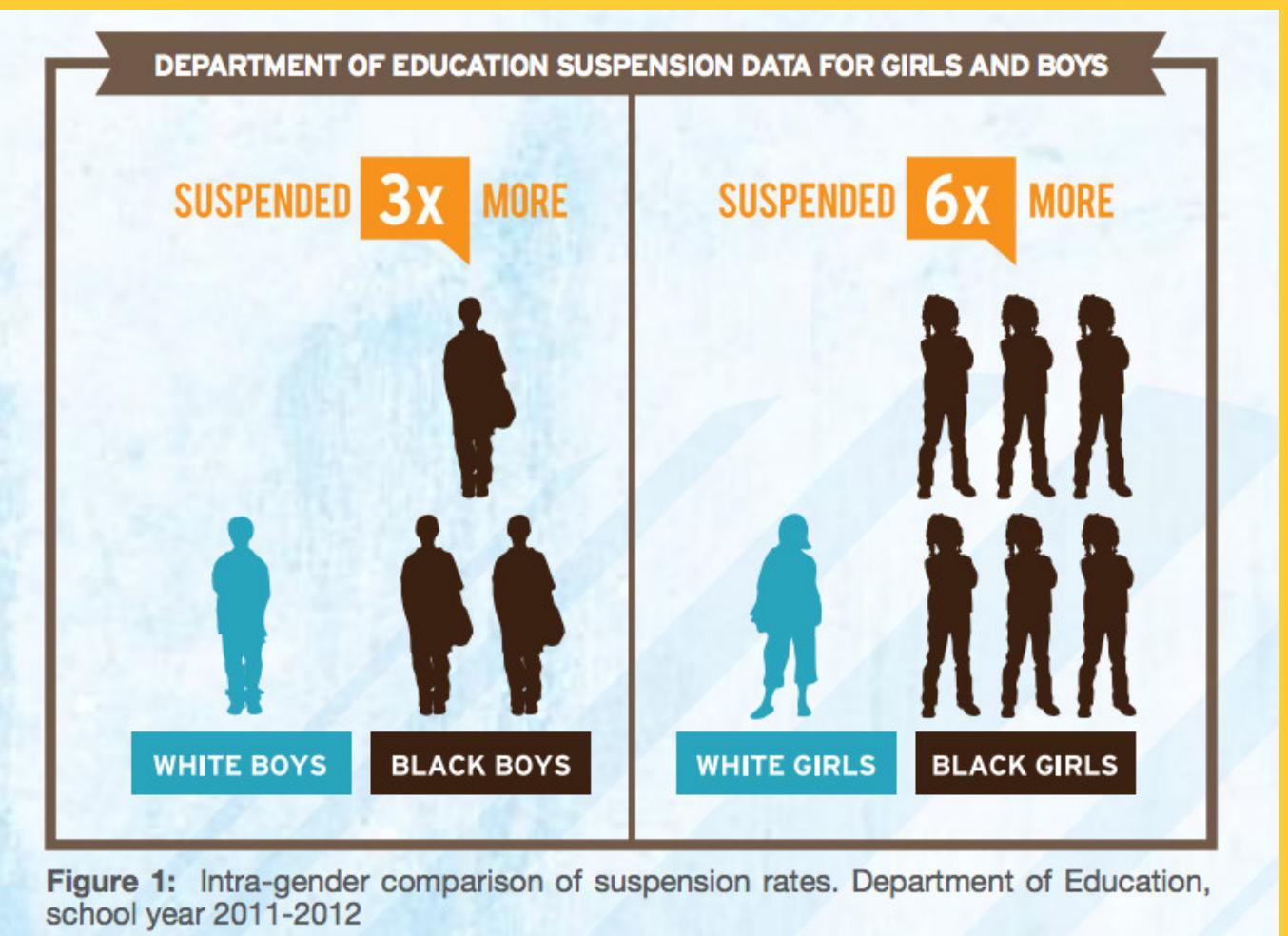


Pathways to Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS) for Black Girls



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Introduction



- This study explores Black girls' experience with out-of-school suspension (OSS) using qualitative interviews of suspended Black girls in Minnesota.
- Studies on racial disparities in OSS have primarily focused on Black boys, with less attention on Black girls (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).
- Black girls' experiences with OSS is a growing concern due to their vulnerability.
- Black girls' are suspended at a rate six times higher than white girls (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality theory

- Intersectionality refers to the ways in which oppressions of gender, race, class, and sexuality can interact to create systematic social inequality (Davis, 2010).
- Black girls in the U.S. commonly experience verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities which communicate hostile, derogatory slights (Sue, 2007).

Black Feminist Theory (BFT)

- BFT addresses the power dynamics of identity politics historically related to race, ethnicity, and culture (Collins, 1998; Hooks, 1989; Jones, 2015; Taylor, 1998).
- Some teachers view Black girls' attitude as disruptive or disrespectful, for some girls it means exuding confidence, self-esteem, and empowerment (Koonce, 2012).

Research Questions

- This qualitative study is a part of a larger program of research examining OSS (Gibson, & Haight, 2013; Gibson, Wilson, Haight, Kayama, & Marshall, 2014; Haight, Kayama, & Gibson, 2016). We used in-depth, qualitative interviews to address two research questions.
 - What are the experiences of OSS for Black girls, their caregivers and educators, especially the intersection of race and gender?
 - What are some of the ways Black girls resist sexual harassment, bullying and OSS?

Methods

Site

The study was conducted in a large public school in Minnesota's largest metropolitan area. The school served about 700 students from 6th through 12th grades. Although Black children comprised 45% of the student population, 87% of the students received suspensions during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Participants

- 10 Black girls, 11 to 15 years (M=13.3), 6th through 10th grade with reasons for suspension as fighting, and disorderly conduct.
- 10 caregivers, 25 to 54 years, 8 high school diplomas or GEDs.
- 5 educators, 25 to 54 years, 3 classroom teachers, and 2 administrators.
 - 2 Black, 2 White, and 1 Latino; 1-20 years professional experience .

Procedures

- Semi-structured, audio-recorded individual interviews.
- Discussed: suspension incident, if suspension was fair, and relation to race.

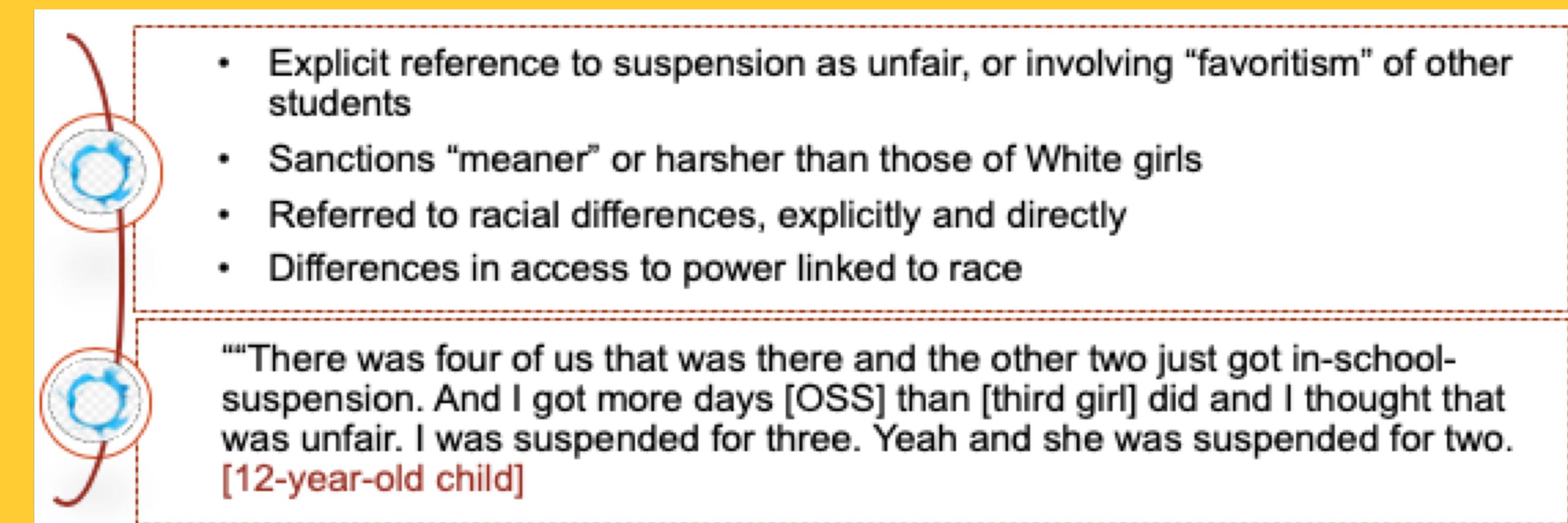
Data analysis

- Recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim.
- Emic codes were induced (Schwandt, 2007) to capture participants' perspectives.

Results

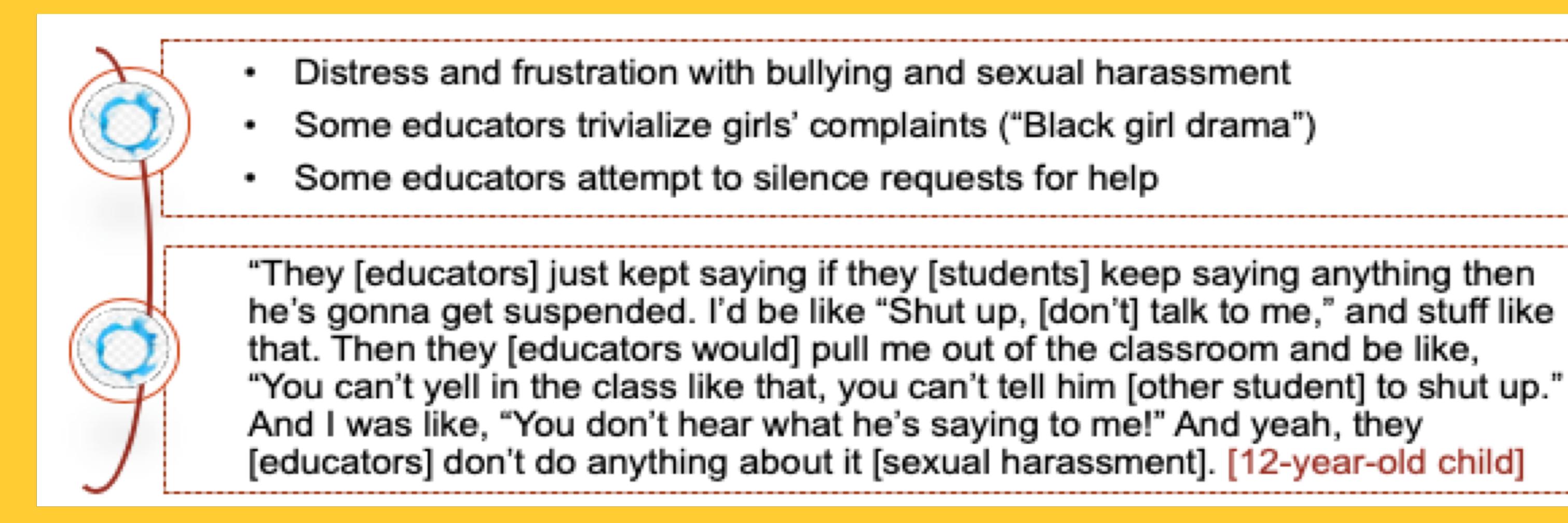
Equity - "We gotta take more consequences than they have to"

In their narratives, 15 participants (7 girls, 7 parents, and 1 educator) described their experiences by:



Intersection of gender and race

Some participants speculated that Black girls may receive harsher sanctions due to the intersecting vulnerabilities of gender and race

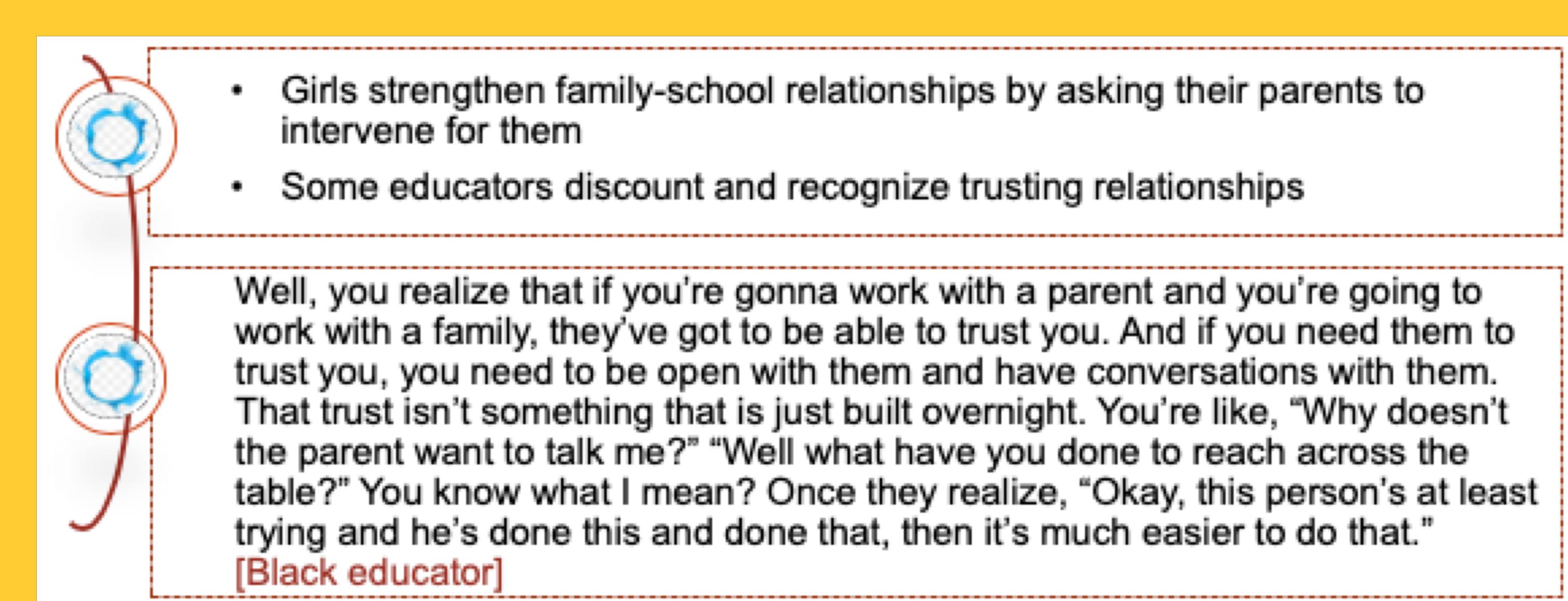


Strategies to resist OSS

Participants described two strategies to resist OSS.

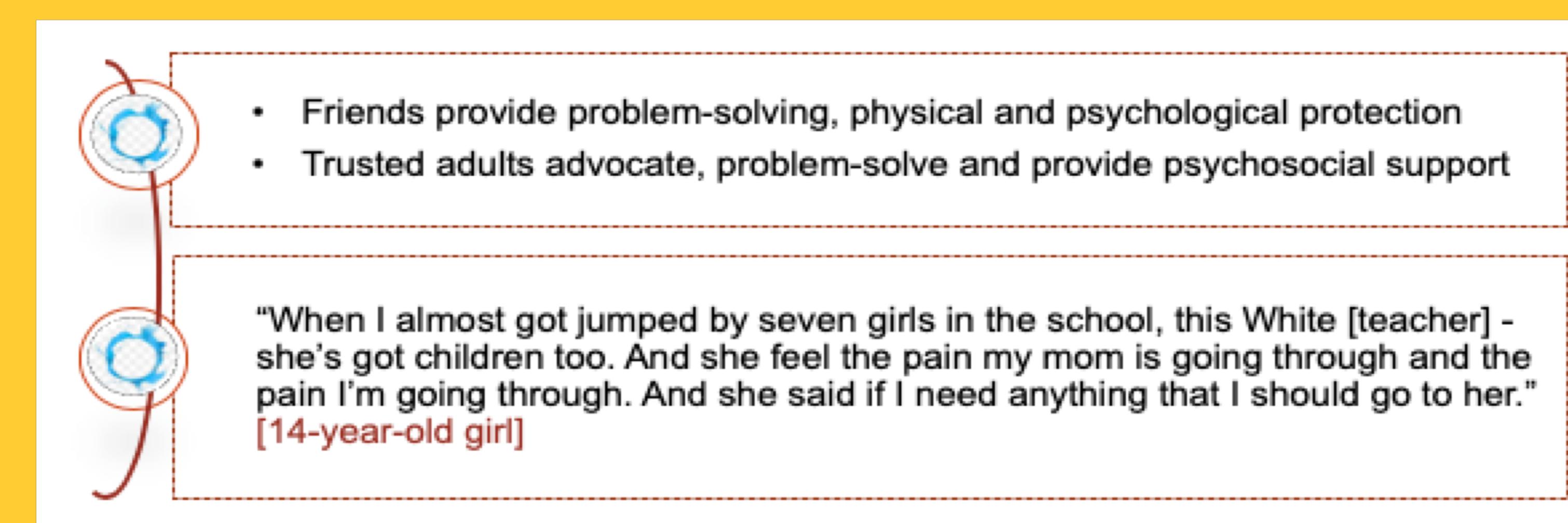
1. Strengthen family-school relationships

Black girls and educators saw OSS as unfair, and they described resisting in various ways.



2. Build a community of trusted peers and adults at school

A number of girls described both the psychological support and the physical protection they received.



Discussion, limitations, and implications

Discussion

- Participants described intersecting vulnerabilities of race and gender as resulting in the OSS of Black girls (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015).
- Some educators attempted to silence or punish the girls; (Wun, 2016), while others served as advocates, supporters and problem solvers.
- Black girls resisted by using strategies that lay foundations for effective interventions such as:
 - forcefully defending themselves ("acting out", "disrupting" class).
 - strengthening relationships between family and school.
 - Building communities of trusted friends, and adults at school.

Limitations

- Probed issues of race, need to explicitly and systematically explore intersectionality.
- Limited interviews likely missed issues and insights in lower grades, and from less populated areas throughout the state.

Implications

- Principals and behavioral deans, can take action on behalf of Black girls to protect them from sexual harassment and bullying at school.
- School social workers can assist those in power to realize and confront:
 - their own complicity in creating psychological dilemmas for minorities
 - their role in creating disparities in education (Sue et al., 2007)
- Educators can actively support family-school relationships by soliciting parents' views through community meetings about schools.
- Educators can coach Black girls to develop effective strategies for dealing with the micro aggressions.



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