



WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

An Analysis of the Impact of Identity on Women of Color Housing Activists

CH+SE LAB

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Introduction

Group identity is tied to the mobilization of social movements. Historically, BIWoC have played pivotal roles as catalyst of social mobilization in their respective communities(Gamson, 1992).

Jones and McEwen(2000) explored the role of identity and proposed a conceptual model of multidimensional identity(MMDI) which acknowledges the multifaceted and intersectional nature of the “inside” self.

BIWoC activists emphasize how their multi-dimensional identities inform their social involvement and activism as a whole(Linder and Rodriguez, 2012).

“My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am...Only then can I bring myself and my energies as a whole to the service of those struggles which I embrace as a part of my living”
-Audre Lorde 1984, pg120-21



RESEARCH QUESITON

Does identity impact BIWoC in their journey to housing activism?

Methods

Sample:

Five women of color were interviewed for approximately 60 minutes. Eligible participants were at least 18 years of age, self-identified women of color, and involved in housing activism for a minimum of a year prior to the interview date.

Coding:

Interviewees were asked questions related to personal background, involvement in housing advocacy, housing/social issues, and impact on their respective communities.

Transcripts were analyzed and reviewed using a modified three dimensional space approach to generate themes via the process outlined below(Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

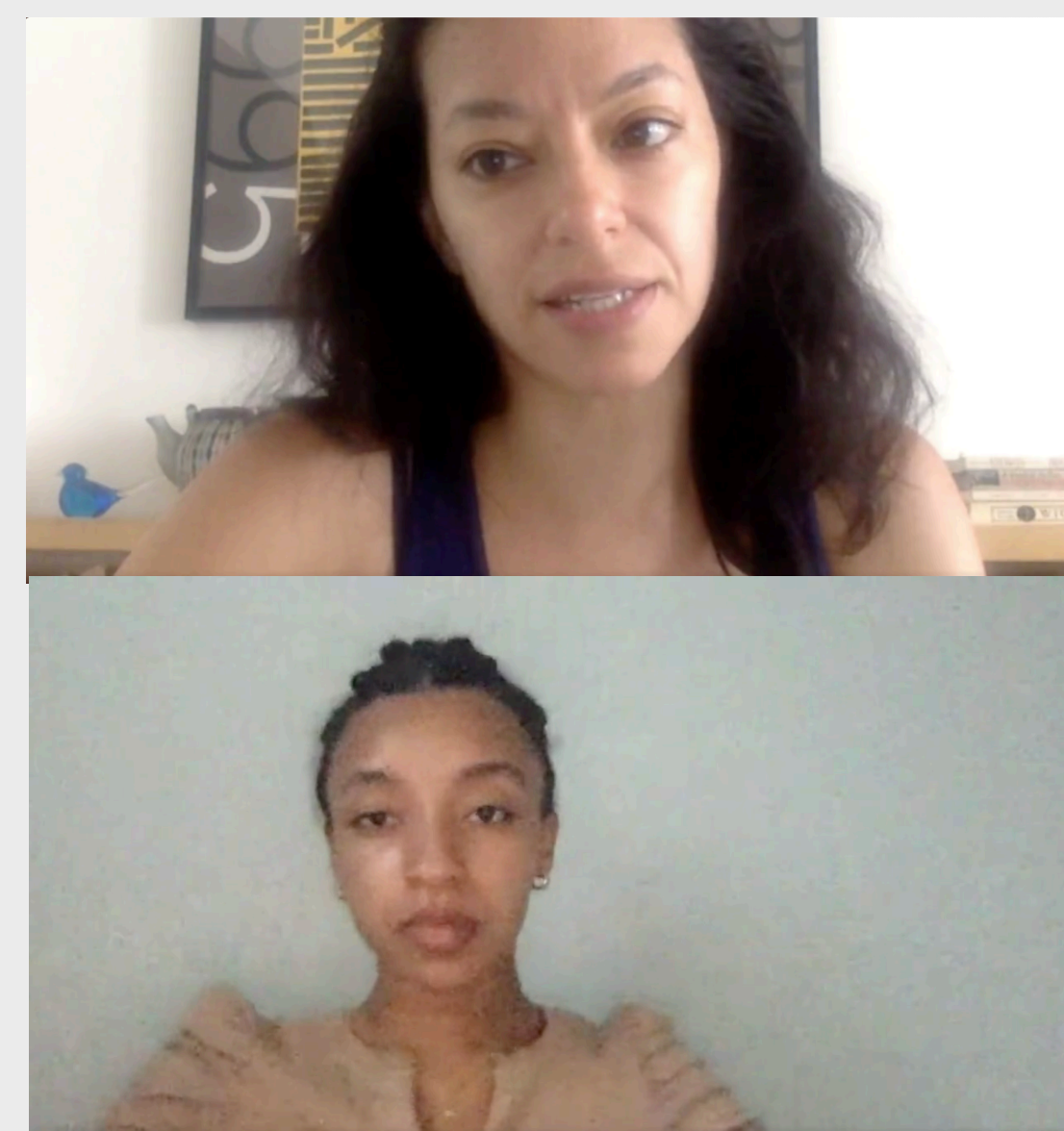


Fig 1. Screenshot from an interview conducted via GoogleMeet

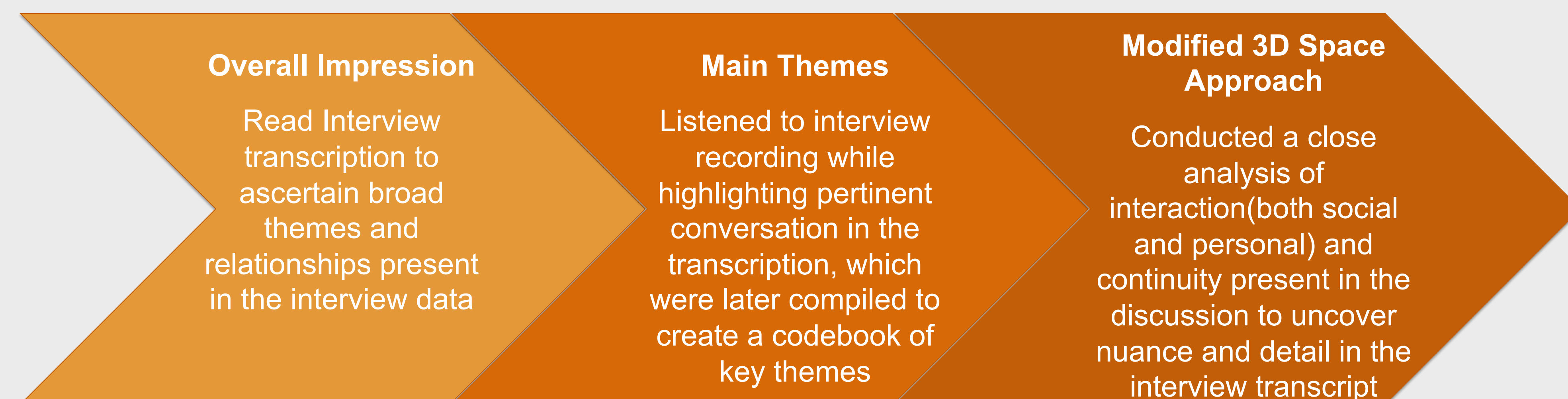


Fig 2. Flow chart of the coding and modified Three Dimensional Space Approach

Findings

Five main codes were identified that captured multiple dimensions of identity.

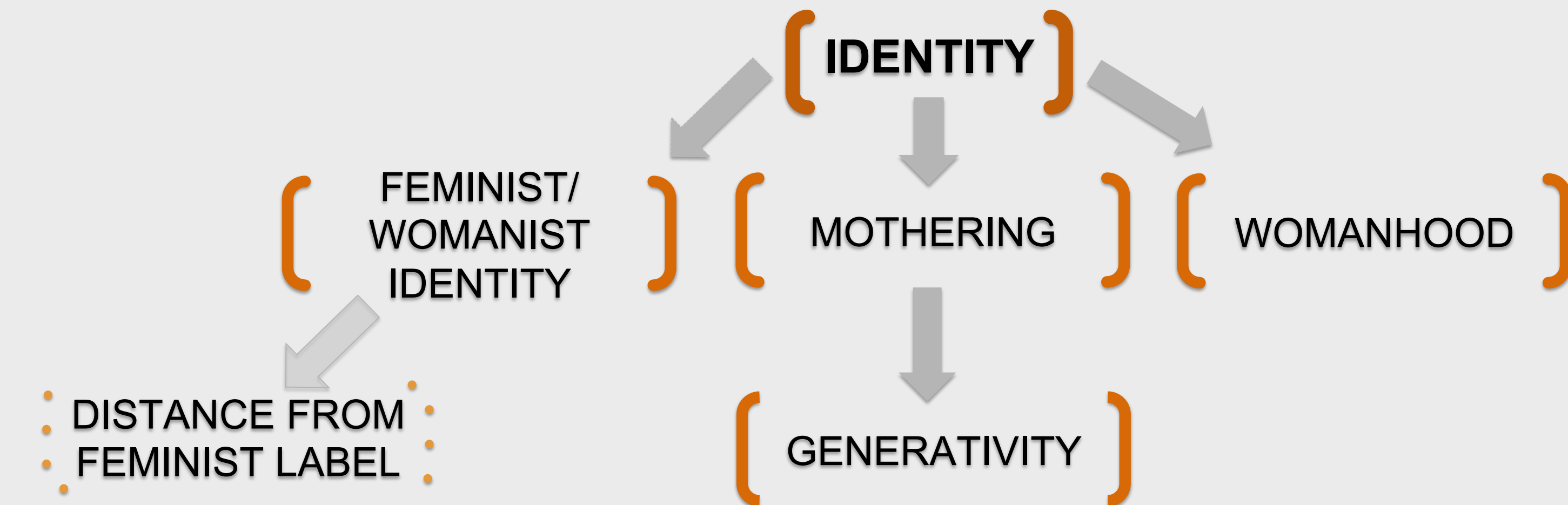


Fig 3. Thematic map outlining major themes and relationships expressed by interviewees

Table 1. Five main codes and the frequency in which they were discussed during the 60 minute interview

CODE	FREQUENCY	EXAMPLE
Mothering/Motherhood(M)	9	“...basically a lot of my activism and my participation in my local community really did begin when I became a mom”
Feminist/Womanist Identity(FI)	8	“I’m gonna say yes to the feminist label, but just because I feel that it needs to be amplified...”
Generativity (G)	5	“ I want a better life for my grandchildren, a better place so they can find where to live and that can be accessible for them,,,that’s why I try to do as much as I can now”
Womanhood (W)	3	“...just being a female driven thing, I feel that women need to acknowledge and own that power.”
Distance from feminist label (DF)	3	“...I feel like definitely closer to a feminist than not a feminist, but I don’t want to be exclusive to it.”

Conclusions

Participants discussed how their multi-dimensional identities as women, feminists, and mothers were both formative in shaping their journeys to activism and keeping them invested in social mobilization initiatives.

While most activist acknowledged the feminist value to their agency, some were hesitant to adopt the label.

Generativity is a driving force for many of the participants in this study. They expressed a willingness and motivation to participate in this work in the hopes that housing disparities would be mitigated by their activism in the present.

Activists work both influences and are influenced by identity. With women of color so integral to many advocacy initiatives, it is important to investigate the factors which lead them to and keep them invested in activism.