In This Space, We Rock Hard: Garret(ed) Spaces for the Literacies of Black Preservice Teachers

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

Historically, the literacies that Black preservice teachers bring to content and pedagogical practices have been deemed inadequate and inaccurate (Sleeter and Milner, 2011; Machado, 2013; Haddix, 2017; Gist 2017b). In an ethnographically-informed qualitative study grounded in Black Feminist Thought, Critical Race Theory, and Ubuntu, my collaborators and I engaged in conversations over the course of a year. Two major questions guided this project: When, where, and how do three Black preservice teachers at a PWI draw on their literacies to confirm, resist, and reshape perceptions of who they are, what they know, and what they need? What types of spaces sustain and nurture the literacies of these Black preservice teachers? Utilizing critical race storytelling and counter-storytelling analysis and critical discourse analysis to analyze field notes, artifacts, interviews, and audio recordings, I explore how marginal garret spaces for Black preservice teachers in an English Education teacher preparation program at a large, public, and predominantly white institution in the Midwest allowed my collaborators to draw on their literacies to affirm, resist and reshape perceptions of who they are, what they know, and what they need. Additionally, I consider how nurturing spaces and visibility in the areas of pedagogy and curriculum helped them to experience and share affirmation, community, and joy.

Dedication

In honor of Sylvia Marie Douglas.

I miss you every day.

I thank you for your unconditional and unwavering love.

Thank you for showing us

what it means

to center care,

to value one's food and language,

and to love the whole community.

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Vita

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Education
Adolescent, Post-Secondary, and Community Literacies; Secondary Education; Diversity and Equity Studies in Education

Table of Contents

Abstract i
Dedication ii
Acknowledgments iii
Vita v
List of Tables ix
List of Figures x
Chapter 1. Introduction 1
Overview of Dissertation 7
Chapter 2. A Review of Literature and Theoretical Considerations 10
Recruitment and Retention 13
Privileging Voices and Perspectives of Preservice Teachers of Color 18
Navigating the White Spaces of Teacher Education 22
Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogies and Preservice Teachers of Color 24
Supplemental/Garret Spaces 27
Theoretical Considerations for Current Study 30
BlackCrit 30
BlackCrit and Literacies 33
Black Literacy Collectives 42
Black Feminist Thought on Space, Margins, and Space Carving 44
Chapter 3. Methodological Considerations 48
An Ethnographically Informed Qualitative Project 50
History of Ethnography 50
Contemporary Conceptualizations of Ethnographic Research 52
Invitation to the Study 54
Context of this Dissertation 57
Collective and Collaborative Tenets from Black Feminist Thought, Critical Race Theory, and Ubuntu 60

Drawing on Critical Race Theory as Methodology 60
Drawing on Black Feminist Thought as Methodology 64
Drawing on Ubuntu as Methodology 65
Data Collection 69
Data Analysis 73
Critical Race Storytelling and Counter-Storytelling Analysis 75
Critical Discourse Analysis 76
Data Analysis Procedures for This Study 77
Issues of Trustworthiness and Limitations of the study 80
Chapter 4. “I’m Not Crazy!”: Testifying, Knowledge Building, and Theorizing in Garrets 84
Collective Knowledge Building and Testifying 85
Bidirectional Theorizing 92
Chapter 5. “She’s a Copy and Paste”: Black Preservice Teachers’ Resistances Against whiteness in Teacher Education 102
Resisting and Challenging Eurocentric ideas of teaching 103
Doing Black History and Talking Anti-Blackness 105
Countering Theoretical Misalignments and Misfires 114
Speaking Out and Making ‘Em Sick 126
Pedagogical Wins and Affirmations 130
Chapter 6. “Don’t Worry, I’ll Get Her There”: Collective and Collaborative Praxes 137
Reshaping Who Cares and Teaches 138
Freedom in Unfree Spaces: Reshaping the space 141
Choosing and Reshaping the Margins 152
Chapter 7. Discussion and Implications 159
Discussion of Findings 162
Peering Through Different Lenses: Theoretical Implications 164
Embodying Methods Beyond Research: Methodological Implications 167
Praxis Implications for Teacher Education 171
Reframing Conceptualization of Teaching and Teachers 171
Moving Toward Critical Race English Teacher Education 173

Cultivating Garret Spaces 175
Areas for Opportunity 177
Final Thoughts 179
References 180
Appendix A. Reflective Seminar Seating Chart 200
Appendix B. List of Sample Codes 201
Appendix C. Transcription Conventions System 202

List of Tables

Table 1. Themes of Reviewed Literature on Preservice Teachers of Color 13

Table 2. Email Invitation to Participate 56

Table 3. Invitation Responses 57

Table 4. Phases and Sources of Data Collection..... 72

Table 5. My Data Analysis Procedures..... 79

Table 6. (Re)defining "Representative" 153

List of Figures

Figure 1. Data Analysis Framework 74

Chapter 1. Introduction

> We believe the one who has power. He is the one who gets to write the story. So when you study history, you must ask yourself, Whose story am I missing? Whose voice was suppressed so that this voice could come forth? Once you have figured that out, you must find that story too. From there you get a clearer, yet still imperfect, picture.
>
> — Gyasi, *Homegoing*

Gysai's novel *Homegoing* chronicles the journeys of descendants of two Asante half-sisters who are separated during the Gold Coast's slave trade. One sister marries a British official and the other, unbeknownst to her sister, is shipped off to American enslavement. Though the characters in Gyasi's novel are fictional, they are based on the real experiences of enslaved people from and in Africa, as well as the experiences of those enslaved throughout the African diaspora. My journey in reading her novel was one of pain, frustration, joy, and affirmation at being seen and heard. As a Nigerian and Black American woman, I felt as though I was learning my own history for the first time. Telling this story was important to reversing erasure and silencing which plays a part in enacting racial violence upon Black and Brown bodies. Erasure of these stories, histories,

and visible images of resilience is intertwined with the ways education at all levels participates in racial violence against Black and Brown bodies. The storyteller determines the truth.

I came to this research during the first semester of my second year in the doctoral program. I was in Discourse Analysis 1 and I had just taken on the role of program manager for the English Education and Social Studies Education programs. This role meant I would be teaching reflective seminars and leading field experiences with preservice teachers. Seeing the class roster for my undergraduate section, I was ecstatic to learn that three Black students would be in the B.S.Ed. English Language Arts section of reflective seminar. One student of Color in class is a treat; three is extraordinary. Upon entering the classroom for my first session, I quickly sensed tension in the room, tension I did not yet understand. Most disturbing, I noticed that the three Black students all sat on the outskirts of the classroom with their backs against the walls; the tension in the space seemed to have physically manifested (See Appendix A) in the places in which individuals chose to sit. There was something about the space that either pushed them to the margins of the classroom or led them to opt to sit on the margins, and the physical locations in which they sat were manifestations of those push and/or pull factors. As the weeks passed, those three students consistently sat on the margins and, as I later learned, they consistently experienced various forms of pushout. In that space existed layered and privileged ideas about who constructs knowledge, what knowledge is valuable and which bodies are knowledgeable and valuable, and there were material consequences for the

three Black student teachers not just in that space, but in the other teacher education spaces they navigated. My early days as instructor of that course made me question not just why those three students were on the margins, but also how they were seen, what push factors or pull factors led them to the margins, and what sort of living was happening on the margin.

I often ask new cohorts of preservice teachers to choose a piece of media that represents "good teaching" or teaching that resonates with their teaching philosophies. And, every year, a good portion of the students choose clips from *Dead Poets Society* (Haft et al, 1981) and *Freedom Writers* (Devito et al, 2007). At times, a student will choose a scene from *Matilda* (Dahl at el, 1996) or *Harry Potter* (Heyman and Seghatechian, 2001) or *Music of the Heart* (Kaplan et al, 1999). But regardless, students tend to see the ideal image of a teacher as white and female and the repetition of this story of a hero white teacher has become the "truth." These observations are important as the value attached to Black and Brown bodies, or "dark bodies" (Love, 2019) has limited access to being seen or valued as full teachers, full knowledgeable humans. When I offer a counter-story (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002) mention a film like *Lean on M*e (Twain, 1989), the students often dismiss the principal, Mr. Clark, for his "harsh" methods, methods that do not align with European American ways of being a teacher. They do not see his passion and his desperation to save his community; they see a mean Black man. Similarly, the Latinx teachers in the documentary *Precious Minds* (McGinnis, 2011), Mr. Acosta and Mr. Gonzalez, are often accused of negatively "indoctrinating" and

"revolutionizing" their students and crossing personal boundaries that teachers should never cross. The preservice teachers do not see their revolutionary love (Johnson, Bryan, and Boutte, 2019) for their students. Johnson et al (2019) define revolutionary love as:

> … deep-seated love that is cloaked in pain and that is bounded in action which disrupts the social constructions of anti-blackness and white supremacist patriarchy through the practice of humanizing love…[and] arms Black children and educators with critical consciousness and the essential tools to fight for the mattering of Black lives and against white supremacy in and beyond PreK-12 urban schools (p. 48).

Hence, when they watch and listen to Mr. Acosta and Mr. Gonzalez, they do not see their passion, their determination to reverse the effects of decades of erasure, or the healing and validating spaces the teachers created. Their teaching is not good teaching.

The lack of images or visibility of teachers of Color and a refusal to disrupt the dominant narrative of who a teacher is and what "good" teaching is has contributed to the calcification of the white female image and pushed good teachers of Color and would be teachers of Color out of the field. Foster (1997) writes:

> Despite numerous thinly veiled efforts to reduce the number of black teachers, those of us – black and white – who have worked closely with African-American teachers know that many of them have provided magical classrooms for poor, African-American children (p. xi).

Those magical classrooms are often those which provide representations of possibilities as well as experiences that echo and do not shy away from cultural, racial, historical, and spiritual understandings of the word and the world (Freire, 1970). However, often, teachers of Color are "portrayed through a progressive lens as authoritarian and conformist, making it difficult to see the multifaceted nature of their practice, including their deep commitments to their students and their communities, and their understanding of the systemic nature of racism" (Philip, 2011, p. 356). These representations hinder deeper understanding and dialogue with teachers of Color and map them as ungeographic[1] and unknowledgeable (Mckittrick, 2006). Thus, teachers of Color are not seen as models for prospective educators (Brown et al, 2018; Philip, 2011), and for students of Color in teacher education programs, this often means that they too are mapped as ungeographic and unknowledgeable. Despite decades of calls for more teachers of racially and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2000; 2005; Haddix, 2017; Sleeter, 2001), not much has been done structurally to make the field less violent and more welcoming and validating for teachers of Color.

With PK-12 students of Color making up a significant portion of the total PK-12 student population, an increase in the number of teachers of Color is imperative (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Haddix, 2017; Achinstein, B., Ogawa, R. & Sexton, D. (2010).

[1] McKittrick (2006) uses the word "ungeographic to refer to "the only recognized geographic relevancy permitted to black subjects in the diaspora is that of dispossession and social segregation" (p.4), thus lacking value or ownership.

> Over the 25-year period from 1987 to 2012, the minority share of the American teaching force—including Black, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and multiracial teachers—has grown from 12 percent to about 18 percent. The minority share of the American student population also grew during these 25 years, albeit not at the same tempo as increases among minority teachers. Minority students now account for more than half of all public school students (Casey et al, 2015, 2).

Even with this growth in racial and linguistic diversity in the student population, progress toward diversifying the teaching force in meaningful, highly-qualified, and long-lasting ways has been very limited. Thus, many preservice teachers of Color find their way to the classroom by way of alternative routes, as many have been shut out of universities and more traditional routes due to financial constraints and the trickle-down of poor educational experiences and preparation for children of Color (Valenzuela, 2017; Irizarry, 2007). And, while many of these programs are situated within or connected to colleges and universities, many do not provide meaningful foundational support in the areas of pedagogy and curriculum or mentoring support that is crucial for preservice teachers of Color entering a field dominated by and complicit in maintaining whiteness and white supremacy (Sleeter, 2017; Sleeter, 2001). These "dark bodies" are often read and treated as unknowing and unfairly admitted by many of their white peers, their instructors, and sometimes by other nonwhite peers. Thus, Black and Brown preservice educators often have to persist, resist, and navigate the systems alone, or not at all.

Overview of Dissertation

In this dissertation, I share findings generated from a year-long ethnographically-informed qualitative study grounded in Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought, and Ubuntu. In this study, I focused on the literacy practices of three Black preservice teachers across two settings: the university classroom and in a garret (McKittrick, 2006) space with me. The aim of this study was to: 1) explore how they drew upon their literacies to resist, reaffirm, and reshape perceptions of who they were, what they knew, and what they needed as they navigated teacher education spaces and developed their own English teacher identities; and 2) explore what spaces nurtured those literacies. In this chapter, I discussed how dominant constructions of "the teacher" and teaching has been grounded in whiteness and white supremacy, effectively marginalizing or erasing the pedagogies, contributions, and faces of teachers of Color.

In chapter two, *A Review of Literature and Theoretical Considerations*, I review literatures published over the past 20 years that center Black preservice teachers and other preservice teachers of Color. I propose five major themes from my review of literature and highlight areas of opportunity. In chapter two, I also detail my theoretical framework. I start by explicating BlackCrit in education as proposed by Dumas and ross (2016) and use it to explore conceptualizations of literacy. I also explore literacy collectives and Black feminist thought on space as opportunities to center marginalized ways of being, knowing, and existing in the world.

In Chapter three, *Methodological Considerations*, I unpack my methodological framework, an ethnographically-informed, qualitative mosaic that draws from three bodies of theory: Critical Race, Black Feminist, and Ubuntu. In particular, I discuss how utilizing these methods centers collective and collaborative approaches to qualitative research. I also outline my use of critical race storytelling and counter-storytelling analysis and critical discourse analysis to privilege and center the voices, literacies, and discourses of my study collaborators.

In chapters four through six, I share my findings from this study. Chapter 4, *"I'm Not Crazy": Testifying, Knowledge Building, and Theorizing in Garrets*, discusses how testifying, theorizing, and collaborative knowledge-building in garrets helped to counter the "madness" and racial gaslighting my collaborators experienced and to affirm what they knew and felt. Chapter 5, "*She's a Copy and Paste": Black Preservice Teachers' Resistances Against Whiteness in Teacher Education*, explores the multiple and varied ways my collaborators resisted Eurocentric[2] teaching practices and texts and how they used their resistances to cultivate and sustain affirming spaces for themselves and their Black and Brown students. Chapter 6, "*Don't Worry, I'll Get Her There: Collective and Collaborative Praxes*, examines how praxes grounded in collectivism and collaboration

[2] I use this term to name and call out the legacy of centering the culture, history, languages and practices of whiteness and white supremacy (which include at the exclusion of and erasure of global Black and Brown peoples and their cultures, histories, languages, and practices.

fostered critically conscious embodiments of care and how reshaping the margins can hold space for affirmation, joy, and community.

Finally, in chapter seven, *Discussion and Implications*, I review my findings and outline implications based on those findings and my collective and collaborative approaches to research methods. I separate my implications into three categories: theoretical, methodological, and praxis. I end with areas of opportunities for additional research.

Chapter 2. A Review of Literature and Theoretical Considerations

There is a proliferation of research documenting the racist, isolating, aggressive, and anti-Black experiences of preservice teachers of Color[3] in teacher education, particularly those at predominantly white institutions. This is not a new phenomenon. However, with the gaps in research and the lack of growth in teachers of Color in the field (despite many concentrated efforts), there has been a recent turn back toward this issue.

Much of the research around preservice teacher education is marked and unmarked, meaning when the word teacher is not marked with a racial identity, the teacher referenced is white. Again, this does little to decenter whiteness and dismantle the dominant image of "a teacher." However, in order to draw attention to the ways in which teachers of Color have been marginalized in teacher education, marking is often intentional and needed. Nevertheless, the heavy focus on white preservice teachers as opposed to preservice teachers of Color continues to center whiteness and "... leaves in

[3] I use the term "preservice teachers of Color" here instead of "Black" because of the current trend toward using preservice teachers of Color. This could be due to the incredibly low number of people of Color in teacher educations programs, thus the need for students of Color to join together or be joined together for support or representation. This could also be an effort to find commonalities among preservice teachers of Color by erroneously and harmfully erasing their unique identities and experiences. Throughout this dissertation I use "Black" and "anti-blackness" to push against reducing race to a discussion of "Color."

place whiteness as defining a set of normative cultural practices against which all are expected to fit" (Willis et al, 2008, p. 39). Additionally, not addressing the experiences and concerns of preservice teachers of Color in studies with majority white participants continues the silences that have surrounded the ways of knowing and being in the world for people of Color.

Therefore, to collect literatures to review, I sought empirical studies on preservice teachers of Color that focused on issues of racial/ethnic equity and diversity in teacher education. I relied on several electronic databases, such as ERIC, JSTOR, Sage Premier, Web of Science, and Education Full Text, using journals to gather articles for review. The terms and phrases "preservice teacher/candidate," "preservice teachers/candidates of color," "equity," and "diversity" were central search terms used to locate studies. In addition, I searched terms that were synonymous to or typically used to identify specific racial/ethnic groups including "Black," "African American," "Latino," "Native American," "Indigenous," and "Asian American." I first selected empirical articles from the field of education, and then, limited my selection to those that focused on contexts within the United States and were published in key, peer-reviewed education journals. Taking into consideration these constraints, my search yielded about 35 articles, of which those devoted to empirical research were mostly qualitative in nature. Additionally, to narrow down my search results, I restricted the selected publications to those published within the last twenty years and, though important, excluded studies that included in-service teachers, rural education, bilingual education, studies that focused on specific

content other than literacy/English teacher education, and studies that focused on how preservice teachers didn't address race. Lastly, I did not seek books or edited volumes.

The goal of my targeted review of the extant scholarship on preservice teachers of Color was to identify and call attention to the big themes that resonate across this body of work and to consider what these themes mean in the context of race and teacher preparation. It was not my intention to conduct a comprehensive review of all the extant literature ever published on the topic. Instead, I sought to try to understand the landscape and the types of focuses for preservice teachers of Color to understand the current landscape and possible areas for further research. My search yielded five predominant themes (see Table 1): 1) the recruitment and retention of more preservice teachers of Color in teacher preparation programs and in K-12 teaching; 2) the perspectives and voices of preservice teachers of Color about teaching; 3) the experiences of teacher candidates of Color navigating teacher preparation programs; 4) culturally responsive pedagogies for preservice teachers of Color; and 5) the experiences of preservice teachers of Color in and out of school spaces. In the discussion, I first explore how scholars have privileged the perspectives, voices, and experiences of preservice teachers of Color. Next, I discuss research that explores how preservice teachers of Color navigate teacher education programs, paying particular attention to programs at predominantly white institutions. I then discuss studies that focus on culturally relevant and sustaining practices for preservice teachers of Color, which also includes sometimes carving out spaces for them. I end this section with areas for further research.

Table 1. Themes of Reviewed Literature on Preservice Teachers of Color

Themes	Literatures Reviewed
Recruitment and Retention	Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell (2011) Flores et al. (2007) Gist (2018) Irizarry (2007) Jones, Holton, & Joseph (2019) Valenzuela (2017) Villagomez et al (2016) Villegas, Strom, & Lucas (2012)
Perspectives and Voices	Clark & Flores (2001) Endo (2015) Frank (2003) Gomez, Rodriguez, & Agosto (2008) Gomez & Rodríguez (2011) Haddix (2012) Irizarry (2011) Kohli (2009) Philip (2011) Philip (2014) Thomas, Dinkins, & Hazelwood (2018) Tolbert & Eichelberger (2016)
Navigating white Spaces	Cozart (2010) Gist (2017b) Kohli (2018) Petchauer, Bowe, & Wilson (2018) Scott & Rodriguez (2015)
Culturally Responsive Pedagogies for Preservice Teachers of Color	Achinstein & Aguirre (2008) Berry (2005) Berry & Cook (2018) Borrero, Flores, & de la Cruz (2016) Gist (2017a) Jackson (2015) Kohli (2014) Philip & Zavala (2015)
Out of Schools Spaces	Haddix (2012) Meacham (2000)

Recruitment and Retention

Literatures on the recruitment and retention of preservice teachers of Color are plentiful (Bianco, Leech, & Mitchell, 2011; Flores et al., 2007; Gist, 2018; Gomez,

Rodriguez, & Agosto, 2008; Gomez & Rodríguez, 2011; Irizarry, 2007; Jones, Holton, & Joseph, 2019; Valenzuela, 2017; Villagomez et al., 2016; Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). Irizarry (2007) argued that teacher preparation programs have had a larger pool of students of Color from which to recruit but have not been successful in attracting more students of Color into the profession through traditional preservice pathways. Many teacher preparation programs and K-12 districts have attempted to recruit and retain teachers of Color. However, with a focus on increasing numbers without sustained support or disruption of oppressive pedagogies and curricula, exits from the field have remained high (Rizga, 2016; Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). Villegas, Strom, & Lucas (2012) reviewed minority teacher recruitment policies and programs from 1987 to 2007 as well as their influence on the racial/ethnic makeup of the teaching force in elementary and secondary public schools. They found that progress was made toward increasing the overall number and proportion of minority teachers in the public schools, but due to a rapid growth of "minority" student populations, the impact was difficult to see and, in fact, the racial/ethnic gap between students of Color and their teachers has actually increased. Valenzuela (2017) reviewed the research on Grow Your Own (GYO) educator programs that focused on recruiting and retaining teachers of Color. She found that GYO programs vary in terms of recruitment, financial assistance, curriculum and support. She also found that they help address teacher shortages, retention issues and teacher diversity by engaging in a variety of strategies that aim to recruit teachers from local communities in hopes that the pool of candidates will increase in diversity and will be more likely to

stay teaching in the community. Importantly, she argues that it is important to keep in mind that when designing GYO programs, different strategies may work differently for different communities but that a stance of community solidarity and critical consciousness helps distinguish GYO models from perhaps most university-based teacher preparation programs in the United States. Brown, Dilworth, and Brown (2018) point out that the metaphors that have been used to describe teachers in recruitment and retention of teachers of Color are problematic. They argue that when viewed metaphorically as a commodity, Black teachers are "burdened by two things: (a) a societal perception that in some way they are gratified by filling a numbers void in the classroom; and (b) that they will be fully engaged with Black and other students of color more so than others by virtue of similar skin tone, background and culture" (p. 287). Additionally, when using the metaphor of "silver bullet" which implies a magical weapon to solve a long standing, complex problem, "African American and other teachers of color are often misunderstood as a charmed cohort that with little effort and minimal resources can remedy the persistent PK-12 academic achievement gap between underperforming students of color and their white peers" (p. 288). It is, then, imperative that intentional and multifaceted approaches are used to recruit, retain, and humanize teachers of Color and that the labor to reverse the racist state of education not rest on the shoulders of these teachers.

To this end, many scholars have produced considerable research on different types of recruitment programs in the U.S., specifically those whose goals are

sustainability, retention, and renovation of traditional teaching practices. Jones, Holton, and Joseph (2019) reviewed the program, Call Me Mister, which was developed to address the significant shortage of African American men in K-8 public schools. In their article, they highlight lessons learned including acknowledging generational differences as well as "the essential need to recognize both the personal and educational contexts of every African American male participant in the program and have an IEP[4]" (p.67). Flores et al., (2007) highlighted the Academy for Teacher Excellence (ATE) at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) and San Antonio College (SAC). As a comprehensive model for the recruitment, preparation and retention of Latinx teachers, the program values diversity, prepares teacher candidates for work in linguistically and culturally diverse communities, and works to increase the number of Latinx students who pursue teacher certification. The program provides support in the areas of teacher learning, faculty development, faculty research, school/district partnerships, and new teacher induction support, creating a comprehensive and cyclic program. Villagomez et al. (2016) outlined the Oregon Teacher Pathway (OTP) as a framework that takes into consideration promising practices for recruiting and supporting preservice teachers of Color in rural eastern Oregon and other rural and urban areas. The pathway program includes a

[4] The term "IEP" used here simply means having an individualized education plan for each of the students enrolled in this program. It is not used as it is traditionally used to signal a plan for individual education plan based on identification of a specific learning need and special education services.

"minority" pipeline from high school through college, financial support, and opportunities to remain engaged with various educational contexts.

Taking up Critical Race Feminism, Gist, C. D., White, T., & Bianco, M. (2018) explained that a Black Woman Educator Pipeline that "shields and protects Black women and girls in academic settings, recreating education as a liberatory process, is a potential disruptive instrument for mitigating the force of structural racism that creates the pushout phenomenon (i.e., the exclusion of Black girls from academic settings through anti-Black criminalization policies and practices) by instead pushing them to teach" (p. 57). They argue that this pipeline can be framed as a counternarrative to punitive and spirit murdering practices through "the protected structure of restorative educational opportunities that create viable pathways to the teaching profession" (p. 58). They advocate that we nurture the genius and agency of Black girls and build partnerships instead of marginalizing and criminalizing them. In this initiative, the experiences of Black girls, as potential future Black women educators, are explored to:

a) better understand and amplify their collective learning and social-emotional experiences,
b) highlight and critique the challenges and possibilities for positively pushing their intellectual identities as students and future teachers via pedagogies and supports,
c) identify spaces and structures in schools that can resist and combat the marginalization of their agency and genius, and

d) consider implications for the development of Black Women Educator pipelines (p. 58).

It is important to note that this approach counters the metaphors that paint Black teachers as commodities or silver bullets and offers continued support. We are preparing and teaching real bodies, who in turn will be teaching young people/bodies and their lived experiences have material consequences. Similarly, Leech, & Mitchell (2011) discussed a pre-collegiate course designed to encourage high school students of Color, including African American males, to explore teaching. More specifically, they examined factors that influenced 11th and 12th grade African American males in a pre-collegiate pathway to teaching program to consider a teaching career. The results exposed the "complexity of effective recruitment while also demonstrating how a successful program has the capacity to encourage young African American males to reframe their thinking and see themselves as potential future teachers" (p. 368). In other words, the program reframed the dominant image of who a teacher is for these young Black men.

Privileging Voices and Perspectives of Preservice Teachers of Color

A great deal of literature highlights the voices and perspectives of preservice teachers of Color (Clark & Flores, 2001; Covertino, 2016; Endo, 2015; Frank, 2003; Gist, 2017b; Haddix, 2012; Irizarry, 2011; Kohli, 2009; Philip, 2011; Philip, 2014; Philip, 2016; Scott & Rodriguez, 2015; Thomas, Dinkins, & Hazelwood, 2018; Tolbert & Eichelberger, 2016). Some scholars have focused specifically on the identity

development of preservice teachers of Color enrolled in preparing programs at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Clark and Flores (2001) asked whether teacher preparation should include the development and enhancement of a positive self-image in teachers and provide teachers with the techniques necessary to promote a positive ethnic identity in their students. Their findings suggest that there is a strong association between ethnic identity and self-concept and that these associations and conceptualizations are varied. Haddix (2012) examined Black female preservice teachers' perspectives on their racial identity in relation to how they were positioned inside and outside a traditional teacher education program in the U.S. She found that her participants made very deliberate decisions about social and personal engagement within and beyond the dominant context of teacher education. To provide context for the sort of positioning his participants experienced and enacted, Philip (2014) explored the emergence and continuance of the term “Asian American” as a political and racial identifier in the U.S. and examined how Asian American preservice teachers appropriated and challenged these multiple meanings. Importantly, this study highlights how these teachers' understandings of their racial identity is related to the anticipated challenges they see for themselves as Asian American teachers of other students of Color. Their experiences, and those of other minoritized preservice teachers, must be appreciated for the challenges and complexities they present.

Other scholars have focused less on the developing teacher identities of preservice teachers of Color and more on amplifying their voices on their negative experiences in

university courses and in the field. Endo (2015) investigated how ten Asian American female classroom teachers experienced racial microaggressions throughout their licensure programs and into their professional careers as classroom teachers. The findings show that the racial microaggressions that these women experienced closely intersected with gender oppression as they: "(a) [made] sense of institutional "cultures of Whiteness", (b) encounter[ed] racialized sexualization, and (c) ... were racialized as foreigners" (p. 604). Frank (2003) listened to the voices of African American education majors enrolled in a teacher education program at a PWI to better understand how their experiences might affect their perceptions of teaching and willingness to stay in the profession. Similarly, but paying close attention to the many ways people communicate, Irizarry (2011) followed a cohort of Latino/a preservice teachers from recruitment into their transition into the teaching profession and examined how the cohort experienced systematic silencing due to overt and subtle forms of subordination, such as individual agents, institutional practices, and institutional policies, all of which marginalized and limited their full participation their teacher preparation programs. Thomas, Dinkins, and Hazelwood (2018) used a qualitative interview approach to examine how ten Black candidates in teacher education programs experienced "microaggressions that were perpetrated by peers, professors, and/or institutional cultures, with microinsults and microinvalidations being most frequent and microassaults less prevalent" (p. 77). They found that all but one of their participants experienced these varied types of microaggressions. They also found that Black teacher candidates found safety in spaces

outside of teacher education, such as Black student and Greek organizations were helpful in reducing the impact of these microaggressions due to their providing space for civil discourse. The authors argue for more faculty, staff and student training to identify and address racial microaggressions and for more spaces for civil discourse within teacher education so that students of Color can share their experiences. Tolbert & Eichelberger (2016) documented the experiences of a bilingual/biracial Peruvian-Anglo European preservice teacher, Serina, citing multiple microaggressions throughout her teacher education program. Alarmingly, they credit her ability to draw on her community cultural capital to push through and eventually become a licensed teacher. This is problematic as it echoes similar descriptions of youth of Color relying on "grit" to push through instead of problematizing the overt and covert acts of marginalization and racism that Serina experienced. Kohli (2009) argues that we must create research and teaching strategies "that acknowledge racial minority teachers as insiders to the experiences of racism in school, and as valuable assets in the fight for educational justice," instead of pushing them to draw on grit or community cultural capital to "make it." Using a critical race theory (CRT) framework, she analyzed the reflections of Women of Color educators regarding their encounters and observations with race and racism in K-12 schools. Their stories exposed "(1) the personal experiences with racism the women endured within their K-12 education; (2) the parallel experiences with racism they observe students of Color enduring in schools today; and (3) racial hierarchies within teacher education" (p. 239). Kohli's study highlights the cycle of racism deeply ingrained in all levels of the

educational experiences of Asian-American, Black and Latina/o youth. She points out how these experiences and personal knowledges can serve as resources for teacher preparation programs; however, I believe it is also important to consider how paralyzing and exhausting the weight of this sort of work can be on preservice and inservice teachers of Color, particularly when there are few people of Color (which is often).

Navigating the White Spaces of Teacher Education

It has been well documented that students of Color on historically white campuses experience anti-Black violence (Dancy, Edwards, & Davis, 2018). To attend to the needs of preservice teachers of Color and to also discuss how, though often not ideally, they respond to these negative experiences, some scholars have centered their research on how preservice teachers of Color navigate teacher education and the field, whether the field experiences are part of a preservice program or once they have secured a job (Cozart, 2010; Gist, 2017b; Kohli, 2018; Petchauer, Bowe, & Wilson, 2018; Scott & Rodriguez, 2015; Tolbert & Eichelberger, 2016). Gist (2017b) examined how double binds influence the teaching and learning experiences of preservice teachers of Color as well as the strategies they utilize to escape them, such as attending diversity workshops outside of their programs, remaining silent, and joining cultural student organizations. Scott & Rodriguez (2015) highlighted how three African American males' experienced stereotype threat, marginalization, and microaggressions in their preparation experiences and navigated these conditions by relying on role models who believed in them and by

drawing on racial socialization practices of African American families. Taking a different route, Petchauer, Bowe, & Wilson (2018) traced how high-stakes teacher exams (like edTPA) have shaped the career entry opportunities for Black teachers. Based on an exploration of past testing for competency movements, they outlined three findings from the emerging edTPA scholarship: (1) mixed and alarming results from edTPA racial bias reviews, (2) institutional resources and unequal distribution, and (3) how the exam may constrain or permit justice. This study helps to make visible some of the institutional and political moves, which are often hidden, that preservice teachers of Color must also navigate during their journey to becoming teachers.

Once in the field, teachers of Color continue to have difficulty navigating the White space of education. Despite recruitment efforts, teachers of Color are underrepresented and leaving the teaching force at faster rates than their White counterparts (Rizga, 2016; Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). Kohli (2018) analyzed narratives from 218 racial justice–oriented, urban teachers of Color and found despite serving majority students of Color, urban schools operate as hostile racial climates for students and teachers of Color. Additionally, institutionalized white supremacy and racism limits the growth of teachers (and I would add students) of Color and ultimately, pushes them out (again, I would add students as well). To give voice to this particular type of experience, Cozart (2010) presents a personal narrative of her "transformation from miseducated (schooled) to educated (cultural broker) as a pretext to explore

miseducation among young Black teachers" adding evidence of additional difficulties in continuing to be a teacher and how conflicting pedagogies hurt students of Color.

Culturally Responsive/Relevant Pedagogies and Preservice Teachers of Color

Very little of the literature takes up how teacher educators adjust to the needs of preservice teachers of Color (Berry, 2005; Berry and Cook, 2018; Gist, 2017a; Jackson, 2015). Gist (2017a) discussed the impact of culturally responsive teacher educator pedagogy on three preservice teachers of Color in their teaching and learning experiences. She argues that "the essentialization of teachers of color as a homogeneous group, while useful for representation and mission-based advocacy work, can often oversimplify commonalities and commitments of teachers of color" (p. 288). This often means that more work needs to be done to be responsive to the needs of preservice teachers of Color. Although the teacher candidates of Color that Gist worked with shared a common racial/ethnic identity, "different class, familial, and prior educational backgrounds situated them at various entry points of learning in the teacher education classroom" (p. 300). Despite the differences, her findings suggest that features of culturally responsive pedagogy, such as critical course readings related to culture and language, in-class activities such as small-group and jigsaw presentations, and culturally responsive assignments can be helpful and meaningful to the learning experiences of preservice teachers of Color. In teacher education, we typically address culturally responsive pedagogy as something to be taught to preservice teachers, not as something

we embody beyond readings. Gist is arguing that by adopting these pedagogical practices, teacher educators "can assert a pedagogical model that builds a bridge between theory and practice (praxis)" (p. 291). Similarly, Berry (2005; 2018) sought to preemptively combat the devaluing African American preservice teachers may experience due to conflicts between their formal/traditional teacher education programs and their perceptions of school and teaching and learning experiences. She discussed what she calls "personally engaged pedagogy," which she adapts from bell hooks, as a means of "enhancing the quality of the learning experiences of her African American pre-service teachers" and valuing their experiences, knowledges, and voices (p. 31). Revisiting her pedagogical approach in 2018, Berry, with Cook, utilizes critical autoethnography to share how she uses personal memoirs with Black preservice teachers to "interwea[ve] the curriculum into the life experiences of the students and teacher educator" (pp. 348). This practice helps to provide multi-dimensional and critical explorations of the what it means to be Black teachers.

Though some scholars acknowledge the need for culturally relevant pedagogy for PTOCs, there are few studies about how to prepare preservice teachers of Color to be culturally responsive and/or culturally sustaining and even fewer to address the supports needed to continue developing culturally responsive pedagogies during early years for teachers of Color (Achinstein & Aguirre, 2008; Borrero, Flores, & de la Cruz, 2016; Jackson, 2015; Kohli, 2014; Philip & Zavala, 2016). Achinstein & Aguirre (2008) explored if and how new teachers of Color experienced sociocultural challenges from

students and how they responded to them in practice. They found that the conception of cultural match is limited and highlighted the various forms of shock that novices of Color experienced when students of Color questioned or rejected their teachers' cultural identifications. Their study revealed that a lack of preparation and support for preservice teachers of Color in the areas of culturally relevant pedagogies can set them up for failure. Jackson (2015) also explored preservice teachers of Color's culturally responsive pedagogy and found that the assumption is often made that preservice teachers of Color already know how to enact culturally responsive pedagogy and understand how to mitigate sociocultural challenges. Philip & Zavala (2016) explored the contradictions, possibilities, limitations, and consequences of the identity of "critical educator of color." They found that the performances of particular critical educator of Color identities "problematically intertwine claims of Freirean pedagogy with crude dichotomizations of people as critical and non-critical... and limit[ed] the productive possibilities of being critical for other educators of color and erase the centrality of dialogue, reflexivity, and unfinishedness that define Freirean-inspired notions of being critical" (p. 659). In a move to account for CRP for and to preservice teachers of Color, Kohli (2014) documented how preservice teachers of Color unpacked and revealed that participants in this study: "(1) had experienced racism and internalized racism in their K-12 education; (2) had done self-work prior to enrolling in their teacher education program to begin the process of unpacking internalized racism; and (3) felt that critical dialogues about internalized racism within teacher preparation was essential to develop pedagogy that challenges

racial inequality" (p. 367). Instead of assuming, this study sought to understand the struggles of teachers of Color with internalized racism in their own lives as they strived to develop culturally relevant pedagogies and racially just classrooms. Borrero, Flores, & de la Cruz (2016) interviewed a group of preservice and first year teachers of Color in urban public schools to understand their transition to the classroom and their successes and challenges enacting culturally relevant pedagogy. They also found that understanding the self as well as the community was critical in continuing to develop as critical pedagogues.

Supplemental/Garret Spaces

Some of the needs of preservice teachers of Color are met in spaces outside of traditional or formal schooling (Haddix, 2012; Meacham, 2000). This is an area best aligned with my research interests. I mentioned the work of Haddix (2012) earlier in the section about the experiences of preservice teachers of Color. She examined Black female preservice teachers' perspectives on their racial identities and how they used their counterlanguages and hybrid racial and linguistic identities to (re)position themselves inside and outside the context of a traditional teacher education program. She privileged the role of Black women as knowledge producers through language and (re)storytelling. From her research, it is clear that her participants were deliberate with what, whom, and when they talked about several topics and, during their "sistahood" talks, they were more likely to share certain feelings and experiences, in languages they preferred, related to

teacher education. This study pushes researchers to look beyond singular experiences and perspectives, as well as to consider the supplemental and/or garret (McKittrick, 2006) spaces where preservice teachers of Color actively resist whiteness and develop teacher identities. Meacham (2000) looked at how the inclusion of "the Black Experience" by teachers who made space in their curriculum was impactful for Black preservice educators. He points out that, in many teacher education programs, relationships are left out and this is detrimental to Black educators who are accustomed to "'the Black Experience,' a supportive educational ethos that extended the ethos of home and community" (p. 590). This becomes especially important for Black educators faced with racial and linguistic surveillance in predominantly white teacher education programs. He argues that the lack of relationships can be addressed by specifically seeking out and compensating "African American, Latina, Native American, and Asian American teachers, parents, and concerned community members and integrat[ing] them into the fabric of teacher education" as they all bring significant insight and can serve as mentors, advisors, and/or advocates when "culturally diverse perspectives are silenced" (p. 594). Additionally, Meacham also found that Black preservice teachers experienced "cultural denial" and "cultural limbo" due to a linguistic allegiance to or denial of African American English, a language that was viewed as unacceptable in their teacher education programs. Both Haddix and Meacham demonstrate how language is directly tied to the literate and developing teacher identities of Black and other preservice teachers of Color. In both studies, preservice teachers embodied a strong love of their culture(s), which

includes their language; however, in becoming a teacher, they were pressured to let go of and/or to be ashamed of their language and other cultural aspects of their identities. Both studies also demonstrate how important garret spaces can be in nurturing and supporting Black students, especially at PWIs.

There's a need for more research and practice on intentional spaces (physical, curricular, and figurative) for the work of teacher education to be done with and for Black and Brown preservice teachers and for the literacies and literacy practices of Black and Brown preservice teachers and students to be included, centered, and nurtured. As seen in the review of literature, the experiences of preservice teachers of Color consist of them persisting, resisting, and navigating racism, often alone. What about intentional spaces to resist AND to rest from the violence? Spaces for healing, joy, representation, and just being? With this in mind, this dissertation describes the literacies and literacy practices of three Black preservice teacher in an English Language Arts teacher education program at a PWI and what happens when we hold space (Hikida, 2018) for their literacies and literacy practices. My study seeks to answer the following questions:

a. *When, where, and how do Black preservice teachers draw on their literacies to confirm, resist, and reshape perceptions of who they are, what they know, and what they need?*
b. *What types of spaces sustain and nurture the literacies of Black preservice teachers?*

Theoretical Considerations for Current Study

Historically, no single definition was able to fully capture what it means to be literate, but for most of its history in English, the word "literate" has been synonymous with education. In other words, to be educated was to be literate (Muhammed, 2018). And certain types of literacies and literacy practices have been seen as more intelligent, moral and civilized (Gee, 2008) while others have been relegated to the home or to out of school spaces. In this section, I will unpack Black Critical (BlackCrit) theory and how I am viewing literacies through that lens. Next, I will move into a discussion of Black literacy collectives where Black folks not only used and developed their literacy practices, but also worked through social and political concerns. Lastly, I will move to Black feminist thought on space, margins, and space carving.

BlackCrit

BlackCrit emerged as a response to Critical Race Theory, which is often seen as a theory on the Black experience. However, though its origins stem from the work of Black scholars (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995) and anti-Black racism, the original intention for Critical Race Theory was to function more as a critique of White supremacy and the limits of the hegemonic liberal multiculturalism, both of which are not relegated only to Black bodies. Many scholars warn against essentialism or collapsing Black identities into one understanding through the establishment of BlackCrit theory, but I find it necessary to understand the specificity of anti-Black racism, and how it functions in the

construction of violent, silencing, and destructive spaces and experiences for Black people.

In their explication of BlackCrit, Dumas and ross[5] (2016) suggest that there are three major tenets to understanding BlackCrit. The first tenet states that, "antiblackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life…" (p. 429). This tenet pushes further than racism against Black people. It instead stresses "a broader antagonistic relationship between blackness and (the possibility of) humanity" (p. 429). To suggest that antiblackness is endemic goes beyond racism and racist actions; it rather suggests that antiblackness is so wrapped up in every aspect of life (everyday practices, policies, social interactions, education) that there is no relief. Dumas and ross (2016) also argue that Black people are living in what Saidiya Hartman (2008) calls "the afterlife of slavery," in which Black humanity and experience is enduringly impacted by the presence of slavery's racialized violence. She writes,

> If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the

[5] Here I lowercase the name "ross" to honor the author's decision to lowercase her name.

> afterlife of slavery – skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment (Hartman, 2008, p.6).

This future in which we currently live is a product of slavery with continual (re)inscribed and (re)justified violence(s) on and against Black bodies.

The second tenet of BlackCrit suggested by Dumas and ross states that, "blackness exists in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination" and counters the belief that racism is no longer an to impediment equal access to opportunities. They argue that in this ideology, "Black people become—or rather, remain—a problem, as the least assimilable to this multicultural imagination… [and] Persistent joblessness, disparities in educational achievement, and high rates of incarceration are all seen as problems created by Black people, and problems of blackness itself" (p. 430). Here, then, Black people are seen to stand in the way of multicultural progress due to their failure to assimilate, failure to fully embrace the marketplace of opportunity and move on up in the world, failure to become true Americans. Dumas and ross push against this sentiment and argue to "recognize that the trouble with (liberal and neoliberal) multiculturalism and diversity, both in ideology and practice, is that they are often positioned against the lives of Black people (p.430). These ideologies and practices have thus, contributed to

colorblind and "all lives matter" approaches, or what the collaborators[6] in my study have called "copy and paste" ideologies.

The third and final tenet Dumas and ross (2016) offer states that BlackCrit should "create space for Black liberatory fantasy, and resist a revisionist history that supports dangerous majoritarian stories that disappear Whites from a history of racial dominance (Leonardo, 2004), rape, mutilation, brutality, and murder (Bell, 1987)" (p. 431). With necessary disruptions of colonization, racism, and power, Black people can envision different futures and resist efforts to gaslight and revise histories of state sanctioned violence against Black bodies. Instead of constantly navigating racist, oppressive, and silencing spaces, BlackCrit spaces can invite imaginations of transformative living and true Black liberation.

BlackCrit and Literacies

Several scholars have worked to demonstrate the political, ideological, and temporal situatedness of literacy as well as the ways in which Black people carve out spaces for these literacies to thrive and Black bodies to be sustained, validated, and restored (Muhammad, 2018; Kirkland, 2011; Richardson, 2013; Haddix, 2010). Often studies on the literacies and literacy practices of Black students/people, take place in

[6] I use the term "collaborator" instead of "participant" to emphasize that this work is done with participants, not on or about them, and to center collaboration and collectivism with participants during all phases of research.

"out-of-school" spaces and hence, are relegated to such space physically and in the recognition from scholars. However, what is not considered is the choice to do so. According to Kinloch (2011), literacy research has gradually shifted from focusing on schools as primary units and sites of study to literacy practices across multiple sociopolitical contexts, including families, homes, and other non-school environments. I argue for the necessity of these "out-of-school" spaces to combat antiblackness. Below I outline three major understandings of literacy and how I am thinking about them through a BlackCrit lens.

First, there is no such thing as neutral literacy or neutral education. Literacy is active, ideological, political, socially situated, and heavily loaded with violent histories (Kynard, 2013; Heath and Street, 2008; Bloome and Green, 2015). If BlackCrit asserts that "antiblackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life," (Dumas and ross, 2016, p. 429) then, thinking about literacy through a BlackCrit lens allows us to acknowledge the legacy of Black people forbidden from learning to read during enslavement, Black codes that established rules with the purpose of silencing and intimidating Black literacy efforts, the state of Michigan's attempt to rule that literacy is not a right, and resistances against the active and political use of literacies for Black people in school spaces. It allows us to acknowledge that for Black people, literacy is often about speaking back to oppressions and fighting to live. Tracing the history of Black student protests, Kynard (2013) shows how Black college students of the 1920s to 60s understood that literacy is

active, ideological, political, socially situated, and heavily loaded with violent histories. For example, Black students at Fisk University protested the ways that their literacies where being whitewashed through strict behavior and dress codes, a form of antiblackness. The ways that they wrote their identities on their bodies, the texts they sought access to, and the ways that they demonstrated their knowledge and identities were being taken from them. To resist these erasure efforts, they read Woodson and Dubois and drew from those readings and from spirituals passed down through generations to enact political literacies, such as the chants "Dubois! Dubois!" and "Before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave." The students focused on "everyday practices [that were] endemic to literacy" (p. 29), or what are now called "out of school literacies." This stance acknowledges that literacies go "beyond classroom instruction, effective pedagogy, or learning outcomes," and attend to the specific types and modes of literacy learning for and in everyday life. Kynard argues that NLS attempts (but doesn't go far enough) to situate literacy in ideological, cultural, and political contexts, which means that literacy is something we do, not something we gain or have/don't have and that it should disrupt fixed notions of learning and power between institutions and the Black masses. Applying a BlackCrit lens allows us to acknowledge that for Black people, literacy is often about using everyday practices to disrupt notions of learning and being grounded in whiteness and white supremacy. Additionally, Kynard's work shows how literacy educators (I would add researchers) today continue to focus on "bridge-type models for students of color" (p. 52) to take their codes, their languages, their identities,

and their literacies and translate them into standardized academic literacy; however, during the Black student protests of the 1920s to the 1960s the universities and the school structures were what needed to change. By pushing for reconsideration (reimagining) of the purpose of educational institutions with regard to literacy development, Kynard's work pushes us to "create space for Black liberatory fantasy.

In discussing her work with youth activists in a Humanities classroom, Butler (2017) argues for "critical youth organizing literacies" specifically for students of Color. In her article, she highlights the work of four female high school students of Color as they bring attention to human sex trafficking. She argues that classrooms can become sites where young people learn to select and critique texts in order to mobilize peers and community members. Here, Butler conceptualizes literacy as political and something we do often to answer or start battle cries for justice. This counters the notion that literacy is measured by standardized tests and is most valuable in school spaces or for academic purposes. Butler also counters the notion that activism is a thing of the past (The U.S. Civil Rights Era, for example) and advocates for current examples of and opportunities for youth organizing, or "Black liberatory fantasy" (Dumas and ross, 2016, p. 431).

My second understanding of literacy is that the literacies and literacy practices of Black people are powerful, valid, and important. These literacies include storytelling, poetry, oral storytelling, and languages (Richardson, 2003; Smitherman, 2006; Fisher, 2006). BlackCrit encourages us "to imagine the futurity of Black people against the devaluation of Black life and skepticism about (the worth of) letting Black people go on"

(Dumas and ross, p. 430). Instead of reproducing Black suffering and creating spaces that reproduce suffering, educational institutions should acknowledge the validity, value, and joy of these literacies and literacy practices. While conducting an ethnographic study over the course of thirty weeks in a middle school, Johnson (2014) was chosen by Winston, a Black student who often opted out of or was pushed out of his traditional ELA classroom. Winston found Johnson on a park bench outside of the school mail office. It was through interactions with and observations of him that Johnson saw how Winston engaged in meaningful literacy in edge of school spaces (a park bench, offices, and a recording studio). To understand Winston's discovery of edge-of-school spaces to engage in literacy practices and develop his literate identity, Johnson collected and analyzed field notes, interviews, and artifacts related to the literacy experiences that took place while he occupied such spaces. For Johnson, the dominant limiting and exclusionary views of literacy and the denial of certain literacy practice in schools has (mis)shaped the literate identities of African American boys. She argues that the home literacy practices of African American boys "may or may not include literacy events that prepare them for the types of practices upheld and valued in school" (p. 202), such as formal writing, reading and analyzing canonical texts, and the speaking of Standardized English. In turn, the literate identities of Black boys "coalesce with imposed sociocultural and sociohistorical ideas about what it means to be Black and male and are influenced by the larger failure narrative that begins to plague Black male youth upon entering school" (p. 202). And, by not being proficient in school literacies, Black boys are positioned as not having relevant

knowledge or literacy practices to draw upon to improve academic achievement. For Black boys, Johnson sees literacy as the process of meaning-making and notes that literacy is social, but must also be "conceived as personal, a practice in which the individual engages to negotiate and articulate the human aspects of self" (Kirkland as cited in Johnson, 2014, p.205). She found that Winston sought out particular people and particular spaces to engage in meaningful literacy practices signaling the importance of literal and figurative space for the literacies, knowledges, and bodies of Black boys to be honored and nurtured.

Similarly, Kirkland (2011) traces literate acts and inactions of a young Black man based on "his understanding of himself in relation to the socio-political subtext of the literate act" (p. 199). The young man did not see himself in school texts and refused to engage with those texts. However, when reading texts that allowed him to see himself and when he was provided with opportunities to use his literacy practices, his engagement countered the supposed strained relationship he had with "literacy". An ideology that devalues Black bodies and the literacies and literacy practices of those bodies attempts to deem them unimportant, invalid, and powerless; however, both Derrick and Winston demonstrated powerful engagement with texts when their powerful, valuable literacies were not supplemental/optional, but centered and with texts that were responsive to their selves and world views. These opportunities allowed them to demonstrate their literacy practices, engagement, brilliance, and joy.

Lastly, literacy is collaborative across generations and time periods. Legacy is important and anti-blackness that devalues Black ways of knowing and being in the world can position the literacies and literacy practices of Black people as inferior or erase them entirely. Fisher (2006) conducted an ethnographic study to examine the role two African American-owned and -operated bookstores played in the literacy practices and education of their participants. For Fisher, due to a history of denied access to formal educational institutions, alternative and supplemental knowledge spaces for literacy learning are part of African American history. Therefore, she observed and participated in bookstore events to understand how participants considered these bookstores as both "alternative and supplementary knowledge spaces for literacy learning" (p. 83). Fisher conceptualizes literacy as tied to history and argues that African American literacy practices have demonstrated how "unexpected sources (such as speeches, pamphlets, etc.) were at the forefront of what it meant to be literate" (p. 85). She positions these historical and new curators of alternative and supplementary spaces as not only readers, writers, and speakers, but literacy activists transforming and reimagining these unexpected sources as education institutions, what she calls participatory literacy learning communities, that engage in particular literacy practices for particular purposes. In this, Fisher sees literacy as socially and historically situated, fluid, and linked to power and believes that, "The ways in which people address reading and writing are...rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being" (Street, 2003, p. 418 as cited in Fisher, 2006). It is through this framework that she examined the everyday literacy practices and

how they were situated within larger cultural and historical frames at two bookstores that represented two "distinct perspectives on how black bookstores become education institutions in their communities" (p. 86). One book store focused on local or community-based writers and the other featured nationally and internationally recognized authors. Focusing on both allowed her to see and demonstrate the multiple, rich literacies and literacy practices central to African Americans' lives and histories. Fisher's conceptualization of literacy emphasizes the importance of communities, history, and cultural heritage to Black literate identities. Learning happens in multiple spaces, not just schools, and literacy practices are passed down from generation to generation. Additionally, by juxtaposing and celebrating the practices featured in both of the two bookstores, Fisher also suggests that no literacy purpose is better than another.

In another study, Muhammad (2015) conducted an ethno-historical study to examine historical artifacts of African Americans written during the 1800s to understand: 1) What did literary societies look like? 2) How did literary society members define literacy? 3) What types of literacy experiences did they engage in? and 4) To what ends did they write? Additionally, she engaged in a literacy collective (outside of the classroom) with young girls to understand what contextual factors within a literacy collaborative influenced the writings of adolescent girls? She analyzed the writing environment and interviewed the girls to understand what aspects of the literacy collaborative helped them to write. Drawing on Royster (2000), Muhammad conceptualized literacy as a sociopolitical tool "drawing from various discourse

communities in and out of school" (p. 284). Through her historical research, she found that African American literary societies "met regularly in educative spaces (i.e., churches, auditoriums, classrooms) to engage in multiple acts of literacy (i.e., reading, writing, debating, lecturing, publishing, critiquing) in efforts to make sense of their identities, improve their intellectual development to incite new thought, and gain print authority or the ability to use language as a tool to exert their voices and ideals" (p. 280). In applying a BlackCrit lens here, Muhammad and the girls in the collaborative pushed against efforts to disappear racial dominance from the history. Muhammad sees literacy as more than just developing independent reading and writing skills. She argues that literacy is social and collective, but also multiple. This conceptualization allowed her to make space for the multiple identities and practices of the Black girls who participated in her literacy collective. Additionally, Muhammad argues that we draw upon multiple social discourse communities to engage in meaningful literacy learning. This links back to her decision to develop a collaborative space for girls to read stories of Black literary women and to share their own stories with each other. Muhammad's work helps researchers to understand that literacy practices of Black people have been thriving for a long time and the importance of drawing on literary ancestors to better understand and contextualize literacy. For instance, she draws on Royster (2000) who, in tracing the literacy practices of African American women, conjured up the image of Sojourner Truth stating, "You know, children, I don't read such small stuff as letters, I read men and nations" (Royster, 2000, p. 43). This not only shows reaching back to literary ancestors, but also adds Truth

to the literacy conversation. Linking this history to her work with her literacy collaborative, Muhammad also helps me to see literacy as a collaborative process across times and the importance of discourse in not only developing literacy, but also continuing the collaborative process. Both Fisher and Muhammad trace the history of using out of school spaces to not only utilize and nurture literacies but to highlight and praise the literacies and literacy practices of Black people, to use them to push for social justice, and to improve social and economic conditions for Black people.

Black Literacy Collectives

Historically, Black literacy collectives were smaller literary societies and organizations where Black people worked through larger social issues alongside their lived experiences. Often, these collectives have been about sustaining, space carving for, and restoration of Black language and literacies. In her exploration of a Black southern school pre desegregation, Siddle Walker (1996) reconstructs a picture of Black schools during that era, arguably Black literacy collectives in their own right. She focuses on Caswell County Training School, located in a rural area of North Carolina. Siddle Walker acknowledges that many segregated Black schools lacked resources and consisted of poor facilities, but argues this is an incomplete picture and, through extensive historical research and interviews, redefines what is meant by "good schools," "good teachers," and the types of supports that were valued by Black communities. She writes,

> Although black schools were indeed commonly lacking in facilities and funding, some evidence suggests that the environment of the segregated school had affective traits, institutional policies, and community support that helped Black children learn in spite of the neglect their schools received from white school boards (p.3).

Here, Siddle Walker counters the arguments that Black people were/are illiterate, that Black people/parents did/do not care about reading and writing, and that Black teachers were/are ill prepared to educate Black children. The community of Caswell County Training School functioned as a literacy collective to not only educate children, but to sustain, build, and advocate for Black literacy.

In her exploration of the development and function of Black literacy and literary collectives, McHenry (2002) writes,

> They encouraged discussion and created a forum for debate on issues of racial and American identity. Their evolution records the developing understanding and shifting uses of literary discourse by northern, free blacks for expression, interaction, and social protest in antebellum America (p. 24)

For these collectives, literacy was ideological, socially situated, temporal, and used to speak back to oppressions. These collectives were about doing something. McHenry cites the case of David Walker, a Black man who published and distributed material that galvanized the Black community but drew the angry attention of white Americans. Literary texts for and by Black people and collectives that studied and produced these

texts helped free Blacks to "practice and perform literacy and allowed them to experiment with voice and self-representation in ways that approximated the ideals of civic participation" (p.56). Additionally, because free Blacks in the urban North were unable use their literacy(ies) and literacy skills to function openly as American citizens, they were "…forced to use them as a means of self-defense and to fight for the right to enter the sphere of politics" (p. 57). Thus, literacy collectives are and have been spaces of multiple practices, expressions, and embodiments of Blackness. Additionally, these spaces can speak back to oppressions, resist revisionist history efforts, and allow space for the Black liberatory fantasy to thrive.

Black Feminist Thought on Space, Margins, and Space Carving

From Anna Julia Cooper to Brittany Cooper, Black feminists have long thought about the complexities of space (Cooper, 1892; hooks 1990; Combahee River Collective; 1997; McKittrick, 2006; ross, 2016; Cooper, 2015; Howard et al, 2016). McKittrick (2006) recounts the story of Harriet Jacobs [Linda Brent] who hid in a garret, which Brent describes as her "loophole of retreat," for seven years to escape the horrors of slavery. McKittrick argues that in the garret, Brent was free, yet still confined and the garret was a space of resistance. Thus, "This does not mean that Brent is simply a victim, but rather that her story and her actions blend black female oppression and captivity with glimpses of individual control and agency" (p. 39). Additionally, drawing on Toni Morrison, McKittrick argues that "racialized geographies are pathologies, indications of

the ways in which space and place contribute to the dehumanization, fragmentation, and madness of both free and unfree people and their lands" (p.3). The Black body is often equated with the ungeographic, and Black women's spatial knowledges are rendered either inadequate or impossible. In our regulatory climate, what Black bodies are supposed to be doing, wearing, thinking, and saying is constantly scrutinized and teacher education spaces, even those supposedly grounded in "social justice," are not exempt.

Some Black feminists (Collins, 2000; McKittrick, 2006) argue that the margin metaphor flattens the material consequences and possibilities of the margin because the issues that marginalized peoples face are "spatial issues with telling spatial consequences" (p. 66). McKittrick argues that we need to pay attention to the margin and how it stays on the borders as empty and nonwhite. She writes, "This language, the where of the margin, shapes it as an exclusively oppositional, unalterable site that cannot be easily woven into the ongoing production of space because the bifurcating geographies—margins are not centers—prohibits integrative processes" (p. 57). The emphasis on margins by several Black feminists puts at the forefront how central the geographies of Black women and those on the metaphoric margin are to how we need to think about space and place. In her essay titled, "Homeplace (a site of resistance)," bell hooks (1990) describes homeplace, a marginal space, as "…a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by so doing heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination" (p. 384). This homeplace, often constructed by a Black woman, functioned outside of spaces dominated and constructed by Whiteness, and purposefully aimed to

"[make] home a community of resistance." In these marginal spaces that are often thought of as spaces of "unlivability" (McKittrick, 2006; Snorton, 2017), living is happening, and we don't just need/have imaginary, metaphoric spaces, but active geographic spaces that locate and respond to real social struggles. McKittrick notes that "Black women's geographies are workable and lived subaltern spatialities which tell a different geographic story" (p. 62). When we (researchers) attend to and reimagine the margins, we can attend to everyone (Combahee River Collective 1982; Taylor, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991) and respond to real social struggles.

Acknowledging that antiblackness is endemic to all aspects of life, schools and schooling included, kihana ross (2016) proposes the theory of Black educational sovereign space. She argues that Black students in education live in the afterlife of school segregation, and uses "sovereign" to suggest that "purposefully constructed Black space in education exists in the margin, outside of the auspices of the larger school (though it may be created *within* a larger school)" (p. 30). Thus, Black educational sovereign space is "born, created, and in direct response to the rampant antiblackness in the larger world, and in U.S. public schools; it may serve as makeshift land, and provide makeshift citizenship to people whose humanity is consistently made impossible on the outside" (p. 30). Similar to hooks and McKittrick, ross sees the sovereign space not as empty, for the disregarded, or inactive, but as space that

> engages in struggling, in reimagining, and in becoming; it engages Black educational futurities, and considers blackness beyond the past and present – it

> nurtures the political act of Black dreaming. While Black space may be produced in a specific place it is not a place in and of itself. Black space is fluid, embodied, and can travel beyond the places in which participants produce it (p. 30).

Black feminist thought on margins and space carving render Black knowledges and Black geographies as adequate and possible, and more space is needed for participants/collaborators to have their knowledges and geographies acknowledged as adequate, possible, and useful. Through this conceptualization, garrets, or Black educational sovereign spaces in teacher education at a PWI, can become spaces of possibility, sociopolitical action and development, and choice for Black preservice teachers. Black preservice teachers who frequently feel like and are treated as trespassers at PWIs, can find space where it is ok to be revolutionary, radical, controversial, loud, and too focused on equity and diversity. Ok to be Black.

Chapter 3. Methodological Considerations

> Whether you have a Ph.D. or no D, we're in this bag together. And whether you're from Morehouse or Nohouse, we're still in this bag together.
>
> —Fannie Lou Hamer

Early in my doctoral program, I read a book as part of one of my research courses. The book was about a group of Muslim girls living and attending public school in the United States. The researcher conducted two years of fieldwork exploring how this particular group of girls constructed and made sense of their layered identities. While reading the book, I felt... wrong. Line after line, my blood would pound in my ears and my heart would race due to the ways the author positioned these young women and their religion and culture. As a class we discussed this discomfort and wondered if what we were experiencing was the difficulty of capturing a group of people and communicating one's ideas in the sometimes cold nature of academic writing. However, lines that seemed to disapprove of the "broken English" or "incorrect Arabic" and negative slanting word choice (such as "Even though the [girls] claimed their culture is independent of their religion, the evidence suggests") left me with a sour taste in my mouth. Simply put, the portrayal of the girls, girls she worked with for two years, did not feel warm and affirming. Later in the semester, our class had the opportunity to Skype with the researcher and sole author of the study. We were excited. Toward the end of the conversation, I posed a question. I asked her if she kept in touch with her participants and

she responded that many participants and other people from the community were not happy with what was published and how they were portrayed. Even more disturbing, her participants would not talk with her and regretted participating in her study. She chalked this up to participants dealing with adulthood; they had shared when they were young and were dealing with the consequences of their words being public.

Research is often described with words such as "careful," "rigorous," and "diligent." However, how do we define careful? Careful for whom? Careful to whom? Diligent in what regard? Rigor according to whose standards of rigor? For many Black people, the word research conjures up images of gynecological experimentations on Black slave women (Snorton, 2017), experiments on Black men with untreated syphilis (Kynard, 2013), research on "nonverbal" (illiterate) Black students on the cover of a 2018 university alumni magazine, and the many research articles that echo narratives that Black and Brown children are inferior, in need of intervention, and deserving of violence (Patel, 2015; Kynard, 2013). Tuck and Yang (2014) write, "Research is a dirty word among many Native communities and arguably, also among ghettoized, orientalized, and other communities of overstudied Others" (p. 223). Researchers tell stories. Too often throughout history, trust has been (mis)placed in the hands of researchers who have had the power and privilege to research and tell/distribute stories and those stories have shaped how marginalized people have been othered. White supremacy and harmful research practices in the pursuit of scholarship, recognition, and success are ingrained in all of us (in conversation with E. Richardson, 2018; Paris and Winn, 2014). As

researchers, we must work hard to minimize our harm and limit the scope/reach of our betrayal. Fannie Lou Hamer's comment at the start of this chapter reminds us to not let titles divide us when we are doing work for change and to remember that all people "in this bag" are impacted regardless of if they have a Ph.D. or not. All of us have stories to tell and much to contribute to the discussion. It is important that researchers consistently work to make the work more "careful," "rigorous," "diligent," and I'll add "loving" (Paris and Winn, 2014; Patel, 2015; Willis, 2008; Madison, 2012; Dillard, 2012; Smith, 2012; Tuck and Yang, 2014; Kirkland, 2013), especially with groups of people who have historically been marginalized and victimized through research, and I believe the best way to do this is through more collaborative and collective approaches to research. In this section, I outline the methods for my dissertation study, discussing first my methodological framework, which is a mosaic of collective and collaborative approaches to ethnographically informed research. I then discuss my methods for data collection, and lastly data analysis.

An Ethnographically Informed Qualitative Project

History of Ethnography

Historically, ethnography was primarily done by men and advanced through anthropology and colonialism. In turn, much of the research that was done was for the purposes of advancing power—navigation, discoveries, and cartography. Through research, colonizers appropriated some local knowledges and exploited the labor of local

people to produce things for capital gain. In the process, colonizers also imposed their own ways of knowing upon the people they subjugated (Glesne, 2015; Hatch, 2002). As they destroyed local industries, trades, and cultural traditions, they effectively slowed the growth or completely eliminated the growth of non-western sciences and ways of knowing and being. The task of anthropologists was to collect and compare info to determine how primitive/civilized a society was and that information was used to further racism and domination (Glesne, 2015). Additionally, researchers wrote reports to document the lives of the locals, often using these reports to exploit territories, justify violence (sometimes disguised as missions), and exploit the labor of the people (Smith, 2012; Glesne, 2015; Hatch 2002). As Toni Morrison once said, "As though our lives have no meaning and no depth without the white gaze. I have spent my entire writing life trying to make sure that the white gaze was not the dominant one in any of my books." (Morrison, 1998). Morrison's goal was not the goal of these researchers, as the "locals" had to be validated through white gaze research and what was "observed" had to be legible to the white gaze. On missions, with the aim to civilize the world, people were stripped of their cultures, languages, and homes, and positioned as inferior subjects. After WW2 and the loss of colonial control, many anthropologists and ethnographers experienced collective guilt over contributions to colonialism and racism. Many began looking for exoticized and marginalized people in their own countries and communities- thus the practices continued/continue through the proliferation of damage narratives (Tuck and Yang, 2014).

Contemporary Conceptualizations of Ethnographic Research

Contemporary scholars who conduct ethnographic work have worked hard to shift the field from observation of "the exotic" to more critical and responsible ways of conducting ethnographies (Heath and Street, 2008; Kirkland, 2014; Fisher, 2006; Green, 2014; Blackburn, 2005; Dyrness, 2008). There seems to be no consensus on what ethnography is among the scholars who conduct ethnographic work. One common understanding of ethnography is that all ethnographic work is inherently interpretive, subjective, partial, and epistemological (Heath and Street, 2008; Green, Skukauskaite, and Baker, 2012). As Kirkland (2014) writes, "For the ethnographer, understanding what people are (as opposed to what they are not) and how people make sense of things (as opposed to how things make sense of them) is essential" (p. 184). In trying to understand people, ethnographers must leave room for changes in direction, or "rich points." Agar describes these points as moments when surprises occur typically due to differences in what the researcher expected and the actual lived experiences of the subjects (Agar, 2013 pp. 147-151). I see rich points as teachable moments for the researcher and researchers need to be open-minded and self-reflective in order to "SEE" these rich points and learn from them. Additionally, field work roles for ethnographers are not fixed, but

> change and develop as a result of negotiations between the researcher and those who are the subjects of research. The researcher does not simply choose an appropriate role and adhere to it throughout the project; nor is it possible to think in terms of a single role, no matter how dynamic, for a variety of roles must be

> adopted which will vary with the different individuals with whom the researcher interacts (Walford as quoted in K. Green, 2014, pp. 156-157).

Ethnographers also have to account for how the "self" influences the research. Many ethnographers nod to the values of gaining an emic perspective (Hymes, 1982). However, there are many approaches to how this should and can be done (Heath and Street, 2008; Kirkland, 2014; Blackburn, 2005; Dyrness, 2008; Green, 2014).

Ethnography has also moved to more responsible and complex description processes. "Whereas in most other approaches, the target of scientific method is simplification and reduction of complexity, the target in ethnography is precisely the opposite. Reality is kaleidoscopic, complex and complicated, often a patchwork of overlapping activities" (Blommaert and Jie, 2010 p. 11). Adopting an ethnographic perspective pushes a researcher to think about the many factors at work when in the field and discuss how those factors influence what is in place in that space. For example, David Kirkland pointed out that data of ethnography are everywhere, even on skin. He describes "ethnography as a method of cultural explication, wedded to a process and a set of ethical choices that surrender to the participant voice" (Kirkland, 2014, p. 192). Geertz (1973) argued for thick description in ethnography and many scholars have followed up with pairing thick description with theoretical analysis to provide a lens for how one analyzes data (Kirkland, 2014; Winn & Ubiles, 2011; Green, 2014). Adopting an ethnographic perspective also allows the researcher to "SEE" instead of observe. Just as spectators of a football game see the field and make assumptions, judgements, and favor

one side, researchers can easily do the same. Passions, intentions, and preconceived notions are a part of our humanity. However, when one takes the time to "SEE" the kaleidoscope—the different colors and shapes that make up the whole—a clearer and more meaningful (often beautiful) picture of all of those colors and shapes at work can be seen.

Invitation to the Study

This study grew from my newly gained position as program manager and instructor for the English Education and Social Studies Education programs. After our third reflective seminar session, Kiara[7], a Black woman in the B.S.Ed. English Education program, expressed concerns regarding her placement. Based on the snippet of information she provided after class, we felt a longer conversation was necessary and arranged to meet in my office a few days later. It was in this meeting that Kiara revealed that her mentor teacher, an older, white, female English Language Arts high teacher in a larger urban school district where 95% of the students are students of Color, had made multiple overtly racist comments to and about her and/or the students and families in the school community. Kiara's mentor teacher told her to watch out for the other drivers in the area because it was "Somali-ville" and "they can't drive." Kiara was told that, though "you guys [Black people] have that Kapernick thing going on," Kiara was still expected

[7] All names and locations have been changed to protect the privacy of my collaborators.

to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, and if she didn't, she would need to step into the hallway. Additionally, Kiara was told that her mentor teacher did not teach or move from her desk during 6th or 7th period because if she wanted to teach "those kids" (students with IEPs and majority Black and Brown children) she would have become an intervention specialist. Therefore, the interventionists needed to teach class. Kiara had hesitated to tell me any this for several weeks. At the time, I was new and the preservice teachers had previously been told by the prior program manager, a White man, that they would not be moved under any circumstances— something I began to challenge as the only person of Color on staff in my particular department. After hearing all of these instances, Kiara and I put in an immediate request for her to be removed from the placement, submitted a written testimony to the school district, and placed a request for movement to another classroom. From our discussion, I also learned that Kiara was not the only Black preservice teacher struggling with not just anti-Black racism in the field, but also within their cohort and their teacher education courses. She wanted to talk more and thought reaching out to the other two Black preservice teachers, Nirvana and LeBron would help.

After meeting with Kiara, I was devastated. I had had such a great, affirming student teaching experience, it hadn't occurred to me that so many of my students of Color could be experiencing something else, especially given that the post-Trump election had re-invited more bold and explicit displays of whiteness, white supremacy, and racism often veiled under claims of first amendment rights and patriotism. I

scheduled a meeting with the professor of the research methodology course I was enrolled in at the time. Given my role in the program and the sensitivity of our national state, I was concerned about formalizing a research project with these three Black students; however, my professor and I felt those were also reasons to extend the invitation. We outlined my plan for engaging these three preservice teachers in a research project and a plan for inviting them to the study. I emailed all three students (See Table 2), and despite my hesitancy, each preservice teacher consented (See Table 3) to participate in the study.

Table 2. Email Invitation to Participate

Hello Kiara, Lebron, and Nirvana— I am writing today to see if you all would be interested in participating in a research project with me. The project would include meeting with me individually and/or as a group over the course of the year to discuss your experiences in teacher education as a person of color. I am interested in your experiences both on campus (In and out of teacher education courses) and in the field (your various field sites). I have been thinking deeply about your experiences alongside my own, and I understand the hostility of these public spaces you must navigate. I've thought about this in my role as an PhD student and as a teacher, but, because recruiting, preparing and retaining teachers of color is very important to me, I am interested in hearing from you all as students currently in our teacher education program. I am proposing that we meet in a location that works best for you all a few times over the semester (with all of your free time!). This is something we can work out as there are many options available (face-to-face and electronic). Also, my office is <u>always</u> open to you all- <u>anytime</u>. Also, if you know of other preservice teachers of color who could benefit from this group or from meeting with me one-on-one, please provide them with my contact information. Please note that your decision to participate or not participate in this project will have no bearing on your status as a student in the class and everything that is said will remain confidential. Also, do not feel pressured to "reply all"; you can reply to me individually. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Warmly, Jenell

Table 3. Invitation Responses

Lebron's Response	Nirvana's Response	Kiara's Response
I would love to participate in your study, just let me know where I need to be. I know all of us have had different experiences with the program, I'd love to hear everyones perspective.	I would love to participate! I am not sure if Lebron or Kiara has responded with times, but if not, how about Monday after seminar, we square away times? I am so excited about this!	Hey guys! That will work for me! Looking forward to hearing more about the project

Context of this Dissertation

This dissertation pulls from ongoing ethnographically informed qualitative research that I began in 2017 with preservice teachers of Color enrolled in three different sections of a reflective seminar, which I taught. At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, I took on the position of program manager for the Integrated Language Arts and Integrated Social Studies programs in a college of education at a large, public, and predominantly white institution in the Midwest. This position entailed inheriting various sections of reflective seminar for student teachers. For this dissertation, I focus on three Black preservice teachers who belonged to one of the Integrated Language Arts cohorts and were enrolled in my courses during the 2017-2018 school year. The university is in a large, metropolitan city in the U.S.A. and it is located in a part of the city that is experiencing a sort of identity crisis at the moment as gentrification efforts have drastically altered the racial and economic makeup of this particular neighborhood. To be blunt, many of the Black and/or poor people who lived in the area for decades have been pushed out of the area. In a 2013 article, the popular, local newspaper described what was

happening in the area as “rebirth;” however, I remember, in 2012, driving past a sign posted near low income housing in this same area that read, “Good things are coming here!” implying that what and who was currently there had little value. In this study, I ethnographically (Heath and Street, 2008; Kirkland, 2014; Fisher, 2006; Green, 2014; Blackburn, 2005; Dyrness, 2008) look at how, when, and where three Black English Language Arts preservice teachers draw upon and use their literacies and literacy practices to confirm, resist, and reshape perceptions of who they are, what they know, and what they need as ELA teachers. My collaborators were 20-something Black preservice educators (two cisgender women; one cisgender man) during the 2017-2018 school year, all of whom were experiencing what Michelle Fine (2017) calls, “exiles within” as they navigated the various spaces of teacher education. In those spaces existed layered and privileged ideas about who constructs knowledge, what knowledge was valuable and which bodies are knowledgeable and valuable, and there were material consequences for the three Black student teachers in those spaces. When writing about the young people with whom she works, Fine writes, “The critical slant of young people situated at the structural rim has focused my collaborative research and writing to theorize their knowledges and wisdom, as they look back critically on dominant arrangements and look forward to imagine what might be” (p. 12). In instances where collaborators are experiencing a form of exile and possible erasure, it is necessary to adopt research methods that do not further exile or erasure, or in my study, Black suffering and anti-blackness.

Therefore, I acknowledge that a "garreted" Black educational sovereign space was created to support not only my collaborators as they wrestled with developing their teacher identities at a PWI, but also to support myself as I wrestled with my developing teacher and researcher educator identity at a PWI. I also acknowledge that my positionality as a Nigerian and Black woman and mother has impacted my interactions with my collaborators and has led to a sort of blurring of the roles I take on in the lives of my collaborators. I have grounded my research methods in Black Feminist Thought, Critical Race Theory, and Ubuntu to inform what I am calling collective and collaborative approaches to qualitative research. This is what Evans-Winters (2019) describes as mosaic. She writes,

> Mosaic as an art form is the process of creating images with an assortment of small pieces of colored glass, stone, or other objects put together to create a pattern or picture. In most instances, the mosaic has cultural and spiritual significance… Using the metaphor of a mosaic, a piece of artwork composed of a combination of diverse elements, patterns, and forms, I propose a gender- and race-based approach to qualitative research in education (130).

Because there was no research map to follow that accounted for not only the type of space that developed within, between, and for us, but also for the "spiritual tugs" I felt when trying to follow one particular method, I found that creating a mosaic for my research process that drew on our unique ways of being in and knowing the world better

suited us and better spoke to my spirit. Below, I will explain my mosaic of collective and collaborative approaches to qualitative research.

Collective and Collaborative Tenets from Black Feminist Thought, Critical Race Theory, and Ubuntu

It has already been acknowledged throughout the academy that ethnographically-informed qualitative research is subjective, complex, and let's be real, researchers tend to get real close to folks. This is why ethnographic methods resonate with me. However, what is not always clear or expected in ethnographic research is how participants (or collaborators from my perspective) are positioned, rewarded, and discussed. Below I draw from Black Feminist Thought, Critical Race Theory, and Ubuntu to discuss a mosaic of collective and collaborative approaches to ethnographically informed qualitative research.

Drawing on Critical Race Theory as Methodology

Storytelling as evidence. I am committed to methods that privilege voices, knowledges, and literacy practices of the folks with whom I research. This means privileging storytelling (written and oral) and other oral practices. Drawing on Critical Race Theory scholars of the past, Johnson, Gibbs-Grey, and Baker-Bell (2017) argue that "storytelling is a suitable research methodology, especially in communities where storytelling is a literacy practice that reflects people's theory of reality, cultural

knowledge, and values" (p. 471). They position and privilege storytelling as legitimate and necessary to research. This is not new, but a call to return and echoes a continuous struggle to restore and sustain Black and Brown ways of knowing.

In Zora Neale Hurston's (2018) newly released book, *Barracoon*, Deborah Plant discusses Hurston's stance on researching Kossula for a patron of many Harlem Renaissance luminaries. In essence, Hurston collected his story. Plant emphasizes that Hurston did not impose herself onto the narrative and was committed to collecting artifacts and their authentic presentation.

> Even as she rejected the objective-observer stance of Western scientific inquiry for participant-observer stance, Hurston still incorporated standard features of the ethnographic and folklore collecting processes within her methodology... Hurston transcribes Kossola's story using his vernacular diction, spelling his words as she hears them pronounced. Sentences follow his syntactical rhythms and maintain his idiomatic expressions and repetitive phrases. Hurston's methods respect Kossula's own storytelling sensibility; it is one 'rooted in African soil' (Plant in Hurston's *Barracoon*, 2018, p. xxii).

Zora Neale Hurston's research methods did not align with the scientific crowd of the day. "The term 'participant observation' is, itself, sometimes resisted because it suggests the 'fly on the wall' approach. Tedlock (2000, 465) notes that the term is, after all, an oxymoron that urges engagement and distance, involvement and detachment" (Glesne, 2007, p. 2). Hurston resisted, and her research practices and treatment of academic

language was deemed inferior by many researchers and storytellers. Additionally, Hurston was not just an observer of Kossula's story, but she fully "participate[d] in the process of 'helping Kossula to tell his story'" (Plant in Hurston's *Barracoon*, 2018, p. xxii) Plant described this process:

> Hurston does not interpret his comments, except when she builds a transition from one interview to the next, in her footnotes, and at the end she summarizes. The story Hurston gathers is presented in such a way that she, the interlocutor, all but disappears. The narrative space she creates for Kossula's unburdening is sacred. Rather than insert herself into the narrative as the learned and probing cultural anthropologist, the investigating ethnographer, or the authorial writer, Zora Neale Hurston, in her still listening, assumes the office of a priest. In this space, Oluale Kossula passes his story of epic proportion on to her (Plant in Hurston's *Barracoon,* 2018, xxiv-xxv).

Despite the constraints pushed upon her, Zora Neale Hurston remained answerable to Kossula and his story above all else. I think looking back to look forward is important here and seeing how Hurston's work provides us another way that we can work together with our participants/collaborators and honor their stories. Like Hurston, we can see our participants as gifts and competent storytellers instead of pushing them into Western ways of doing and reporting research. Additionally, as Gibbs Grey, Johnson, and Baker-Bell (2017) articulated, there need to be more respected spaces in the academy for

scholars who want to use or revise methodologies that are grounded in their epistemologies and ontologies.

Restorying and Counter-Storying. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) identified three different types of counternarratives: personal stories (individual's experiences with racism or sexism), other people's stories (another person's experiences with racism and sexism with biographical and sociohistorical analysis), and composite stories (narratives drawing on various forms of "data" to "recount the racialized, sexualized, and classed experiences of people of color") (p. 33). Through this interdisciplinary approach, researchers can cultivate spaces to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledges of people of Color. "Our response draws on the strengths of communities of color. If methodologies have been used to silence and marginalize people of color, then methodologies can also give voice and turn the margins into places of transformative resistance" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 37). In many communities of Color, storytelling is an oral and collective endeavor, co-signed by "Amens" and "mmhmms". All storytelling in research that is about the lives and ways of other people should be grounded in their experiences and knowledges. And instead of keep participants/collaborators on the margins when constructing the story, perhaps researchers should move to the margins to allow participants to speak.

Drawing on Black Feminist Thought as Methodology

I am committed to methods that center collective theorizing and knowledge building (Combahee River Collective, 1982; Christian 1987; Dillard 2012) and acknowledge that people of Color have always engaged in theorizing work as a collective endeavor. Additionally, by committing to collaborative and collective research, I have to allow for bidirectional theorizing with my collaborators, which inevitably happens anyway because a researcher is never researching on their own when conducting research. Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) note, "Research happens between conversationalists, therefore research is always collaborative" (p. 25). When thinking through a Black Feminist Thought lens and conducting research with/in a collective and collaborative community, researchers and collaborators can draw upon collective memories and collective stories that are layered upon one another and sometimes intersecting. This opens the door to bidirectional care as well and researchers embodying collaboration and collectivism with participants/collaborators. Researchers must be willing to allow care (spiritual, physical, communal, etc.) to be directed towards them (the researcher), specifically in communities where this a way of knowing and being in the world.

Black Feminist Thought also pushes researchers to think about how participants/collaborators are navigating the "researched" space and how they are being positioned and/or positioning themselves. Is that positioning one of inadequacy? Of knowledge? Of geographic agency? (McKittrick, 2006; hooks, 1999; Collins, 2000;

Snorton, 2017). The researcher/participant power dynamic is always there, and researchers have to work hard to press against it to make space for integrative processes. Often, the participants' interactions and knowledges are reported out, but the participants are not part of that process or even invited to participate in that process and the relationships built with participants are not sustained beyond a researcher's successful publication. It is critical, then that we consider how people are in spaces (the spaces we occupy in the world) and how we create collaborative and collective spaces in research.

Drawing on Ubuntu as Methodology

Lastly, I am committed to research that reflects reciprocity and responsibility to my ancestors and my collaborators. I am a Nigerian and Black American woman. Fundamental to the very understanding of both Nigerian and Black concepts of personhood, epistemologies, and cultural production is "theorizing and collective... wisdom, intelligence of all in community, living, past, and future" (Dillard, 2012, pp. 21-22). This is what feels like home to me. This has also meant uncovering and remembering the methods and practices that have been erased/forgotten (Dillard, 2012). Dillard, Abdur-Rashid, and Tyson (2000) write:

> Posthegemonic research then is a revealer of things past hidden—the voices of women and the oppressed, the inherent biases, motives and ideologies of the researcher, the social and political context of research work which implicates the very notion of the research project—and the oft silenced spiritual voice (p. 448).

Dillard (2012) argues that "good research," in the spirit of remembering Ubuntu, is "something that helps African ascendants see more clearly the ways that we are intimately connected to and responsible for each other" (Dillard, 2012, p. 22). Here, Dillard retools the language associated with research, and "good" research is about responsibility to community, "living, past, and future" (p. 22), a tenet of the African Ubuntu philosophy. Desmond Tutu describes Ubuntu:

> It speaks of the very essence of being human... It is to say, my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other persons. It is not I think therefore I am. It says rather: I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share. A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are (Tutu, 1999, p. 31)

Adopting this philosophy of solidarity in humanness is committing to put humanity, connection, and compassion at the forefront. In essence, we affirm our humanity by acknowledging that of others. Instead of looking for gaps in research or problems to fix, researchers can look to further reciprocity and relationships between all collaborators involved in the research, thus sharing knowledges, the production of knowledges, and the use of such production (Dillard, 2012, p. 59).

During the initial phases of my research, I found myself resistant to some of what I perceive to be the regimented and traditional ways of qualitative research. I found it difficult to remain objective and I struggled with video recording our conversations (D. Martinez, 2016). I recorded each of the sessions, but I noticed that the introduction of a listening device drastically changed the tone and mood of the conversations. Danny Martinez (2016) talks about our responsibility to the community when considering the local appropriateness of research tools. In his case, he was working with an over-researched, over-surveilled community and, after engaging in a discussion with his participants about his video camera, he chose not to inflict additional violence by video recording. I think it is important to think through how and why we do what we do at every step of the research process and realize our responsibilities to the communities in which we work. I felt bad about my decision to not record; I felt like I was failing at being a researcher in some way, but I also felt strongly that I was making the right decision. Dillard (2012) discusses the seduction in research (seduction to the rewards of theory and seduction away from the spiritual). She writes,

> ... it was clear that we'd all been trained in Western theories and notions of research, with little resistance or critical examination of how such training had shaped our pedagogies and approaches to research. We'd literally been trained away from ourselves... The spiritual nature of research, the spiritual outcomes of research, and the influences of the researcher as a spiritual being were unmentioned and unnamed... (p.18)

It took a while for me to sense where my hesitations were coming from. I audio recorded most of my conversations with my participants, but I found myself not centering the device to minimize its intrusion. Even when my participants did not see the recording device, I still felt a tug within me. Our garret conversations were important to all of us. They were more than a research project. They were what sustained us, what "gave us life," and they were sacred. Dillard argues that paying attention to spirituality in research and teaching "can be both revelatory as well as revolutionary" (p. 23). Sacred spaces for testimonies and storytelling are important. When my spirit told me to let my participants know I was writing about them and to ask permission, I did, even though according to IRB I didn't have to. Researchers seek consent to conduct research, but I think we also need consent to speak for participants. A researcher typically gains consent very early on in the research process, or at least before officially collecting data. Member checking is one thing, but it is also important to ask if a story can be shared and discussing the implications of that story being shared. If we are in community with our participants, we are responsible to them and answerable to them. Additionally, similar to D. Martinez, it's important that we acknowledge when theoretical or methodological findings stem from our collective conversations (theorizing!) with our participants, thus keeping the spirit of collectivity and collaboration alive even when we have exited our field sites.

In the research world, we tend to believe that a purpose of qualitative inquiry is to help us understand a social phenomenon. Through my experiences thus far, I wonder if I can ever fully understand and capture any social phenomenon. Perhaps we and those we

research with would be better served if a purpose were that of Ubuntu. In an Ubuntu research model, we would work to listen to and respect many different perspectives for understanding the world, we would see how the suffering of others is directly connected to our own lives. I am not naively advocating for a sort of utopia -- there will always be conflicts—but taking a stance of Ubuntu in research can work to keep the humanity of our "participants" and their very real struggles AND joys at the forefront of our work. In our current socio-political environment, we need more of this kind of collectivism and collaboration.

Data Collection

Phase one of data collection for this study correlates with the first semester of the 2017-2018 school year. The research question of focus for this phase was research question one: *When, where, and how do three Black preservice teachers at a PWI draw on their literacies to confirm, resist, and reshape perceptions of who they are, what they know, and what they need?* Forms of data collected during phase one included: participant observations, group conversations, individual semi-structured interviews, field notes, classroom engagement and management plans, unit plans, offered data, and audio recordings (See Table 4). Phase two of data collection correlates with the second semester of the 2017-2018 school year. Though we started meeting as a group in October of 2017, the major focus of our initial meetings was to know one another, hence I continued to focus on and refine research question one during the second phase, but I also

added research question two: *What types of spaces sustain and nurture the literacies of these Black preservice teachers?*

Forms of data collected during phase two included: participant observations, group conversations, individual semi-structured interviews, field notes, teaching philosophy statements, offered data, lesson plans, and audio recordings (See Table 1). Approaching research from a collective and collaborative stance also means that the data is our data; it does not belong to me alone. Collecting and claiming data (stories, histories, experiences, artifacts, etc.) from participants/collaborators and believing that can be used as the researcher sees fit is more aligned with colonial and imperialist mindsets. Therefore, I was intentional with how I collected data and tried to make sure my collaborators felt included and respected in the data collection process. In anticipation of our meetings, I always prepared questions for our group conversations, but the direction of those conversations was up to the people present. I did not own the agenda of the group, as the point of these conversations was to hear what was important to my collaborators and to center their experiences, their imaginations, and their needs. As a participant in the conversations, my field notes were critical. I jotted notes anytime we gathered to talk, and I took field notes immediately after we concluded a conversation. I did not save or analyze any of my collaborators' ethnographic artifacts, except for offered data, until after they were no longer enrolled in my courses. Individual interviews were both necessary and sometimes unintentional. Individual interviews allowed me to ask specific questions, and complicate a monolithic depiction of "the Black teacher."

Additionally, it allowed collaborators to talk about individual concerns that they may not have wanted to discuss with the group or could not because of the limited time for all voices to be heard. Some of the data I "collected" was offered to me by my collaborators, which happens when centering a culture of collective action and contribution; I have labeled that data as "offered data" to signal this phenomenon of bidirectionality. Lastly, it is important for me to understand and reiterate that researchers tell stories through data and that the data collected represents one of many stories of my collaborators and of Black preservice educators.

Table 4. Phases and Sources of Data Collection

Research Questions	Who	When	Where	Data Sources
When, where, and how do three Black preservice teachers at a PWI draw on their literacies to confirm, resist, and reshape perceptions of who they are, what they know, and what they need?	Three Black preservice teachers. Myself	Phase 1 I began collecting data in September 2017 and have continued to explore how my collaborators have talked about how they resist, confirm, and resist perceptions of who they are and the literacies they draw on to do so. Weekly participant observations of reflective seminar from September 2017 until December 2017 when students went on break. Phase 2 Biweekly participant observations of reflective seminar from January 2017 until April 2017 when students graduated.	A reflective seminar course for preservice teachers in an undergraduate preservice teacher program. Various meeting spaces negotiated by collaborators. We met in several locations: at local coffee shops and restaurants, at my house, and in a room on campus	Field notes, analytical memos, artifacts and documents, transcriptions of audio recordings from group meeting with collaborators. Student reflective journal submissions. Student classroom engagement and management plans Teaching philosophy statements My reflective writing about my experiences Took notes during group meetings. We met in groups of 3 or 4 a total of 8 times. Took notes during informal interviews with collaborators. I conducted a total of 2 individual interviews with each collaborator.
What types of spaces sustain and nurture the literacies of these Black preservice teachers?	Three Black preservice teachers. Myself	We created the space in October of 2017 because I saw the need for a safer space for these Black preservice teachers as well as myself, the only Black teacher educator associated with their program. However, I did not start to address this particular question until Phase 2 of the research.	Various meeting spaces negotiated by collaborators	Interview transcriptions, field notes, analytical memos, artifacts and documents, and transcriptions of audio recordings from group meetings with collaborators. I created theoretical, conceptual, analytical memos that looked across data. I created methodological memos that explored collective and collaborative approaches to research.

Data Analysis

Because of the collective and collaborative nature of this study, data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the study and it was critical for all members involved. I did not push my collaborators to listen to all data or read all field notes, but I did invite their thoughts on particular data (a bit of conversation from a previous meeting, for example) and I informed them that all data collected is open and available to them. Analysis happened at multiple points during the study, and collaborative conversations helped to limit researcher bias and allow new questions or insights to emerge.

To capture and privilege voices, knowledges, stories, and literacy practices of my collaborators in this study, I centered analytical tools that would privilege individual and collective storytelling (written and oral), and other oral practices. Therefore, I chose Critical Race Storytelling and Counter-storying Analysis (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002; Johnson, Gibbs Grey, and Baker-Bell, 2017) as well as Critical Discourse Analysis (Rogers and Wetzel, 2014) to create my analytical framework (see Figure.1). Both approaches allowed me to pay attention to the literacies my collaborators drew upon when discussing how they are resisting, affirming, or reshaping conceptions of who they are, what they need, and what they know as English Language Arts preservice teachers. These tools also helped me to pay attention to stories that countered the master narrative of who gets to be and be seen as a teacher and what that looks like (curriculum, pedagogy, physical traits).

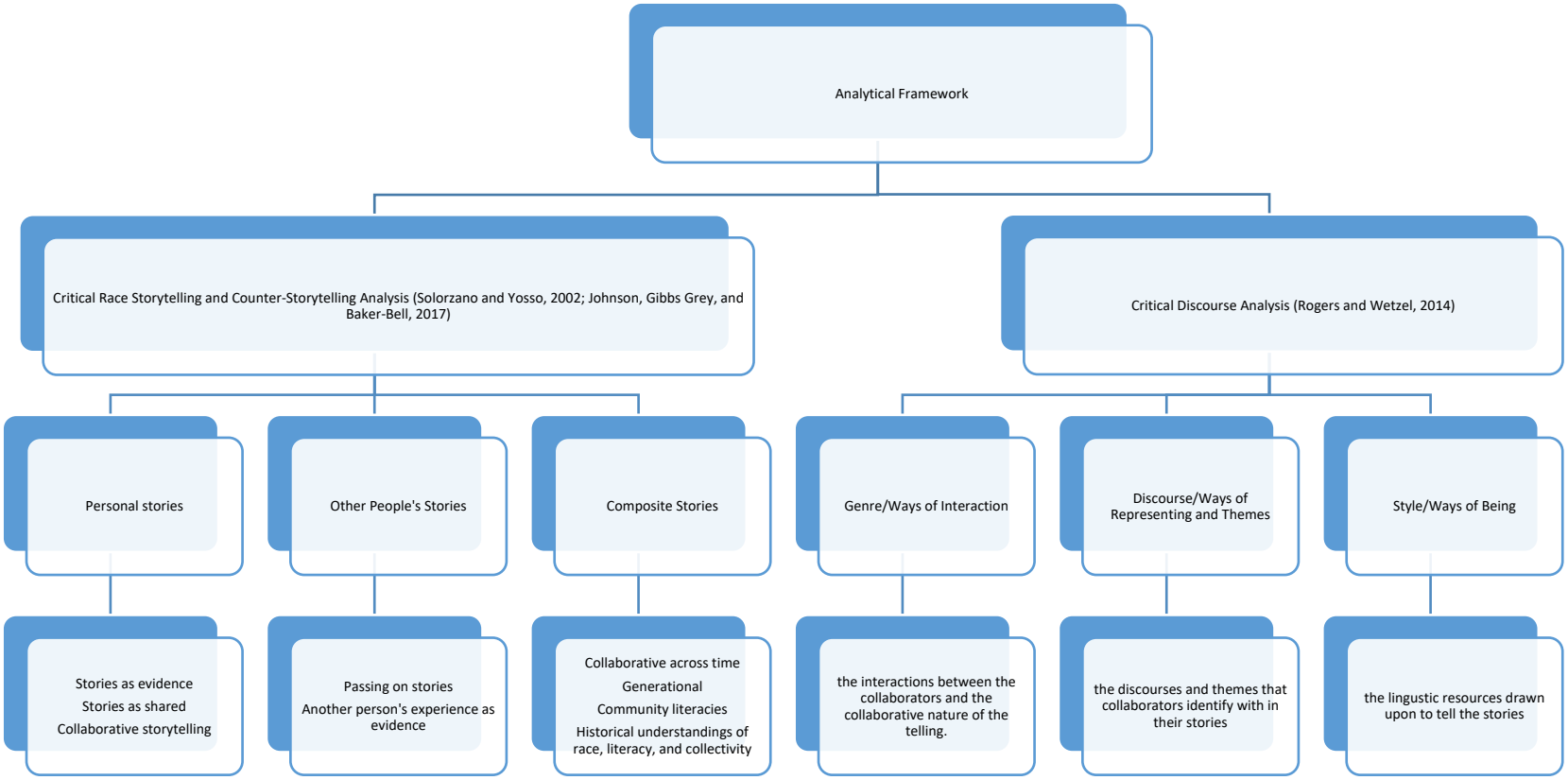

Figure 1. Data Analysis Framework

Critical Race Storytelling and Counter-Storytelling Analysis

Johnson, Gibbs Grey, and Baker-Bell (2017) called for the re-centering of storytelling as a methodology and questioning what counts as analytical methods, encouraging researchers to (re)turn to "storytelling approaches to challenge and push the field of literacy research forward" (p. 473). They draw heavily on Solorzano and Yosso (2002) who outline these elements as the basis of Critical Race methodology:

- *The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination*. Centers the permanent and endemic nature of race and racism and the multiple layers of intersectional oppression based on other subordinated identity markers.
- *The challenge to dominant ideology*. Claims that center objectivity, neutrality, and colorblindness which act to keep whiteness centered while silencing the experiences of people of Color.
- *The commitment to social justice*. Offers space for liberatory and transformative imaginations and responses to racism and other intersectional forms of oppression.
- *The centrality of experiential knowledge*. Legitimizes and values the experiential knowledges of people of Color, such as storytelling, family histories, biographies, narratives, chronicles, and testimonios.
- *The transdisciplinary perspective*. Uses and acknowledges the importance of transdisciplinary inclusion of other areas of study (women, gender, and sexuality

studies, law, ethnic studies, etc.) as critical to understanding the effects of racism and other forms of oppression (pp. 25-27).

Solozano and Yosso argue that master narratives have become so entrenched in our everyday lives that white people and people of Color often tell and uphold these narratives. Therefore, they argue for counter-storytelling as a tool for "exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege… [to] shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (p.32). These counter-stories fall into three categories: personal stories/narratives (which recount individual experiences with race and racism); other people's stories/narrative (which recount another person's story with race and racism); and composite stories/narratives (which draw from various data – social, historical, biographical, autobiographical, etc.—to recount racialized and intersectional experiences (pp. 32-33).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Rogers and Wetzel (2014) argue that the approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA) should be cumulative, carrying multiple levels of and lenses for analysis with one to begin critical discourse analysis. For me, this meant bringing Black Feminist Thought and Ubuntu to CDA. This cumulative approach to CDA appeals to me because it allows for a more mosaic approach to analysis and makes space for the messiness of analysis. Drawing and adapting from the Faircloughian model of CDA, Rogers and Wetzel (2014)

outline the three-part CDA framework they use: genre (focus on the linguistic features), discourse (focus on the ideas and identities presented), and style (focus on positions on takes). They outline these guiding questions for analyzing transcripts:

1. How are "ways of interacting" expressed?
2. What "ways of representing" are represented?
3. How are "ways of being" communicated?

Specifically, I used CDA as a tool to not only analyze talk, but to view how elements of Black Feminist Thought (margins, space carving, theorizing, testifying, and collective knowledge building) and Ubuntu (solidarity, community, and co-humanity) were taken up and talked about.

Data Analysis Procedures for This Study

To help me process what I'd collected or observed, I wrote a variety of memos (conceptual, methodological, analytical, and, often, a combination of the three) to take up different topics and issues, to help me identify areas of further exploration, and to highlight particular recurring themes. I independently open coded transcripts from both individual interviews and group meetings as well as my fieldnotes in a sequential manner. From these codes, I developed more descriptive codes and analyzed the data for themes and patterns, which I shared with collaborators.

During data collection, while listening to their stories and theorizing, I listened for key events and made note of those key events in my field notes. Thinking of Zora Neale

Hurston's (2018) interviews with Kossula in *Barracoon*, I adopted a narrative semi-structured interview style that privileged their storytelling and their voices. Our conversations centered around their experiences and relationships with teaching and learning in PK-16 settings, in their teacher education program, and in the field as well as their perspectives on being/becoming a teacher and teaching. While collaborators were sharing, I tried not to interrupt much. I may have had an idea of what I hoped to talk about, but I did not center the conversations around my questions or the direction I wanted the conversation to go. Instead, I let my collaborators take the lead, especially when we met as a group. I found that I was more likely to ask questions when talking one-on-one with a collaborator, but again, those questions were often clarifying questions and I did not center my own questions. After each meeting and interview, I wrote memos (analytical, theoretical, and/or methodological) to capture my thoughts and questions. I also rewrote many of their stories, based on my note taking to include time stamps of when I noticed an important contextualization cue or collaborative storytelling. After listening to the audio data post meetings, I often found myself with a question. In these instances, I engaged my collaborators in stimulated collaborative analysis either during our next meeting or through email, and thought about how these key moments were informed by theoretical and methodological framing.

Table 5. My Data Analysis Procedures

Step 1.	Organized and familiarized myself with the data.
Step 2.	Identified initial codes and searched for themes with theoretical frames in mind.
Step 3.	Coded again, refined themes, and transcribed key moments.
Step 4.	Examined relationships between language and social world and the linguistic resources to do the following: reshaping, resisting, reaffirming, building identities, building relationships in garret, building meaning. a. Genre (re-voicing; piggybacking, counter-storytelling, laughter, narratives, reference, co-constructing, testifying, hesitation; overlapping speech, changes in speakers/listeners) b. Discourse (identifying with Blackness, Ubuntu, solidarity, co-humanity, community, margins, and garrets) c. Style: (intonation, stress, pitch, register, tempo, pausing,)
Step 5.	Reconnected to social processes, theory, and other scholarship in the field.

Post data collection, I listened to all of my audio recordings and noted key events. Some of these key events were ones I had previously noted during data collection, while others were new. As I identified key events, I transcribed them and noted patterns and themes. Four major themes arose from these key events: 1) reaffirming who they are, what they know, and what they need; 2) resisting and countering whiteness in teacher education; 3) reshaping what it means to be in community and to (be)come a teacher; and 4) co-constructing identities and relationships in garret spaces. As I refined these themes, I sorted key moments into each theme category. Next, to deeply explore these themes and key moments, I used the BlackCrit and literacy lenses (described in chapter 2) and the experiences of my three collaborators to examine how my they drew upon their literacies to reaffirm, resist, and reshape. I looked for how reaffirming, resisting, and reshaping happened or was talked about in interaction. I understand certain linguistic resources to reveal certain things, so I looked for an a priori set of codes (See Appendix B) including

contextualization cues, indexicals, genre, discourses, and style. Questions I kept at the forefront when analyzing data were:

- How are topics taken up? Dropped? Developed? Disagreed with? Shared?
- What contextualization cues seem relevant to constructing meaning?

Finally, I added my own professional and personal experiences related to these concepts and ideas. In particular, I focused on how our stories together and the context that was created through our garret contributed to our reaffirming, resisting, and reshaping and connected to other social processes, theory, and scholarship in the field.

Issues of Trustworthiness and Limitations of the study

In assessing trustworthiness, many qualitative researchers (Denzin and Lincoln; 2003; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Dillard, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2008) argue that the aim is not to locate the truth, draw conclusions, or fill gaps— all of which is subjective, often grounded in positivist research models, and does not take into consideration that "people from different backgrounds will not necessarily act in the same way under the same conditions" (Smagorinsky, 2008, p.394). In this study, the use of my mosaic of methods render a particular truth for a given moment, a given context, and a given person. Context influences the ways "truth" emerges in a given study and this can be seen as a strength and a limitation; a strength because it acknowledges the complexities and uniqueness of human life and social processes and a limitation because the "truth" is relevant to this context with these people only.

I implemented practices to strengthen the trustworthiness of my findings. One practice was centering Dillard's (2012) questions of: 1) what is "good" research? and 2) what have we forgotten? By turning to Critical Race theories, Black feminist thought, and African spiritual research methodologies, I centered marginalized peoples' ways of knowing and being as well as different understandings of responsible, "good" research. This helped to hold space (Hikida, 2018) for my collaborators and aligned my research practices with my theoretical framework as well as the identities of my collaborators and myself.

Another practice for establishing trustworthiness was sustained contact with my collaborators and understanding that I did not "own the data." As I mentioned, I engaged with my collaborators in various reflective seminar sessions, various garret meetings, and through email, text, and casual conversation. This can also be seen as a limitation because most of those moments were timebound by the school year and complicated by my role as their program manager. Did I have enough time with my collaborators? Did they have enough time and space to trust me and one another? Did my role in the program limit their abilities to share and does it put all of us at risk?

A third practice I employed was looking for counter-evidence or reading against the data. This was not only to explore if what I was seeing/hearing/feeling was really happening, but it also helped me to avoid monolithic depictions of my collaborators, particularly because we centered solidarity and because many of their stories were so familiar to my own. These counterexamples did not invalidate what I was seeing, but

added complexities to my understandings and invited more opportunities for interrogation. This is also a limitation because I know that I can never fully capture any of us and our stories are much more complex and continuously evolving than I can capture in this dissertation.

Lastly, I systematically worked to triangulate data, looking across multiple data sources such as: fieldnotes, interviews, audio recordings, artifacts, offered data, memos and logs. To check the stories that were shared, I engaged in member checking as well as simulated collaborative analysis. This was done by sharing transcripts, conference presentations, or talking and laughing about our stories in subsequent meetings or on phone calls, all of which sought to gain their perspectives on my interpretations of our data. I also often engaged in walk and talks or group analysis sessions with colleagues and mentors who raised questions or pointed me toward areas for additional consideration.

In the next three chapters, I share the findings from my study. I start by discussing how the literacy practices of testifying, theorizing, and collaborative knowledge building in garrets helped to counter the sort of "madness," racial gaslighting, and silencing my collaborators and their students experienced. I then discuss the multiple and varied ways my collaborators resisted anti-Black and Eurocentric teaching practices and texts grounded in erasure and silencing and how they used these modes of resistances to cultivate and sustain affirming spaces for themselves and their Black and Brown students.

Lastly, I discuss how collective and collaborative praxes helped us to foster and (re)shape critically-conscious embodiments of care, affirmation, joy, and community.

Chapter 4. "I'm Not Crazy!": Testifying, Knowledge Building, and Theorizing in Garrets

I sat in my office chair, paced the floor, straightened the books on my shelves for the umpteenth time. My heart was racing; my stomach was in knots. Should I be doing this? Can I do this? Is this the right thing to do? What will it mean to attach the role of researcher to this kind of support? Ever since I had pressed send on the email to all three of the Black preservice teachers in my undergrad cohort, inviting them to participate in a study with me, I'd been stressed. We had agreed to have our first meeting in my office on October 3rd, 2017. Despite my hesitations, Nirvana, Lebron, and Kiara walked in smiling, eager, and there was a collective sense of relief in just sharing the same space. We started the meeting and the stories just flowed. They all shared a feeling of exclusion from most of their white cohort members. For example, Nirvana shared that she posted on the cohort Facebook page requests for materials. No response. A white cohort member did the same shortly thereafter, and received several responses, which sparked a moment of, "Am I trippin'?" for Nirvana. In another instance, Lebron contributed to a class discussion and said very similarly what Kiara had already said, and the class took up his comment when they did not take up Kiara's comment. During small group work, Kiara was often silenced/talked over and seen as angry instead of passionate; however, when Lebron showed the same passion for the same issues, such as segregated and unequally funded schools, he was regarded as knowledgeable. At times, Lebron as a Black man held the

classroom's attention and he was not interrupted; however, Kiara and Nirvana, as Black women, were continuously interrupted/silenced and their knowledges/literacies were questioned. This is not to say that Lebron did not experience racial violence and hostility in this space, as he was often not selected as a partner or experienced attempts to negate his teaching and learning experiences in spaces such as Freedom Schools and his fraternity, but Kiara and Nirvana experienced both racial and gendered oppression in the form of visible invisibility. During this meeting, through the stories they shared, all of my collaborators stressed a sense of superiority among the white women in the cohort who were validated by and represented in the curriculum, well-matched with mentor teachers who looked and thought like them, and saw their languages and literacies centered. From this meeting, we realized four important things: 1) we would need more room (my office wouldn't cut it); 2) we would need food; 3) we needed this space; and 4) we were in this for the long haul (study or no study). From this first meeting, I also began to see how through collective knowledge building, testifying, and theorizing, our garret conversations could provide space for my collaborators to not only draw on literacies and affirm one another, but also support how they had to move in and across various teacher education spaces.

Collective Knowledge Building and Testifying

Meeting in our garret and sharing our collective experiences, knowledges, and our collaborative theorizing created a space that rendered each member as valuable, human,

and knowledgeable, counter to the oppressiveness of many of the other teacher education spaces. Many of my collaborators' concerns echoed the same concerns I had for them and for myself. During our first meeting, Lebron frustratingly stated, "[Black] Kids are real, can't just play, experiment on them. They are human beings. I spend so much time trying to get people to see this" (10/2/17). Kiara and Nirvana nodded their heads in agreement, indicating that they, too, had experienced the dehumanization and "madness" that comes with not only teaching and learning in anti-Black spaces, but navigating life in Black bodies. The "madness" I refer to here is not just the anger and frustration that Lebron feels, but the exasperation and weariness that comes with knowing racism exists and is pervasive in so many aspects of one's life, but constantly being told that it is not or that it is not as bad or it is something of the past. Drawing on both Eduardo Glissant and Toni Morrison, Katherine McKittrick (2006) writes:

> Édouard Glissant suggests that geographies produced in conjunction with, and often because of, white European practices of domination expose 'various kinds of madness.' These forms of sociogeographic madness are, for Glissant, tied to transatlantic slavery and colonialism: the landless black subject is, importantly, anchored to a new world grid that is economically, racially, and sexually normative, or, seemingly nonblack; this grid suppresses the possibility of black geographies by invalidating the subject's cartographic needs, expressions, and knowledges. Toni Morrison, additionally, explains that racialized geographies are pathologies, indications of the ways in which space and place contribute to the

> dehumanization, fragmentation, and madness of both free and unfree peoples and their lands (2-3).

My collaborators had all expressed feeling excluded and disconnected from their cohort and teacher education program, essentially landless, as the landscape did not have room for their identities and knowledges. But further, as Lebron expressed, they were also weary from trying to get "people" (their cohort members and other folks in education) to see them and the children that looked like them, to simply see the manifestations and pathologies of antiblackness. Lebron's emphases on "real" and "human beings" act to resist the perceptions that "people" (namely white teachers) have about Black children and attempts to counter the invalidation of Black bodies, specifically Black children, as valuable and deserving of all of humane treatment. The collective nodding also illustrates shared understanding of the role educators have played in dehumanizing Black children and how meeting in our garret helped to affirm and counter, if only for a moment, the feelings of "madness" they/we experienced in spaces outside of our garret. Lebron's reference to experimentation on Black bodies can not only tie into the historical experimental traumas inflicted upon Black bodies, such as the ill-gotten and unpaid use of Henrietta Lacks' cancer cells or the Tuskegee experiments subjecting Black men to syphilis or the gynecological experiments performed on Black slave women by Dr. James Marion Sims, but also to the constant stream of educational quick fixes, strategies, programs, and fad-based acronyms that are pushed on schools, specifically those that serve high populations of Black children.

Later in the conversation, when discussing her past schooling experiences, Kiara, stated that she wants "…to create an environment that I never had." Here, Kiara was referring to the public schools she matriculated through, including her K-12 schools and the public university she was attending at the time, all of which had been, according to her, places of silencing, invisibility, and erasure, something many of her white peers in reflective seminar had difficulty understanding or even acknowledging. In a sense, my collaborators were referring to racial gaslighting. Davis and Ernst (2019) define racial gaslighting as "the political, social, economic, and cultural process that perpetuates and normalizes a white supremacist reality through pathologizing those who resist" (p. 763). Kiara did not want "them" (Black kids) to experience similarly silencing educational experiences and spaces as they moved through their institutions of education, thus again affirming what she knew to be true about the experiences of Black children in schools and affirming the type of teacher she wanted and needed to be. Despite the eye rolls and silencing efforts of their cohort members, my collaborators refused to acquiesce to the notion that what they had and were experiencing was truly anti-Black racism in education. Roberts and Carter Andrews (2013) argue that

> …sociohistorical gaslighting against Black educators has yielded a culturally reified designated identity rooted in rhetoric and practices that presume their (much like that of African American students) undesirability, incompetence, and general lack of interest in and/ or commitment to education… [and that] this *designated identity narrative* gets constructed and reconstructed historically and

contemporarily by broadly positioning Black educators as outsiders and as unqualified (70-71).

Tying back to McKittrick, these gaslighting efforts (exclusion from conversations, purposeful ignoring of their needs, suggestions that racism is no longer a factor or only a personal deviance and not institutionally sustained and replicated, and refusals to work in "those" districts or with "those" kids") contributed to my collaborators' feelings of madness. However, here, the acts of storytelling and "truth telling and testifying talk" (in conversation with C. A. Tyson, January 2020) are powerful uses of literacies grounded in their ways of knowing and demonstrating knowledge as well as ways to counter how madness and racial gaslighting showed up in our lives.

During a meeting later in the semester, Lebron also discussed another example of "madness" in his experience as a student within the teacher education program.

Lebron: It's not (Inclusion) very helpful to me. I feel like, see I took it in the summer and I took it with the lady that runs the course. She was like ⇓the lady for the course (inaudible) and she wouldn't let me come to class because I was working for Freedom Schools. ⇑Freedom schools was down to let me miss the second half of afternoon activities to go to class and they were still going to pay me. I was like wow⇒. I would've had to be like 5-10 minutes late every day and it's like so what? it's a two-and-a-half-hour class.

Me: She said no.

Kiara: (shaking her head)

Lebron: She talking bout we take a test the first 5-10 minutes of each class. You're going to miss it so, I don't know what I can do. I'm like <u>well</u>, excuse me, but I can just sit outside and take that or you know take it at the end. She's like nope. Can't do it. I then had an argument with her about how she's supposed to be an inclusion teacher but she can't make inclusionary methods work.

Nirvana: (rejoins the table) Don't be getting deep before I get over here. (11/4/17)

Here Lebron engages in some discourse analysis himself as he tells three stories, one about the ineffectiveness of a course on inclusion, a second about support from Freedom Schools, and a third about non-support from "the lady." When discussing "the lady," his pitch was low and he emphasized the word "lady." This signals her power and authority and what he knew he was up against. When discussing Freedom Schools, his pitch was high on "Freedom Schools" and he drew out the word "wow" in line 6, stressing his surprise at this level of support and signaling a shift in how he valued Freedom Schools' understanding of his financial and academic precariousness. Their support in contrast to the constraints he saw with "the lady" teaching the course on inclusion redefined and stretched his understanding of what it means to truly be inclusive and highlights a disconnect between the presumed objectives of the course and the implemented policies and practices of the instructor. Kiara responded to Lebron with a

shake of the head and I responded with "She said no," as we were able to predict the response of the instructor based on historical understandings and dominant conceptions of inclusion that have continued anti-diversity perspectives—meaning institutions have hardly moved the needle on changing power dynamics. This is a story we'd heard so many times before and we'd experienced the barriers (global and local forces not self-created), but nonetheless those barriers were ever present and ever felt. Those bodies marked as "diverse" have less power while preferred bodies with racial, economic and other social identifiers most closely aligned with the norms of the institution enjoy the most privileges. When Lebron continued, he performed the instructor's responses in line 14 using short, abrupt sentences: "She's like nope. Can't do it." This signaled her unwillingness to compromise, to hear him out, to understand his situation. However, in inclusion and equity and diversity courses, he'd been told how important it is to know one's students' situations and needs. Additionally, Lebron contributed these stories as an act of theorizing and testifying (Christian, 1987; Martinez, 2015), which is taken up and validated by Nirvana when describing his comment as "deep." Through telling these stories, Lebron stressed the importance of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies (Ladson Billings,1995, 2014, 2000; Paris and Alim, 2014) and knowing one's students, both ideas that had been stressed in some of their teacher education courses but were not being practiced in their courses. In aligning ourselves as equally committed to these issues, this collective, dialogic space became one in which Kiara, Nirvana, and Lebron were seen as knowledge producers and theorizers (Christian, 1987), an environment

many of them had sparsely seen in schools. Instead of being read as ungeographic (McKittrick, 2006) and unknowledgeable, which often happened with their peers in reflective seminar, in our garret space, each member's literacies and stories were seen as worthy and real.

Bidirectional Theorizing

Because of the collective and collaborative nature of our garret, my collaborators often brought in texts and resources that centered their knowledges to add to our conversations and/or to propose what we should read as a whole reflective seminar, thus contributing to the course curriculum. These texts included their own lives, histories, and experiences as past K-12 students and as current preservice teachers. Essentially, their lives were texts (Kirkland, 2013). Aside from sharing their life experiences as texts, Nirvana shared "Books Like Clothes: Engaging Young Black Men with Reading" (Kirkland, 2011), which explores the ideological and personal identity factors that influence decisions young Black males make about reading texts, and Lebron shared curriculum from Freedom Schools, a literacy and cultural enrichment program for youth in grades K-12 that has historically centered 1) high quality academic enrichment; 2) parent and family development; 3) civic engagement and social action; 4) intergenerational servant leadership development; and 5) nutrition, health, and mental health (Children's Defense Fund, 2020). The Freedom Schools model centers literacy practices of Black and Brown youth, such as call and response, chants, singing, and community circles, so that the young people thrive and see their bodies and knowledges

as valuable and justified. In sharing, Nirvana and Lebron embraced collective theorizing and contributed their expertise when they wanted, in a space that did not spotlight them or position them as experts or representatives of their entire races and/or ethnicities. Additionally, in sharing both of these texts, Nirvana and Lebron made connections between research and the issues we found important in our garret conversations, and the resources that they selected positioned the literacies and literacy practices of Black students as valuable and equal.

Additionally, my collaborators also often made their own discoveries and theorized their own answers to the issues at hand. One afternoon, Kiara sent me a text while working on lesson plans:

Kiara: I want to share my lesson plans with you. Ashley gave me feedback but I want yours as well – this is something that I've noticed my Black students do as well.

Me: ooooh

Kiara: Like if my inclusion teacher is helping the students out, I have one kid who will have me check her work again just because she wants me to see it… Wow! What a connection.

Me: That's interesting! Yes, write about that. What do you think it means? What do you think it means for Black students to see you as their teacher? (2/6/18).

In line 2, Kiara referred to the Black students in her classes as “my black students.” Kiara noticed similarities between how her Black students, who were attending a predominantly White middle school, connected with her (in a sort of garret) and how she, and the other collaborators, not only connected with me but found affirmation in our garret. Not only did this collective consciousness, knowledge building, and valuing of “marginal” knowledge and bodies happen in our garret space, but, in lines 2-6, Kiara, began to do and realize the same with her students in the field. She had begun applying this Black feminist praxis of support in the field and her Black students had begun carving out garret spaces by turning to her. These garret spaces offered communities of safety, spaces of freedom in the unfree, or what ross (2016) calls Black educational sovereign spaces, which I described in Chapter 2. These spaces are often created in response to antiblackness and function to provide “makeshift citizenship to people whose humanity is consistently made impossible on the outside” (ross, 2016, p. 30). I followed up on Kiara’s statement with questioning and encouraged her to continue delving into what it means that students are coming to her and seeing her, the Black teacher. Instead of me saying that Kiara made a connection, she stated it herself in line 7, owning the finding and her part in the research and I honored that ownership by asking what she thinks and what meaning it has for her and her students, what R. Martinez (2015) describes as sharing the responsibility of representation and storytelling with communities.

The following week Kiara and I met up at my house for dinner where I followed up on her text.

Me: Oh, this week, when you had texted me, when you were asking me, "Hey I want to check out my plans" and you were like, "Oh my gosh! This is the same thing" and so I'm just wondering like—

Kiara: —Man, that happened repeatedly throughout the week even after I had mentioned it to you that day. It was just like, wow⇒ man this is so interesting. Like this is so much to think about. Like why is this so important to her? She even said like, "I just want to make sure that you think this is okay before I keep going. I want to make sure that it's good enough for you before I finish it up." I'm just like why though? Like, that was just so interesting. And then I was thinking for me, like why? Why did I need that second okay? Why did I need that second support when I had already gotten that, you know, the "okay that this looks good"? So, I don't know.

Me: Is it just her?

Kiara: As often? Yeah, it's her. Let me, of course, there's other kids of Color who want a little more support. They want to like please me a little bit more. So, if I ask them to redo their work, it's nothing for them to redo it or "I know that wasn't my best work. A'ight, Ms. Kiara[8], I'll go ahead

[8] I use my collaborator's first names instead of their last names when they refer to themselves while sharing stories. I use the last names of the collaborators' mentor teachers when they refer to them while sharing stories. This is not to rank the mentor teachers as more important than the student teachers in this study. This move is made solely for reader simplicity.

19 and redo it." But, yeah, it's her particularly though, who just like, she's

20 latched on like heavily and it's just really interesting. (2/11/18)

In line 1, I initiated a member check-in with Kiara by asking her about the text message she had sent me the previous week. Again, I attempted to make space for her theorizing and invited her into the analytical process. When Kiara responded, she repeated the word "why" five times, each time verbally placing emphasis on the word. Here she questioned the importance of her observation, her connection. She also connected what she saw the young Black girl in her class doing to what she saw herself doing with me and called this phenomenon "second support." I attempted to help us dig a little deeper by asking at line 14 if she (the young Black girl in Kiara's class) is the only one who sought out her support. As first Kiara seemed to say yes, but quickly remembered that there were other Black kids who sought her out and seemed to perform better in the class for her. This "second support" that Kiara talked about can be linked back to the high expectations that Kiara set for them. High expectations are tied to how a teacher values one as a human and how much a teacher believes in and supports students. Kiara had previously stated that she wanted her Black students to not experience what she had, which was an education experience of silencing, invisibility, and erasure. Low expectations and low support, or "fake love" as defined by Johnson, Bryan, and Boutte (2018), are ways that students can feel silenced, invisible, uncared for, and essentially erased. However, not only did it seem here that her students felt seen by her and wanted to be seen by her, but they performed

better for her because she has made them feel supported and seen. As the conversation continued, I followed up with another question:

Me: Are you the only teacher of Color in the building?

Kiara: The absolute only. Like, there's literally no… Well you know what, there might be a Black ED teacher below us but he doesn't really see the entire school body…Which is awful. Like I said, those couple of kids in Mrs. Carter's class who kind of talk a little much, they all are kids of Color and it's kind of… like BJ is a Black kid who I can tell that if he went to a Black school, he would just fit in, like he would just be a regular student. But here, it's just like "Oh⇒, he just so extra" or "Oh⇒, he just talks too much! Oh⇒, he just has so much attitude." I'm just like, he's just a normal kid to ⇑me. Like I'm here for the banter because it's funny (laughing), but I'm also I'm 20 years younger than a lot of the teachers as well so I can just tell they aren't used to that dynamic of kid, that type of kid for that extra energy. Like there's this kid Darius and he's just (laughing) he's just a Black kid, and he's just funny and he's a lot of energy and he talks back but in like a facetious way. It'll be like, he'll take everything you say literally; he's just a smart little kid. But he's not doing so maliciously. And they don't, everybody just thinks he's a smartass and it's just like, "Oh⇒, I can't stand Darius. Da da da da" I'm just like he's an okay kid to ⇑me, you know. You just talk to him like you

40 talk to ⇑anybody else, he'll listen to you. Stop talking to him like he's

41 different cause that's how he's gonna act. (2/11/18).

My follow up question at line 21 attempted to further connect theory and my collaborators experiences at the university with Kiara's observation at her field placement. Kiara acknowledged that she, as a preservice teacher, was the only teacher of Color (not just only Black teacher). She recalled an intervention specialist, whom she referred to as an "ED teacher," as possibly Black, but also acknowledged his invisibility and lack of reach in the building. She described the lack or representation of teachers of Color and the invisibility of the intervention specialist as "awful" and quickly connected this lack of representation to how students of Color were regarded. In lines 26-39, Kiara recalled BJ and Darius, who were two students who were constantly seen as problem students, but were "regular," "normal," and "okay" to her. Interestingly, Kiara stated in lines 26 and 27 that if BJ went to a Black school, he would have fit it, meaning in that space, who he was would have been more accepted. However, he and Darius were seen as problem students because they talked too much, they were funny, and they took up too much energy, common master narratives about Black students. She identified this problem as a geographic and spatial one. When repeating what teachers have said about BJ and Darius, Kiara repeatedly started off the teachers' statements with, "Oh," which she emphasized and drew out. This repetition of "Oh" at the start of these statements acts to mimic and mock the teachers who Kiara saw as incorrectly reading the actions, intelligence, and literacy practices of these Black students. In sharing this story with me,

the use of the "Oh" also communicated to me how ridiculous she found their readings of these Black kids and the use of "da da da da" in line 38 is a commonly used Black language practice to highlight when something is seen as "bullshit" and not to be taken seriously. It's important to also note that Kiara referenced a difference in age in line 31 as the possible reason why the white teachers in her building saw students like BJ as problematic. However, in her rebuttals to what the statements the teachers use, Kiara emphasized that both BJ and Darius as Black boys were just regular kids to her, a counter-story which suggests that she saw how race and the lack of understanding the literacy practices of Black students in her class contributed to the misreading and overdisciplining of kids like BJ and Darius. Additionally, she talked about BJ and Darius here with me so that her reading of her students can be validated. She narrated these events to me to affirm in this affirming context after highlighting that Black students came to her specifically, the only Black teacher in the building, as she came to me, the Black teacher in her teacher education program. Interestingly, what she didn't know was that, during my transition into the program manager role, the previous program manager warned me that I would have my hands full with two of my three collaborators, a reading that was far from the truth and emphasized his lack of understanding of the specific racialized experiences, needs, and literacy and language practices of my collaborators as they navigated this teacher education program.

In a later conversation, Kiara again discussed connecting with BJ, this time through literature. As she shared an example of a found poem based on the novel *Stella*

by Starlight (Draper, 2015) with her class, BJ exclaimed, "Ms. Kiara got bars!" BJ's use of the word "bars" references the poetic expressions of rap or slam poetry (used often in Black culture) in which profound connections are often made through metaphoric and rhythmic word use. Here, Kiara's "bars" again validated the literacy practices of her Black students by sharing this story with me and by sharing her example with her whole class. Through sharing their stories, which Yosso and Solorzano call sharing other people's stories as counter-storying, and analyzing BJ's and Darius's traits, Kiara showed a differing conceptualization of their Blackness—their humor, their way of talking, their attitudes—and saw them as kids who embodied Blackness, not problem children. While other teachers in the building were only able to see their Blackness as deficits and annoying, she saw them as engaging, she enjoyed their humor, and she made them feel valued. Thus, figurative garrets of co-conspiracy that could rise and fall in the blink of an eye became essential for acknowledging and holding space for what was centered, geographic, and counted in the classroom space. This is perhaps why the unnamed Black girl she references at the start of our conversation had latched on to her so "heavily;" she saw how this Black woman teacher understood the ways they demonstrated their knowledge and fostered spaces of Black educational sovereignty. Recalling Black feminist thought on theorizing as the work of the people (Christian, 1987), the researching and theorizing here became bidirectional.

In this chapter all three of my collaborators used our garret space to affirm what they knew and what they valued as teachers, despite numerous efforts from others to say

otherwise. Additionally, they drew on our *material garret space* to create *figurative garret spaces* with some of their own students. They were both spatial, temporal, and even ephemeral. But, they had real value and material consequences for the learning and teaching that could happen in their classrooms. Through our discussions and storytelling/counter-storytelling, they made connections to our space, to their lives, and to other texts to counter racial gaslighting and maneuvers to exclude them and their knowledges. They also discussed literacy and literacy education through a BlackCrit lens, acknowledging that anti-Black racism was indeed present and contributed to (mis)readings and dehumanization of Black bodies and the literacy practices of Black bodies (their students and their own). By engaging in collective knowledge building and bidirectional theorizing, my collaborators were allowed space to invest in the project and the material consequences of it, of future preservice teachers of Color, and of the students they would co-construct knowledge with in the future.

Chapter 5. "She's a Copy and Paste": Black Preservice Teachers' Resistances Against whiteness in Teacher Education

The program is not tailored to us because we are not here. — Kiara

During our initial meeting, I asked how things were going in the field for each of my collaborators. Both Kiara and Nirvana expressed that their mentor teachers were fine. Nirvana was already planning for and teaching a creative writing class and Kiara was still getting to know her new mentor after being switched to her new placement four weeks into the school year (see Chapter 3). However, Lebron radiated frustration with his "$21,000 waste of money" experience and described his mentor teacher, a graduate of the same program ten years prior, as a "copy and paste of these folks." The "folks" being his majority white cohort members, he cited her ideas and "the way she thinks" as copied and pasted and felt that he was seeing "the same people providing the same experiences" for poor students and students of Color in particular. This idea of "copy and paste" resonated with all of us and all of my collaborators at some point voiced their struggles with overwhelming whiteness in their teacher education experiences. From the bodies that made up their cohort, to the instructors they had and the theorists that were centered, to the mentor teachers they were paired with and the curriculum they were forced to teach, my collaborators often stressed feeling surrounded by whiteness. I shared with them how, upon joining the doctoral program full-time, I had initially struggled with self-

surveillance and anger, often feeling dismissed and very Black in overwhelmingly white thinking and white bodied spaces. This was particularly difficult, for them and for me, because we all stemmed from environments that were either entirely segregated or much more diverse and much more welcoming and validating than what was represented and valued on campus and in our courses. However, my collaborators consistently discussed the ways they resisted and challenged Eurocentric ideas of teaching and learning. Despite silencing and erasure efforts in the field, they fought to see themselves, for their Black and Brown students to see themselves, and to be the English teachers they needed to be. In this chapter, I discuss the varied ways my collaborators used literacies of resistance to subvert and challenge pedagogies and curriculum moves in their field placements that centered anti-Blackness and whiteness but, also, how they used literacies of resistance to create spaces of joy and affirmation for themselves and for their students.

Resisting and Challenging Eurocentric Ideas of Teaching

My collaborators had experienced violence and erasure previously in reflective seminar and were experiencing a replication of the spatial and geographic dynamics of violence and erasure in the field. In particular, they liked the idea of a cohort but were resistant to the upholding of Eurocentric ideas within the cohort. They yearned for more collective and holistic experiences that were inclusive of their Black and cultural identities and communities. Recalling Meacham's (2000) analysis of what impact not having the "Black Experience" had on Black students in teacher education, he

highlighted that African American preservice teachers often face the challenge of having to internally affirm the integrity and validity of their linguistic and cultural heritage while conforming to the norms of a profession that has been historically hostile to that heritage" (p. 572). In typical teacher education programs at PWIs, what is normal and expected is grounded in whiteness. Haddix (2017) writes:

> Instead of being in programs that acknowledge their cultural knowledges and center on curriculum and practice, students of color are expected to excel in Whiteness-centered teacher education programs and in standardized teaching metrics (i.e., teacher certification examinations) to be identified as 'a teacher.' For students of color, becoming a teacher means erasing or hiding their racial, linguistic, cultural, and sexual identities to fit a set standard (p. 145).

Instead of having their rich languages, literacies, and literacy practices constantly dismissed, corrected, and silenced, my collaborators sought out places where they could create what Kiara called "environments they never had" and utilize methods they saw as critical to their development as English teachers and the development of their students. Additionally, they felt pressure to perform a certain way to get "good marks" according to program level disposition evaluations. However, all three resisted Eurocentric ideas of teaching and learning and "silent on race" pedagogies in the field, some subversively, others through direct resistance/rejection, putting their grades and their relationships with their mentor teachers on the line for the betterment of vulnerable students and to embrace the teachers that they were becoming.

Doing Black History and Talking Anti-Blackness

At Bridgeport Middle School, Kiara was in a school with very few Black and Brown students and she as a student teacher, was possibly the only Black teacher in the building. It's important to remember that Kiara was traumatized by her first experience placement location (see Chapter 3). She was moved to Bridgeport four weeks into the school year and found the adjustment from her learning and teaching experiences in majority Black public schools challenging. Interestingly, the Black students at Bridgeport Middle School started to gravitate to her and in turn, she unintentionally created garret spaces of her own. The creation of those garrets and the impacts her validation produced, led Kiara to have more courage to speak out and push against Whiteness in her field placement. Kiara and I met for dinner at my home one evening for her individual interview. During this interview, she shared about her experience working with her mentor teacher on a literature circle unit. The title of the unit was "Historical Fiction" and consisted of seven different book titles that mostly centered around slavery and racial discrimination and had been received by the school librarian through a grant: *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson, 2014), *Chains* (Anderson, 2008), *Elijah of Buxton* (Curtis, 2007), *Jefferson's Sons* (Brubaker Bradley, 2011), *One Crazy Summer* (Williams-Garcia, 2010), *Stella by Starlight* (Draper, 2015) and *The Watsons Go To Birmingham* (Curtis, 2000). It's important to note that "Historical Fiction" is a genre category used to market books, in this case young adult books, in publishing and library services. It is also important to

note that *Brown Girl Dreaming* is classified as autobiographical poetry. Thus, the use of "Historical Fiction" serves as a potential way to avoid talking about race in literature and to position issues of anti-Black racism as "in the past" or "over" and our current society as "post-racial." While talking about her experience in teaching with these books, Kiara expressed her frustration with not "doing as much with the books" and "the frame of what [her mentor] wanted [them] to do." Even though this was at the start of Kiara's transition time to official student teaching and she had been vocal about the ways that she hoped to approach teaching this unit, especially during Black history month, she was still unable to move beyond students just reading the books to read them:

Kiara: We won't really unpack them. We don't really process them. She won't talk about them in the next day. So, I've been trying to design stuff so that we are really getting in touch with the novels. Doing stuff with the novels and talking more about like the actual reading because why read if we aren't going to talk about it? She hasn't even highlighted that they're reading Black authors for the most part. (2/11/18)

In lines 1-3, Kiara used words and phrases such as "unpack," "process," and "really getting in touch" to emphasize her stance that reading these novels, in particular, required critical literacy work. When she said that she would like to see the students "doing stuff with novels and talking," she was highlighting the need to allow space for students to reflect on and respond to the novels and she was also highlighting the importance of talking. Here we see that Kiara valued literacy practices that center dialogue and co-

construction of knowledge. We also see that Kiara knew that with these particular novels being taught in this particular setting, a certain kind of pedagogy work needed to be enacted. When she asks, "…why read if we aren't going to talk about it?" she wasn't just referring to reading and talking about texts in general. She was stressing the need to talk about these particular books that deal with issues of slavery and discrimination. This is punctuated by her follow up sentence that her mentor teacher hadn't "even highlighted that they're reading Black authors," which is a critical example of the level of unawareness and erasure, intentional or unintentional, Kiara was facing. Kiara's frustration and means of resistance was through a re-envisioning of the literacy practices she hoped her students could engage in for deeper, more authentic relationships with not only the physical texts, but the social texts of the school, classroom, and one another. A bit later in the conversation, once Kiara had fully constructed the picture of the "Historical Fiction Unit," I initiated an analysis of the ways antiblackness and the erasure of Blackness had been upheld and communicated through this unit:

Me: So⇒, this is a historical fiction novel unit. Not Black history or anything, so, really you can get away with reading these and not talk about race or anything?

Kiara: Not necessarily

Me: But you kind of can. Like why not African American historical fiction or something?

Kiara: "Oh yeah. No yeah. Like the teachers can absolutely get away

without mentioning race at all without highlighting Black history month on Monday. But I'm like I gonna have to do Black history facts every day because what I've noticed is they're not doing that on the news where I noticed they did for Hispanic Heritage Month. I was just like they usually never even talk about Hispanic Heritage month but the fact that they did three quotes everyday about that culture—

Me: —They're not doing anything for Black History month?

Kiara: Noth::ing and I'm just like this is making me very upset. It literally makes no sense to me.

Me: Y'all are reading all these literature circle books. I thought it was because that's what she was—

Kiara: —It wasn't even hey guys it's Black History month. I literally was going through it. I was like, "Hey guys, it's Black history month. I have on my shirt with an afro today blah blah blah blah blah. Black History month is really important to me because I'm Black, of course, there we go. And I was like I'll try to wear as much Black clothing as I can just to show you all know what I have in my wardrobe and showcase the culture but now I realize when I go to school I'm like alright guys, I'm gonna just drop some history with you every chance I get because I realize that no one else is doing it." (2/11/18).

In line 1, I began by problematizing the title of a unit that consisted of historical fiction based on Black U.S. experiences and was being taught during Black History month. By not naming or acknowledging Blackness, an underlying message of silence, taboo, and erasure was allowed to fester, and the mentor teacher's use of neutral language to name the unit aligns with colorblind and erasure practices. Kiara's response in line 4, "not necessarily," was a misunderstanding of my indeterminant use of "you" in line 2. She believed that by using "you," I was referring to her. This is an important moment because her response of "not necessarily" signaled her commitment to not reducing race and shows that Kiara saw herself as a co-collaborator and able to disagree. I pushed back in lines 5-6, misunderstanding that her use of "not necessarily" did not refer to the demonstrated stance of teachers at Bridgeport, but to her own stance. In line 7, Kiara finally realized my indeterminant use of "you" and responded, "Oh yeah. No yeah. Like the teachers can absolutely get away without mentioning race at all" and she offered an additional, school wide example of erasure when she continued with, "without highlighting Black history month on Monday." She explained that the morning news that was broadcasted throughout the school featured quotes and facts during National Hispanic Heritage Month. Kiara was aware of the historical erasure of Latinx history and cultures in schools and expressed her pleasant surprise at the school wide celebration of Latinx cultures during National Hispanic Heritage Month when she emphasized "never" in line 12. It appeared that she expected the same level of school wide celebration during Black History Month, however, Kiara realized that the school news and her mentor

teacher were silent, not even acknowledging the annual observance of Black History Month. So, though the students were reading books about African enslavement and anti-Black discrimination, her mentor teacher's unit plans did not center Blackness or provide opportunities for her to facilitate discussions around race, oppression, justice, or anti-blackness. In this sense, the teacher was able to include "multicultural" historical fiction books in her teaching by skirting around any explicit discussions of race. Therefore, students were simply reading the books for the sake of reading, but they were not actually doing the work of unpacking Black experiences and their lessons were not grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy. Kiara stressed her disbelief and pain at this level of erasure and silencing by emphasizing and lengthening the word "Noth::ing" in line 15, by emphasizing and repeating the word "literally" in lines 15 and 19, and by explicitly stating she was "very upset" (line 15) and "going through it" (lines 19-20). I affirmed and shared her disbelief and anger in line 14 by emphasizing "anything" and in lines 17-18 when I shared that I had thought her mentor teacher included these particular books for the "Historical Fiction Unit" to acknowledge Black History Month. Apparently, both Kiara and I expected too much.

Kiara, however, found ways to circumvent the silencing imposed on her and her students and to offer counter stories that disrupted narratives that displaced and disposed Blackness. In lines 20-22, Kiara shared that she vocally acknowledged the observance of Black History Month and expressed to her students that it was "really important to [her] because [she's] Black." Another method Kiara used to combat this erasure of Black

History Month was through her clothing, which connects to Kynard's (2013) analysis of the ways literacies were used as resistance by Black students experiencing erasure and silencing at Fisk University. Kiara pointed out the afro on her shirt when telling students that Black History Month is important to her. In *Liberated Threads* (2015), Tanisha Ford traces the complex ways that Black women of the African Diaspora have historically redefined themselves through accruements as powerful testimonies to the past and to engage in social, political, and cultural movements. She argues that

> …such shirts are also part of a longer history to which the politics of style are central. These T- shirts enable the wearers, whether consciously or not, to participate in a collective remembering of the era of black freedom and black feminism across the diaspora. Retracing the history of the development and proliferation of soul style across the black world illuminates the creative ways in which entertainers, student activists, and ordinary people used their dressed bodies as sites of resistance and self- expression (p. 184).

Kiara wore specific t-shirts with Black empowerment phrases and images and cited Black history facts each day on her own as an embodied literacy practice to showcase her culture and to speak back to the silence and erasure not just around Black History Month, but also the silence and erasure of Blackness within the historical fiction unit. Through her own analysis, she resisted. Knowing the perceived and realized limited agency she had in that space, she chose to participate in remembering and celebrating the history of Black freedom fighting and freedom dreaming. Furthermore, through her decisions to

wear and recite Black history, Kiara drew on historical and cultural literacies of resistance, engaged in Black oral tradition of reciting Black history facts, and spoke back to oppressions and anti-blackness. Further, Kiara found it to be especially important for her Black and Brown students, who had sought her out and created garrets with her, to see her standing up and drawing on her literacies to push back on the silencing and erasure efforts across the school.

In addition to reading one of the literature circle books, the students also watched a TED Talk titled, "We Need to Talk About Injustice" (Stevenson, 2012). Kiara's mentor teacher assigned this viewing and paired it with questions pulled from an online source when she and Kiara were out with the flu. Kiara was frustrated that this was assigned while a substitute teacher was filling in because the plan was for students to simply watch the video and complete a set of questions. There was no plan to unpack the questions, to engage in a discussion after watching the TED Talk, or to make connections between the TED Talk and the seven literature circle books the students were reading. Kiara retuned before her mentor teacher and took it upon herself to unpack while her mentor teacher was still out with the flu.

Kiara: "All right guys. Let's unpack this. What does it mean? Like they didn't know what social justice meant they didn't understand that concept. Or know even know what 'ally' was; they were calling it "alley." What are you talking about alley? (2/11/18).

Assigning the TED Talk without context and no follow up further communicated to students the unimportance of Blackness and again, as Lebron discusses in the next section, got to the what but not the why. For Kiara, Lebron, and Nirvana, teaching literature was about more than reading and achieving state standards. They saw teaching as a place where they could challenge master narratives of Blackness and provide students with the space to also problematize and disrupt these narratives, utilizing their literacies and literacy practices to do so. Again, this teaching practice aligns with understanding literacy as a way to speak back to oppressions, specifically in a space dominated by Whiteness.

Beyond disrupting the miseducation around Blackness and Black history, Kiara also sought to disrupt the idea that Black literature is or must be relegated to the trope of struggle.

1 **Kiara**: "And I want you all to understand that they don't only write about
2 slavery and discrimination. And that's not the experience of all Black
3 characters. And I want them to understand that." (2/11/18).

Kiara realized that all of the literature books, except *One Crazy Summer*, focused on slavery and discrimination and were all set in the past. Hence, space in the curriculum matters, but time also matters because, as demonstrated with this unit, some futures and pasts are often not represented. Though Kiara used the phrase "all Black characters" in lines 2-3, she was connecting to and acknowledging a diversity of Black experiences in the U.S. and she wanted her students to do the same. This is not to say that these books

do not hold value or that there is no longer a need to tell stories about the enslaved and segregated experiences of Black people; however, Kiara offered a counter-story to idea that Black stories had to be about pain, struggle, and slavery as well as the monolithic image of who Black authors are and the stories they share. The one book that did not center Blackness and Black experiences through a lens of slavery and/or racial discrimination was *One Crazy Summer*, which tells the story of three sisters who enjoy their childhood experience at a Black Panther summer camp and discover a different image of Black Panthers than that which is portrayed in the media. Unfortunately, Kiara reported that "Mrs. Carter hates this book," and it was the only book that Mrs. Carter vocally stated as such. For Kiara, *One Crazy Summer* was a step in the direction of providing diverse perspectives and experiences of people stemming from the African diaspora and disrupting the trope of Black pain and struggle that was perhaps unintentionally created by the inclusion of the other six books.

Countering Theoretical Misalignments and Misfires

One afternoon, after realizing how important food was during our first meeting, my collaborators and I met at a local coffee and sandwich shop. We trickled in, placed orders, and started discussing how they were feeling about being teachers. Lebron was particularly vocal about his experience during this meeting. He and Nirvana were placed in the same high school, Greenway High School. Greenway was located in an enclave of the larger metropolitan city in which their university is located. Demographically, about

74% of students attending Greenway High School were non-white and about 57% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. At the beginning of this chapter, I recalled my first meeting with my collaborators during which Lebron described his mentor teachers as a "copy and paste" of what he saw within his cohort. This idea of copy and paste could mean that for Lebron he did not see the type of teaching and learning that he felt would help him grow into the educator he wanted and needed to be. To provide himself with a teaching approach different from his mentor teacher, Lebron grew to have a close relationship with one of the principals in the building, a Black man, and part of this connection was through the language he used with students. Lebron described the principal's way of talking as "preacher talk" and this greatly resonated with him. Emdin (2016) calls this "Pentecostal Pedagogy" which highlights how Black preachers keep their audiences engaged in their sermons through inclusion, participation, call and response, and improvisation. The goal is to get educators to appreciate the diverse literacy practices and forms of expression that students bring with them to school. Lebron saw an opportunity to use this mode of expression to connect to his students who were familiar with the literacy practices and modes of communication common in many Black churches. Lebron also used this pedagogical style to center close relationships with students built on trust, mentorship, and accountability. He saw this in contrast to his mentor teacher who would attempt to have culturally relevant lessons in her class, but did not understand how some of her teacher moves that were meant to build meaningful relationships and connect the cultures of her students to the curriculum were fostering

less connection, thus many students demonstrated a the lack of investment and ownership in her lessons and in her class. Lebron referred to a unit centered around This I Believe essays as an example. This I Believe INC. is a "not-for-profit organization that engages youth and adults from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing brief essays about the core values that guide their daily lives" (This I Believe, 2020). Thousands of essays are archived on the website and several selected essays have been shared in national broadcasts on the Nation Public Radio. Scores of teachers, including myself, have used This I Believe essays and curriculum as an educational tool since its inception. In the transcript below, Lebron recalled when his mentor teacher, Mrs. Weiss, introduced This I Believe essays to the class:

Lebron: She said, 'We gonna write these things. They're supposed to really connect. Really something deep. Something that brings out the feels in somebody. Make them woke.'

Nirvana: Did she say that?

Kiara: How do you just start there? Why is that your starting place?

Lebron: She read two or three of them that were woke and made her feel—

Kiara: — Oh my god.

Lebron: She gave them the website and told them to read them. She got the what, she don't got the why […] Now you got kids writing about animal cruelty—don't have an animal or haven't had any experience with

it. This should be a narrative. But it ain't taught. Kids like, 'I don't know I can't write about anything too deep because Mrs. Weiss said—OH! Mrs. Weiss, she said, I'm a mandated reporter. If you write about something and it's serious, I have to tell somebody. We gotta go up to the counselor. So, we gotta decide if we can write about this together. Immediately, I'm like what did you just say to them? That just cut off like 80% of ideas for everybody! […] If your life is in danger, like rape, murder, some kind of abuse I totally agree and we have to get them out of this situation. But if a kid is telling me about how he's in a gang? You know what I'm saying? How he runs with his boys and what not, that's a personal conversation I have to have with you after you write. Not while you tryna work through your process cause now you gonna start leaving stuff out and now you don't feel comfortable talking to me about it.

Nirvana: But see that's coming from someone that is equip with how to respond. That's not gonna come from a white woman who clocks out at 3 o'clock and who is gonna read them real quick to see who she needs to bring Mr. E in for. And students are going to say well what's her radar for we're going to have a conversation versus what's going to be reported. Also, that goes back to whatever goes on at home stays at home. You know. […] Tell student mandated reporter but give them an assignment that's a diary entry, I don't got anything to write either. I know what it

looks like for child services to come because the way we live is seen as inferior. But that also puts a guard up like I really don't want y'all to go there cause I don't wanna go there with you.

Kiara: AYE! I think that's what it more so is. She's like ya'll can go there but if y'all go too far, I ain't tryna do that much work. (11/4/17)

In lines 1-3, Lebron repeated the words his mentor teacher used to engage students in writing This I Believe essays. Lebron's repeated the words "connect," "deep," "feels," and "woke", which arguably can resonate with the goals of the project. He emphasized each of those words, not only to critique his mentor teacher's approach, which he believes failed at inspiring students, but also to acknowledge the importance of the work. Similar to Kiara's experience with her students mispronouncing and misunderstanding the words "ally" and "social justice," Lebron saw a disconnect between the words his mentor teacher used and what was actually being enacted in the classroom. This is further captured when he stressed that the essays "should be narrative," highlighting the personal storytelling nature of this particular essay and the importance of this particular literacy practice. He then followed up with, "But it ain't taught," which is particularly telling and stressed that models were not provided. Lebron was highlighting a disconnect in the classroom community. Narrative writing was not explicitly taught, but neither had the idea of a safe community for sharing personal stories. Mrs. Weiss asked students to spontaneously write about someone or something personal that was attached to their beliefs; however, she had not built the trust or the space for those sorts of stories to be

told, written, or shared. She had not earned the right to ask for those stories. Hence, students wrote about things like animal cruelty, even though it was not something they experienced personally. The students, then, knew to write about a "deep" topic, but strategically avoided writing about anything that deeply impacted them. They did not give her their stories.

Lebron also understood how many stories students could potentially write could qualify as "calls to children services" in the eyes of his mentor teacher, but were not in his eyes or the eyes of the students and their families. He understood the tension between asking students to use their literacies and reveal their lives in their writing, but then punish them for using certain languages and/or subject them and their families to scrutiny. This is not to say that Black children do not sometimes need agencies like children services to step in and protect them from loved ones, and Lebron acknowledged this. However, a study conducted by the Children's Bureau (2016) found that Black children make up about 13% of the population but represent more than 22% of children identified by CPS as victims, more than 24.3% of children in foster care, and more than 23% of children waiting to be adopted. The researchers cite possible explanations for these disproportionate representations as:

- Disproportionate and disparate needs of children and families of color, particularly due to higher rates of poverty
- Racial bias and discrimination exhibited by individuals (e.g., caseworkers, mandated and other reporters)

- Child welfare system factors (e.g., lack of resources for families of color, caseworker characteristics)
- Geographic context, such as the region, state, or neighborhood (p.5).

Nirvana echoed this research and Lebron's analysis of Mrs. Weiss's mandated reporter statement. In lines 25-28, she differentiated between teachers who are "equip" to respond, which she saw as someone who was invested in students past 3 o'clock and those who will not simply read the essays "to see who she needs to bring Mr. E (an intervention specialist) in for." Nirvana was pushing for a deeper investment and deeper understanding of the students at Greenway, one that saw them and their families as assets and valuable, and not one that sought out deficits and gaps first. Nirvana also echoed Lebron when she questioned what Mrs. Weiss's radar was for the need to report something. Again, here, she was drawing on a community understanding that Black bodies and Black lives are judged through a lens of anti-Black racism and this is emphasized when she said, "I know what it's like for CPS to come to my house because the way we live is seen as inferior." Here Nirvana pointed out how antiblackness is embedded in education and how the lack of cultural understandings and a persistence of master narratives of Black inferiority has led to harsher and racist assessments of Black families. Knowing when and when not to share certain stories is a way to avoid capture. She also aligned this to again talking the talk but not really wanting to do the work. In lines 34-35, she argued that Mrs. Weiss inserted the mandated reporter disclaimer not just as a warning so that students were not surprised in the chance she had to report

something, but to also keep her distance from the students because she "does not want to go there" and was not invested in that part of the work. Kiara agreed with Nirvana's assessment in lines 36-37 when she exclaimed "AYE!" and stated that the teacher "ain't tryna do that much work." Earlier in this chapter Kiara stressed a lack of commitment to doing work that centers antiblack racism and fosters deep connections with and within students. Kiara knew that it takes more than assigning a book about enslaved Black people or an essay about beliefs that only fall within the acceptable white gaze (Morrison, 2013). In this first section of the transcript, Lebron, Nirvana, and Kiara all stressed their understanding of how antiblackness is embedded in curriculum and normalized pedagogical approaches. When Lebron started sharing about the essay and shared the words his mentor teacher used, Nirvana responds with, "Did she say that?" and Kiara with, "Oh my god." Without voicing their communal understanding, my collaborators knew that what Mrs. Weiss was asking of the students required strong relationships built on trust, deep understanding and appreciation of cultures, space for collectivity and reciprocity, and a total commitment to doing and embodying anti-racist education.

As the conversation continued, Lebron connected this experience teaching the This I Believe essays to theoretical misalignments:

38 **Lebron**: I think that one thing with the education, like if I was to look
39 back at how I'm being set up to become a teacher, I'm not taught to look
40 at these kids as anything but kids. Like all of these, I feel like (pause) the
41 education that I'm getting around these students is all about how to

deal with them as a them and not as an us. You know what I'm saying? Not as a develop::ing us. But you get all, all you do is theory on theory on theory about age to *age, *this is what they do, *this is what they do, this is who they *are, this is who they are, this is how it *is, this is how it *is (hit the table while punctuated starred words). And then you go observe, go observe them and see that what we're telling you is true. Now write down. Isn't this what we said? Put it to the theory. What did you see? How did you see it? Oh! All kids are like this now. That's how we were kinda low-key taught.

Kiara: Lebron, I understand what you're saying, but I respectfully disagree. I feel like I've been given the tools I need to serve the kids as individuals through specifically equity and diversity and inclusion. Because we were taught to look at the person.

Lebron: Inclusion is not required and when you think about the overall program…We could be us and have our experiences, but like I can equitable and diverse just because I'm Black, right? Just because I've had to experience things in my life that make me want to be equitable and diverse. Right? But if I'm just a random student, and I'm going to this program and that's one thing I'm missing. Go into my field and can't connect.

Kiara: We need at least two levels of that.

63 **Nirvana**: We said that to them. Some of the stuff they teach, it's not

64 taught when we in the field. (11/4/17)

Here, Lebron discussed how he had experienced theory in teacher education and in his field placements. He said that the expectation was that student teachers understand the theory, go to field and find examples of the theories, write about it, and be affirmed for proving the theory (or professors) right. He showed how overwhelming and constricting this felt to him when he emphasized and punctuated words by hitting the table in lines 43-45. Most of the theories and research he was exposed to were those published by big name white men or research that draw on big name white men. Lebron felt like there was little representation of theorists who looked like him and/or talked specifically about people who looked like him in a way that centered the "developing us." And, when he was exposed to theories and/or research that did specifically addressed people who looked like him and the students he grew to love, those theories and/or research were add-ons, not central/essential theorists and/or research discussed several times and in detail. Initially, Kiara did not agree with Lebron and argued that she felt she was exposed to theories that stressed seeing students as individuals. She cited an equity and diversity course and an inclusion course as her evidence. However, evidence of the impact of curriculum gaps was made evident when Lebron countered that inclusion was not required and that just because he could draw from his life experiences as a Black man to try to be equitable and diverse, that wasn't enough. Both Kiara and Nirvana agreed with

him here by responding that “We need at least two levels of that” and “We said that to them” respectively.

Additionally, Nirvana’s last statement “It’s not taught when we in the field” echoed Lebron’s earlier statement that the This I Believe narratives were not “taught.” Here, my collaborators were referring to the theories they learned about in their equity and diversity course, which tends to be very theoretical. They frustratingly expressed that they needed more than just the one course and emphasized the need for not only more training on culturally responsive pedagogies but also explicitly taught and modeled examples of how to do this work, both at the university and in the field. During her individual interview with me later in the year, Kiara also drew attention to similar themes that demonstrated how she was (not) being prepared:

Kiara: However, there, of course, are some times where it’s just like cookie cutter. This is probably not appealing to me or appealing to the environment that I may want to teach in, the environment that I came from and I also felt like every time we talked about at-risk students, I’m just like, that’s my whole childhood. Things aren’t that bad. That also may be just me seeing it from my lens, like I grew up in the situation. So, of course I’m not going to think things are as bad as they were because someone did a good job of making them seem otherwise… I just think it [the curriculum] could benefit from more classes like equity and diversity or maybe just how schools are different […] We are told what we need to

be doing and what's the best was to teach students, and how we should be in our classroom, how classrooms should be like. And then a lot of us aren't in placements that resemble that or we aren't going to teachers who want to accept those practices. (2/11/18)

When Kiara described her program experiences as sometimes "cookie cutter," this is a drastically different perspective from her previous belief that both her equity and diversity and her inclusion course had prepared her well enough to do the kind of work she wanted to do. Her use of "cookie cutter" also echoed Lebron's use of "copy and paste" when he described his mentor teacher. Additionally, Kiara pointed out a major tension with how she saw herself and the "environment that [she] came from" when she described the environment as "not that bad," but then questioned if her lens was impacted because "someone did a good job of making them seem otherwise." Here Kiara wrestled with the master narrative attached to the label of "at-risk" which when described in the context of teacher education is reminiscent of so much of her community and her upbringing. In other words, what's deemed as "at-risk" when observed through a white gaze, was part of who Kiara was and where she was from. She theorized through herself, and her own experiences were the epistemological nexus here. This is an example of the damage-heavy deficit-based conceptualizations of Blackness and "urban education" can have, even in programs that strive to be progressive. In lines 10-14, Kiara not only highlighted the lack of models in the field, but also highlighted mentor teachers who refuse to accept and/or allow practices grounded anti-racism. The erasure and silence of

Blackness, the add-on and/or non-required status of courses on equity and inclusion, and the lack of models of what culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies can look like all contributed to my collaborators feeling unprepared and subjected to "cookie cutter" experiences.

Speaking Out and Making 'Em Sick

As mentioned above, Nirvana was placed at Greenway High with LeBron. Based on our conversations and her lesson planning, Nirvana appeared to feel the most prepared and confident in countering and/or resisting Eurocentric teaching and learning experiences that upheld whiteness and white supremacy. One afternoon, as Nirvana, Kiara, and I enjoyed lunch at a local restaurant, our conversation centered on the number of educators of Color in each of their field placements and how comfortable they each felt discussing certain topics while being the only one (Haddix, 2016) or one of the only ones in their field placements. Nirvana admitted gradually feeling comfortable and courageous in having complex conversations with her students. After white nationalist Dylan Roof murdered nine churchgoers at a historic African American church in Charleston, South Carolina, Nirvana publicly contradicted her mentor teacher and spoke out on police brutality:

1 **Nirvana**: But I'm vocal in my classroom about stuff like that.

2 **Me**: About what? Stuff like what?

3 **Nirvana**: Stuff like what's like about being a Black teacher like I <u>tell</u> my

students we read about them at OSU. I'm like, you all are in my textbooks, but like I need you to understand that you need to do this work and stuff like that and my teacher be in the room or like we went over the conversation about the most recent killing in Florida. My teacher tried to say (2 second pause) that she's not negating that he could have had a mental health issue. And that he's a little boy. So, I let her say what she had to say before I said we really don't know the facts but the reality, the fact is they didn't portray him as a terrorist and all this. They didn't bring up his parents.

Kiara: Correct.

Me: RIGHT!

Nirvana: I said like—

Me: —And he was taken in. But, you can have a CELL::PHONE in your back::yard in Sacra::mento—

Nirvana: {—I had to keep it together}

Me: {—shot at with 20 bullets.}

Nirvana: I was like they are going to say Greenway is dangerous and all these things… don't get it twisted they are going to make you out to be a criminal and dangerous and my teacher was there. She was sick about it. I know she was. I don't care. I'm like the only way to change is to make people uncomfortable. I don't care. You not gonna tell these kids—

Me: The narrative that the Black, the Black girl, the Black boy comes up before the actual person… the narrative that's provided for that's acceptable for the Florida guy, as oppose to the narrative that's acceptable for you know like Tamir Rice—

Nirvana: — I told her. I said I don't care what nobody say. Every community has their share of drug use, crime, and gun use whatever you want to call it but y'all need to know the news is going to portray some stories more than others so that people have this narrative of who Greenway is…so what the news may portray is like, there's like community amongst you all and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. (3/28/18)

In this transcript, Nirvana recalled her mentor teacher justifying/minimizing Dylan Roof's responsibility in murdering nine churchgoers by bringing up his mental health, evoking master narratives about whiteness and disability. As a white boy with a disability, Dylan Roof is afforded the position of child and sympathy for his illness; however, countless Black boys are not afforded that same position or sympathy. Her mentor teacher, perhaps unintentionally, highlighted racism as an individual pathology and did not see how through justifying and minimizing she was partaking in and reproducing systemic racism. This part of Nirvana's story provoked lots of overlapping responses from me and Kiara. Overlapping speech was not uncommon for us, but typically it was during humorous parts of our conversations. In this particular

conversation, our overlapping and interjections were due to emotional frustration and fatigue at the number of times Black bodies have been slaughtered during police interactions, the number of times white mass murderers/terrorists have killed scores of people often because of anti-Black hatred, and the number of times the media has displayed sympathy for the mass murderer while criminalizing and vilifying the Black victim of police brutality. Nirvana stated that in the moment of discussing Dylan Roof with her mentor teacher and students, she had to "keep it together," highlighting not only the emotional toll these murders have had on her, but the fatigue she felt at having to counter her mentor teacher and naming anti-Black racism vocally. Nirvana repeated the phrase "I don't care" in lines 22, 23, and 29 to emphasize that she did care. What she didn't care about was tiptoeing around complex topics or making her mentor teacher uncomfortable, thus putting herself on the line for the wellbeing of her students, whom she cared about very much. Her level of care was further demonstrated when she engaged in counter-storying by telling the students directly how and why they will be judged because of their skin colors and why it's important that they embrace their blackness and brownness and depend on one another. She emphasized this in her narrative by also repeating phrases of vocal action, such as "I'm vocal in my classroom" in line 1, "I tell my students" in lines 3-4, and "I said" in like 3. Nirvana also highlighted how she did this in direct challenge to her mentor teacher by repeating phrases that acknowledged her mentor teacher presence in the classroom. For example, in line 6, Nirvana says "my teacher be in the room" and in line 21, "…my teacher was there. She was sick about it."

In both of these examples, Nirvana wanted Kiara and I to know that she resisted whiteness and racism in the classroom with her mentor teacher in the room. This demonstrated the level of agency she had in that space but also demonstrated her modeling of how literacy through a BlackCrit lens can be drawn upon in the classroom to speak back to oppressions and she engaged in this type of narrative analysis with us and with her students.

Pedagogical Wins and Affirmations

In their critique of the insufficiency of equity and diversity courses, my collaborators discussed their desire for additional equity and diversity courses, one that is grounded in practice and would allow them to better understand the needs of their students and how they can respond to those needs utilizing their own life experiences and theories and practice grounded in justice, equity, inclusion. This was what they felt they needed and even asked for. Though they described the need as simply "at least another level" of the course, what they were truly asking for was what they needed to be the teachers they wanted and needed to be. Nirvana, Kiara, and Lebron were all hungry for models that centered their own and their students' ways of knowing and lived and passed down experiences. Lebron mentioned that he could connect to his students due to his background but still struggled with theory and pedagogical approaches. Demonstrated by their conversations above, teaching wasn't just about a career for them; it was life or death. It was about uplifting and contributing to their communities. What they craved

were examples of how to implement these practices and model teachers to learn from. However, they struggled to find space for this at the university and in the field. They did not see the urgency they felt for Black lives and education grounded in equity and diversity as a priority for their teacher education program or their field placements.

Additionally, Lebron expressed that he was not being prepared to see his students as "a developing us." This is a very different way of thinking about one's role as a teacher— one grounded in Ubuntu and Black feminist pedagogy (Tutu, 2012; Dillard, 2012). Nirvana echoed some of this when she says to her students, "there's like community amongst you all and don't let anyone tell you otherwise." She modeled care for community and vocally communicated that care as a method for combatting racism. Lebron and Nirvana saw their students' wellbeing tied up in their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of education as a whole.

During their interviews, I asked each of my collaborators what the found to be affirming during this year of student teaching. There were three common themes amongst their responses. One theme was the ability to connect with students through the use of Black English and centering literacies their students used. Going back to BJ's response, "Ms. Kiara got bars!", Kiara used found poems as way for her kids to create a response using textual evidence and found BJ's response affirming and validating for both him and her.

In another example, Nirvana shared a moment when a student, described as one of her mentor teachers "worst students to her" but a favorite to Nirvana, flew through an

individual reading of MacBeth and exclaimed, “Yo Ms. Nirvana! Everybody died? That’s craziness.” She described her relationship with the unnamed student as one where they were always “cracking jokes” and singing songs.

> **Nirvana**: Like when we did the body biography project, like sometimes I just cannot help but laugh at him (laughter) and I know it makes my teacher mad. I put him and all his friends together and their project, I have a picture of it, it was so:: nice. They made Macbeth the devil, it was so:: good. He was like, “Ms. Nirvana, we beasty!” (laughing) I’m trying to be all serious but cracking up. But they like pulled out all their artistic skills. Like they put money signs in places for power, like it’s not wrong. You’re definitely doing this correctly. But she just be like rolling her eyes and I’m like if you read, you can joke as much as you want in my class as long as you know what you’re talking about. (3/28/18)

Not only did Nirvana draw on Black cultural practices of using humor and songs as modes of expression and connection with one another and with texts, but she also discussed how centering these practices and making space for this student’s linguistic repertoire drew high engagement and academic participation from him. Like Kiara’s analysis of Darius and BJ in Chapter 4, Nirvana discussed this unnamed student in ways that celebrated his brilliance and complicated his designation as “the worst student.” Also, like Kiara, Nirvana drew on BlackCrit literacies and constructed ephemeral figurative garrets of co-conspiracy that centered her Black students and mapped them as

geographic. Both Kiara and Nirvana described their own use of Black English as affirming to them and their students

1 **Kiara**: You know I said something like “beat down or tore up” and they
2 kids were excited because they never heard it before like I get to talk in,
3 sometimes I talk in Ebonics and it makes them happy because they feel
4 connected.
5 **Me**: They’re seeing themselves in that space that they don’t even typically
6 feel that their culture is—
7 **Nirvana**: —You’re the dominant in the room. You’re the
8 authority and it’s like oh my gosh she looks like me.
9 **Me**: It’s validating. (3/28/18)

Despite being the only one and having very few Black students in her classes, Kiara talked about talking in “Ebonics” as a way to connect with them. Nirvana stressed this as an important pedagogical move in lines 7 and 8 by using the words “authority and dominant” to describe Kiara. She knew that having Ebonics used and acknowledged by the teachers re-centered which languages and bodies had power in the classroom.

Another common theme of affirmation amongst my collaborators was garret spaces in the field that centered Blackness and being in places where they weren’t the only ones. For example, when I asked Lebron what was affirming for him, his response was simple, “Being at Paulson” (3/30/18). Paulson was the high school from which Lebron graduated. While Greenway observed their spring break, Lebron observed several

teachers at Paulson, which had a later spring break. He described the experience at Paulson as one that showed teachers who "loved what they do," students who "wore hoodies and do rags and were just comfortable," and a school culture that was "just free" (3/30/18). It's telling that he mentioned clothing as something he found to be affirming, recognizing how deeply embedded anti-blackness is in every aspect of education. Kiara shared a similar affirming moment with Black kids who were discussing Kiara's hair beads with a white student who wanted the same beads in her hair. In their exchange, Kiara tried to gently explain that she didn't think the beads would be found at the hair shop the white student frequented. When the girl did not understand, the Black kids chimed in and responded, "because you white. You don't have the store we have in your neighborhood." (3/28/18). Kiara expressed feeling affirmed by moments like this one, not just because her hair was accepted and celebrated, but also because these were moments when the Black students in that space could be seen as knowledge producers and feel that their ways of knowing, being, and adorning themselves were just fine.

The third common theme of affirmation shared amongst my collaborators was being able to talk honestly about issues of equity and justice with their students in their field placements. Early in this chapter, I highlighted how Kiara communicated issues of social injustice and Blackness by reciting Black history facts and by wearing and drawing attention to clothing that showcased her culture. Through those pedagogical moves, she fostered a space where issues of equity and justice could be openly discussed and included in the classroom. When I asked Nirvana what she found affirming, she stated:

> **Nirvana**: "It's been really fun to be able to like, tell it you know like straight up. So, like we have a conversation and she's in the room you know and I'm like you're an African man. The world doesn't like you, you know, so that's really affirming to make like the elephant in the room visible in the room.

Though, she also had expressed how hard it had been for her to constantly resist and counter her mentor teacher on issues of anti-Black racism, she also found this to be affirming for her. She found affirmation in carving out space to explicitly discuss systemic racism with her students, but she also found affirmation in recasting the space as one that makes "the elephant in the room visible in the room" in contrast to how the space had been cast her mentor teacher. It's important to note that most of these affirming pedagogies were counter to Eurocentric ideas of teaching and learning and many were grounded in modes of resistance. In this sense, resistance and affirmation both fell under the same umbrella.

In this chapter, my collaborators used methods of resistance to counter and fight Eurocentric ideas of teaching and learning, but they also used them to make space for affirmation and joy for themselves and for their students. Nirvana and Kiara both shared examples of using Ebonics and Black cultural references as ways to not only connect with their students but to also validate the languages and literacies of their students. They also shared examples of drawing on their students' literacies and their own literacies as ways to disrupt normalized displays of knowledge and engagement. In Nirvana's

statements, she included examples of openly countering her mentor teacher in the spirit of experiencing moments of joy and pain with her students. Additionally, Lebron and Kiara both talked about dressing in ways that are deemed inappropriate and/or political by standards of professionalism grounded in whiteness and white supremacy, but those same modes of adornment were affirming for them and for their students. What my collaborators experienced were very real and persistent embodiments of antiblackness from several directions. Their simple presence in these spaces countered and disrupted the deficit narratives about Blackness and Black teachers. By drawing on their literacies, my collaborators demonstrated how teaching in these spaces with all of their Blackness centered their ways of knowing, their bodies, their pedagogies, and through this, they set examples for the Black and Brown students in their classrooms, examples they desired and requested for themselves.

Chapter 6. "Don't Worry, I'll Get Her There": Collective and Collaborative Praxes

"No one has my face."—Jiselle

When my daughter was 3 years old, she was moved from the early preschool classroom at her early childcare learning center to the official preschool classroom. Immediately, she began to complain, "I don't want to go to school." She started having accidents at nap time and cried when she was dropped off. We didn't understand what was happening. She'd always loved school. We asked her many times what was wrong, why didn't she want to go, was someone bothering her? A few weeks into her time in the new classroom, we were riding in the car on the way to her school, and I was trying to convince her that she would have a great day making new friends and she replied, "But no one has my face!" This broke my heart. Though there were children of Color in her classroom, they were all boys. The other Black girls who were in her early preschool classroom had not returned (they were on vacation or leave at the time). My daughter was yearning for the sisterhood she felt with Paris and the comfort she felt when she saw Ryla. She missed dancing, singing, and "Black girling" with them, and though Addy, a white girl, was there every day and my daughter loved playing with her, her face was still not reflected in this new space, and she felt lonely and afraid. My daughter's words were a reminder of how painful it was (even for her young 3-year-old self) that those literacies and those forms of care and comfort were missing from the space. But it was also a

reminder of how important it is for people from marginalized backgrounds to see and be in community with those who look like them, who talk like them, who have their face.

Though much of our garret conversations centered around validating our experiences as Black people in teacher education, teaching, and ways to navigate these spaces dominated by whiteness and anti-Black racism, many of our conversations also included perspectives on collectivism, community, and care. Through this group came an understanding and embodiment of collective care, conscious care, and the importance of one's face. Through their texts, in person conversations, and writings for class, the group established a system of collective care which shifted normative definitions around "need" and "representation." In doing so, they made space for mutual support outside of the institutions of which they were a part.

Reshaping Who Cares and Teaches

What started as me acting as an Othermother (James, 1993; Collins 2000) to my research collaborators led to collective care of one another academically and financially. Historically, othermothers have been defined as non-blood mother women who share in mothering responsibilities and have functioned as brokers for students who have not had the advocates necessary for success and survival, specifically in racially oppressive spaces (Troester, 1984; Dixson & Dingus, 2008; James, 1993; Collins, 2000; Henry, 2005). While Othermothering is a form of care that draws from Black feminist praxis, it has the potential to place one individual in the relationship or group as the

mother, thus the one offering the most care and guidance. Thinking back to chapter 4, I argued that Kiara had discovered her own finding when she realized that she was forming a figurative garret space with the Black students at her field placement. Kiara uses the word "latched" to describe how closely a young Black girl in her class has taken to her. Latched is a term used to describe how infants and children take to a mother's breast for nourishment. The concept of Othermothering, then, can feel more one directional and perhaps that is necessary in certain contexts. Collective and conscious care as a methodology and epistemology, however, allowed space for all members of our group to actively display and engage in acts of care, hold one another accountable, and hold one another up. It also allowed for each collaborator to have a say in how the group functioned and to contribute their own historical, cultural, and generational literacies when negotiating our collective community.

One afternoon, toward the end of our first semester together, I reached out to Nirvana and Kiara via text message to inquire about a meeting. This was an accountability and academic check-in meeting.

Me: Hey! I know Lebron is busy between classes, but can either of you stop by my office to chat? Mama bear is worried about y'all.

Kiara: Awwwww Jenell. When will you be in your office?

Me: I'll be here all day. Probably leave around 4:30.

Kiara: Okay… We are going to come after class.

Me: Perfect.

7 **Kiara**: Nirvana said she's going to avoid this meeting

8 **Me**: Nirvana, I will come to your house!

9 **Kiara**: *makes mental note and doesn't go home* Don't worry I'll get her

10 there.

The use of the phrase "Mama bear" in line 2 aligns with the concept of Othermothering. When Kiara responded, she used the inclusive "we", even though I had asked them individually. Through veiled in humor, Nirvana's concern about the content for the meeting showed through when Kiara replied, "Nirvana said she's going to avoid this meeting." My response, "Nirvana, I will come to your house!" was again Othermothering (care), but this time it was veiled in humor to make Nirvana feel less anxious about the meeting. Kiara's use of "I'll" in her response, "Don't worry I'll get her there," showed care for Nirvana. She took up the responsibility for Nirvana as she did at the beginning of the exchange. This collective care was what they did not see centered or experience with the rest of their cohort members. For this reciprocity to occur, it required all of the collaborators (myself included) to redefine, blur, and share the roles we inhabited upon entering the project. For example, Kiara and Nirvana often took it upon themselves to check on me as they knew that I, as the new Black program manager, was the target of their white peers rage and experiences anti-black racism from students, colleagues, and mentor teachers. So, though I may have entered into the group as the leader, Othermother, etc., I had to make space and share the pedagogical and Othermothering hats.

Freedom in Unfree Spaces: Reshaping the space

From being responsible for the success and emotional well-being of one another to the offering of basic food needs, collaborators took on a stance of solidarity.

Kiara: Well, as usual I'm poor, broke, and hungry. Um:: I ain't got no gas (laughter)

Nirvana: What are you going to do with your mom today?

Kiara: I don't know. She's supposed to give me some money. I really hope so because I don't get paid until next Friday. So, I'm just like what am I gonna do? Like I got 26 cents umm but we'll see.

Lebron: You know Ms. Angela?

Nirvana: Take this (cup of coffee) with you.

Kiara: No Nirvana.

Nirvana: Listen. Let me tell you one thing about me. This costs about $4 first of all, so you gonna take this (Nirvana pointing to cup of coffee)... But also, me and Lebron had a conversation and I just wanna say this right here. Like, even if it's just us three in this cohort you need to depend on us and vice versa. There's no reason you have to be flat broke, especially when I talk to you directly.

Lebron: Right

Me: That's why I'm like ya'll can come eat at my house. I know I'm

vegan, but y'all will be ok.

Lebron: —Don't hold on to your struggles if you don't have to. That's the point. You can let go of your struggle

Nirvana: —And she lives across the street from me. This the thing though. Listen, you gonna create your own hardships because you can graduate with the reality of me Lebron, and Nirvana made it. We was rockin' hard with each other and then in our professional career when you have hard days you still callin' us. Like, this is where this networking and relationship starts. When you are the only Black person at your placement and you like I need a three-way convo real quick. When we had our first meeting with Jenell I was really happy because I didn't realize especially how like Lebron is the only male in this space and some of the concerns he had I hadn't thought about.

Kiara: —Yeah. Exactly

Nirvana: But, it made me feel extremely relieved to think (inaudible) from his point of view. So, Imma tell you like I told you there and Imma yall now—

Me: —I can second that she said something like this before.

Nirvana: <u>YES</u>! She don't listen. She stubborn. You gotta force Kiara, like <u>COME EAT THIS FOOD</u>! (all laughing)

Lebron: It's the strong Black woman syndrome.

Nirvana: But it's also gonna be the death of you.

Lebron: — Pride before the fall.

Nirvana: Right. And we ain't gotta have that in this space. Like at [the university] and with our cohort, you gotta come with your representative face on. But not here… so don't make spaces that should be easy hard...

Kiara: Y'all are gonna make me cry.

Nirvana: You should cry because for too long you been doing it all by yourself but community as the collective versus the individual.

Kiara: I just don't like feeling super needy.

Me: You're not needy.

Nirvana: Right.

Lebron: We all:: needy honestly. If we all have less than what we need being Black. Y'all women. Y'all have even less. Y'all get paid less.

Nirvana: No one should be sitting at this table and this is all you got today. It used to be this person needs a house, so we gonna pour into this person so they can get this house. That we don't see. (1/10/18)

In lines 1-2, Kiara initiated a conversation that centered her frustration with her continuing dire financial status. She used humor and laughter to possibly lighten the mood or as the seasoned folks in my community used to say, "Laugh to keep from crying." Her laughter was not picked up by the group; however, her financial stress was.

Nirvana was the first one to respond by asking about Kiara's mom. We were aware her mom was in town and that they would be meeting after our meeting. We were also aware that though her mother did not have much, she tried to help her daughter as much as she could. Kiara then revealed how grim her situation was when she stated that she was not scheduled to be paid until the following week and had twenty-six cents in the bank. Lebron then drew on an intertextual resource, Ms. Angela, an Indigenous woman in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion known for showing up for people of Color as an extended community member and who understood the particular needs of students of Color and, thus, figured out ways to retain and support students of Color. Nirvana offered a coffee to Kiara, which she refused. This act of charity toward her as an individual was hard to accept. Nirvana, then, began defining the community and renarrativized the support. She said, "even if it's just us three in the cohort, you need to depend on us and vice versa" signaling not only an expectation of reciprocity and care for one another, but also as a necessity to collectively survive within racist systems within the university and at large. She followed that sentence with, "There's no reason for you to be flat broke, especially when I talk to you directly." The dependent clause here pushes this idea of collective and conscious care even further, suggesting that even if Kiara and Nirvana did not have the close relationship they had, the network of support was vaster and connected back to Lebron's earlier question, "Do you know Ms. Angela?" Both Nirvana and Lebron were referring to perhaps a sort of physical and figurative undercommons at the

university. In *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (2013), Harney and Moten write:

> Her labor is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The university needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of all that, she disappears. She disappears into the underground, the downlow low-down maroon community of the university, into the undercommons of enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted, where the revolution is still black, still strong (p. 26).

In other words, there is an understanding that part of the revolution is self AND community care, especially in spaces where Blackness is unwelcome, but required in small numbers by representation quotas. Thus, our small garret was nested in a larger undercommons of enlightenment. Lebron and I cosigned Nirvana's idea of this community space as one of sharing resources when I offered for them to come eat at my house and Lebron replied, "Right," and told Kiara not to hold on to her struggles alone. Nirvana then stated that Kiara "live[s] down the street from [her]" indicating that their close geographical proximity made it nonsensical for them not to band together.

When Nirvana responded again in lines 21-30, a lot of important community affirming and forming moves were made. First, she advocated for making the community they envision a reality, one in which, they were "rockin' hard with each other" and continued to do so as they entered onto their separate career paths. She mentioned them having a "three-way convo," which was not about each collaborator talking to me, but the

three of them centering collectivity and talking with one another. She understood that the racism they were facing in teacher education would not end once they moved into their careers and that this care could extend beyond their teacher education program. Next, she highlighted their collective struggle as Black students at a PWI and Black teachers in the very white space of teaching, but she also recognized the individual journeys and how their intersectional identities changed how they each were impacted by and navigated this period of time in their lives. She recalled our very first meeting when she had the opportunity to listen to Lebron's story and was made aware of his isolating experience as a Black man in the cohort and in his field placement. Kiara echoed Nirvana's feelings when she responded, "Yeah. Exactly." Lebron's perspective and pain were eye opening, and I can only imagine the loneliness Lebron felt at times; he was the only man of Color across all English education cohorts, staff, and faculty within the department. He took many steps to care for Nirvana and Kiara, and though he was part of a network of other Black and Brown men in another university capacity, he did not have a single man in the department who looked like him.

When Nirvana continued by jokingly calling Kiara stubborn and in need of being forced to receive help, both she and Lebron took turns drawing on various literacies and intertextual resources to construct the type of community they knew Kiara needed and also the one they saw in front of them. I did not interrupt their dialogue as they co-constructed their definition of community. The first intertextual resource Lebron drew on was at line 38 when he responded to Nirvana's joking and interjected, "It's the strong

Black woman syndrome." Here, he drew on Joan Morgan's (1999) critique of the SBW (Strong Black Woman) stereotype. As Black women, it is ingrained in us to not care for ourselves and to not ask for help. And often, when help is offered, we turn it down and suffer/fix it ourselves. Morgan points out in her discussion of the SBW that this stereotype hides the suffering of Black women: "No matter how bad shit gets, handle it alone, quietly, and with dignity" (p. 90), which mirrors the disappearing Harney and Moten describe. Lebron countered the historical idea that Black women have to be super-sheros, carry everyone's weight, never show weakness, do it all alone, never buckle under the weight, and are not entitled or deserving of self-care, let alone care from others. In line 39, Nirvana emphasized the seriousness of the damage caused by the SBW stereotype by citing death as a result of holding on to the SBW stereotype. There's a lot of praise Black women get for being "strong" and the badge is typically worn with honor, but what is not addressed is the emotional, spiritual, financial, and even physical death that comes with the immense (and often underappreciated and unreciprocated) labor exercised by the SBW all the time. Lebron was not a Black woman, but strived to understand and unpack the experiences of the Black women in the garret just as Nirvana and Kiara did for him by acknowledging the loneliness and particularities of his experience being the only Black man or man of Color in the cohort/program. He drew on another intertextual resource when he interjected again with "Pride before the fall" and cosigned Nirvana's correlation between the SBW stereotype and death. In lines 41-44, Nirvana followed up with, "And we ain't gotta have that in this space." The "we"

Nirvana used here can have a double meaning. First, it can refer to Black women and continue to push back on the SBW stereotype that Morgan discusses, redefining vulnerability as being afforded to Black women, resisting an institutional constraint, and supporting one another despite this constraint. Second, it can refer to the members of the garret space that we created and reshape how we were as a collective and a community as opposed to individually. Her further emphasis on "in this space" signaled Nirvana's understanding that the rules were different in the garret. The possibilities were different here. She engaged in spatial analysis, demonstrating how space is inherently connected to literate practices and survival. She showed her understanding that at the university and in the cohort, things are hard and she drew on another resource when she says, "you gotta come with your representative face on." American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar, wrote a poem titled, "We Wear the Mask" in 1896, the same year the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the legality of racial segregation via the Plessey vs. Ferguson case, as an affirmation of Black experiences in the U.S. but also as call a to resist and save parts of oneself from the white gaze. The second stanza of his poem reads:

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

The "representative face" Nirvana talked about is the mask that she felt they must wear to survive, navigate, and resist, but "in this space," she felt they could show their emotions,

they could show up as their selves and they could show how hurt they were. She saw "this space" as one that didn't have to be "hard" and encouraged Kiara not to "make spaces that should be easy hard." Kiara was so used to spaces being hard and having to struggle on so many fronts, but in lines 38-44, Nirvana and Lebron so beautifully and compassionately reminded her of historical understandings of being in community with one another. They drew on historical and racial literacies about reading the world and reading oneself. Thet drew on discourses— strong Black woman and representative face, which counter collective and collaborative ways of being in the world and silence possibilities, connections, and community building. They replaced those with realistic experiences and ways of seeing and being in the world that did not beat Kiara down or leave her alone in the fight. They uplifted the power in the "us" as opposed to the "me."

Kiara began to see and believe the possibilities in this community when she stated, "Y'all gonna make me cry" and Nirvana encouraged her to cry, seeing this as one step in countering the SBW image that Kiara has had to embody for most of her life. When Nirvana continued, she says, "… for too long you been doing it all by yourself but community as the collective versus the individual." Kiara then explained how hard it was to change because she didn't want to be "needy." Nirvana shut down that perspective by stating, "You're not" and Lebron reshaped the perspective by drawing on understandings of how systemic racism and sexism have positioned us as "all: needy." This reframes and rereads "needy" by reaching toward collective, collaborative, and anti-systemic understandings. Here Lebron acknowledged two things. First, he acknowledged that as

Black people, their financial situations were not by happenstance, but symptoms of anti-Black racism. It is important to note that at this time, all of my Black collaborators were not on track to graduate due to 1) dire financial concerns (Lebron and Kiara) and 2) difficulties passing math classes (all three). In a study on food insecurity, Wood and Harris (2018) found that "multiethnic and Black students are more likely to experience food insecurity" (p. 144) and that housing insecurity, legal concerns, and health issues are the most prevalent predictors of food insecurity. This is not the first time this type of study has been conducted nor is it the first time the results have indicated such; however, my collaborators, specifically my Black collaborators, continued to experience financial hardships related to being college students in silos. As Black people, the level of poverty and educational harm experienced by Nirvana, Lebron, and Kiara was in stark comparison to other collaborators in the larger study and students in their cohort. The second thing Lebron acknowledged was that Kiara and Nirvana were outsiders within (Collins, 2000). When he said, "Y'all women. Y'all have even less. Y'all get paid less" he acknowledged how race and gender intersect to compound the "neediness" that Kiara experienced. Though teacher education caters to women, as Black women they were still outside. And as Collins (2000) notes, the Black woman's position as an outsider-within places her within "a unique matrix of domination characterized by intersecting oppressions," social, political, intellectual, and economic (p. 23). Despite the "neediness" of all of the collaborators, both Nirvana and Lebron offered substance to sustain all members of the community. They drew on historical and racial understandings of spatial

literacies and helped us all read our positions (Freire, 1970;1993; 2005) and cartographies (Butler, 2018) in the world. The sort of care that was needed required that we embody Black literacies of care and center how we understood space and place in our teacher education program and beyond.

At the end of this transcript, Nirvana stated that no one at the table should only have that meal for the day and drew on another historical understanding of community when she stated, “It used to be this person needs a house, so we gonna pour into this person so that they can get this house. That we don’t see.” Her use of “it used to be” can be seen as freedom dreaming. Not only did she draw on historical understandings of what it means to be in community with others, but she drew on history to dream about ways to experience freedom within currently unfree spaces. She also saw community as a verb rather than a noun, as she defined community as something active and something that those in it must continue to work at. In these constructions of what community is, we see that literacy is inseparable from care. Here, community was collective, freeing, not bound by the same rules, and acknowledged the greater societal constraints on Black women and men. The garret space relied on us being a conscious collective, acknowledging different positionalities, and standing in solidarity. Through our conversations, community was always being negotiated, multiple literacies were always welcomed, and critically conscious awareness of Blackness was always at the forefront.

Choosing and Reshaping the Margins

What does it mean to reimagine the margin as a desired and sacred place? Throughout history and around the globe, there have been many marooned, sovereign, and other geographies of resistance for people who historically (and I use that term to nod to past and present as history happens today) have been subjected to various forms of erasure, silencing, and violence. Choosing the margins for our garret was more than just about meeting in our garret to talk, and the creation of the garret space is more than a methodological choice. Choosing the margin was also about choosing a different way of being in this capitalistic society, holding values that do not align with individualism and center the wellbeing of us instead of me. Thus, the garret was a supplemental education space that was collective and individual regarding the development of their teacher identities. In other words, we were all working to get "there," understanding that "there" was something different for everyone in the garret. The goal of our garret and this research was not to collapse my collaborators individual experiences (Haddix, 2015; Gist 2017), but to acknowledge their individual growth, to learn from one another through conversation, and to support one another while in the program and beyond it. For example, Lebron attended Freedom Schools Site Coordinator Training. This training took place during student teaching. He took the academic risk and time, and sought out a marginalized community educational program to supplement what he had learned during student teaching. This move was not just about money and a summer job, but also about what he believed in and the type of educational experiences he was looking for. It was

choosing a space that would help him get to his "there." Also, in centering the wellbeing of us instead of just me, came acknowledgement that it is everyone's responsibility to get each person there. There was not only accountability for the "self" but for one another out of reciprocal care. And, this care was not based on a "you owe me" ideology, but based on a "your wellbeing is tied up in my wellbeing" ideology, or in other words a spirit of Ubuntu (Tutu, 2012; Dillard, 2012). Nirvana and Lebron understood this deeply, but the idea seemed a bit newer for Kiara and she had hard time believing/trusting that this sort of care was real.

The garret was also a place of reimagining and freedom dreaming. When writing their end of the year teaching statements, each collaborator (unbeknownst to the other collaborators) used the word "representative" to reshape and redefine "representative face" as positive identities for themselves and for their students.

Table 6. (Re)defining "Representative"

Kiara	**Lebron**	**Nirvana**
"You cannot be what you cannot see." The words offered by activist and children's rights advocate, Marian Wright Edelman, has shaped the way I think of teaching, learning and how I continue to see myself as an educator. For so long, teaching was a pipe dream because it seemed unattainable until I met my first Black teacher. So, my first role as a teacher will be as a **representative**. The world is changing and if we are to serve the changing demographic, the way in which we are serving them must also change. Our	I chose to pursue a career in teaching because I believe quality education is the most important gift I can give to my community. I know that for many of my students, I may be the first African American male teacher they are exposed to. I plan on bringing my culture and experiences to my classroom, and allowing students to express their own cultures as well. It wasn't until I reached college that I was exposed to African American literature and history in a school setting. Since I plan on working in inner city schools, I believe it's important to expose	I read a quote once that said, "Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen." As a former student and now an educator based on experience I can confirm that one of the invisible obstacles between educators and students, teaching and learning is a lack of being seen and a space demanding courage. Courage is the ability to be authentic, and being willing to risk being vulnerable and disappointed. What kind of paradigm shift would take place in the classroom if students saw more than just the **representative** of their teacher?

educators must be **representative** of our student body. Equally important; however, is the need to diversify student learning by providing them with multiple **representations** of educators. It was not until age twelve that I saw myself as a teacher. **Underrepresentation** was – and still is – an issue that prevents the nation's youth from pursuing the careers they dream of. Aside from the passion I have for teaching and learning and developing youth, I am driven by the need to increase the **representation** of teachers of color. Learning should be purposeful, impactful and developed over time. I intend to do all of that while being a **representative** of what is possible.	minority youth to scholars and authors that **represent** their communities. School is a place for students to learn about themselves and the world, so I plan to provide students will multiple cultural perspectives. Research suggests that teachers should celebrate students home languages and diversity of speech. I regularly use ebonics on a daily basis, and although I have been taught how to code switch for certain situations, I believe in taking pride in community diversity. I plan to act as a model for my students on how to embrace their cultures while appreciating the need to conform to certain literacy norms needed to communicate with the rest of society. I believe teachers have the responsibility to connect with students and meet them where they are. Growing up in an inner city school allowed me to see multiple approaches to teaching. There were teachers that came to collect a paycheck, instructing students they had very little relationship with. There were also teachers who came to school early and stayed late, who knew all of their students names, and who took the time to plan lessons with their students needs in mind. I want to be the type of teacher who goes above and beyond for his students, because I believe I have a responsibility as an African American Male to be a **representative** and set a new standard for excellence in our community. I hope to inspire my students to want to be teachers, so that the cycle of giving back can continue.	What kind of work would students produce if they were expected to be their most courageous, most authentic and most vulnerable selves with the assurance of it being a shame-free classroom community? I found while in the classroom that most of my students who were performing poorly, were hiding. Attached to bringing to my attention any difficulties that may have prevented them from presenting their best selves in class and in their work was fear and shame. Fear of judgments, lack of empathy and a ton of self-shaming and feeling the need to convince myself or their peers of their worth. As an African American teacher of English Language Arts, I am charged with the task of empowering students of all backgrounds to explore different genres and develop the strength of critical thinking and asking critical questions. One of the most important questions for the demographic (urban) of students I plan to teach will be, "Am I accurately depicted in this book?" Why, or why not? When was the book written? Who is the author? What was the climate of life during the time the text was written? What was socially acceptable and unacceptable? Lastly, what as a reader and a writer can I do to change this?

Here representation is about symbolic meanings and what means what to who in what context and how we can shift those representations/meanings. From lacking teachers of Color to lacking culturally inclusive and affirming texts and resources in the curriculum, they all acknowledged how Blackness is and is not represented in schools. Kiara and Lebron acknowledged that they may be the only ones in their respective spaces and/or the first Black or African American teachers their students will have, but all three of my collaborators claimed their racial identities as Black or African American, signaling they understood how their Blackness would impact their roles as teaches.

In her statement, Kiara stated that she wanted to be a representative because teaching became a reality for her once she met her first Black teacher—a representative. This use of representative was about being able to see and be something that was invisible before. Kiara was talking about disrupting the idea that teaching is a white woman's profession and a place for only certain pedagogies, many grounded in Eurocentrism. Kiara made a strong reshaping clarification when she emphasized that "educators must be representative of our student body" but also that there is a "need to diversify student learning by providing them with multiple representations of educators" (3/28/18). Here, Kiara highlighted that adding more teachers of Color is not just about more bodies, hence fulfilling quotas, but also about effecting change systemically, exploring and showing what is possible, and making space for different possibilities in education by diversifying the what and how, not just the whom.

In his statement, Lebron reshaped what is important in schools, moving marginalized knowledges, bodies, and texts to the center. He pushed against practices that only bridge literacies when he stated, "I believe it's important to expose minority youth to scholars and authors that represent their communities. School is a place for students to learn about themselves and the work…" (3/28/18). In addition, he stated that he used Ebonics and that he did so purposefully because he has pride in his language and planned to "act as a model for [his] students on how to embrace their cultures..." He reshaped this marginalized language and the type of work that can be done in marginalized spaces. When asked about this during his individual interview, Lebron stated,

> "I want to connect people… bring people back into school, like I want to bring people as mentors…parents and brother and sisters, uncles and aunts…I want my school to represent the community… and we go out into our community…sign people up for voting… This is what school is." (3/30/18).

Here he used the word "represent" again, but it was not about standing in for someone/something, but instead about activism and including those on the margins of K-12 spaces (community members, parents, etc.) truly in the fabric of the classroom and school. Lebron saw that a segregated, marginalized school, like Paulson, then, can be reshaped to act as grounds for revolutionary acts, community transformation, and reciprocal care.

In her statement, Nirvana started off by acknowledging that invisibility plays a large role in constructing and maintaining "obstacles between educators and students, teaching and learning…" (4/30/18). She then questioned, "What kind of paradigm shift would take place in the classroom if students saw more than just the representative of their teacher?" Here, she explicitly drew on her definition of "representative face" mentioned during a previous conversation with Lebron, Kiara, and I. Because she had seen how masking had impacted students in her field placement, she questioned the transformative realities (paradigm shifts) made possible by her showing up in her classroom without her mask and encouraging her students to do the same, thus evoking a spirit of Ubuntu (Tutu, 2012; Dillard, 2012).

Choosing and reshaping the margin is about, as Meacham (2000) described, "a supportive educational ethos that extended the ethos of [their] home and community" (pp. 590-591). Though they saw "representative face" as a mask necessary to wear for navigating, resisting, and surviving the anti-Black racism around their cohort and at the university, my collaborators also saw possibilities and agency in their future teacher selves and reshaped "representative" as showing what's possible, authentic, real, and disruptive to anti-Black racism in education. All three collaborators were pushing at what school means and what they can mean within it. In this, they can be models for Black children and for one another and dream of cultivating spaces where they can remove their masks, experience joy, and be affirmed. Thus, by choosing the margin, our garret, my collaborators and I used language in our group to provoke imaginations, freedom dream

and drew on intertextual references to support our understandings/negotiations of the interconnectedness of community, teaching, and Blackness.

Chapter 7. Discussion and Implications

> Indeed our survival and liberation depend upon our recognition of the truth when it is spoken and lived by the people. If we cannot recognize the truth, then it cannot liberate us from untruth. To know the truth is to appropriate it, for it is not mainly reflection and theory. Truth is divine action entering our lives and creating the human action of liberation.
>
> — James Cone

A few years back, I admitted to a white colleague that white men in pickup trucks scare me. She laughed a little, thinking I was joking. In all fairness, my comment did come out of left field as we were causally talking about fears, childhood memories and such. I restated my fear and explained that, in particular, white men wearing ball caps in pickup trucks with American flags driving behind or beside me scare me and send my heartrate scampering. Police cruisers have the same effect. There is a collective and social reality evoked in these literal images for me. There is a truth grounded in the generational and historical realities that Black people have endured and passed along as warnings cemented in those images for me. And I am not unique in this. There is a very real legacy of antiblackness and undeserving but justified violence in the U.S. that does not pertain to all people of Color. Our languages are not seen as the desirable ones that

people sign up to study. Our cultures are desirable for marketing and capital gains, but not to be fully lived. Our dark skins are lightened, whitewashed, or often completely missing from mainstream media. Whether it be the immediate invocation of fear brought on by the pickup truck, a confederate flag or the undesirability of Black languages, what is undeniable, and a site of primary focus in this particular academic endeavor, is the overdue facing of a unique "disgust and cultural disregard for Blackness" that persists in the U.S. (Dumas, 2016, p.12).

When reviewing literatures for my dissertation, I noticed the need to not collapse all people of Color in teacher education into one category. I understand the move toward terms like, "people of Color," because and in some instances, there may be very few students of Color in a program and they often come from different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, the power in joining and sharing similar experiences becomes a place of strength and support. However, I think it's dangerous to push for the "of Color" descriptor when it collapses all people of Color into one category. The experiences are different. Just like we need work in teacher education that specifically centers experiences of preservice teachers of Color collectively, we also need work in teacher education that centers the complexities and specificities of certain struggles. Hence, I chose to specifically focus on Black preservice teachers and BlackCrit in this dissertation because we are not in a post-racial state. This can be seen by the number of Black men AND Black women who have been killed by the police, the most recent literal (not figurative) lynching of Ahmaud Arbery, during which he was hunted down by white

men and killed for jogging while Black in the "wrong place"— his own neighborhood. Or we can revisit the killing of Trayvon Martin, who was murdered while walking home from a convenience store with Skittles and an Arizona tea. In both instances, and in many more, the justifications for their deaths quickly came raining in. It is ok to kill Black bodies and the fight for justice and the realization that Black people are entitled to justice is so hard and elusive. My responses are embodied literacy practices. And though physical racial violence is not common at the university, spirit murdering (Love, 2019) and erasure are. As researchers and teacher educators, we have the studies, we have the video, and we know, but we have continued to do things the way we've always done them. So, just as the state has sanctioned anti-Black violence by continuously excusing and justifying the murdering of Black bodies, universities have sanctioned anti-Black violence by doing the same.

The purpose of this study was to explore how three Black preservice teachers enrolled in an English Education teacher education program understood and navigated the various spaces of racial violence within teacher education (university classrooms and field placement schools and classrooms). Specifically, I looked at when, where and how they drew on their literacies (racial, gendered, historical, generational, community) to (re)affirm, resist, and (re)shape shared and projected perceptions (often grounded in racial violence) of who they are, what they know, and what they need as developing English teachers and human beings. I also looked at how developing collective and collaborative approaches within garret spaces helped to hold space for life, for joy, and

for their literacies and praxes to thrive. I found that: (1) Various material and figurative garrets fostered a space that centered bidirectional theorizing, collectivism, and collaborative knowledge building; (2) my collaborators resisted and challenged Eurocentric ideas of teaching and learning by drawing on a variety of literacy practices in order to see themselves, so that their Black and Brown students to see themselves; and (3) a garret space can provide the opportunity for different constructions and embodiments of collective and conscious care practices to flourish. In this chapter, I first provide a brief overview of these findings. Then, I discuss some of the theoretical, methodological, and praxis implications for teacher education based on this study. Finally, I end with areas for opportunity and my concluding thoughts.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding was that garrets were multiple, sometimes material and/or figurative, both at the university and in the field. At the university, our garret fostered a space of bidirectional theorizing, collectivism, and collaborative knowledge building, rendering each member as valuable, human, and knowledgeable, which was counter to the oppressiveness of many of the other teacher education spaces. Because of the extensive racial gaslighting, policing, and surveillance my collaborators experienced, our garret space conversations served as a place where collaborators were able to explicitly share stories of antiblackness and be affirmed. Similarly, in the field, garret spaces, like the one Kiara unintentionally created, can serve to affirm and validate all of the brilliance

Black and Brown students bring to schools. Though these garret spaces in the field could be seen as material garret spaces since actual bodies made up the space (i.e. eating lunch with Kiara), but sometimes the garret spaces like the ones that Kiara and her students created were also figurative spaces—spaces that only they could sense and spaces that, in the blink of an eye, could validate and encourage Black and Brown students to draw on their literacies and be fully seen.

My second finding is that, despite silencing and erasure efforts in the field, my collaborators resisted and challenged Eurocentric ideas of teaching and learning by drawing on a variety of literacies and literacy practices. To address the *how* of my research question, they drew on their literacies by seeking out supplemental intertextual resources, such as Freedom Schools curriculum and educators who centered the pedagogical approaches they wished to model. They also drew on their literacies and literacy practices by individually and collectively pushing and pulling our conceptualizations of community, collectivism, and teaching. For instance, each collaborator embodied resistance in different ways and at different times. Kiara utilized her clothing as a mode of resistance, Nirvana utilized oral protest, and Lebron utilized community and marginalized pedagogical approaches and resources. These resistances and disruptions not only helped them to do the type of teaching work they wanted and needed to do, but also disrupted the very persistent attempts to silence and erase Blackness. To address the *when* of my research question, they drew on them all the time, but they made very specific choices about when (i.e. when to wear the mask) and when to

show up as their full selves (i.e. in instantaneous garrets with Black and Brown students). In particular, they did so when they needed to counter the teaching practices that erased or silenced Blackness and the impacts of antiblackness or when they needed to affirm and amplify the languages and literacy practices of the Black students in their classrooms. They also did so when they needed to see themselves and when they needed to be the English teachers they needed and wanted to be.

My final finding is that a garret space can provide the opportunity for different constructions and embodiments of collective and conscious care practices to flourish. In this conceptualization of a garret space, the margin can be chosen and reshaped, or "create space for Black liberatory fantasy" (Dumas and ross, 2016, pp. 431). For our garret, reciprocal care and different embodiments of care, and various explorations of freedom became sites of conversation and exploration. In teacher education, that space can serve as an extension of home and community for Black preservice teachers to find rest, vulnerability, affirmation, and joy.

Peering Through Different Lenses: Theoretical Implications

Utilizing a framework that draws on BlackCrit, Black feminist thought on space, and social constructions of literacy, this study develops three conceptualizations of literacy. The first conceptualization is that there is no such thing as neutral literacy or neutral education as "antiblackness is endemic to, and is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life," (Dumas

and ross, 2016, p. 429) Literacy is not exempt. Thus, for Black people, literacy understood through a BlackCrit lens can allow us to acknowledge the legacies of racial violence and to make space for engaging in literacy in order to speak back to this violence.

The second conceptualization of literacy is that the literacy and language practices of Black people are powerful, valid, and important and deserving of spaces that acknowledge this. These literacies include storytelling, poetry, oral storytelling, and languages (Richardson, 2003; Smitherman, 2006; Fisher, 2006). A BlackCrit lens allows us "to imagine the futurity of Black people against the devaluation of Black life and skepticism about (the worth of) letting Black people go on" (Dumas and ross, p. 430). Instead of reproducing Black suffering and creating spaces that reproduce suffering, educational institutions should acknowledge the validity, value, and joy of these literacies and literacy practices. An ideology of devaluation of Black bodies and the literacies and literacy practices of those bodies attempts to deem them unimportant, invalid, and powerless but Nirvana, Lebron, and Kiara demonstrated powerful engagement with various types of texts, such as clothing, books, marginalized curriculum, social texts, and historical/generational modes of community building. Additionally, their powerful, valuable literacies were not supplemental/optional, but centered and necessary for their development into the teachers they needed and wanted to be. They were responsive to their selves and their world views and sought out (or created) opportunities that allowed

them to demonstrate this understanding of their literacy practices and to better draw on these to engage with their students.

The final conceptualization is that literacy is collaborative across generations and time periods. Legacy is important and anti-blackness that devalues Black ways of knowing and being in the world can position the literacies and literacy practices of Black people as inferior or erase these legacies entirely. I drew on Fisher's (2006; 2008) and Muhammad's (2015; 2018) conceptualizations of literacy, which both emphasized the importance of communities, history, and cultural heritage to Black literate identities. Applying a BlackCrit lens here can allow us to collectively and collaboratively push against efforts to disappear racial dominance from the history of literacy and push for continued collaborative discourse to use literacy practices to push for justice for Black people.

By thinking about literacy through a lens of BlackCrit and Black feminist thought on space, I see the problem is the conceptualization of literacy. This a space and time problem where the bodies, geographies, and literacies of marginalized folks are not counted and not desired. Marked or unmarked, the ways that literacy continues to be conceptualized keeps whiteness as the center. For example, home literacies are called home literacies for Black and Brown folks because they are not privileged, featured, recognized, or accepted in school spaces. Schools have not flexed to allow for their "home" literacies to show up and show out in schools. In fact, with the passage of policies and greater standardization of education and teacher education, the window for

the inclusion of more literacy practices and languages seems to be shrinking. Despite the pleas for and commitments to change, exclusive conceptualizations of literacy will continue without more commitment to retooling language and disentangling the colonial and Eurocentric roots of literacy that have led to hierarchies and painful marginalization for so many students.

Embodying Methods Beyond Research: Methodological Implications

In this study, I pushed for space in the methodology canon. When it comes to research, there are certain methods that are privileged and favored hierarchically over others. Those drawing from philosophies and practices of people of Color tend to reside at the bottom, while those with ties to Western ideas reside at top. Not only do I push for space in the canon, but for conversation between methodologies. Hortense Spillers (2003) talks about retooling the language/s that we inherit that are often cliché and uncritical. I think extending this metaphor of retooling to cliché and uncritical research is necessary and many education researchers are and have been doing just that. Researchers have been retooling what it means to engage in diligent, rigorous, "good" research. Whether this means remembering language and methods that have been forgotten or reimagining and transforming research methods, the field of education needs less research that continues to harm participants. For example, moving from using participants who are active to collaborators who are co-conspirators helped me to step back and for my collaborators to

have agency in the research because we are, as Fannie Lou Hamer said, in this bag together.

Building on Winters-Evans' work on a mosaic (2019) of methods, Dillard's work on remembering tools we have learned to forget (2012), and Patel's work on methodological pluralism (2019), I built a methodological approach that took into account the bodies that were part of the research and centered collective and collaborative approaches to qualitative research. The implication here is not for others to draw on the same theories to inform their methods, but instead for researchers to be intentional and unafraid to think outside of mainstream methodologies.

Another implication is to embrace the messiness of research. It is messy and, when truly collaborative, collaborators will bring their lenses to the research. The people we research with may not know the fancy terminology, but they come from communities that have researched, theorized, built and co-constructed knowledges for centuries and it's important to carve out space for the methods and perspectives of our collaborators in the research work. As researchers, we should pay close attention to how they are talking about their experiences, use that to reshape and reimagine what is possible, and allow for movement in and between stages and roles. There may not be a goal of "action" and that's okay. Being collaborators does not just mean action in the social justice sense; being collaborators can mean in the construction of ideas, thinking, processes, and contributions.

Reconsidering options for sharing this work and when approaching research from a collective and collaborative stance, sharing with and writing for/with the community you research is critical. Diaz-Strong et al. (2014) suggest transformative possibilities for the IRB process that put researching and organizing for justice at the forefront. They write,

> What if we develop processes that asked the question, how is this work linked to other justice mobilizing scholarship? Or, how will this work redistribute resources or access to life pathways? Changing how and to whom we are accountable can move up away from "research of convenience" to research that responds to express material, political, or historical needs. Our networks can develop pathways among organizations, people, and institutions to focus work and channel resources (e.g. graduate students desiring experience in participatory action research) toward entities that need this labor (i.e. "This is what we know" and "This is what we need assistance with"). Collectivizing moves against so much of what the academy centers on—individual expertise and success (or failure)—but as resources for justice work continue to diminish inside universities, pooling our labors will provide needed strength (Diaz-Strong et al, pp. 17-18).

Diaz-Strong et al. are advocating for a shift from research and publication as currency to research for community. They center the material consequences for the participants. Perhaps researchers who adopt a collective and collaborative approach should explore other avenues of sharing. This would mean putting accessibility for the people the

research is about at the forefront. What's published in academic journals is usually for academics. The everyday teacher, parent, student, or community member doesn't typically read what is published in our elite academic journals and the distribution often stays within the academy. What if we published for our collaborators? What if we published with them, or at least extended the invitation?

Lastly, utilizing collective and collaborative approaches means sharing stories of pain/struggle AND stories of joy/success—a balance of stories. I often read research and it is about a problem (achievement gap, ineffective teaching, etc.). Rarely do I read about joy, love, and the beauty of humanity. Nigerian writers Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Adichie have both called for a "balance of stories" in the world. At the start of this dissertation, I argued that researchers are storytellers. Even in the most numbers-based (the quant of all quant) research project, there is a story being told. If one is answerable and accountable to the community in which they research, that accountability does not end once it is time for sharing the research. There's been a proliferation of damage narratives on marginalized populations (Tuck and Yang, 2014, Tuck 2009). Not all of the stories that researchers collect are positive stories. Many are painful for collaborators and sometimes can be painful for others if they were made public, and because we hold the pen, research can also hide their own, non-positive stories (in conversation with C. Clark, 2020). Instead of adding to damage-centered narratives, researchers must remember whom and what the research is for.

Praxis Implications for Teacher Education

This study draws forward questions of audience in teacher education. Who does the curriculum address? Who does the program address? Lebron, Kiara, and Nirvana have demonstrated that they are not the audience. The answer is not for these students to adjust but for the university to adjust. Kynard (2013) argues that instead of bridge-type models that seek to force students to adjust or solely house their literacies in out-of-school spaces, the universities and the school structures are what needs to change. Below I discuss three praxis implications for teacher education: (1) reframing conceptualizations of teaching and teachers; (2) moving toward critical race English teacher education; and (3) cultivating garret spaces.

Reframing Conceptualization of Teaching and Teachers

About two weeks into this project, Kiara and I were talking about how each member of the group felt about teaching. In particular, we were talking about what drives people away and what brings people in. When talking about Lebron, Kiara mentioned that she didn't think he will stay in the classroom long because of the kind of community work he was passionate about. I replied, "I wonder why he didn't do child and youth studies?" Though my question may seem neutral, it's a question that could have pushed Lebron out of our education program. I was so unprepared to do this work with them. I had, like I had been taught on so many level and spaces, reduced "teacher" to a certain image and there was no space for someone like Lebron.

When I began this journey, I questioned who gets to be seen as "the teacher?" What's the ideal image of teacher? Why did so many of my white students choose clips from *Freedom Writers* and *Dead Poets Society* as a frame of reference for good, ideal teachers? I complicated these observations by pointing out the erasure of Black and Brown teachers and pedagogies grounded in marginalized cultures. However, what I did not complicate was how even for those of us pushing for space for Black and Brown teachers, there can still be an expectation that teaching look a certain way, in a certain space and all other types of education should happen outside of "real" teacher education programs.

This is one of the trappings of so-called equity-based programs. Adjustment is for broken students to make, not broken schools and systems. In the educational programs that "teach" preservice teachers of Color to be teachers, never are the ways of knowing and being as Black teachers dominant in the courses on methods and practices. They are either missing from the conversation and history or marked (Bucholtz 1999 in Strauss and Feiz, 2014). And even within those programs and within educators who strive to make strides toward equity and justice, lie remnants of colonialism, racism, and white supremacy. We need a reconceptualization of what teaching is and who our teachers are. I am not talking about reform, but a complete reimagining of what teacher education programs can and should look like. We need programs that center and provide spaces for the literacies and bodies of preservice teachers like Lebron, Nirvana, and Kiara and the students they so deeply fought for to be explored, validated, unmasked, vulnerable, free.

Moving Toward Critical Race English Teacher Education

In 2018, Lamar Johnson proposed Critical Race English Education (CREE) as a "theoretical and pedagogical construct that tackles white supremacy and anti-black racism within English education and ELA classrooms" (p. 102) He proposes: (1) explicitly addressing issues of violence, race, whiteness, white supremacy and antiblackness; (2) expanding literacies to include activist and social movement contexts; (3) dismantling dominant texts and highlighting how language and literacy can be utilized as tools for people on the margins; and (4) building on and affirming the various literacies that Black people bring to schools. Though many have taken up Johnson's work to rethink K-12 English classrooms, I think that this framework needs to be taken up more in higher education as well, moving us toward a Critical Race English Teacher Education. This will require a Critical Race analysis of who we cite, the voices we privilege through the decisions we make regarding class texts, the languages we make space for and validate, and the bodies (not) represented in our programs.

In addition, a Critical Race examination of our practices will mean that we do not only teach our preservice teachers the importance of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014) but be responsive and sustaining as well. For instance, we need a critical examination of the educational contexts in which we place our students. Students like Lebron should not have to seek out his own development to be the teacher he wants to be and students like Nirvana and Kiara should

not have gear up for battle when heading to their placements, but instead have the space to grow pedagogically and try new things in an environment that is affirming and models what our programs claim to stand for. Therefore, teacher education programs need to seek out and building reciprocal relationships with non-white, linguistically diverse teachers, parents, community members and truly make them part of the fabric of teacher education in a variety of capacities. Additionally, teacher education programs should partner with organizations, local and national, to explore curricular options that have the potential to transform the teacher education experience.

A Critical Race examination of our teacher education programs will also entail being responsive to not just the cultural and academic needs of our students, but the economic needs, understanding that the systemic and structural anti-Blackness is at play on every level. If we truly hope to recruit, prepare, successfully graduate, and retain Black teachers and other teachers of Color, critical disruption of whiteness and oppression at every stage is necessary, from examining policies and practices that continue the status quo to leveraging resources to sustain the communities we build. I say "successfully" graduate from our institutions not to emphasize surviving the institution, but to emphasize graduating with a rich, affirming experience that provide opportunities for non-White students to thrive. Also, this includes a Critical Race examination of the local and national attempts at standardization. This includes language and grammar courses that exclude language diversity and gateway testing that centers Eurocentric teaching practices. Teacher educators truly committed to this work must advocate for and

movement-build with their Black and Brown students, and "…[choose] to engage in the struggle for educational justice knowing that you have the ability and human right to refuse oppression and refuse to oppress others…" (Love, 2019, p. 11).

Cultivating Garret Spaces

When I think about my project, I see that we (my collaborators and I) were all trying to find space in layers of unlivability (Snorton, 2017; McKittrick, 2006): historical unlivability, the unlivability of our current sociopolitical climate, and PWI unlivability. Our garret was critical in supporting us all during the 2017-2018 year and beyond. There was urgency for a space like ours, but I also realize that cultivating garret spaces does not address the systemic structures that create the need for a space such as our garret.

In doing research around the experiences and needs of preservice teachers of Color, it is not enough to just regurgitate or add to the numerous stories of Black educators feeling isolated and silenced, and being deleted from the teaching profession. Like McKittrick (2006) demonstrated, Linda Brent was free yet unfree in her garret; in our garret the same is true. Though the garret helped to support my collaborators and me, it is also important that we do not just attempt to identify add-ons for Black preservice teachers and other teachers of Color, but livable and transformative spaces that attend to those on the margins, thus attending to everyone (Combahee River Collective 1982; Taylor, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991).

Thus, a praxis implication for teacher education is the cultivation of material and figurative garret spaces. What my study reveals is that garret spaces are needed not just for nurturing and joy, but to also develop educators. Being progressive is not a static state and universities should always be becoming, because "…if we ever get to a place of complete certainty and assuredness about our practice, we will stop growing. If we stop growing, we will die, and, more importantly, our students will wither and die in our presence" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 77). Garret spaces can provide opportunities for co-construction of knowledge. In garret spaces, important theorizing and community work can happen that shifts perceptions and complicates pedagogical approaches. For example, throughout this study, Lebron did a lot of theorizing. Imagine what could have happened if we adjusted and actually picked up what he was putting down? Creating dialogic spaces, such as the garret we created, "serves as a critical and necessary act for literacy research with aims to inform policy and practice that impacts communities" (LRA Call for Proposals, 2018) and "take[s] as a starting point the humanity and dignity of all people" (Winn, 2014, p. 251). Therefore, at a PWI, in a space where one person of Color is the norm, garret spaces that push back on anti-blackness can help to create livablility and "open up the question of symbolic, imaginative, and political work the garret can do" (McKittrick, 2006, p. 62.

Areas for Opportunity

In 2001, Sleeter discussed the overwhelming presence of whiteness in teacher education; however, the article could have been written today. In fact, she more recently published another article (2017) using Critical Race Theory to demonstrate the continued presence of Whiteness in teacher education. There continue to be blind spots in the research and below I point out a few areas for opportunity not addressed by my dissertation.

Though I acknowledged the frustrations my collaborators and I felt around curriculum, I did not address specifically the curriculum of teacher education programs and how the curriculum (the theorists and authors who are seen as pivotal and important and often taught, for example) continues to silence the experiences and knowledges of people of Color. Therefore, there's more to explore such as: Who is missing from the history of education? Whose voices and theories have been silenced and erased from the field? How do the experiences of preservice teachers change when these voices and histories are made center? How do certain assignments and texts further racial violence and how do others further racial inclusion and affirmation?

Another area that deserves more attention is how teacher education programs build partnerships with communities. In this study, I talked about how we formed communities amongst ourselves and within field placements. I also talked about how my collaborators drew on their own communities, past and current. However, there is room for more research on how these partnerships can be built to better prepare preservice

teachers and disrupt exclusive, Eurocentric ideas of who the experts and teachers are. In particular, how can teacher educators better research with and learn from communities to imagine new, transformative, and sustaining possibilities that are embedded in teacher education? Grow Your Own or pipelines seem to be locations where most of this sort of research and learning with preservice teachers tends to happen. However, thinking about Lebron, who sought out his own professional development opportunities to supplement and counter what he was getting from his teacher education program, the field can benefit from more research on bidirectional learning and teaching with communities that privileges collectivity, multiple epistemologies, and sustained collaboration. Additionally, this should not be solely relegated to development of preservice teachers like Lebron, Nirvana, and Kiara, and we cannot continue to only provide these texts and experiences as optional, alternative, or add on readings. Often, white students are only aware of and therefore uphold Eurocentric ideas of teaching and learning and could greatly benefit from pedagogies, practices, and theories that disrupt the monolithic image of "good," or "real" teaching.

Lastly, there's greater opportunity to 1) address the isolation of development toward equity and diversity and 2)research on programs that approach equity and diversity more holistically throughout the curriculum. It took centuries to build this racist state; it'll take more than one class to reverse it. A gap in the research, then, is how sustaining faculty development in the areas of equity and diversity impacts the experiences of preservice teachers. Isolated courses on equity, multiculturalism, or

inclusion and the continuance of "I didn't know" faculty all continue to mark otherness and counters progress toward real change. This research should extend to in-service teachers and school districts as well. And with garrets in mind, there is an opportunity for this work to happen with students and communities of Color, as opposed to in isolation at universities.

Final Thoughts

Twenty years ago, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) framed preparing teachers to teach African American students as "fighting for our lives," and that fight is still just as urgent. We also need to think about how we are preparing teacher educators to teach Black preservice teachers. This dissertation study contributes to the ways Black preservice teachers can collectively and individually draw on their literacies to navigate teacher education spaces. It also contributes to our understanding of what kinds of spaces nurture those literacies and allow space for joy, affirmation, and community. Scholars have shown us what happens in majority white cohorts and how students of Color experience our programs. This dissertation builds on that body of work by centering collective and collaborative approaches to not only research but also within our pedagogies. We need more spaces that center bidirectional theorizing, co-construction of knowledges, varied embodiments of care, and opportunities to reshape our conceptualization of "the teacher" and teaching. This fight is not one to do alone, but one where we, as collaborator Nirvana said, "[rock] hard with each other."

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Appendix A. Reflective Seminar Seating Chart

Appendix B. List of Sample Codes

(adapted from Rogers and Wetzel, 2014)

Genre—Ways of Interacting
Humor/Laughter
Cohesion
Referencing
Constructing/Co-Constructing Meaning
Narratives/Personal Stories
Turn Taking
Overlapping
Metaphors
Agreement/Disagreement
Use of Black English
Interruption
Switching Roles
Intertextuality
Discourse—Ways of Representing and Themes
Theme of (re)affirming
Theme of resistance
Theme of (re) shaping
Anti-Blackness
Racism
Teacher Identity
Collectivism
Collaboration
Garret
Style—Ways of Being
Mood
Pronouns
Pitch
Volume
Lexicalization
Relexicalization

Appendix C. Transcription Conventions System

(adapted from Tannen)

Italics	
…	Notable pause
[…]	Omitted content
–	Interruption
underline	Emphasized
CAPS	Extra stress and loud
⇓	Pitch decrease
⇑	Pitch increase
⇒	Drawn out word
((double parentheses))	Description and gestures
::	Lengthened syllable