchal and actively detrimental to girls.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to popular belief, co-ed schooling is neither “natural” nor “normal,” nor does it better prepare students for the “real world.”<sup>19</sup> Single-sex schools are common in many countries, but, despite their increased prominence in the last decade in the United States, they remain relatively scarce, largely due to a combination of legal, social, and economic reasons dating back to the early 1900s.<sup>20</sup> In 1972, the passage of Title IX – the federal statute intended to eliminate gender discrimination in education – further complicated matters for the expansion of single-sex education in public schools as it disallows taxpayer money to be spent on such public institutions.

Although all-girls’ schooling has fallen out of favor in the U.S., I see a need to renew such a learning environment by re-imagining it as an empowering, feminist setting that can exist in public and private schools. As such, it is important to analyze how current all-girls schools successfully raise up generations of girls to speak for themselves, pursue their interests, and challenge stereotypes – which is the aim of my project on *The Academy*. It is my belief that all-girls schooling is the equitable solution to the sexist mistreatment and neglect girls currently face in co-ed schools. Without boys at school, I believe girls will be able to experience and expect respectful treatment from those around them, see

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<sup>18</sup> Mael, “Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling,” 104.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>20</sup> Patterson and Pahlke, 740 and Mael, “Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling,” 101.

themselves and their peers as leaders, thrive socially, emotionally, and academically in the classroom and, with this foundation, throughout their lives.

However, contemporary research has not conclusively determined whether single-sex schooling has more positive or negative effects for female students. There are many arguments for and against all-girls schools, and studies have shown mixed results of this school type. It is difficult to form conclusions regarding the efficacy of single-sex schooling because of the numerous other factors that skew data, such as teacher quality, school resources, peer influence, parent involvement, and students' economic background.<sup>21</sup> In addition, studies of single-sex schools are inherently influenced by the fact that student enrollment in this setting is voluntary. Therefore, one cannot fairly compare students in coeducational schools with those in single-sex schools because the choice to enroll in either of these implies bias in favor of the attended institution.

Some researchers have worked to eliminate these extenuating factors as much as possible from their research on single-sex education. One such researcher is Amy Roberson Hayes, who describes her study and its results in the publication "The Efficacy of Single-Sex Education: Testing for Selection and Peer Quality Effects." Hayes' team examined fifth-grade students at a co-ed school who had applied for an all-girls middle school. Applicants were accepted and denied based on a random lottery system. The researchers included in their study only students who had scored comparably well in fifth grade so that the major differentiating factor in sixth and seventh grade scores was the school setting. Their findings showed that the students in the single-sex school earned

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<sup>21</sup> Amy Roberson Hayes, et al., "The Efficacy of Single-Sex Education: Testing for Selection and Peer Quality Effects," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, vol. 64, no. 9 (2011): 694.

significantly higher achievement scores at the end of sixth and seventh grade than the students who remained in a co-ed setting, indicating that female students have greater academic success in a single-sex setting.<sup>22</sup>

To further support this indication, Hayes cites a study done in which female college students of the same ability level were given a math test in three different spaces: an all-female setting, a co-ed setting, and an all-male setting in which the female research participant is the only woman in the group. The results showed female test-takers scored the best in the all-female setting and the worst in the all-male setting.<sup>23</sup> Another researcher corroborated this finding by discovering that female student achievement is inversely related to the number of males on campus, and positively related to the percentage of females on faculty.<sup>24</sup>

In his article, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling: Relationships to Socioemotional and Academic Development," education author Fred A. Mael lists numerous benefits to all-girls schooling that extend beyond academics. In a study of 1,809 students from 75 all-girls high schools, students were found to enroll in more math courses, rate their school and teachers more positively, and have higher educational aspirations compared to students at co-ed high schools.<sup>25</sup> These findings took place in spite of the fact that the all-girls schools in the study had lower per pupil expenditures, less teacher stability, and a lower percentage of teachers with advanced degrees.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hayes, et al., "The Efficacy of Single-Sex Education," 698-699.

<sup>23</sup> Hayes, et al., "The Efficacy of Single-Sex Education," 700.

<sup>24</sup> Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 110.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

Mael synthesized several other studies from around the world regarding the efficacy of single-sex schooling, and the results are overwhelmingly positive regarding the academic and socioemotional development of girls. First, Mael identified studies that controlled, as much as possible, for socio-economic variables, student background, teacher qualifications, school characteristics, classroom characteristics, parent involvement, and peer influence. Across the board, he found that girls perform better academically in a single-sex setting. This is true in predominantly White communities, as well as within large minority populations. Girl students in a single-sex setting were found to have a better attitude toward math and to perform better in science, despite worse science facilities at all-girls schools. In terms of their socio-emotional development, girls who receive a single-sex education have higher self-esteem, greater perceived cognitive competence, greater perceived self-growth, and are more likely to express internal locus of control attitudes, which means they believe they have a greater degree of control over events in their lives compared to girls who receive a co-ed education.<sup>27</sup> Girls in a single-sex school also have better relationships with faculty and more overall satisfaction with academics.<sup>28</sup>

Researcher Karen Gallas compared how elementary-age girls acted in a co-ed setting and in a single-sex setting and recorded her observations in her article *"Sometimes I Can Be Anything:" Power, Gender, and Identity in a Primary Classroom*. In co-ed groups of students, Gallas observed boys, not girls, initiating ideas and assuming responsibility for planning. The female students she observed used indirect means to signal they needed help; they rarely asked for what they needed; and they waited for a private opportunity to

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<sup>27</sup> Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 111.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

ask the teacher questions. In sum, female students displayed a passive demeanor in co-ed, public settings, while male students were generally active.<sup>29</sup> However, the opposite was true when female students had the opportunity to work in single-sex groupings. In this environment, female students were expressive and animated, spontaneous and creative, and assumed responsibility in dividing up and performing tasks. Mael discusses the same finding in adult women: women are more submissive and persuadable when interacting with men than when interacting with other women.<sup>30</sup>

I believe there are unique and powerful benefits associated with all-girls schooling. Girls need to see girls speaking out and sharing their opinions with others. Girls need to see girls in every leadership position their school has to offer. Girls need to see girls as the smart ones, the funny ones, the confident ones, the athletic ones – girls need to see girls occupying every space and every role as normal and natural while they are children so they can continue to boldly occupy spaces in society as adults. Witnessing and participating in such positive experiences will develop girls' sense of self-worth and allow them to feel empowered to change society by taking up space in society. My hope is by not witnessing male supremacy in the classroom, students at all-girls schools will not be conditioned to accept male domination in the household, in the workplace, or in society at large.

This project is organized according to the following: a review of literature concerning Asian American girls experiences in school, a research method through which girls at an all-female school answered questions about their experience, an analysis of the data and discussion of the findings, and a reflection and recommendation for how schools

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<sup>29</sup> Karen Gallas, *"Sometimes I Can Be Anything:" Power, Gender, and Identity in a Primary Classroom* (Teachers College Press, 1998), 113.

<sup>30</sup> Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 113.

can provide female students with a more equitable education. The entire project operates within feminist theory for the purpose of critiquing the inequality of coeducational schools and determining the effectiveness of a specific all-girls school for empowering its female students. I will be utilizing narrative inquiry to frame and produce a story about the educational experiences of Academy students from statistics and student quotes generated from my survey.

**Chapter 2:**  
**Literature Review**

There is a great deal of literature documenting the social experiences of girls in schools, AA students in schools, and the implications of schooling on the self-esteem of both of these populations. To conduct my research into the effects of single-sex schooling on female students at the Academy, it is important to know the historical, cultural, and social experience of girls in coeducational settings to understand the inequities of present-day, co-ed schooling. Knowing this context will allow me to evaluate how the sexualization and racialization of girls, and the power imbalances between boys and girls, that exist in a coeducational setting are present, and to what extent, they also exist in a single-sex school. The majority of the students involved in my study are Asian American (AA). Therefore, it is worth investigating the social context surrounding contemporary Asian American students in the American education system in preparation for this project. Important aspects are 1) the historical stereotypes associated with Asian immigrants in the United States and Asian Americans (prejudices that continue to define Asian Americans today and that have bled into the education sphere), 2) the gap between the stereotyped and real academic successes of Asian American students, 3) the lack of Asian American representation in the American education system, and 4) how the totality of K-12 schooling contributes to the formation of self-value in Asian American students.

Knowing the broader historical, cultural, and social context of Asian American female students in American continental schools has prepared me to better understand students who may or may not identify as members of this racial category but are categorized as such. The lack of critical work that recognizes and explores the intersection of race and gender that defines the social experience for AA female students is a major hole in academia that mirrors this population's invisibility in American society. Although my

study is informed by this context, due to administrative circumstances beyond my control I was not able to discuss race within my research. As such, my project's sole focus has been on how students' gender affect their education and schooling experiences. Nonetheless, I will describe in depth the research surrounding Asian American girls in school because it gives important context to the majority of my study's participants who are female, Asian American students and represent one of the most ignored, yet most at-risk, demographics in our country.<sup>31</sup>

Initially, I was interested in learning how AA girls perceive their own attractiveness to get a glimpse into society's and their school setting's impact on their self-esteem. However, such questions pertaining to appearance were removed due to privacy concerns. Despite this development, it is important to know that Asian American girls and women have and continue to struggle to attain the American beauty standard which is rooted in Whiteness. In a society that harshly judges and unfairly values women and girls for their appearance, this information could help explain why the majority of participants do not feel confident. Also, although I could not ask participants questions about their race, it is important to know that Asian American students are often expected by White educators to perform exceptionally well because of racist stereotypes. Although outside of the realm of my project, the entirety of the context of female Asian American students – essentially, the burdens the participants socially and emotionally carry with them into school – motivates my study.

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<sup>31</sup> Rosalind, Chou, *Asian American Sexual Politics*, 77.

### *Asian Americans Racialized*

Today although the term “Asian American” is imposed upon many, few have personally adopted it. Sapna Cheryan and Beoit Monin, professors in the Department of Psychology at Stanford University, explain that many AA people experience a phenomena known as “stereotype threat,” which is the fear of being seen in a negative light because of one’s group membership.<sup>32</sup> This anxiety likely contributes to why many AA people reject this label as part of their identity. A second phenomena described by Cheryan and Monin is that of “perpetual foreigner” whereby AA citizens feel American, but are treated by non-Asian Americans as though they do not belong in the United States.<sup>33</sup> In a study cited by these two professors, Americans rated faces as appearing “American” or not. The results of the study were that White faces were perceived as the most American and faces with Asian features were perceived to be the least American. African American and Hispanic faces were rated lower than White, but higher than Asian. Interestingly, both White and AA people rated the AA faces as less American than the White faces.<sup>34</sup> This finding suggests that AA people hold the same foreigner bias against Asian features as White people, indicating that the hegemonic, mainstream belief system is so deeply embedded in American society that even minorities accept majority opinions.

Racialized beliefs and assumptions of foreignness affect the ways people are treated and the opportunities they are given. Simultaneously, the ways people are treated and the opportunities they are given affect how people see and think about themselves. How a

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<sup>32</sup> S. Cheryan and B. Monin, “Where are you really from?: Asian Americans and Identity Denial,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 89, no. 5, 718.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 717.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 719-720.

person identifies – whether socially, racially, politically, or through their gender and sexual orientation – and the social undertones associated with the ways in which they do so, have important implications in shaping how one perceives of him- or herself. In particular, race and American society’s attitudes on race are critical influences on a person’s identity that affect their sense of self-worth.

Racialized categorization has had a long and consequential influence over American history. Such organization of people of color has thus contributed to larger racialized systems of discrimination present today, such as the justice system, policing, housing, healthcare, and education. In the case of Asian people emigrating from Asia to the United States during the mid-1800s, they immediately experienced it in various forms, beginning with restrictive immigration laws. Asian American Studies professor and legal and political historian, Mae Ngai explains that the U.S. government designed and applied immigration laws to rank the desirability of people from different countries, with Asian countries consistently ranked at the bottom.<sup>35</sup> As a result, Asian immigrants and subsequent generations of AAs have been made to feel they are perpetual foreigners in the United States and outside the definition of American because of their race.

Although there are many racial and ethnic groups present in the United States, the nation tends to operate within a Black and White racial binary. This binary excludes Asian Americans as a valid racial group, thus marginalizing and silencing this minority population.<sup>36</sup> As a result, Asian Americans and their experiences have rarely gained

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<sup>35</sup> Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. (Princeton University Press, 2004.)

<sup>36</sup> Jennifer C. Ng et al., “Contesting the Model Minority and Perpetual Foreigner Stereotypes: A Critical Review of Literature on Asian Americans in Education,” *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 31 (2007): 96.

visibility and voice as a distinct minority group on the same level as Black Americans. Yet, despite this marginalization, Asian Americans have long endured similar forms of racial subordination and institutional discrimination as Black Americans – racial violence, segregation, unequal access to public institutions, and discrimination in housing, employment, and education – with American courts even classifying Chinese Americans as Black during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in an attempt to justify segregationist policies.<sup>37</sup>

White Americans' perceptions of Asian Americans, and race more broadly, have shifted towards a more nuanced and inclusive understanding during the latter half of the twentieth century. But, Rosalind Chou, sociology professor and author of several books about Asian American experiences and interests, explains that changes to racial stereotyping throughout American history have been based mostly on the attitudes of powerful White men.<sup>38</sup> For instance, During World War II, Japanese Americans were considered a national security threat by many White Americans because of fear of a Japanese invasion of the U.S. mainland and large numbers of Japanese Americans living on the West Coast. As such, Japanese Americans were violently discriminated against by White Americans and resulted in government policy that affirmed such actions and attitudes. Under the view that Japanese Americans were a danger to public safety, President Roosevelt, backed by a fully supportive Congress, issued Executive Order 9066 (1942) that forced over 110,000 Japanese Americans into detention camps.<sup>39</sup> During this

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<sup>37</sup> Stacey J. Lee, *Unraveling the "Model Minority" Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth* (Teachers College Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>38</sup> Rosalind Chou, *Asian American Sexual Politics*, 15.

<sup>39</sup> Roger Daniels, "Japanese Americans: The War at Home." (Scholastic, 2020, accessed 13 August 2020) available from <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/wwii/ahf/mineta/background.htm>; Internet.

time, the Nisei generation pushed their Sansei children and grandchildren to perform exceptionally well in school to prove their worth as successful American students in order to combat racial assaults.<sup>40</sup>

The shift to the classroom signaled a new racialized construction of AAs by White America. Japanese Americans, as well as Chinese Americans, Korean Americans, and Indian Americans, gradually became recognized by Whites as highly successful students. Educational anthropologist Stacey J. Lee, in *Unraveling the Model Minority*, explains that, in order to maintain a society of White supremacy, White Americans began to elevate Asian Americans as an example of the American dream: upward mobility through individual achievement. In this way, Asian Americans have become interestingly positioned within the American racial hierarchy as superior to other minority groups in some ways, but always outside the standard of a White American.<sup>41</sup> As Lee points out, the Model Minority stereotype is a racist ideology designed to differentiate Asian people as inherently different from White people. White people who hold this ideology have gone so far as to invoke pseudo-scientific research to attribute personal characteristics and intellectual abilities based on genetic makeup. For instance, Asian American academic success has commonly been credited to an Asian gene, as though Asians are so inherently different that they have an altogether separate biology.<sup>42</sup> This kind of thinking reinforces the perception that Asian

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>41</sup> Ng et al., "Contesting the Model Minority," 96.

<sup>42</sup> Ng et al., "Contesting the Model Minority," 98.

Americans are “perpetual foreigners” due to their racialized attributes and physical differences.<sup>43</sup>

This stereotype may seem to only adversely impact AAs, but, in fact, it stretches farther to negatively affect other racial and ethnic groups. When a halo is cast around Asian Americans as Model Minorities, then the efforts of other minority groups are measured to the outcomes of AAs. Doing so thereby marginalizes the structural inequities of African American, Latino, Indigenous and other minority groups’ that pose disproportionate challenges to these groups and, instead, imposes a cultural deficit explanation for their lower economic, social, and academic status. This inevitably promotes interracial tension between Asian Americans and other groups of color, and even working-class Whites.

In education, the Model Minority myth also serves to villainize Asian American students as a threat to White students’ educational opportunities. There exists an anxiety that Asian American achievement will impact the grading curve to negatively harm White students, or that Asian American students will unfairly fill all the coveted spots in top universities.<sup>44</sup> This angst has influenced many White Americans to take up the contrary view that AA people are more intelligent than other people of color, but also less trustworthy – as if they take what is not theirs through deceit. This view benefits White Americans by establishing them as the most virtuous and intelligent group of “true” Americans.<sup>45</sup> The Model Minority myth is also detrimental for Asian American students

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<sup>43</sup> Postcolonial academic Edward Said’s concept of *Orientalism* is a political discourse in which Western society highlights and naturalizes differences between Westerners, framed as “Us”, and peoples in the Oriental East, framed as “Them.”

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>45</sup> Rosalind Chou, *Asian American Sexual Politics*, 23.

who do not measure up academically to the unyieldingly high standard expected of them. In fact, the stereotype erases the experiences of many Asian American students who do not fit this racialized typecast and thus contributes to low self-esteem, feelings of failure, and even depression for these students.<sup>46</sup>

Overall, the Model Minority stereotype functions to reinforce the status quo in which White Americans hold the most social and cultural capital based on their system of racial classification.<sup>47</sup> This stereotype remains problematic because it creates the false perception that individuals can overcome structural racism through hard work and academic success. By lumping all minority populations together as one homogenous category, the Model Minority stereotype does not take into account the many factors that oppress various minority groups differently. It disregards minority status as a contributor to academic failure, poverty, and incarceration. For these reasons, Asian Americans are seen as evidence that individual effort and hard work can overcome systemic, institutional racism. In education, comparisons between minority groups serve to maintain White supremacy by villainizing Asian Americans for stealing top positions, while simultaneously critiquing other minority populations for not achieving the same academic heights as some Asian American students.

Today, students of Asian descent adopt many different identifiers, not always self-labelling as Asian American due to the racist devaluation of the term. Consistent with White supremacist ideologies, contemporary research shows that in schools today, Asian students are often treated by White teachers and peers as though they are socially inferior

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>47</sup> Ng et al., "Contesting the Model Minority," 98.

to other students. For instance, AA boys tend to learn in school that they are too short, too quiet, and too foreign due to their deviation from typically Caucasian genetic characteristics; in essence, they learn they lack White American, hegemonic masculine qualities of height, bulk, and Caucasian features.<sup>48</sup> To mitigate this perception of themselves, AA boys frequently adopt an urban hip-hop culture to appear tough. In her research, Lee concluded that AA high school students of both sexes internalize feelings of low status, which results in them not feeling a strong tie with their specific ethnic communities.<sup>49</sup>

Many Asian American students develop strategies to combat discrimination in schools, but these strategies can also have harmful effects on their own identity formation. First, many students do not wish to be labelled as a stereotypical Asian nerd, so they instead position themselves to remain anonymous. Many AA students band together to protect each other from harassment. This self-imposed strategy of grouping can result in separating AA students from the rest of their non-Asian classmates and even further contributing, however unintentionally, to their own “perpetual foreigner” status.<sup>50</sup>

Students’ responses and strategies in conforming to their schools’ social norms has particularly harmful effects on children of immigrant parents. For immigrant families, the acculturation of school children normally outstrips the pace of their parents, which is aptly called “dissonant acculturation,” and can lead to intergenerational conflict between immigrant parents and their U.S. born children, resulting in some cases with estrangement of children from their parents. For instance, it is common for first generation AA

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>49</sup> Ng et al., “Contesting the Model Minority,” 105.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 105.

adolescent girls to quickly assimilate into American culture which heightens tensions between conflicting familial and societal expectations for teenage girls, and can disastrously lead to psychologically internalized distress, depression, and anxiety in these vulnerable youths.<sup>51</sup> As students are socialized in school to believe American culture is superior to all others – including their parents’ Asian culture – AA children commonly reject their family’s way of life, which leads to familial difficulties. As one example, many Asian cultures value deference to elders – which is not compatible with the American emphasis of prioritizing individuality – and can cause offensive misunderstandings when disregarded by immigrant and multi-cultural children.<sup>52</sup> Immigrant parents tend to dichotomize Asian and American cultures and interpret kids’ behavior as a rejection of family and tradition. This can lead to parents feeling shame, humiliation, anger, and despair. Troublingly, many immigrant parents compare their children’s behaviors with those of kids in Asia, while kids simultaneously compare their parents with White American parents. White American parents are associated with more freedom, and Asian parents are traditionally more controlling. These cultural comparisons in parenting are potentially harmful for AA family dynamics and can lead to dissatisfaction and resentment among both children and parents. Differences in language abilities – in particular, English versus their cultural vernacular – between Asian immigrant parents and their children also have significant negative effects on family relations, kid’s health, and social development because language is a measure of acculturation – and acculturation is a measure of self-esteem.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ng et al., “Contesting the Model Minority,” 105.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., “Contesting the Model Minority,” 108.

<sup>53</sup> Ng et al., “Contesting the Model Minority,” 106.

What is desperately needed is an education that supports and celebrates students' families' cultures and actively refutes the idea that White, Western-centered curriculum and societal values are the only ones worth learning. More specifically, this adverse social treatment of female AA students undoubtedly weighs on their self-value. Asian American girls deserve a solution in the form of an educational setting and experience that can help form their self-value and empower them throughout their childhood and into their adolescence where they are heard, respected, and valued for who they are. With this solution, it is my hope that our nation will see fewer cases of depression and suicide in Asian American girls and women; fewer instances of sexualized and racialized microaggressions, harassment, and violence; and more Asian American girls and women who proudly lift their voices and stand up for themselves and others, knowing their worth.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

My project examines The Academy to highlight the self-worth of its students in an effort to showcase the social and emotional benefits of an all-girls educational setting. This study will provide valuable insight for the purpose of directing how public and private schools, alike, can coordinate their students and spaces to best serve girls for a truly equitable education and empowering self-formation.

### *Research Questions*

The following were my original research questions that guided my research and the initial development of my project:

- How do students at all-girls schools feel about themselves?
- In what ways do coeducational schools harm female students?
- Do single-sex schools provide a more equitable education to female students than coeducational schools?
- How effective is The Academy, an all-girls school, in empowering its female students?
- Can a single-sex setting be utilized to empower female students within a coeducational school?

The following questions developed as I analyzed my data from the questionnaire:

- How do students in an all-girls school perceive and achieve success?
- How do students in an all-girls school conform to, and defy, gender norms?
- What is the quality of the relationships between peers in an all-girls school?

- What is the quality of the relationships between students and teachers/administration in an all-girls school?
- In which areas do students in an all-girls school feel confident?
- In which areas do students in an all-girls school lack confidence?

### *Site*

The Academy has a rich history. It was founded in the latter half of the nineteenth century by Christianized ali'i (chiefs) who feared the collapse of Hawaiian society following the end of the kapu system.<sup>54</sup> Up until The Academy's founding, Christian education in the manner of the Western missionaries had been restricted to Hawaiian boys. Several female ali'i believed Hawaiian girls should receive a Christian education as well and one such ali'i founded The Academy. At the time of the school's founding, most students were upper-class, Native Hawaiian girls – many were children of ali'i– and the staff was made up of White, female members of an Anglican religious order.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, female seminaries became the primary method of educating middle-class White women in the United States.<sup>55</sup> Educational reformers at the time believed women should be educated so that they could play a major role in teaching their children at home, as well as becoming professional teachers in schools.<sup>56</sup> This Western-style education began in Hawai'i when members of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived in 1820.<sup>57</sup> The missionaries' initial purpose for

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<sup>54</sup> George S. Kanahale, *Emma: Hawaii's Remarkable Queen* (Honolulu: The Queen Emma Foundation, 1999), 25.

<sup>55</sup> Beyer, "Female Seminaries in America and Hawaii During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century," 91.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

educating Hawaiians was to lead them to salvation through reading the Bible.<sup>58</sup> The typical female seminary curriculum in Hawai'i included religion, morals, and literacy, as well as domestic arts and ornamental subjects such as dance, music, and language. In addition, seminaries often included manual labor to promote industriousness and to allay tuition costs. One example of such manual labor was requiring students to clean the facilities and prepare and serve meals.<sup>59</sup>

Today, The Academy looks much different. The Native Hawaiian student majority has been replaced with that of Asian Americans. The original central emphasis on religious education has been replaced with a mission of educating the whole person.<sup>60</sup> Despite these changes, the school retains several features from the time of its founding – single-sex classrooms, pride in its Native Hawaiian founder, certain religious traditions, and school uniforms that replicate 19<sup>th</sup> century gender norms of girls wearing skirts and dresses that restrict movement to align with modesty standards.

A study of this school is important because its unique setting and history yields interesting insights that contribute to, and expand, our understanding of how a single-sex setting with a majority non-White student population can challenge misconceptions of race and gender. More specifically, the distinctive placement of the school in the Hawaiian Islands offers a rare and fascinating perspective of Asian American students attending a school in a state with a large Asian American population. Moreover, The Academy houses an uncommon social context for a school, being that the socioeconomic statuses of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>60</sup> Educating the whole person is the notion that a school nurtures a student's academic growth, physical growth, mental growth, and spiritual growth.

students' families vary widely. As a result, it is hoped that student data obtained from The Academy will be able to highlight how the intersection of race and gender affects students across a range of class lines. Doing so will add greater understanding of how race is a significant factor in shaping how non-White girls experience schooling, and society more broadly.

### *Participants*

The participants of this study were the Junior and Senior classes of The Academy in the 2019-2020 school year which constituted fifty students. These particular classes were chosen as participants because many members of this group have experienced almost thirteen years of single-sex private education. In addition, developmentally, these are the most mature students at the school. These students can best articulate their thoughts and reflections on their experiences at The Academy. To protect the privacy of the students, families, and school, I have changed the name of The Academy from its original.

More than three quarters of the students who attend The Academy are fully or partly Asian American. The data collected from the questionnaire reveals how the students identified themselves by race. Participants were asked to view of list of seventeen ethnicities and choose all that applied to them. The two largest categories were Chinese and Japanese – 45.8% of respondents chose either one of these categories whereas 25% of respondents chose Native Hawaiian or Caucasian. Asian American ethnicities – listed on the questionnaire as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, Thai, Asian Indian, and Other Asian – were chosen 66 times. Non-Asian American ethnicities – Native

Hawaiian, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander, Native American, African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern – were chosen 34 times.

### *Questionnaire*

The data for this study was collected through a questionnaire given to the Junior and Senior classes at The Academy. Participants were provided with a 37 question – multiple choice and short answer – digital questionnaire via Google Forms, and the time and resources to complete it. The utilization of a questionnaire was chosen over face-to-face interviews so students had an opportunity to reflect on their experiences without the pressure of answering in a timely manner. In addition, students could honestly and candidly respond to the questions without the pressure or anxiety of speaking directly to the researcher, who is a teacher at their school. Finally, students were not required to provide their names or email addresses on the Google Forms questionnaire, therefore protecting their privacy in the face of these sensitive topics.

Through a series of thoughtful questions, the questionnaire sought to determine participants' perception of their own character traits and abilities, their teachers' perceptions of them, and the quality of their interpersonal connections at school. Participants understood that their involvement was voluntary. The questionnaire was edited from its original format by the head of the school – who had to approve any questionnaire before distribution when meant for students – due to concerns over their privacy.

## *Data Analysis*

Data was organized into percentages based on the number of participants' responses. Although 48 questionnaires were returned to the researcher, not every question has 48 responses because many students chose to not answer each question. Once I collected the data, I coded the data into categories and patterns that emerged, and that will make up the content of the following chapters.

## *Methodology*

Although my study tells the story of Juniors and Seniors at one particular school site, the analysis of the data draws upon the fieldwork and literature of other researchers that spans decades. I believe the way to find meaning within student responses lies in an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates historical background regarding the context for the contemporary educational scene. In addition, I will be using a feminist lens, informed from the work of several scholars, to analyze and make sense of student data.

My project attempts to contribute to the vast field of feminist research by incorporating several of its important features to empower young women to share their stories and experiences through a respectful and egalitarian research process: quantitative and qualitative data collection, girl-centric focus, a balanced relationship between researchers and participants, responsiveness to girls' lived experiences, and contestation of patriarchy.<sup>61</sup> First, the methodology of my questionnaire includes both quantitative and qualitative research, using statistics and measurable responses, as well as allowing the

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<sup>61</sup> Rebecca Campbell, et al, "Feminist Approaches to Social Science: Epistemological and Methodological Tenets," *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 6, 773.

participants to write their own short answer responses from which to analyze. The quantitative data will be used to gain a broad understanding of how students perceive various circumstances in their school setting. On the other hand, the qualitative data allows participants to explain their experiences and feelings in their own words, and by analyzing the responses, participants' voices are made valuable and integral to the research. Second, feminist research connects with girls and is girl- and women-centered. As described, my participants are girls who have experienced single-sex schooling. By hearing exclusively from this female population, their voices are heard without interruption, again highlighting their value without opposition or male voice. In showcasing girls and girls' voices alone, I hope to counter a social system that has long upheld exclusively male voice, and normalize the presentation of female voices as valid and worthy. Third, feminist researchers aim to eliminate a power imbalance between themselves and their research participants in order to gain their trust. Although I could not meet face-to-face with my participants due to the pandemic, I made clear to them that their disclosures would be kept anonymous and private, and that they would have no bearing on their grades or status at school. By eliminating a power imbalance between the researcher and the participants, the participants are valued for who they are and made partners in the process of contributing to the project and its outcomes. Fourth, feminist research reflects on the emotionality of women and girls as well as their life experiences. My questionnaire attempts to understand girls' perceptions of themselves and their worth through their feelings, choices, and behaviors. My feminist analysis of the questionnaire focuses on deconstructing girls' lived experiences in a manner that values their lives. Furthermore, my project places young Asian American girls' voices on the forefront of the data to

contribute to their visibility in a society that overlooks and undervalues this population to their disadvantage. By attaining greater visibility and value in society, it is my hope that young Asian American girls will be empowered, confident in and proud of themselves, and advocates for just treatment for themselves and each other.

Finally, and most importantly, the purpose of my research is to transcend the patriarchy within American society and empower women and girls. By analyzing the students' self-values as outcomes of all-girls schooling, I hope to offer an educational space outside of male dominance – and outside of the patriarchy that exists in coeducational schools – to build up a generation of girls who do not accept subjugation and do not comply with the standards and expectations set for them by White males that perpetuate their inferior status in society. The feminist methodology I have employed gives voice and value to girls for the purpose of empowering them. Rebecca Campbell and Sharon M. Wasco explain feminist methodologies as efforts to perform just and equitable research that highlights girls' and women's voices that align with feminist values – and this manner of methodology is central to my project.<sup>62</sup>

Cordelia Fine, a philosopher, professor, and author who analyzes how individuals are gendered throughout their lives – often beginning at the time of conception – has influenced my thinking and impacts how I read data responses submitted by female participants.<sup>63</sup> I have come to understand that these students have been gendered to their detriment their entire lives. Although schools tend to mirror society, it is my belief that all-girls schools – and even all-girls spaces within co-ed schools – can allow its occupants to

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 773.

<sup>63</sup> Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender: How our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference*, (W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010), 191.

learn, grow, and challenge the injustices that exist outside of these spaces. It is with this hope that I analyze that data.

My ideological framework regarding education has been informed by my own experiences as a student and an educator, as well as by the works of education philosophers such as Paulo Freire, who views education as liberation for the oppressed.<sup>64</sup> Freire challenges teachers and students to use their platforms as influencers of their students and classmates to advance equality. He explains that what students learn in school – through directly taught lessons by teachers, as well as via student treatment and teacher treatment of classmates of other gender or racial identification – has profound consequences on how students view themselves and each other. Knowing this, I approach my research purpose as pursuing an empowering, liberating education for girls who have experienced a lifetime of gendered expectations, sexism, and oppression by society and their school environments.

Furthermore, my feminist educational methodology has been informed by Beverly A. Stitt's work that describes the vast sex-based discrimination that girls experience in the social environment of co-ed schools. More specifically, she identifies how: 1) girls have higher behavioral expectations placed upon them than boys; 2) boys receive a more academically engaging education than girls; 3) boys are tracked to better paying occupations post-high school; 4) girls are physically and emotionally less safe in school.<sup>65</sup> David Corson's work also informs my approach. Through extensive co-ed classroom observations, he describes unequal power, space, and voice authorized by teachers to

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<sup>64</sup> Peter Leonard, et al., *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 24.

<sup>65</sup> Beverly A. Stitt

female and male students. Male and female teachers alike have been found to unconsciously discriminate against female students by allowing them to move, state their opinions, disagree with the teacher, and break classroom rules less often than their male peers. This unjust imbalance motivates me to seek an educational setting that is truly equitable for girls – beyond equitable infrastructure and the quality of the curriculum – that involves fair treatment of girls and boys by adults and peers in school that allows for healthy self-value and equal life opportunities. *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, written by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) describes these imbalances as well, and its data also expands my feminist methodology by inspiring me to be yet another female educator who seeks justice for female students through my work. From this collection of scholarship, I have realized the range of detrimental effects that exist in having female and male students together in a shared learning space. This understanding directs the feminist angle through which I analyze my data.

In order to collect data that furthers my mission of pursuing educational equity for girls, I chose an all-girls school site that had students with many years of single-sex education. It was my hope that these students would be able to provide the most insight into the value of all-girls schooling by anonymously and voluntarily participating in a multiple choice and short answer questionnaire. At the start of the school year, I spoke with the lower school and upper school principals about my project and obtained their approval to submit such a questionnaire to the students. It was my goal to discover whether a single-sex environment produced a sense of empowerment in its students. Therefore, I wrote questions that sought to understand how these students perceived their ethnicity, level of attractiveness (physically, and as a friend and romantic partner), and

academic and critical thinking capabilities (in school, and in solving problems in general.) While writing my questions, I consulted with the school counselor and, later these questions were approved by my advisor. Next, I submitted them to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). While my questionnaire was under review, the global COVID-19 pandemic reached the United States. The IRB mandated that I change all face-to-face aspects of my questionnaire (delivery, completion, pick-up) to an online format. Once these changes were made, the IRB approved my questionnaire. The last step was to have the questionnaire approved by the Head of School. At this stage, the Head of School removed all questions pertaining to attractiveness and race (besides participants self-identifying their own race) due to privacy concerns. The removal of these categories of questions changed the focus of my questionnaire to cover those only pertaining to students' self-assessments about their academic and critical thinking abilities. As such, I can only analyze my data with a focus of how their gender affected their schooling experience and without any specific understanding of how race and their feelings of attractiveness may have affected their educational experience.

Nonetheless, the participants and their candidness have been highly valuable to my research. I make every attempt to mask the identities of the students and the school involved in my study while avoiding muting admissions and feelings of the students who participated. My purpose is to neither criticize, nor speak for, these students, their teachers, or their school, but, rather, to use their experiences and reflections to disrupt public misconceptions about girls-only schooling and highlight the benefits of such an educational environment while also addressing its challenges. It is my hope that the themes I have identified – striving for success, both defying and fulfilling gender norms,

relationships with classmates and adults within school, and expressing their voice may resonate with other girls and validate their feelings and experiences thereby empowering them to recognize that the systemic oppression they have faced is not indicative of any inherent inferiority.

As I reflected upon my findings, I realized the challenges students regularly face – personal insecurities, difficult relationships with peers and authority figures, and both compliance with and deviation from sexist gender norms – are, in many instances, inevitable as those reflect social features of American society in general. My charge here is not to disparage coeducation settings, but to propose that all-girls learning environments offer a just, equitable, and empowering educational alternative that has been previously ignored and undervalued.

### *Validity*

The participants in my research are students at The Academy who voluntarily offered their anonymous responses to the school, knowing their answers would be viewed and analyzed by their teachers and administration. It is possible that understanding this may have affected participants' responses. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the data suggests that many students desire to please their teachers. As such, it is possible that some participants in the study gave responses they knew their teachers would want to see.

### *Researcher Positionality*

My personal experiences with sexism and racism in coeducational schools – as described in Chapter 1 – have shaped my personal bias in viewing them as harmful spaces

for girls to receive education. Positive experiences I have observed as an educator within single-sex settings have caused me to have positive associations with all-girls spaces.

◇ Note

It must be noted that the questionnaire was given and completed during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, students had been off school campus and taking their classes remotely for weeks at the time of completing the questionnaire. It is possible that this distressing situation may have affected some of the participants' responses.

**Chapter 4:**  
**Self-worth and Success**

In Spring of 2020, I offered my questionnaire to both the Junior and Senior classes at The Academy which constituted fifty students in total. From that total, forty-eight students voluntarily completed and submitted the questionnaire, but some elected not to answer specific questions provided. Operating within my feminist methodology, as well as drawing from research and literature pertaining to education for girls, particularly girls of color, I analyzed the data from the questionnaire in Summer and Fall of the same year.

In this chapter, I will discuss my findings from the data and their implications for students of all-girls schools. Many findings emerged through my analysis of the data, but most important to my study were the insights into how students defined their self-worth. In this study, self-worth is understood as how inherently valuable and deserving of respect a student believes herself to be. This concept influences a person's entire approach to achieving life satisfaction and fulfillment. In a patriarchal society, a woman's worth is often determined by their sexual value to men. My driving question in this project was whether the elimination of male students would eliminate enough of the patriarchal values of our society – and even reverse them – so students at all-girls schools could find value in themselves using a different, healthier measure. This chapter offers a two-part discussion on how students value themselves – themselves being defined as their time, efforts, skills, and talents: part one discusses how students defined success as a positive evaluation from teachers; part two reveals that several students highly value themselves and their success emerges from their own efforts. The juxtaposition between these two findings reveal a complicated and many-faceted understanding of what constituted and defined self-worth according to the students as well as the potential of all-female education for instilling empowering values in students that contradict sexist messages from society.

## *Defining Success*

To investigate my interest in student self-worth, I asked the following in my questionnaire: *Describe a time when you felt successful in school. Explain why you think you were successful.* I considered responses to this question in connection to self-worth by analyzing how students understand personal success. I hypothesized three categories of potential responses within which to sort my data. The first category was for a student who feels successful when she learns something new or grows in a skill, thereby believing herself to be the most important agent in achieving her own success. It is likely that this student has a healthy valuation of herself knowing that her efforts and abilities result in a positive outcome. The second category is for a student who feels successful when she effectively collaborates with her peers to achieve a common goal, thus believing herself to be a valuable part in achieving success for herself and others. It is likely that this student has a positive perception of herself knowing that she is important for the success of her community. The third category is for a student who feels successful only when an authority figure grants her an award. Accordingly, she has much less control over her success. This student may have an unhealthy judgment of herself knowing she has little control in achieving success, especially if the system within which she resides is rigged to subjectively grant awards to some more than others.

Prior to reviewing my findings, I had hoped students at an all-girls school would fit into my first hypothetical category, possessing high self-esteem due to the absence of harmful comparisons by teachers between female and male students. It was my hope that girls seeing female representation every student role in the school community – scientist, mathematician, engineer, writer, artist, athlete, musician – would fill girls with the

confident knowledge that they can do anything. Social science research support this understanding showing students at all-girls school feel more in control of the outcomes of difficult situations that girls at co-ed schools.<sup>66</sup> As such, I had hoped this would have been the case for Academy students– defining and controlling their own success based on their personal progress. To my surprise, very few respondents fit within this category.

In addition, I also believed it likely that The Academy girls would fall into the second category of community-minded-based success: effectively collaborating with peers to achieve a common goal. Research suggests that teenagers are more likely to have close relationships with peers of the same sex, rather than the opposite sex. In addition, data from my questionnaire informed me that 76% of the 48 participants agreed or strongly agreed that they have good friends at school, which incidentally is the second highest area of agreement in the entire questionnaire. This significance in this data is that it suggests there are many positive peer relationships at school. As such, I had hoped that students would see their place of belonging and contribution to the community as reasons to feel successful. In the end, only one respondent mentioned success in relation to community – a student who has attended The Academy for four years. She alone said:

I always feel successful when I/we (as a group/school grade) accomplish anything we did together (ex: going to California with the school orchestra to compete and receiving many awards) because we worked so hard to prepare, and when we are recognized, it feels good, especially winning something.

Yet, it must be noted that the student specified that being recognized and winning awards were the major accomplishments and allowed her to feel good, while producing music and working together well as a group seemed secondary.

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<sup>66</sup> Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 110.

To my surprise, more than half of the responses to the question concerning success fell into the third category: feeling successful only when success is externally determined by a teacher or other adult judge and represented with a tangible award, letter grade, or score. Of the thirty-four participants who responded to the question, nineteen of the responses specifically noted a recognition bestowed upon them by a teacher or other adult authority figure within the institution of education. In other words, many students did not define success on their own terms. Instead, their understanding of success was and has been dependent on an adult's judgement of the quality of their work. This finding is unsurprising in light of the self-esteem crisis plaguing girls in contemporary society as described in Chapter 1. When girls have low self-esteem, as is characteristic of this generation's teenage girls, they crave approval from those around them, especially people in authority positions, such as their teachers.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, as my finding suggests, girls at The Academy perceive success as receiving external validation, which then shapes their self-worth by diminishing their ability to recognize achievement in their personal growth.

Thus, in order for students to feel proud of themselves, they need adult validation of their abilities. This result was unexpected as I had believed that once removed from the stresses and demands of the larger patriarchal society and placed in an all-female environment, girls would thrive at greater rates. But, conversely, desire for validation by female students at The Academy from authority figures there remains widespread.

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<sup>67</sup> Albert Reijntjes et al. "Delighted when approved by others, to pieces when rejected: children's social anxiety magnifies the linkage between self- and other-evaluations," *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 52, no. 7, (2011): 774-781.

One form of validation that students seek are awards. Students' awards vary widely, but what they have in common is they are chosen by teachers or other adults, they are judged subjectively according to the teachers' and adults' discretion, and they are awarded publicly. It is additionally noteworthy that most of the honors that have made students feel successful were awarded to them individually, suggesting that students must be singled out to feel pride in their efforts. For instance, one student, who has attended The Academy for three years, felt successful when she won the Best Delegate Award at the Pacific Model United Nations. That awardee shared, "I had never received a reward like that, and it meant a lot to me." Other individual prizes cited by students as their successes were an award for an English essay, an award at the Science Fair, the title of May Day Queen, and awards at the school's formal Awards Assembly.

Another student, who has attended The Academy for six years, won an individual prize for her photography at the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. She described the experience:

I felt successful when I won a silver key at the Scholastic Art and Writing awards this year. It was the best feeling to me because I finally feel like I'm somewhat good at photography.

This student expressed that receiving the award for her photography gave her a boost in confidence in that skill. Instead of judging her photography for herself, her feelings of confidence, pride, and success are dependent on an authority figure's subjective assessment on her skill.

To one Senior scholar-athlete, a student of The Academy since Kindergarten, not only is winning an award the definition of success, but not winning is akin to failure. She explained:

I know I was successful because at the end of my Junior Year, I received Honorable Mention for ILH (Interscholastic League of Honolulu) Girls Varsity Division 3 Basketball and the Scholar-Athlete of the Year award. I was actually very disappointed at myself during my Sophomore Year because I did not receive an award for Basketball, so when I received these two awards, I was very proud of myself and I knew that my hard work wasn't for nothing.

What can be understood from this explanation is the student's feeling of pride in herself is a result of winning an award. At the same time, the student's feeling of disappointment in herself is caused by not winning an award. Therefore, a student's feelings of success – as well as negative and self-deprecating feelings – are directly linked to an authority figure's evaluation of the student.

All the awards listed above were granted publicly, and most often by a judge who does not have a relationship with the student. In fact, many judges at competitions may have never met the student and only examined their work presented for evaluation. But many respondents to the questionnaire also described feeling successful as a result of good grades and scores granted by their teachers. Therefore, the most common factors for students' perceived successes is they were determined by an authority figure within the educational institutional sphere.

For female students to have healthy self-worth, it is my belief that they should value the innate goodness in themselves and count their personal progress as success, regardless of external evaluation and validation. This manner of defining success for themselves, instead of relying on an institutional assessor, would give students a great deal of control over their successes and their consequential feelings of pride in themselves. However, The Academy students care a great deal about what authority figures in their lives think about them and this occurs whether the authority figure is their teacher or when authority figures nameless and faceless judges at competitions. Either way, students see their efforts

as successful only when they are declared so by an authority within the educational institution. The students' need for validation by a person of authority is consistent, and interconnected, with their educational institution. Students' feelings of accomplishment and pride in themselves do not take into account the inherent importance of learning, personal growth, personal interest, community achievement, or personal, familial, or cultural values.

### *Hard work leads to success*

Despite the large number of students who are dependent on adult validation to influence their self-worth, there are many students who believed that they do have control over the definition of their success. This sense of control, as the following discussion will reveal, lies within the inherent value students associate with their own effort, abilities, and hard work.

Of the thirty-four students who responded to the question concerning success – *Describe a time when you felt successful in school. Explain why you think you were successful* – nine students, over a quarter of respondents, stated their success was due to their hard work. Believing that one's own effort causes success indicates a high level of self-value, as well as a healthy level of control in overcoming difficulties in life.<sup>68</sup> The clearest example of this understanding was given by a student who has attended The Academy for twelve years. She described how her formal education failed to teach her math in a way she could

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<sup>68</sup> Fred A. Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 112.

understand, so she took it upon herself to find resources outside of school and learn the material in a way that suited her needs. She explained:

Earlier this year I had a roadblock in learning something in math because I didn't understand it at all. I took the time to learn the math on my own via YouTube videos and Khan Academy, and it definitely helped because I got the highest midterm grade in my math course class.

This story captures how this student's high locus of control meant that she held influence over the outcome of a difficult situation. She did not turn to her teacher for help as her teacher had already failed her; instead she looked to alternative methods from which to learn and teach herself. Although her success of receiving the highest grade in her class remained in the sphere of the educational institution, her means of achieving that success was certainly outside of the sphere. In other words, her success was determined by her test score, but she prepared herself to perform well by her own creativity and hard work.

This student's explanation exemplifies and represents the experiences of the other eight students who relayed similar stories of personal effort outside of school and belief in their own abilities that helped them overcome challenges and gain institutional-based success. These other eight students also commented on their hard work "paying off," or used similar language equating their personal time, talent, and effort to something of great value, and certainly important in gaining success. In one instance, a student who has attended The Academy for nine years described herself working "really hard" on a project and concluded,

I felt successful when I worked really hard on a project and got a good grade for it. I think I was successful because my hard work paid off in the end.

My analysis of this response is that the student believed her own ability and effort allowed her to achieve success. Of course, it is again noteworthy that this student's success was her

good grade, keeping her success within the realm of the educational institution although her means of achieving the success was her innate skill and work ethic.

Another student, a member of The Academy's Orchestra and an Academy student since Kindergarten, shared the following describing when she felt successful:

When I went on the orchestra trips to compete and we won several awards. It felt incredible to have all our hard work and dedication paid off, and to be able to have the honor to participate in and represent our small school/orchestra at these big competitions. As an individual I was successful because I had practiced so hard for these trips and best of all I was also having a lot of fun.

This student's efforts led to her receiving validation which secured her feeling of self-worth. Through this student's language of "paid off," she seems to view the Orchestra's hard work and dedication as equally valuable to winning awards. Once again, the awards are deemed the actual success, determined by judges, but the student believes her personal hard work, as well as the Orchestra's hard work, is what led to the awards.

Returning to the Senior scholar-athlete mentioned in the previous section, the last sentence of her response was:

"I was actually very disappointed at myself during my Sophomore Year because I did not receive an award for Basketball, so when I received these two awards, (Honorable Mention for ILH Girls Varsity Division 3 Basketball and the Scholar-Athlete of the Year award) I was very proud of myself and I knew that my hard work wasn't for nothing."

It is worth remarking upon that "hard work" is clearly not the success. When hard work does not result in an award, it is deemed by the student as a waste, as the above quote demonstrates.

In the end, I was somewhat encouraged by this data to learn that several students – who could be representative of more – believed they have some control in overcoming challenges in their lives and achieving success within the educational institutional realm

even if their success is ultimately determined by another party. This pocket of students with a high locus of control challenge the gendered norm of their generation, being that girls are socialized to become paralyzed by fear of failure.

Substantial research has found many teenage girls and young women view difficulties impacting their lives as outside of their influence.<sup>69</sup> A study by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) reinforces this discovery by highlighting that girls are more likely to attribute academic success to luck than their own hard work – whereas boys are more likely to attribute their success to their personal ability. Sadly, these unequal attributions are taught and reinforced by teachers at coeducational schools through greater and more frequent praise of boys' academic abilities and contributions than girls'. As a result of these acknowledgements, boys are more likely to feel mastery and control over academic challenges, while girls are more likely to feel powerless to overcome a challenge.<sup>70</sup> But as the reflections of The Academy girls demonstrate, several students at this particular all-girls school believe themselves to be active agents in their own lives, and confident in their abilities to overcome external challenges and create outcomes according to their choices and desires. Unfortunately, the number of respondents that fit this mold was not as high as I had initially predicted. So, although these girls still find their definition of success within the realm of their educational institution, some do perceive themselves (their dedication, abilities, and efforts) as critically important in achieving success.

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<sup>69</sup> Fred A. Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 112.

<sup>70</sup> Stitt, *Building Gender Fairness*, 7.

## *Conclusion*

As a believer in the positive psychological effects of all-girls schooling, I had hoped the participants of my study would defy socially created, sexist, gendered models and mindsets as outlined by years of research and literature regarding female students in coeducational schools. Yet, I must acknowledge The Academy, along with all schools, operates within a sexist and patriarchal society. Consequently, it is impossible to expect students of all-girls schools to be free of all the harmful psychological effects of that society. Moreover, The Academy, along with all schools, operates as part of the American educational institution, which has long disadvantaged girls and people of color. As outlined in Chapter 2, the educational institutions of this nation were created, in part, to uphold the White male supremacy of our greater society. To combat the detrimental effects, I believe that an ideal all-girls school can promote values of gender equity and encourage healthy self-worth in its students. However, even this ideal school would exist within our society that values men more than women.

The Academy is one such all-girls school that exists within American society. My findings concerning The Academy students' self-worth were fascinating to come by as they conflicted with my initial assumption of self-reliance of students of all-girls schools and validated literature regarding the contemporary self-esteem crisis of adolescent girls. My questionnaire asked explicit questions regarding students' confidence, perception of their own abilities, and assumptions of how their teachers thought of them – and the responding data yielded many possible conclusions. Interestingly, however, my greatest insights came from questioning students on when they felt successful in school. The participants who chose to answer the question revealed their self-worth – in terms of feeling successful and

proud of themselves – is mostly determined by authority figures within the educational institution. And yet, how several students believed they could control their outcomes and gain success, reveals they also have an innate respect and admiration for themselves. Perceiving their own energy and abilities as valuable suggests that these girls see *themselves* as valuable, implying a healthy self-worth.

Yet, it must be noted that fifteen students chose to not answer the question regarding feeling successful in school and three students responded by saying they could not recall a time they felt successful. Eighteen out of 48 respondents opting out or being unable to answer is a significant percentage (37.5%), and this group may represent students who are consistently ranked in the bottom half, whose scores are not competitive, who do not win top prizes – in essence, students who the educational institution has deemed as unsuccessful. When feelings of pride depend on the judgment of others, inevitably some people will not be able to feel proud of themselves as the nature of ranking necessitates that some people are ranked at the bottom. For girls who are harmfully judged in all areas of their lives – appearance, sexuality, morality, intelligence, and competence – being judged negatively within the school setting likely contributes to their dangerously low self-esteem. In other words, female students' feelings of pride in themselves and their successes are dependent on subjective others who are part of an education system that has long disadvantaged girls and continues to keep them oppressed through the importance that is placed on its judgment.

Most students surveyed require and seek teacher validation in order to feel successful, which, in turn, affects their personal self-worth. This is also the case for those who are self-motivated. Students may be confident in their abilities and highly motivated

but, in the end, they still need the validation and assessment from adults in order to be successful. So, it seems, that no matter how hard they work, students are still confined by, and reliant on, the larger powers of adults to provide them with validation.

## **Conclusion and Further Research**

## *Reflection*

My project evolved a great deal over the course of two years. My interest has always involved the educational experiences of girls, specifically Asian American girls, and in equitable educational settings and practices that develop healthy self-esteem in female students. My project initially began with two separate literature reviews – one exploring literature surrounding girls in school and the other investigating literature pertaining to Asian American students. Then, I wrote a course paper that synthesized these two literature reviews in an attempt to gain insight into the experience of female Asian American students. While this intersectional demographic remains largely absent in academic literature thus far, my paper – and this project – attempts to fill in the space.

My belief in single-sex schooling as an equitable solution for addressing the injustices AA girls experience at school began as a hypothesis based on my personal experiences as a student in all-girls settings and my experience teaching at an all-girls school. Because of this hypothesis, I completed a third literature review, one that surveyed research regarding the efficacy of single-sex schools for female students. I hoped to take my project a step further than existing research by evaluating the efficacy of an all-girls school that serves primarily Asian American students, thus giving value and voice to a specific intersectional population of importance.

My initial plan was to assess the self-worth of students at The Academy – a majority Asian American educational institution – by asking them questions pertaining to how they thought about their own race, how they perceived attractiveness and beauty, and how competent they believed they were in handling academic and life challenges. However, questions regarding race and beauty were prohibited by The Academy's Head of School so I

changed my project to assess confidence in academics and life skills, effectively eliminating race as a factor in my project.

When analyzing the data, I expected to find insights regarding student self-worth in responses to questions 3-34 on the questionnaire.<sup>71</sup> These questions require students to rank how confident or skillful they believe they are in various academic and life skills. I hoped students' self-assessments of their confidence and competence – as well as their assumptions of their teachers' perceptions of them – would reveal that they have healthy mindsets and beliefs about themselves. However, while the data did provide some evidence in support of participants expressing a healthy self-esteem, these same statistics did not show the depth of complexity of the issue. For example although 41% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are confident, this number alone cannot convey how students understand and express confidence in the many areas of their lives. Interestingly, profound insights regarding student self-worth were most prominently revealed when intertwined with the idea of success. Upon reflection, I now see that the concept of self-worth and student understanding of the concept are much more complicated than I had originally thought.

Questionnaire data indicated that many Academy students possess a high degree of self-confidence at school and defy many gender-based academic stereotypes by pursuing challenging course work, higher education, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) courses and careers. But, more important to my project is the confidence these girls have demonstrated in valuing themselves and their inherent worth. Several Academy students see their abilities as something they can control and leading to their

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<sup>71</sup> See complete questionnaire in Appendix 1

accomplishments. Yet, The Academy exists within a patriarchal society, and the all-girls setting alone has not been able to eradicate in its students the subsistence of sexist ideals, fears, and stereotypes about girls and women. Therefore, students' individual valuing of themselves is overpowered by their need for affirmation by authority figures within the educational system, instead of being able to secure that affirmation within themselves.

### *Discussion*

Ultimately, my findings from The Academy's data verify the literature pertaining to girls in school that I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. My first major finding was that The Academy girls do not determine success for themselves, but instead rely on an authority figure within the educational institution to deem their work as successful or not. Students' resultant feeling of pride in themselves is dependent on this authority figure's approval, as well. This finding suggests that many students possess a low level of self-value since they do not perceive their personal learning and progress as success, nor do they feel proud of themselves for the sake of their own growth. Their need for external validation substantiates the literature by showing how Academy girls' self-worth is dangerously low as they tend to crave approval from others.<sup>72</sup> This finding also indicates an absence of students' feelings of control over the challenges they face, which also verifies the literature that explains many girls often do not feel in control of difficulties in their lives.<sup>73</sup>

My second finding was that a number of Academy girls do take pride in their energy, talents, and efforts as those surveyed understood their abilities as directly leading to their

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<sup>72</sup> Albert Reijntjes et al. "Delighted when approved by others."

<sup>73</sup> Fred A. Mael, "Single-Sex and Coeducational Schooling," 112.

successes. This finding suggests that many students do perceive great value in themselves; that they believe they have the ability to overcome challenges speaks of their healthy self-worth. This verifies the literature that girls at all-girls schools have a higher locus of control than girls who attend coeducational schools.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, this suggests that The Academy girls' feelings of control over obstacles in their lives is at least partly influenced by their all-female educational setting.

### *Recommendations*

I recommend that all-girls schools more actively teach the whole-child approach that The Academy claims as their mission.<sup>75</sup> Educators at these institutions must teach female students to see their innate value as human beings worthy of respect, honor, and celebration in order to build students' self-esteem and greatly increase their qualities of life. These schools should not present high scores, grades, and awards as success because the earning of these accolades are all dependent on an outside party. These external judgments and rewards do not take into account students' personal growth, learning, or effort. If these schools took away the ultimate honors of institution-based awards, teachers and administrators would surrender a great deal of their authority and schools would sacrifice their power to promote or demote people into their future roles in society. Applied more broadly, students – male and female alike – at all learning institutions would

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> "About Us," St. Andrew's Schools, (2020, accessed 12 October 2020); available from <https://www.standrewsschools.org/about-us>; Internet.

have a more equitable position in society if they could recognize their own learning and growth as accomplishments. Without rankings, scores, and winners, everybody would be able to be successful.

I also recommend that teachers and administrators at all-girls schools, in particular, use their unique setting as an opportunity to fiercely advocate for students to contest gender-based stereotypes that serve to harm their self-esteem. Educators of all settings must teach girls that they are valuable as learners and as people who have the ability to overcome challenges. Female students ought to learn about the patriarchy within which they live and learn that the harmful stereotypes about girls and women are not based in fact, but were created by men to keep women oppressed. Schools should not mirror society. Rather, they should expose and oppose the sexist ideals of society and empower their female students by that exposure while also educating boys about gender equity and mutual respect. Only once girls are aware of their disadvantaged place in society, they are able to contest it.

I recommend that further research needs to be done on homogenous educational settings for other populations of oppressed groups besides just girls. By excluding from a learning space the students for whom social power is inherently given (the White, male, American-born, middle- or upper-class, cisgender population), oppressed students may have a more meaningful and empowering educational experience. For example, researchers could investigate schools that serve an exclusively Asian American student population. Educators at these schools could expose the racist ideals of American society and empower their Asian American students by that exposure. The greatest backlash I have received when sharing my hope of single-sex schooling as an equitable education for

girls is that this setting does not replicate the real-world. This point is undoubtedly true, but the current realities of the “real world” is neither desirable nor supportive of millions of Americans, many of whom belong to socially and, in some instances, politically oppressed groups. Rather, it serves to benefit and advance the interests of a particular minority – White, cis-gender males. So, I can only imagine there will be backlash at a suggestion of Asian-American schooling, as well.

The world is not homogenous. However, the world is not an equitable place for all people either. So, it is my belief that we should not have schools that replicate the real-world. We should have schools that do better.

### **Appendix 1: The Questionnaire**

1. How many years have you attended The Academy?

2. Before attending The Academy did you attend an all-girls school? If yes, please include the additional number of years you attended an all-girls school (do not include the years at The Academy that were included in question #1.)

(For questions 3-34 indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements (1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree).

3. I am a good problem solver.

4. I like to take challenging coursework at school.

5. I am confident.

6. I like to take on leadership positions at my school (e.g. in student council, clubs or sports, etc.)

7. I like to speak up in class.

8. I am a good reader.

9. I am a good writer.

10. I am good at Music.

11. I am good at Language.

12. I am good at Math.

13. I am good at Science.

14. I am good at Social Studies.

15. I am good at using technology.

16. I am a good public speaker.

17. I am well-liked by students at school.
18. I have good friends at school.
19. I am willing to voice my opinion.
20. I am willing to take action on what I have learned in school to help others.
21. I am willing to take intellectual risks.
22. I am planning to attend college after I graduate from high school.
23. I will be prepared to do college-level work after I graduate from high school.
24. I want to get an advanced degree (Master's, Ph.D., J.D., M.D.) after graduating from college.
25. I am interested in going into a STEM field.
26. My teachers would describe me as a good student.
27. My teachers would describe me as a leader.
28. My teachers would describe me as a go-getter.
29. My teachers would describe me as kind.
30. My teachers would describe me as a good collaborator.
31. My teachers would describe me as competitive.
32. My teachers would describe me as helpful to others.
33. My teachers understand me.
34. I have one or more adults on campus that "get me."
35. Describe a time when you felt successful in school. Explain why you think you were successful.
36. Describe a time when school was challenging for you. Explain why you think it was challenging.

37. What is your ethnicity? Choose from the options below. Choose as many ethnicities as apply to you.

## Appendix 2: IRB Approval



UNIVERSITY  
of HAWAII®  
MĀNOA

Office of Research Compliance  
Human Studies Program

April 28, 2020  
Taira, Derek, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Educational Foundations  
Wengronowitz, Tara  
Rivera, Victoria, Dir, Ofc of Rsch Compliance, Social & Behavioral  
The Effects of Single-Sex Education on Girls# Self-Worth  
None  
2020-00225  
April 28, 2020

Under an expedited review procedure, the research project identified above was approved on April 28, 2020 by the University of Hawaii Institutional Review Board (UH IRB). The application qualified for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110, Category 7. Per 45 CFR 46.109,

This memorandum is your record of the IRB approval of this study. Please maintain it with your study records.

The Human Studies Program approval must be maintained for the entire term of your project. Please see guidance at \_\_\_\_\_ on the regulatory requirements for ongoing review and/or monitoring of research approved under an expedited review category.

If, during the course of your project, you intend to make changes to this study, you must obtain approval from the Human Studies Program prior to implementing any changes. You can submit your proposed changes via the UH eProtocol application. If an Unanticipated Problem occurs during the course of the study, you must notify the Human Studies Program within 24 hours of knowledge of the problem. A formal report must be submitted to the Human Studies Program within 10 days. The definition of "Unanticipated Problem" may be found at: \_\_\_\_\_. The report form may be submitted via the eProtocol application.

You are required to maintain complete records pertaining to the use of humans as participants in your research. This includes all information or materials conveyed to and received from participants as well as signed consent forms, data, analyses, and results. These records must be maintained for at least three years following project completion or termination, and they are subject to inspection and review by the Human Studies Program and other authorized agencies.

Please notify this office when your project is complete. Upon notification, we will close our files pertaining to your project. Please contact this office if you have any questions or require assistance. We appreciate your cooperation, and wish you success with your research.

UH Human Studies Program, Office of Research Compliance  
Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation, University of Hawaii'i, System  
2425 Campus Road, Sinclair 10, Honolulu HI 96822  
Phone: 808.956.5007 • Email: uhirb@hawaii.edu  
<https://www.hawaii.edu/researchcompliance/human-studies>  
An Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action Institution



## Appendix 3: Consent for Participation Form approved by the IRB



### University of Hawai'i Consent to Participate in a Research Project

Tara Wengronowitz, Principal Investigator

*Project title: The Effects of Single-Sex Education on Girls' Self-Worth*

Aloha! My name is Tara Wengronowitz and you are invited to take part in a research study. I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the Department of Educational Foundations. As part of the requirements for earning my graduate degree, I am doing a research project.

#### ***What am I being asked to do?***

If you participate in this project, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire.

#### ***Taking part in this study is your choice.***

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. If you stop being in the study, there will be no penalty or loss to you. Your choice to participate or not participate will not affect your grades at St. Andrew's Schools.

#### ***Why is this study being done?***

The purpose of my project is to evaluate the effects on self-worth of students who receive an all-girls education. I am asking you to participate because you receive an all-girls education.

#### ***What will happen if I decide to take part in this study?***

The survey will consist of 21 multiple choice and open-ended questions. It will take 20 minutes. The questionnaire will include questions like, "Do you feel you are good at using and understanding technology? Explain." and "Are you looking forward to, and/or planning to, attend college? Explain." The survey will be distributed in school to be completed on your own time and returned to school.

#### ***What are the risks and benefits of taking part in this study?***

I believe there is little risk to you for participating in this research project. You may become stressed or uncomfortable answering any of the questionnaire questions. If you do become stressed or uncomfortable, you can skip the question or take a break. You can also stop taking the survey or you can withdraw from the project altogether.

There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this survey. The results of this project may help spread awareness of the benefits of all-girls schooling, which may help girls in the future. Providing girls with an educational setting that builds positive self-worth may contribute to a more just society, one that has fewer cases of anxiety and depression in girls and fewer instances of discrimination and violence against girls and women.

#### ***Privacy and Confidentiality:***

I will not ask you for any personal information, such as your name or address. Please do not include any personal information in your survey responses. I will keep all study data secure in a locked filing cabinet. Only my University of Hawai'i advisor and I will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

## Appendix 4: Assent for Minors Form approved by the IRB



University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program  
(808) 956-5007, [uhib@hawaii.edu](mailto:uhib@hawaii.edu)

### University of Hawai'i

#### Assent to Participate in a Research Project - 14 - 17 years of age

Tara Wengronowitz, Principal Investigator

*Project Title: The Effects of Single-Sex Education on Girls' Self-Worth*

Aloha! My name is Tara Wengronowitz and I am inviting you to participate in my research study. I have taught First Grade at St. Andrew's Schools for three years. I am also a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), in the Department of Educational Foundations. One requirement for earning my Master's degree is to do a research project. The purpose of my research project is to evaluate the psychological impacts of receiving an all-girls education.

**Activities and Time Commitment:** If you agree to be in this study, you will complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire will be completed on your own time. The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete. You will complete the questionnaire independently without consulting anyone. If you choose to participate, you will be one of a total of 28 St. Andrew's high school seniors who will complete the questionnaire separately. One example of the kind of question I will ask is, "Do you feel you are good at using and understanding technology? Explain." If you would like to see a copy of all of the questions that I will ask, please contact me via the phone number or email address listed near the end of this consent form.

**Benefits and Risks:** There may be no direct benefits to you for participating in this research project. The results of this project might help me determine the implications for self-worth by receiving an all-girls education. I believe there is little or no risk to you for participating in this project. There is a possibility you may become uncomfortable or stressed by answering a question. If that happens, you may skip the question, take a break, or stop the questionnaire. You may also withdraw from the project altogether. If you decide not to participate, that is fine.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:** I will keep all study data secure in a locked office. Only my University of Hawai'i advisor and I will have access to the information. Other agencies that have legal permission have the right to review research records. The University of Hawai'i Human Studies Program has the right to review research records for this study.

When I report the results of my research project in my typed paper, I will not use your name or any other personal information that would identify you. I will not name St. Andrew's Schools. Instead, I will use a pseudonym (fake name) for the school. If you would like a copy of my final report, please contact me at the number listed near the end of this assent form.

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