From Object to Subject: Exploring the Experiences and Developmental Needs of Black
Women Pre-Service Teachers

By

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This dissertation is dedicated to my darling Daddy. We did it!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As a Black woman educator, this dissertation is especially important to me. I recall preparing for my first teaching position in Okolona, Mississippi, and everyone — professors, administrators, family members — told me how much my students would learn from me and how much my students needed me. I was told my majority Black students needed a role model like me, a young Black woman who had just graduated from college. I walked into my classroom believing this, and I believed that I would have an instant relationship with my students based on our shared race. However, my first year of teaching was one of the most difficult years of my life. I felt isolated, frustrated, and under-prepared.

Looking back on my teaching experiences, I now know I was haunted by my experiences as a K-16 student. I was haunted by the ghosts of anti-Blackness, assimilation, and meritocracy. I survived and garnered success in these systems by investing in competition (often to the detriment of my mental health), as well as code-switching as a mechanism to blend in and fit in with my peers. I did everything I could to fit middle-class, white parameters of success. Naturally, these assimilationist beliefs haunted my instruction. I found myself at odds with my students, but I could not figure out why. It was not until a Black woman teacher, Ms. Lucas, gave me some advice. She told me that I needed to do "the work." The students knew I was an outsider even though I looked like them. I had to spend time greeting my ghosts. In order to become a *real* teacher, I needed to understand the history and context in which I was working, and I had to complicate my own hegemonic beliefs about schooling. I needed to interact with parents, identify and connect with community leaders, and expand my limited views of the town. From then on, I clung to Ms. Lucas. She helped to support me in understanding the *real* work of teaching.

I tell this story because, specifically, it drives this dissertation, and broadly it drives my scholarship. I did not learn how to build relationships with students and families or to question and disrupt systemic oppression within K-12 education from my preparation program. I learned it from Ms. Lucas — a Black woman. My dissertation focuses on the needs of Black women pre-service teachers (BWPSTs) because their experiences are often overlooked in teacher education. They are assumed to be the saviors of Black children without critical exploration of *their* approach to anti-oppressive education. Teacher educators need to pay more attention to Black women's unique socio-historical positions in relation to school to better support their critical transition into educators.

To respond to this need, I developed a *counterspace* (Ong et al., 2018) called (B)lack+(W)oman+(T)eacher (BWT) to create space for BWPSTs to bring their whole selves to a community that shares key identity markers. BWT served as a place of healing as we laughed, built community, and critically analyzed our experiences throughout teacher training. This space was particularly important to me and my scholarship, as it was the space I needed as a pre-service teacher to help me to greet my ghosts and to lean into criticality. My dissertation explores BWPSTs' experiences and teaching ideologies and how teacher education programs support or inhibit their development as a strategy to re-imagine teacher education, so this crucial work does not rely on the unpaid labor of a generous Black woman colleague to repair what teacher education overlooks.

In Chapter 2, I review current research on BWPSTs in the United States. This review explores teacher education literature, focusing on how Black women have been characterized. In particular, this review found that BWPSTs have occupied an *absent presence* in teacher education literature by often being present in articles —especially those that focus on "teachers

of color" —while their identities and experiences as Black women have been absent. This chapter ends with recommendations for new directions for teacher education scholars to center BWPSTs.

In Chapter 3, I present a conceptual framework connecting three key concepts: (1) *teaching ideologies*, (2) *Black girlhood/Black feminism/intersectionality*, and (3) *ghosts and hauntings* to understand some critical issues in Black women's experiences in becoming teachers. Specifically, I argue that, as I was, Black women are haunted by different aspects of their schooling experiences, and their teaching ideologies are shaped by their negotiations with the ghosts of those experiences. In this chapter, I define each concept to understand how these women talk about their ideologies.

In Chapter 4, I present the methods I used to answer my core research questions. These are: How have Black women's schooling experiences impacted their teaching ideologies? How are Black women pre-service teachers (BWPSTs) experiencing and learning in teacher education programs? And, how can teacher education programs better support BWPSTs? I provide a detailed description of BWT, the space where I got to know my participants; my dual role as a facilitator and researcher; and a description of the participants in this study. I explain how I used a combination of meeting records (video recordings, transcripts, my plans and reflections) alongside participant interviews as data sources for my inquiry. Additionally, I outline my methods for combining the theoretical tenets of Black Feminist Epistemologies and the practical tenets of the Listening Guide in order to complete this analysis.

In Chapters 5-8, I present my findings. Each chapter outlines one of the four focal participants including her background information, a description of her ghosts, her teaching ideologies, and a summary of her experiences in her teacher education programs. My goal was to

highlight their voices to center them as subjects in this study, creating critical knowledge to push this field forward.

In Chapter 9, I took the opportunity to Freedom Dream, building with and extending the voices from the Black women in this study. I summarized each woman's case, and I made recommendations for how teacher education programs could have better supported each woman. I engaged in Freedom Dreaming to look past our current reality to imagine new possibilities.

Finally, in Chapter 10, I provide a summary of the study, limitations, and implications for future work.

One more note: In this dissertation, I chose to capitalize Black because I refer to Black as a race of people who are connected by a shared history and culture. Through capitalizing Black, I am taking a political stance against an ever-shifting category of domination and I aim to decenter whiteness in this dissertation and in my future work (Howell et al., 2019, p. 20).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction:

Teacher education programs are ostensibly designed to support the development of *all* teacher candidates. However, historically, teacher education programs have largely focused on challenges white teachers encounter entering schooling contexts, ignoring the unique developmental needs of Black teachers (Brown, 2014; Gist, 2014). Not surprisingly, this focus on white teachers reflects the current teacher demographics in K-12 schools —majority white and female (McFarland et al., 2019), a majority that is growing as the number of Black teachers has drastically declined (Ingersoll, 2011; Milner & Howard, 2004).

The attrition of Black teachers is not a new phenomenon, as conditions since the 1954 *Brown* decision have contributed to the decreasing number of Black teachers. Specifically, the legacy of desegregation displaced Black teachers after *Brown v. Board* (Foster, 1997) alongside the deprofessionalization of teachers of color in the workplace (Acosta et al., 2018). Additionally, increased professional opportunities in other sectors outside of education made teaching a less appealing option for college educated Black people (Foster, 1997). These factors help us understand how between 1987-2012, the percentage of Black teachers did not surpass nine percent and declined in comparison to other teachers of color (Farinde Wu & Griffin, 2019, p. 1).

In an effort to respond to this demographic reality, policymakers have been calling to hire more teachers of color to support *racial matching* as a way to support racially minoritized students' achievement (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). There are compelling arguments for racial matching: Black teachers have the potential to serve as valuable role models for Black students, given the heightened exploration and identification with a racial or ethnic identity (DeCuir-

Gunby, 2009). In addition, teachers of color "may be perceived more favorably" by students of color due to greater cultural alignment (Easton-Brooks, 2013). By looking at the outcomes of these studies, the solution seems clear — increase the number of Black teachers as a strategy to support Black students.

However, calls to increase teacher diversity emphasize benefits to students without adequate consideration of minoritized teachers' developmental needs or histories. Additionally, calls to increase teacher diversity have largely been unsuccessful, even though teacher education programs have increasingly incorporated multiculturalism over the last few decades (Banks, 1995). Since the primary beneficiaries of these changes have been white teachers, the proportionate number of teachers of color —specifically Black women —remains low (Phillip, 2011). The goal of this review is to take stock of current research on teacher education to ascertain what it would mean to center the needs of Black women pre-service teachers (BWPSTs) to sustain them in the profession and set up the context for my dissertation study.

Since contemporary efforts to diversify the teaching workforce have largely been unsuccessful, many researchers have focused on different points along the teacher pipeline. One point is teacher education, as the quality of a teacher education program can be a determining factor for the retention and success of in-service teachers (Jackson, 2015). Specifically, to develop Black female teachers, "Teacher preparation programs, whether traditional or alternative, must be comprehensive and enact and promote advanced pedagogy such as culturally responsive teaching" (Gay, 2015, as cited in Farinde Wu, 2019, p. 3). However, research on teacher candidates of color is limited (Dilworth, 2012; Jackson & Kohli, 2016), and scholars have described the research base on the preparation of teachers of color as ''small and not comprehensive in scope" (Torres, Santos, Peck, & Cortes, 2004, p. 83, as cited in Mensah, 2019,

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p. 1415). While research on pre-service teachers of color is small, the research base on BWPSTs is even smaller.

I have two purposes for this literature review. First, reflecting how it has driven this dissertation, I hope that it will catalyze other scholarship centering BWPSTs. To truly diversify the teaching force, the teacher education field must adjust and focus on groups that have often been excluded. By prioritizing BWPSTs' stories and experiences, "teacher education programs can gain insight on how to better serve Black women and by doing so, potentially improve the field of education at large by retaining more Black women educators" (Farinde Wu, 2019, p. 3). Second, by shifting the focus to BWPSTs, the perspectives offered here aim to sustain and retain them in the profession. To meet these goals, I explore the following questions in my reading and synthesis:

- How has teacher education literature characterized Black women?
- How does current literature conceptualize BWPSTs' learning and development?

Theoretical Framework: Critical Perspectives on Understanding Black Women's Absent Presence in Teacher Education Research

To understand the complex position that BWPSTs occupy, I bring together three related theoretical constructs: *Critical Race Theory*, *Absent Presence*, and *Intersectionality*. First, Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) outlines five key tenets: (1) centrality of race and racism, (2) challenging the dominant perspective, (3) commitment to social justice, (4) valuing experiential knowledge, and (5) being interdisciplinary (Kohli & Solorzano, 2012, p. 445). Using CRT, the permanence of race and racism impacts teacher education as it continues to be overwhelmingly white and has little focus on race and racism (Milner et al., 2013). Interest

convergence, a critical element of CRT, drives calls (such as those for racial matching described above) to increase diversity in the teaching force.

Interest convergence provides an explanation of policies and practices that have been perceived as supporting racial uplift, yet have actually served the interests of the group holding the most systemic power — whites in U.S. society. Reflecting this interest convergence, much research focusing on hiring Black teachers broadly and Black women particularly discusses their increased numbers as a strategy to 1) fill positions at "hard-to-staff" schools (Farinde et al., 2016), and 2) position them as cultural saviors for minoritized children (Cherry-McDaniel, 2019). This is an example of interest convergence, because the motivation to increase access for BWPSTs is an effort to solve policy issues instead of focusing on building fulfilling opportunities for these women.

Second, the hyperfocus on Black women's labor while largely excluding Black women's voices and experiences from teacher education literature can be characterized by what Gill and Erevelles (2017) have coined as *absent presence.* They use the term absent presence to describe the experiences of Elsie Lacks, Henrietta Lacks' daughter. Henrietta Lacks was a working class Black woman whose cancer cells were extracted from her cervix and used for research unbeknownst to her and her family (Gill & Erevelles, 2017). Her daughter, "who was institutionalized and underwent 'treatments' that eventually killed her" (Gill & Erevelles, 2017, p. 124), also has a chilling story involving medical systems using her body for "research." Following the logic of interest convergence, her story assumes absent presence because, unlike Henrietta Lacks, Elsie Lacks' cells did not serve scientists (i.e., the group with power) with a foundation for cancer research, therefore her story and existence often goes untold and unacknowledged. In accounts of Elsie Lacks,

whose story offers a powerful indictment of the medical and carceral systems

that sustain the violent spaces where disability intersects with race, class, and

gender. Her less-privileged narrative that nevertheless continues to "haunt" not

just the text but also the historical and contemporary contexts that connect to

other narratives of exploitation, racial segregation, incarceration

(institutionalization of disabled people), sterilization, and the more contemporary

practice of the trade in human organs in poor communities across the globe (p.

124).

Her untold story is important because she reflects many intersections of Black women's

experiences; yet because her story, like those of many Black women, has not served the interest

of powerful groups, it is ignored. Although ignored and absent from current literature, the

representations of her experiences are nonetheless present: Elsie's story reflects the position of

Black women in contemporary U.S. society. Like Elsie Lacks, their stories have been absent

from traditional literature and scholarship, yet present as they shine light on many different

forms of intersectional oppression that impact experiences in the contemporary United States,

including education. Within education, we see disproportionate representation in suspension and

expulsion data in K-12 schooling (Morris, 2016), discrimination through standardized testing

(Petchauer, 2018), and maintenance of whiteness in teacher education (Sleeter, 2017), all of

which contribute to the pushout of Black women and girls from the teacher pipeline.

Finally, to probe BWPSTs' absent presence in relation to schooling, I use the frame of

intersectionality (Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016). Intersectionality helps us see beyond the broad

categorization of "teachers of color," which is often used in the literature and contributes to the

absent presence of Black teachers (Gill & Erevelles, 2017). By aggregating Black women's

experience alongside the unique and differing histories of other racially minoritized groups, the conflation of "teachers of color" with "Black teachers" in teacher education research denies the long history of anti-Blackness — not to mention intersectional oppression of gender — and their impact on Black women teachers.

Intersectionality pushes for a fuller view of how "race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together" (Hill-Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 4), impacting the experiences and outcomes of Black women. For example, Gholson (2016) outlines the experiences of Black girls in math classrooms:

> Perceptions of Black girls and women, such as being confident, assertive, or argumentative—often referred to pejoratively as 'being loud'—run orthogonal to modes of white femininity (cf. Harris-Perry, 2011), but parallel to masculine attributes associated with success and participation in mathematics. (p. 291)

Here, Gholson argues that Black women's ways of being are not accepted in the same ways that white women or as Black and white men, leaving our experiences ignored and undertheorized. Similarly, BWPSTs' femininity is often illegible in white dominated spaces like teacher education. As noted by Crenshaw (2012), this ignoring and "not knowing" basic information about BWPSTs' subjectivity leads to "not caring," perpetuating a vicious cycle in which knowledge production excludes Black girls and women (Gholson, 2016), giving rise to their absent presence in teacher education literature. Intersectionality helps unpack BWPSTs' complex identities, illuminating the ways that multiple oppressions work simultaneously to impact their school experiences.

As a field, we must tackle the cumulative impact of anti-Blackness and sexism. To do so, we need to disrupt BWPSTs' absent presence in educational research by shifting them from being the *object* of this literature to being its *subject* (Evans-Winters, 2019), ultimately moving from absent presence to rightful presence (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020). Rightful presence, "focuses on the processes of reauthoring rights towards making present the lives of those made missing by the systemic injustices inherent in schooling and the disciplines" (Calabrese Barton & Tan, 2020, p. 436). Acosta et al. (2018) claim that, "Although documented as powerful, transformative, and valued, [Black women's] pedagogy and form of teaching remain undertheorized in educational research, policy, and practice" (p. 341). By illuminating how this literature represented Black women, often to the exclusion of their learning needs, we can sharpen research on their experiences in teacher education, as well as design better contexts for their learning.

Methods:

This literature review was conducted using a three-phase process: literature search, abstract review, and full text review. I conducted searches of the following databases: EBSCOhost, ERIC, and ProQuest Education, and included literature published between 1990-2021. My search included combinations of the following keywords: Black OR African American; women OR female OR gender; women of color; pre-service teacher OR teacher education. I chose to include "women of color" because many of these texts include Black women as participants, so I wanted those articles included in the first screening. These searches resulted in 20 unique sources. Next, I reduced this list through an iterative process of screening abstracts, eliminating papers that did not explicitly focus on BWPSTs (e.g., they focused on Black women teacher educators or in-service teachers). After the abstract screening, I engaged in

a full text screening process by reading each article closely. After this process, 9 articles met the complete criteria.

Findings: Exploration of Black Women Pre-Service Teachers in Current Teacher Education Literature

To demonstrate how the experiences of BWPSTs have been characterized within teacher education literature, I unpacked themes that emerged throughout this review. The authors referenced in this section addressed BWPSTs in distinct ways. These themes included: (1) missing identity — who are these Black women? (2) experiences of BWPSTs in inadequate teacher education programs; and (3) limited transformative learning environments.

Who are These Black Women?

Black women have been uniquely positioned throughout their long, tumultuous history in the U.S., impacting how they engage in the work of teaching. In two articles, the authors included Black women participants, but did not position them socially, culturally, politically, or historically. For example, Bangou and Waterhouse (2008) selected Andrea, a Black woman, to participate in their study focusing on pre-service teachers becoming technologically literate. Their case selection logic was explained as follows:

> The students who allowed for a greater variability and balance were selected to be part of the study. For instance, since there were two African American students, the one whose personal technology information and perception of computers was the most different from the other participants was chosen. (p. 448)

The researchers chose to focus on Andrea because of how she compared to the other students rather than to explore the salience of her identity and intersectional experiences as a Black woman. As a result, she is used as a comparative study object rather than as a subject with

particular experiences, leaving readers to fill in who Andrea is based on generalizations or stereotypes.

Occasionally, the authors mentioned her identity. For instance, describing her experiences in her student teaching placement in a predominately white suburb, they state that, "Andrea's reading of the world as the school environment contributed to her personal literacy; her reading of self as a teacher of color. This is a reading informed by experience at the intersection of gender, race, class, and power," (p. 451). This description of the way Andrea "reads" the world was in response to a realization about the resources at her placement site being more plentiful than other schools she had encountered. In doing so, the authors conflate her socioeconomic experience with her racial experience, adding to a widespread conflation of the two. Even to the extent that they mention that her reading of the world is informed by gender, race, class, and power, they do not unpack what that means for Andrea as a Black woman *in particular,* let alone what it means for her growth as a teacher. Small n case studies distinctly afford scholars the opportunity to investigate such details. However, by not unpacking her identity, the authors contribute to the absent presence of Black women by including Andrea as an object in the study to be used for comparison to other students in her program while not fully engaging her particular Black womanness or centering the implications of her experiences for her developmental needs.

While this article made limited mention of participants' identities, other articles do not mention participants' identities at all. For example, Quinlan (2020) included four BWPSTs in her article outlining schema theory to understand transfer in argumentation in a teacher education program. In the methods section, it is mentioned that "the participants in this study were four female African American preservice students (with the pseudonyms Joy, Rhonda, Faith, and

Daniella) enrolled in a master's degree programme in elementary education at a Historically Black College and University" (p. 1214). Aside from this sentence, these women's identities are left out of the analysis, again contributing to Black women's absent presence. That is, these women are present as they are the objects of the study, but their humanity, identities, and perspectives are absent.

Inadequate Teacher Education Programs (Survival)

When researchers engage Black women's identities more fully, they often identify ways that teacher education programs have been inadequate in meeting their needs. Multiple authors provide us with a foundation to explore the experiences of BWPSTs. For example, Farinde Wu and Griffin (2019) found four ways teacher education programs underprepared BWPSTs. These included: 1) limited knowledge of special education requirements and documentation, 2) limited culturally responsive teaching techniques and strategies, 3) lack of preparation for teaching underserved students of color, and 4) inadequate length of teacher prep programs. The shortcomings that these BWPSTs identified are particularly important because the curriculum of a teacher education program can impact teacher preparedness for classroom teaching, and therefore, influence teacher retention (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Black women teachers should not have to persevere in classrooms due to inadequate teacher preparation, especially since Black female teachers are at higher risk of stress than their white counterparts (Fitchet et al., 2017).

While many teacher education programs continue to focus on the needs of white women teachers, Black women have been finding ways to persevere and advocate for themselves in these potentially harmful spaces. Haddix (2012) describes the experiences of two BWPSTs, Natasha and Latoya, and their use of linguistic strategies to sustain themselves in their teacher

education program including using deliberate silences to preserve their identities and voices within their program. They were deliberate about what they talked about, when, and with whom (p. 174). They navigated spaces by using their voices (or not) in different ways to sustain themselves. As Haddix describes, "[b]eing silent also allowed for their cultural and linguistic selves to emerge from this dominant context unharmed and unscathed" (p. 175). These women had to protect themselves in a program that did not see them or their needs.

Similarly, Mensah (2019) describes the experiences of a Black woman teacher called Michele. Mensah chronicles Michele's experiences in teacher education, student teaching, and in her in-service classroom. Initially, she struggled finding her voice in her program, as she found herself trying to be someone she was not. It was not until Michele had a Black woman professor who encouraged her to consider focusing on science education that she used her voice to teach science in the liberatory ways, despite roadblocks she encountered in the program and in the schools she taught. She gained confidence to advocate for herself and her beliefs in different spaces while sustaining her identity and purpose as a teacher.

In each of these studies, BWPSTs' Blackness and, to varying degrees, womanness was central to the analysis. By centering their experiences, researchers uncovered how the BWPSTs implemented protective strategies to survive their teacher education programs. Their programs did not systemically support them; instead, they had to build individual strategies to be successful. In these articles, these women were regarded as subjects and the authors took care to unpack their identities to report about their experiences. These case studies provide a foundation for future scholars to disrupt the absent presence in teacher education literature. By centering these women, we can begin to unpack their individual strategies of preservation as a glimpse into how to think about systemic changes in teacher education programs across the country.

Transformative Learning Environments

       While research that meaningfully centers Black women's identities helps illuminate their subpar experiences within teacher education programs, there were instances where Black women had transformative courses or professors who changed their trajectory. One common aspect of their transformative experience was finding community outside of the white gaze. No matter how small, these women relied on their communities to get through their programs. These communities allowed them spaces to discuss their issues and to reflect on strategies for survival.

       For instance, Wynter-Hoyte et al. (2020) found that their Black women participants cultivated a sisterhood, formed intergenerational alliances between Black faculty and students, and learned the most with intersectional learning engagements.

> The sisterhood these women created, along the lines of Blackness and femaleness, produced a bond that enabled them to connect with each other on an emotional level. This explained the shedding of tears as each woman shared her counterstory. Each student understood that, in the same manner, our individual stories about race and racism produce collective stories, our individual tears produce collective tears (p. 354).

Their community served as a place of healing (Harmon & Horn, 2021) as they were able to display their individual feelings among a collective. Wynter-Hoyte et al (2020) use the concept of the Kitchen Table, a space for Black women, to frame their findings and to show the importance of these types of spaces for BWPSTs. Similarly, Haddix (2012) discusses how the two women in her study formed a bond with each other in the program as students and how they all built a relationship (student and professor) forming an intergenerational bond (Wynter-Hoyte, 2020).

In addition to finding spaces and community, the BWPSTs outlined in these articles had transformative learning experiences with Black professors who reinforced their belonging in their programs. Woodson (2017) describes her experience with Danitra, a Black woman student, who initially struggled on a critical historiographies assignment. She was tasked with writing a history unit using the following identity markers: Black, lesbians, antebellum period. Danitra struggled because she could not find any stories of Black lesbians in the antebellum period, so she questioned her capacity to be a history teacher and her skills as a student. Woodson, the professor, helped her to critically look at traditional archives, textbooks, and accounts from that time period as a way to explain why she might not find these stories easily. While this was a difficult assignment at first, Danitra's eyes were opened to critical histories and her duty as a history teacher to redefine the curriculum for her students and to illuminate histories that have often been silenced. This experience gave her confidence in her abilities and allowed her to work through her insecurities as a history teacher.

Similarly, Mensah (2019) chronicles Michele's story as an aspiring teacher that fell in love with science through a course taught by a Black woman professor.

> Science methods became the counter-narrative to previous teacher education experiences and was transformative for Michele in many ways. Michele, for example, talked about her new relationship with science, which was not an easy undertaking. She had to rethink, reconceptualize, and reimagine herself in science and as a female African American science teacher. She had few opportunities to build on her personal experiences and to examine issues of identity prior to the science methods course. (Mensah, 2019, p. 1432)

This professor helped her to see herself in the curriculum, gave her confidence to pursue her dreams, and to advocate for herself.

The common thread among these women is that they had specific instances of learning growth typically spurred by a Black teacher educator. Ideally, these instances of learning development should not be contingent upon having a particular teacher educator, these opportunities should be woven into the fabric of the program overall.

Conclusion: Implications for Extending the Literature on BWPSTs

In this review, I outlined three themes in the teacher education literature and its attention to Black women: (1) missing identity - who are these Black women? (2) experiences of BWPSTs in inadequate teacher education programs; (3) limited transformative learning environments. These three themes point to the limited knowledge we have of Black women's learning needs in their professional education as teachers. The first theme points to the ways their experiences have been under-conceptualized, while the second points to the many negative experiences they have in teacher education programs. The third theme is more hopeful, pointing to the possibility of supporting their growth as educators. Nonetheless, because the documented instances of transformation tend to be one-off experiences, the field of teacher education clearly still has work to do.

If we want to take seriously the calls to increase the number of Black women in the workforce, these findings emphasize some directions for future scholarship that would make BWPSTs subjects — and not objects — of research. Specifically, future work should 1) avoid the problem of absent presence and center the Black women in more teacher education scholarship; and 2) identify ways to deliberately restructure teacher education to better prioritize the needs of Black women and, ultimately, all teacher candidates. Many scholars discussed here

have laid a strong foundation for uplifting the voices and experiences of BWPSTs. We have a base for understanding some of the obstacles they face in these programs, as well as their strategies for overcoming them.

As the literature continues to grow, exploring the learning development of Black women will be imperative. For instance, while many argue that Black teachers possess valuable cultural resources in educating students from diverse backgrounds, these teachers' strengths need to be acknowledged, enhanced, and developed as pedagogical tools in teacher preparation programs (Farinde Wu, 2019). Black teachers must be provided opportunities to transfer their rich prior knowledge of culture to pedagogical content knowledge (Farinde Wu, 2019). Black women are not meant to be policy solvers; they are people whose humanity should be respected and uplifted as learners and professionals with developmental needs. This shift of centering their development can drastically change the landscape of teacher education making it a more humanizing space for all teacher candidates. In this dissertation, I center the voices and the needs of BWPSTs to push the field forward in considering transformative ways to reconstruct teacher education to better serve BWPSTs.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

In my dissertation, I explore three questions: (1) How have Black women's schooling experiences impacted their teaching ideologies? (2) How are Black women pre-service teachers (BWPSTs) experiencing and learning in teacher education programs? (3) How can teacher education programs better support BWPSTs? To answer these questions, I use three key concepts: (1) *teaching ideologies*, (2) *Black girlhood/Black feminism/intersectionality*, and (3) *ghosts and hauntings*, which I explain more below. By looking at the development of teaching ideologies from an intersectional, Black feminist perspective, I find that hauntology helps me explain how the afterlives of slavery (Shange, 2019) permeate Black women's experiences of becoming teachers in U.S. schools. Specifically, I found that Black women are haunted by different aspects of their schooling experiences, and their teaching ideologies are shaped by their negotiations with the ghosts of those experiences. In this chapter, I define each concept to understand how these women talk about their ideologies.

Teaching Ideology

To understand participants' teaching ideologies, I draw on terms and concepts from Phillip's (2011) framework of "ideology-in-pieces." Drawing on Stuart Hall (1996), as cited in Phillip et al. (2018), I conceptualize ideology as,

> Socially shared systems of representations through which people "make sense of, define, figure out, and render intelligible the way society works." Ideologies do not operate through single ideas; they articulate (i.e., connect) elements such as concepts, representations, images, assumptions, and episodic memories. (p. 26)

Hall argued that ideology is complex and composed of practical, taken-for-granted, commonsensical ways of sensemaking, in addition to "well-elaborated and internally consistent

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systems of thought" (p. 27). He also argued that people's common sense is inherently

"fragmentary, disjointed and episodic" (p. 43). In other words, ideologies are not necessarily

coherent; people make meaning in different contexts that do not necessarily translate across

contexts, leading to potential contradictions that often go unnoticed. Phillip (2011) argued that

"individuals' understandings, explanations, or interpretations of contexts may vary depending on

how they are socially positioned" (p. 300). Phillip provided an example about how a teacher's

response to the presence of police being in school would most likely differ if that teacher

interpreted the context through the perspective of a teacher, a parent, or a taxpayer. I push this

example further by arguing that an individual's understanding, whether they were using the lens

of occupation, would also be impacted by their intersectional position. For example, a Black

mother in an under-resourced school would most likely have a different perspective or ideology

about police in a school compared to a white mother in a predominantly white, affluent, and

private institution.

　　Hall (1996), as cited in Phillip (2011), pointed out that while one's practical knowledge is

"real," as it is based on a set of lived experiences, it is also partial and incomplete because it does

not allow one to grasp other aspects of the larger system (p. 301). He claimed that our process of

sensemaking has a relationship to systems of power and that the salience of certain everyday

assumptions have the ability to legitimate or challenge the status quo. For instance, white

administrators and teachers may position a Black girl as loud or aggressive while in school. This

positioning is rooted in stereotypes shaped by the racism in our education systems and society.

Teachers in the school may believe these stereotypes and treat the Black girls in particular ways.

Hall claimed that people "make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible" the way race

and racism operate in schools, and they largely rely on their practical, taken-for-granted,

commonsensical knowledge to do so. These hypothetical teachers might not have ever interacted with Black girls through their own experiences in school, yet they treat Black girls poorly as they draw on these stereotypes, consciously or not. In order to shift their system of thought, they must go through the process of *rearticulation*. Basically, the teacher's commonsensical meanings and networks of words, concepts, images, and anecdotes must be broken in order for an association of new meanings to be established. In order for this teacher to interact and build new beliefs about and actions toward Black girls, their old concepts, images, and networks must be disrupted. Phillip (2011) pointed out that "rearticulation involves changes in collective meaning that challenge social forms of power" (p. 301). Collectively rearticulated meanings shape how individuals make sense of their social world.

Building on Phillip's (2011) framework, I claim that teaching ideologies are made up of a teachers' socially constructed systems of representations through which they make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way schools and teaching currently operate and how they should operate. Their teaching ideologies are fragmented and dynamic as they are made up of concepts, representations, images, assumptions and episodic memories that work together or contradict each other, depending on the context. While all teachers' ideologies are shaped by their contexts, BWPSTs' teaching ideologies are unique because of their social position and how they have experienced the world as Black women haunted by their experiences as Black girls, yet they are still characterized by the contradictions Philip and Hall described.

Methodologically, I attended to these contradictions in my coding by using a Black feminist lens (Collins, 2000) with the *listening guide* methodology (Gilligan et. al, 2006), which sensitizes researchers to the contrapuntal voices about different issues. Instead of looking for and quantifying coherent ideologies in my participants, this method attuned me to the tensions they

were navigating, as their stated beliefs and commitments shifted with different contexts that made different facets of their identities salient.

Black Feminism/Black Girlhood/Intersectionality

It was important to me that the exploration of participants' contradictions understood this not as a fault of their sensemaking, but rather as an understandable outcome of the educational spaces they have had to navigate, which are full of paradoxes and contradictions. For this reason, I explored *hauntology* as a lens to understand the complex history of four focal BWPSTs: Caresha, Taylor, Tanya, and Sade. I explored their ghosts in an attempt to understand how their experiences have impacted their teaching ideologies. I used the concepts of *ghosts*, *hauntings*, and *intersectionality* to analyze these BWPSTs experiences as K-16 students and pre-service teachers and to situate them in the diverse and expansive history of Black women teachers and girls in this country. A Black woman's transition into teaching is so complex because they are becoming institutional actors in an institution that often does harm to students who look like them, shaped by what Shange (2019) calls the "afterlives of slavery." Undoubtedly, all teachers must navigate the contradictions of public education as they develop their practice, especially when the institution's demands conflict with teachers' own obligations to support children's development or ethical commitments (Britzman, 2012). If this is complex terrain for *all* pre-service teachers—what Beach (1999) called a *consequential transition*—it becomes even more fraught for those whom schooling has too often marginalized or harmed throughout its existence. Thus, an essential question for Black women teachers becomes: *How do you step into a role as an institutional actor (teacher) in a system that has historically done harm to people like you?* As a result, the essential question has its own intersectional meanings (Crenshaw, 1990) for

Black women teachers, who experience both racism and misogyny—what has been termed *misogynoir* (Bailey & Trudy, 2018)—in U.S. society.

Black girls and women in the United States step into a unique history, grounded in racism, sexism, classism, ableism, etc., but marked by strength and resiliency. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1990) coined the term *intersectionality* to outline the ways that Black women and girls have experienced society, particularly in the US. She claimed that Black women do not experience racism, sexism, and homophobia as additive oppressions; rather, these oppressions are multiplicative and work together simultaneously to impact the experiences of Black women. Due to their intersectional existence, Black women are often on the receiving end of state-sanctioned violence (Yoon & Chen, 2022). Black girls often experience prolonged state sanctioned violence in primary and secondary schooling. Mapping the experiences of Black women training to become teachers is particularly complex because most of them were Black girls in school. We know that school environments often mirror oppressive systems found in broader society (Dumas, 2014), doling out what Love (2019) has referred to as "slow violence" against Black children. Black teachers have to reconcile with these systems that have often pushed Black children out (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Love, 2016; Morris, 2016) in their quest to become institutional actors (teachers) in these settings. The path to becoming teachers is particularly fraught for Black women because they are often haunted by the ghosts of their own experiences as well as the experiences of their sisters, aunties, friends, and ancestors that also navigated these violent systems.

In this framework, I explore Black girlhood to understand how the experiences of the participants have impacted their teaching ideologies. Intersectionality and Black feminist frameworks, while serving as a foundation for critical work, have often focused on the

perspectives and experiences of Black women. However, Black girlhood has been heavily undertheorized. Smith (2019), in her chapter, "Theorizing Black Girlhood," claimed,

> The lack of theorizing and articulations that are specific to early childhood (ages three to nine) and adolescent girls (ages 10 to 18) in Black feminism results in an over-essentialized and homogenized description of Black girls' experiences. Black feminism's primary focus on Black adult women has also silenced the voices of Black girls as writers and contributors of their own standpoint and experiences. As a result, Black girlhoods have not equally been engaged in the self-naming and self-empowerment project of Black feminism, as they are not explicitly included in the overall writing, analyses, and theorizing. (p. 24)

While the participants in this study are all Black women, they participated in activities that intentionally explored their childhoods and their experiences as Black girls. Their intersections not only included race, sex, sexuality, SES, etc., these intersections also included their age and situated them in the location of school (Smith, 2019). When Black girls contend with their "coming of age," they are also making sense of their interpersonal, instructional, and institutional relationships. When considering these BWPSTs ideologies, I explored the question that Smith (2019) raised,

> What might it look like if [BWPSTs] thoroughly explored their Black girlhoods and the ways in which these experiences then shaped or influenced their journeys to Black womanhood? In many instances, it seems as if their reflections of Black girlhood are subtle memories, and they have not been granted the necessary time and space to develop further understanding or healing. (p. 27)

Taking the time to understand how their intersectional experiences haunt their teaching ideologies can support them in reconciling with a perpetually violent institution and can spur rearticulations of their experiences to realize new and liberatory futures for themselves and their students. Teacher education programs have the opportunity to provide space for BWPSTs to greet their ghosts and critically re-articulate their teaching ideologies.

Ghosts and Hauntings

I utilized works from Dillard (2022) and Yoon and Chen (2022) to frame hauntology highlighting ghosts and haunting in this study. While I used the succinct frameworks from Dillard (2022) and Yoon and Chen (2022), I acknowledge and honor the work of Black feminists who have contributed to the work of Black Feminist Hauntology (Butler, 1979; Saleh-Hanna, 2015; Hartman, 1997; 2008; McKittrick, 2006; Morrison, 1988; Telly, 2009; Jordan-Zachary, 2017). A ghost is "an incorporeal force that is dead but returns to and interrupts awareness of the living such that it is present for future. A 'paradoxical' 'absent presence' that is structurally and materially produced yet intangible" (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 77). In this explanation, ghosts are not simply spooky or goofy apparitions like Casper. These ghosts help "Black people embody a spiritual knowing, a just knowing, a way of being in relationship with the full circle of life (Dillard, 2022, p. 5). Ghosts, as mentioned here, "while heterogeneous in affect, desires and intentions, and histories, . . . are and were all targets of oppression and victims of state sanctioned violence that has been submerged" (Yoon & Chen p. 77). Because Black girls are often victims of state-sanctioned violence in educational spaces, I argue that the BWPSTs in this study are haunted by ghosts from their childhood. As they navigate through these systems, they have adopted coping strategies and survival skills that show the marks of these hauntings. Because Black women often do not have the space to greet these ghosts, they are continuously

haunted as they carry forth these understandable (but often not sustainable or humane) survival

skills. It is in this way that their teaching ideologies are haunted.

But the presence of ghosts does not necessarily mean that BWPSTs are doomed to be

haunted. In a hauntology framework, ghosts remind us that they have jobs to do. They push us to

(re)member (Dillard, 2022), to correct the record, and thus make it impossible to do something

different and better for the past and future (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 77). Ghosts haunt to push us,

the living, to do something:

> A haunting is an experience or sensation of knowledge or familiarity without prior
>
> exposure or access to them; the uncanny. A process of return and revisitation of the past to
>
> the present; a rejection of linear sequential time. An act of such return by ghosts. A memory
>
> of an ongoing agitation about injustices (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 77).

Haunting is a process of distorting and repeating time that is instigated by violence and

challenges boundaries around reality and possibility (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 77). Ghosts are not

just personal apparitions designed to remind us of our past experiences with institutional

violence. Ghosts haunt and connect us through our histories and tie us to others that have been

impacted by the institution. Ghosts also haunt "those who could have been targets but weren't;

they haunt those who work in the institutions, who inflict pain and have come to be aware of it"

(Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 79). Ghosts push us to have a reckoning on the journey to becoming

teachers.

Each Black woman in this study experienced school as an anti-Black institution that has

been reified for decades in this country. They have been, in various ways and to differing

extents, victims of state sanctioned violence, causing them to be haunted by their ghosts. In

response, they each have learned how to cope with and navigate these systems, which has

impacted their ideologies. The ghosts that haunt them have impacted their transition from Black girls to Black women, their experiences in teacher education, and their teaching ideologies.

Yoon and Chen (2022) argue that there is something to be done about ghosts and hauntings. We can never get rid of ghosts, but we can work with them to unlock a future that was previously unimagined. They argue that one can *witness, (re)memorize* (Dillard, 2022), and *dream* and *transform*. The act of witnessing is an essential step in this process:

> Witnessing is a spirit-led process of being haunted. It is receiving and often recording an account of injustice; it is to be with ghosts and feel traces of their pain, even though you cannot experience it directly. Heeding hauntings begins with witnessing: with being in relation with ghosts, with recognizing that ghosts are always horrifying but not always malevolent. (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 83)

Witnessing is how we affirm that the young Black girl within each of us matters, the ghosts of Black women (both ancestors and others) matter, and what has been erased matters (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 84). In witnessing, we acknowledge the complexities of our personhood acknowledging not only the oppression but also the power in survival and resurgence. In BWT, the Black women reflected and shared their experiences as Black girls and Black women. We acknowledged the ways that institutions have failed us yet allowed us to think that we were failures. As a collective, we witnessed each other's stories, as to not overlook what we have been encouraged to forget.

We can also (re)memorize because, "to remember is to get free"(Dillard, 2022, p. 22). A rememory is a story. Specifically it is a story that helps us "navigate the time when state-sanctioned violence is officially over and done, but the over and done stays" (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 84). (Re)memorizing makes it possible to do the work of (re)visioning, (re)cognizing,

(re)presenting, and (re)claiming (Dillard, 2022, p.22). Rather than forgetting or even forgiving, "releasing the hold that memories have on us—so they no longer have power over us—is the first step in putting the past back together again" (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 85).

When BWPSTs (re)memorize, they are taking power over their stories and they are holding their sisters', mothers', aunties', friends', and students' stories. Dillard (2022) claimed that, (re)claiming involves going back (and forward) to lay claim to the legacy of Black/African people and to take your place within or in relation to this legacy"(p. 22). By (re)claiming their stories they are taking their powerful place in the legacy of Black teachers in this country. They are releasing the burden of these stories so that they can rearticulate their teaching ideologies in liberatory ways. (Re)memorizing helps us to release in order to make room for dreaming and transforming. Freedom dreams (Love, 2019) will never be realized without justice, reckoning, repair, and love. Transforming means "taking steps to return, repair, and reckon with having no good options, and yet having all options" (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 87). It also means, "talking back, resisting and creating the education we wished we had ourselves (Dillard, 2022, p. 3) Black women are transitioning into institutional actors on their journey to becoming teachers. They must witness and (re)memorize to fully engage with their ghosts. This process provides a space for them to begin to dream and to transform their ideologies and subsequently their pedagogy. Working within the institution may feel like it forecloses liberatory options, but realizing that another world can be achieved allows for new and unimagined possibilities. Teacher education programs can support BWPSTs in rearticulating their teaching ideologies through supporting their relationships and interactions with their ghosts, or they can perpetuate anti-Blackness encouraging continued hauntings.

Chapter 4: Methods

Study Design: Building Counterspaces for Black Women Pre-Service Teachers

To study BWPSTs development, I wanted to center BWPSTs subjective experiences, making them subjects of educational scholarship, not merely objects of it. To do this, my study takes a qualitative approach using social design research methodology (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016). Data collection took place in the fall and spring semesters of 2020-2021, overlapping with a global pandemic, allowing me to offer a geographically diffuse affinity space for BWPSTs in the United States.

For this reason, my analysis focuses specifically on the development of BWPSTs who participated in this counterspace (Ong et al., 2018) group, which I called (B)lack + (W)oman + (T)eacher (BWT). A *counterspace* refers to a "safe space" that lies in the margins outside of mainstream educational spaces (Ong. et al., 2018). This space was particularly important as Black teachers are often regarded as having rich experiential knowledge, but the transition from experiential into pedagogical knowledge is largely undertheorized (Jackson-Manuel, 2015). The examination of BWT aims to contribute to the field by centering the perspectives of BWPSTs to illuminate how addressing marginalized teachers' social, cultural, and gendered experiences enhances teacher education in preparation for these teachers to transition into the classroom.

Ten undergraduate and graduate BWPSTs participated in eight virtual *counterspace sessions* (Ong et al., 2017) occurring monthly (see Table 1 for an overview of the sessions and interviews and Table 2 for an overview of the participants). In the tradition of social design research, I used ethnographic methods to understand the meanings participants derived from their experiences in BWT (Emerson et al., 2011). I invited each participant to three interviews over the course of the year to understand these individuals' histories and experiences in

becoming a teacher, with a particular eye on their experiences as K-16 students and in their

teacher education programs. Although not all participants were able to do all of the interviews, in

the spirit of respecting their needs during the pandemic crisis, I interviewed those who were

willing and available.

Meeting Design and Data Collection: Understanding the Experiences and Development of BWPSTs

The meeting topics were designed to surface participants' experiences as Black girls in

school and their experiences in teacher education. I investigated their recollections both at the

group-meeting and individual levels of analysis, with attention towards the relationships between

the two. Both group and individual levels of analysis helped me to understand participants'

teaching ideologies through the activities, conversations, and artifacts (for example: writing

products and collaborative documents) centering the literature shared during the meetings. By

looking across individual and group level development, my analysis surfaced points of

confluence as well as tensions between the two, which can inform future work with similar aims.

Dates:	Data Collection Event:	Themes/Activities:
October 21, 2020	● Meeting 1 of BWT	● Inspiration ● Introductions ● Setting norms
October and November, 2020	● Round 1 of Interviews	● What brought you to teaching? ● Ideas about "good" teaching
November 14, 2020	● Meeting 2 of BWT	● Check-in ● Inspiration ● Introductions ● Community building ● Discussion of text: McCormack, S. (2020). Backpack of Whiteness: Releasing the Weight to Free Myself and My Students. *Urban Education*, *55*(6), 937-962. ● Group discussion of our personal boulders as Black women
December 6, 2020	● Meeting 3 of BWT	● Check-in ● Inspiration

		• Set goals and norms • Discussion of an "ideal" classroom to unpack their teaching priorities and beliefs about "good" teaching
February 7, 2021	• Meeting 4 of BWT	• Check-in • Inspiration • Discussion of quotes from *Pushout* by Monique Morris • Self reflection writing activity
March 7, 2021	• Meeting 5 of BWT	• Check-in • Inspiration • Shared letters we wrote to our 9- or 16- year old selves • Discussed themes from: *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom* by Bettina Love • Self reflection activity: salient identity markers
March and April, 2021	• Round 2 Interviews	• K-16 schooling experiences
April 11, 2021	• Meeting 6 of BWT	• Check-in • Inspiration • Discussion of our understandings of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy using the text: *Becoming Queerly Responsive: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for Black and Latino Urban Queer Youth* by Ed Brockenbrough • Case study
April 25, 2021	• Meeting 7 of BWT	• Check-in • Inspiration • Collaborative writing activity and discussion • Discussion of two questions: How can I become a disruptor in a system that has benefitted me? How can I become a disruptor in a system that oppressed me?
May 2021	• Round 3 Interviews	• Experiences in teacher education
May 23, 2021	• Meeting 8 of BWT	• Check-in • Inspiration • Group discussion about practicing self-care as in-service teachers and advocating for their needs

Table 1. Outline of meetings and interviews for BWT and study participants.

Eliciting and Reflecting on Collective Experiences

Elaborating more on the data collected, I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed eight, two-hour *counterspace* sessions that aimed to provide space for participants to explore their intersectional identities, teaching ideologies, and schooling experiences as a collective. The specific plans for each meeting emerged and responded to participants' interests, but the initial

goal was to read work from Black women education scholars on culturally responsive pedagogy, equitable disciplinary practices, and abolitionist teaching. We also used this counterspace to connect socially, build community, and uplift one another. This affinity space centered these women's needs and affirmed their cultural selves while working to heal their relationships with schooling. Some of the themes that we covered included identity exploration, beliefs about "good" teaching, experiences of Black girls in schools, culturally responsive pedagogy, heterosexism, ableism, and positionality as Black women teachers. An analysis of the pilot work for these meetings found them to be spaces of connection and healing (Harmon & Horn, 2020).

During each meeting, I also jotted handwritten notes of pertinent comments and interactions, and afterwards I typed extensive descriptive retrospective fieldnotes to fill out the recordings and transcripts. I also included my interpretations of body language, interactions between participants, and the use of the chat function on Zoom, as these noticings and observations were used to follow up during one-on-one interviews. Because I was acting as a facilitator and researcher, the fieldnotes were inevitably interpretive and reflective of the sense that I was making of what I was observing (Emerson et al., 2011) while also fully participating in the conversation and activities. Along with fieldnotes, I collected artifacts from each meeting produced by the participants. For example, in Meeting 1 we completed a collaborative writing activity, and in Meeting 4 we built a Padlet with excerpts from *Pushout* (Morris, 2016) that participants wanted to discuss. To enhance the fieldnotes that primarily captured my takeaways from the meetings, I filmed, audio recorded, and transcribed each meeting to create a record of the experiences of these women. Comparing fieldnotes to the recordings and transcripts assisted in my reflexivity as a researcher, which was crucial given the tensions in my participant-observer role. As mentioned above, as a facilitator, I made many decisions during meetings and

interviews. I decided when to ask probing questions, I decided how and when to take up

comments from participants, and I made decisions about how we would interact around texts

(i.e., whether to use small group discussions, reflective writing, etc.). By having both fieldnotes

and transcripts, I tracked my reactions and noticings after meetings and interviews. By

comparing these data, I interrogated my own biases in amplifying or moving past certain

participant contributions, which I used to interpret the content of the conversations. For example,

if I skipped over someone's comment, I would bring that comment back up in the next meeting

or in an interview to give them space to elaborate.

Tracing Individuals' Experiences

To trace individuals' development as BWPSTs, I relied on interviews, which were

recorded on Zoom and transcribed. Most participants completed three open-ended, semi-

structured interviews distributed throughout the year (Kvale, 2015). In the pilot study, my data

analysis had shown that participants had specific reasons for becoming teachers, which included

being raised in a family of Black women teachers, wanting to be the role model they never had in

school, and having a commitment to social justice. In the current study, I further investigated

participants' journeys to becoming educators through their experiences as students, their

experiences in teacher education, their hopes for their future classrooms, and their overall needs

for success. These interviews explored their ideologies and commitments to better understand

their development. Additionally, hearing their personal histories contextualized their

participation in BWT and illuminated the ways in which BWT could potentially support or

inhibit their development and potential healing. Each interview was also audio recorded and

transcribed to collect longitudinal data sets on each participant; these were used for analysis of

individual cases and for cross-case analysis to understand both common themes and points of contrast (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997).

After each interview, I took extensive descriptive notes capturing my experiences of the conversation, noting details that stood out to me and points of contrast and connection to other participants. These became material for writing reflective and analytic memos about each participant after each meeting and interview as I developed a sense of how they were managing the consequential transition to becoming an agent of power in schools. I recorded themes that I noticed and other interesting comments that came up across conversations. I reviewed these comments with my advisor at our check-in meetings.

Tracking participants' themes allowed me to identify interesting relational interactions and narrations of their experiences. By identifying these interactions, I conducted simulated recall interviews by writing them up as vignettes and sharing the written narrative with participants (Calderhead, 1981) as a method for member checking. The tangible artifact allowed me to prompt participants for what they were thinking and feeling at the time as they shared personal stories or experiences; although these reports could not be taken to be 100% accurate, they can provide important substantiation and insight into how these women were narrating their stories. This was important information as it was used for methodological notes and to better understand the impact of facilitator moves that help or hinder the learning and social processes in the meetings.

Researcher Role

Because of the interpretive nature of this research, it was important to understand my own role in meaning construction. This was especially important in BWT, since I had the dual role of researcher and facilitator. Tensions of participant observation exist in ethnographic

studies all the time; for the clarity of my analysis, it was important for me to be, "actively engaged, thoughtful, and forthright regarding tensions that can surface while conducting this study" (Milner, 2007, p. 388). As a facilitator, I acted as an insider because I shared key identity markers with the participants, giving me an insider connection (Harmon & Horn, 2021). This connection gave me crucial relational and interpretive resources, as I understood most cultural references made during meetings; I empathized with their stories, often having similar stories; and I was able to organize activities that spoke to our common identity markers. As a facilitator, I actively engaged in each BWT session, so when I asked participants to engage in writing and/or reflection activities, I also engaged in those activities. I often shared my reflections and experiences in teacher education and as a teacher. I felt like I was able to share more with this group than in typical white-centered spaces because I assumed that they would understand my stories because of our similar social and cultural experiences. In this way, on the participant-observer continuum (Guest et al., 2013), my role in the group was highly participatory.

Another tension involved the sensitive nature of what we were discussing. My ultimate goals as a facilitator were to protect my participants, to push their thinking, and to provide a space where they could show up and interact authentically. To that end, I began every meeting with a check-in and inspiration to ground our work together for each meeting and to surface our shared experiences (an idea I borrowed from Joseph Mathematics Education Lab). I used these activities as a way to show that I cared about their well-being, and I encouraged them to reach out to others in the group as resources and support throughout their teacher education programs. We also engaged in vulnerable activities where I asked them to reflect on their experiences, and sometimes those experiences were painful. By asking probing questions and asking participants to reflect on certain experiences, I absolutely tried to avoid re-traumatizing anyone. I often used

my power as a facilitator to provide choices and offer them different levels of participation. For instance, I encouraged them to speak and share where they felt comfortable or to step back and listen when that seemed more appropriate.

While my role as a facilitator afforded me opportunities to engage in this group, it also had limitations. Because I often shared my stories and experiences, I was mindful as an analyst about how conversations and activities developed because of my input. When I reviewed meeting transcripts, I interrogated my role: Did my voice silence anyone else's? Did the participants feel empowered to challenge my comments? Also, as a facilitator, I was constantly making decisions both during the planning phases and during sessions. Again, this awareness shaped my reflection and analysis, as I questioned my response to participants' comments or wondered if I should have taken up a topic in different ways to elicit different responses. As part of my reflexivity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019) around these issues, I regularly consulted with my advisor and members of the Joseph Mathematics Education Lab about the tensions that surfaced, trying to respond in ways that reflected my goals and my commitment to care (Collins, 1990).

As a researcher, as I reflected on the data that meetings and interviews yielded, my role was more aligned to that of an outsider. Although I was engaged in the conversation as a facilitator, I also reviewed recorded sessions to analyze the interactions, discussions, and writing activities. As an analyst, I was able to use artifacts from our meetings and interviews to theorize about the needs of BWPSTs. Even though I shared an insider connection, I held power in this space (especially as someone who designed and led the activities and paid participants). I had to unpack the ways in which my power operated in the meetings. During the data collection phases, I examined the ways that my participants interacted with me. What did they say to me? When

were they silent? In what ways did they actively engage or take on a more passive role? How did I know? The comments they made to position me offered insight into their experiences with me. For example, during an interview with Sasha, we talked about her personal aspirations as an educator. She said she was not sure if she wanted to be a teacher for her entire career, but she knew that she wanted to stay in education. In thinking about exploring different ways to "be in education," she said, "I am trying to get like you, sis." At this moment, I think she positioned me in two different ways. First, by saying, "I am trying to get like you," she positioned me as a role model, signaling that she thought I was in a potentially more desirable position in education. This position came with potentially more power or prestige, so she was signaling that my position was aspirational which reflected my role as a "facilitator" or someone with power in the group. Additionally, she referred to me as "sis," a term signaling that she saw me as someone that shared fictive kinship with her and that she saw me as nearly the same age by referring to me as sister. On the other hand, during our fifth meeting, Taylor unmuted her microphone and asked, "Mariah, will you allow me to say something here? I'd like to share something." Taylor asked me this question as we were finishing a sharing exercise about letters we wrote to our nine-year old or sixteen-year old selves. I had just mentioned that, if no one else had a comment, then we would move on. By using the term "allowed," Taylor reinforced my facilitator role as the person that decided how and when the conversation would move. Both of these comments helped me to understand how the participants perceived me during the meetings and, consequently, to investigate how they made meaning in this space. Over the course of my project, I continued to attend to these moments to understand how I was perceived and remain mindful of the tensions this pointed to.

The tension between my role as a facilitator and researcher pushed me to grapple with a question raised by Tuck and Yang (2014): "How do we learn from and respect the wisdom and desires in the stories that we (over) hear, while refusing to portray/betray them to the spectacle of the settler colonial gaze?" (p. 223). I engage in this research because I want to build new structures in teacher education to better support minoritized teachers. I want to theorize about the needs of BWPSTs. Because of these goals, I constantly monitor and make decisions that will protect the words and experiences of my participants while also contributing to the field of teacher education. Through an ethic of care (Noddings, 2015), I refuse to portray/betray them to the spectacle of the settler colonial gaze. This means that I constantly checked in with them and communicated with them about their right of refusal. At the start of each meeting, I explained my reasons for recording our meetings, but I asked them to let me know if they wanted me to stop the recording at any time and for whatever reason. I provided various levels of participation for every activity, so that each participant could participate in ways that allowed them agency in what they disclosed or kept private. I also conducted member checks with each focal participant to share my findings. Even as a Black woman researcher and facilitator, I can participate in settler colonial practices, so by discussing these tensions, I can continue to investigate them as I conduct this research.

Participants

Prior to this dissertation study, I conducted a pilot of the BWT group, as described in Harmon & Horn (2020). In the pilot study, I only recruited local BWPSTs as participants. As I alluded to in the introduction of this chapter, the pilot was interrupted by a natural disaster along with the COVID19 pandemic. Using the disruption as an opportunity, I used the reality of the new everything virtual world to recruit participants from a broader geographical area, identifying

BWPSTs at various institutions around the United States. Participant recruitment for the BWT group happened in a couple of ways. I began by sending out fliers and email invitations to student listservs, distributing fliers to professors to share, and using social media. Once a few participants showed interest, I used snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997) to recruit additional participants. Additionally, I utilized convenience sampling to recruit participants. Convenience sampling was appropriate for a counterspace because it was

> a type of nonprobability or nonrandom sampling where members of the
> target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy
> accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the
> willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study. (Etikan
> et. al, 2015, p. 2)

Each participant signed up for this group because they fit the criteria of Black, woman, and pre-service teacher, along with agreeing to attend monthly meetings and periodic interviews, as well as having access to Zoom to interact virtually. As I interpreted my data, I remained mindful of my sampling strategy: participants sought out the opportunity to participate in the group. In contrast, had this group been deemed mandatory for Black women across teacher education programs, then the interactions and engagement would potentially be different, impacting the findings of this study.

Participants consisted of ten Black women enrolled in either primary or secondary teacher education programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Their programs varied across grade bands and subject areas. The participant sample included women from institutions from across the east coast, south, and midwest regions of the United States. All participants

consented to the research aspect of this activity, and I asked them to choose their pseudonyms, which are in Table 1 below.

Pseudonym:	Content Area:	Undergraduate /Graduate:	Program Type:	Region of Country:	Salient identity markers:	Int I	Int II	Int III
LY	Elementary	Graduate	Alt. Route	Mountain	Muslim, immigrant	X	X	X
Taylor*	Math	Graduate	Alt. Route	South	Mathematician	X	X	X
Ida B.	English	Graduate	Alt. Route	South	Queer, disabled			X
Joan Scott	Science	Undergraduate	University-Based	South	Christian		X	X
Tanya*	Elementary	Graduate	Alt. Route	South	Biracial, Catholic	X	X	X
Lisa	Elementary	Undergraduate	University-Based	South	Christian, athlete			
Sade*	Math	Graduate	University-Based	South	Mathematician	X	X	X
Caresha*	Elementary	Graduate	Alt. Route	Midwest	Granddaughter, sister, aunt, religious	X	X	X
Sasha	Math	Undergraduate	University-Based	South	Sister, Christian	X	X	X
Willow	Social Studies	Undergraduate	University-Based	South	First generation college student			X

Table 2. Participants in the BWT study. The (*) and highlight denotes focal participants. Salient identity markers refer to characteristics that participants self-identified using a survey distributed during meeting five. I additionally added identity markers to participants using information that was shared through group discussions and personal interviews.

Focal Cases

Within this larger group of BWPSTs, I focused on Caresha, Taylor, Tanya, and Sade. Throughout this dissertation, my goal was to disrupt the notion that Black women and Black teachers are monolithic. I chose these four women to illustrate that point. These BWPSTs had some similar and some different schooling experiences, but their teaching ideologies and priorities varied greatly. Some of the similarities included Caresha and Tanya who were both training to become elementary school teachers while Taylor and Sade were in secondary

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mathematics education. Each focal participant was enrolled in a graduate program, but there was variation in whether they were enrolled in a university-based program or an alternative route program. As expected, there was variation in their self-identified identity markers.

I chose these four women because they provided a spectrum in understanding the experiences and teaching ideologies of BWPSTs. Each woman's identity was complex and layered, so by choosing these women I illustrate how their converging and diverging experiences shaped their teaching ideologies in distinct ways further highlighting the in-group diversity of BWPSTs. Lastly, these women served as the focal cases because I had substantial data to build on: they attended at least six of the eight counterspace meetings, and they all participated in all three of the individual interviews.

Data Analysis

Analytic Approach

To investigate each research question, I combined theoretical tenets from Black Feminist Epistemologies (Collins, 2000) and practical tenets from the Listening Guide (Gilligan et. al, 2006). By grounding my work in Black Feminism, I found The Lisetning Guide to be a helpful analytical tool to help illuminate the voices of the BWPSTs in this study. Gilligan et al. (2006) described the Listening Guide as:

> A method of psychological analysis that draws on voice, resonance, and relationship as ports of entry into the human psyche. Thus each person's voice is distinct— a footprint of the psyche, bearing the marks of the body, of that person's history, of culture in the form of language, and the myriad ways in which human society and history shape the voice and thus leave their imprints on the human soul. (p. 2)

The Listening Guide method consisted of a series of listenings, each designed to bring the researcher into relationship with a person's multilayered voice. In a Black Feminist Epistemilogical framework, lived experience is a criterion for credibility (Collins, 2000, p. 257). In this study, these Black women shared their lived experiences through group meetings and interviews. Through each listening exercise, I attuned to distinct aspects of the participant's expression, voice, and experience within a particular context. This approach to listening was centered on a set of basic questions about voice: "Who is speaking and to whom, telling what stories about relationship, in what societal and cultural frameworks (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 21)?" Collins (2000) claimed,

> For Black women new knowledge claims are rarely worked out in isolation from other individuals and are usually developed through dialogues with other members of a community. A primary epistemological assumption underlying the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims is that connectedness rather than separation is an essential component of the knowledge validation process. (p. 255)

As a collective in both meetings and interviews, the participants and I (the facilitator) built knowledge through our dialogues. With these understandings, I read the interview transcripts and listened to the audio recordings multiple times, with each listening focused on a different aspect of the narrative. Gilligan et al. (2006) referred to each step as, "a "listening" rather than a "reading," because the process of listening requires the active participation on the part of both the teller and the listener" (p. 3). Similarly, Collins (2000) highlighted listening as an active role. For example, in call-and-response discourse often utilized in Black churches, the focus is typically on the speaker. However, in this discourse, the speaker and the listener *both* interact verbally and non-verbally where the speaker calls and the listener responds. A key connection

between Black Feminist epistemology and to the foundation of the Listening Guide is that, "The fundamental requirement of this interactive network is active participation of all individuals" (Collins, 2000, p. 261). As a researcher and facilitator, I was an active listener. Not only did I listen for research purposes, but I listened to affirm, encourage, and support these BWPSTs. In addition, this method is particularly useful in analyzing the stories of BWPSTs because:

> Each listening is not a simple analysis of the text but rather is intended to guide the listener in tuning into the story being told on multiple levels and to experience, note, and draw from his or her resonances to the narrative. (Gilligan et. al, 2006, p. 3)

As outlined here, the Listening Guide differed from traditional qualitative coding structures, since I focused on the layers of the participants' voices rather than seeking stable categories or quantifying the text.

As a facilitator and researcher in this study, it was important to intentionally listen to each participant's voice. Building on my conceptual framework (Chapter 3), I adapted the Listening Guide with a Black Feminism lens as a strategy to listen for the ghosts that have haunted the participants' teaching ideologies and their experiences in their teacher education programs. I used this analysis to then answer and build recommendations for how teacher education programs can better support BWPSTS. Below, I outlined the original Listening Guide process and how I adapted each step to make sense of each woman's story. Finally, I outlined how I used Freedom Dreaming as a methodology to build recommendations for teacher education.

Listening for the Plot. The first step of the Listening Guide was to *Listen for the Plot*. As described by Gilligan et. al (2006), "The first listening comprises two parts: (a) listening for the plot and (b) the listener's response to the interview" (p. 4). Both steps are important, as Collins (2000) outlines oral traditions in African American culture where "there is always the

consciousness and importance of the hearer" (p. 261). In this step, I took on the role of an active listener to engage in a process that was very similar to traditional open coding in qualitative research.

In this step, I listened to each woman's interview, and I attended to the plot by simply trying to understand what was going on in each interview. I took note of interesting stories they told, repetitive phrases and themes, connections to conversations in BWT, and anything that surprised me or gave me pause. After this listening, I wrote memos capturing major themes emerging in each interview and any connections I sensed between participants. I also used this listening to actively respond to the interview. I responded to their stories by writing and describing my position and experiences, and I responded to my own interviewing moves noting instances when I felt my input impacted the flow of the conversation. This reflection was important, as Milner (2007) pointed out that, "researchers must be mindful of the enormous role of their own and others' racialized positionality and cultural ways of knowing"(p. 388). In this reflexive practice, I consciously and actively listened and documented my own responses to what each participant expressed. I notated examples where my own story converged or diverged with the stories each woman shared during the interviews. In this step, I documented my conversation with the transcript to help uncover my associations with the narrative being analyzed.

"I" Poems. A key tenet of Black Feminist Thought (BFT) centers on Black women's self-definition and self-valuation. Farinde-Wu et al. (2016) summarized Collins (2000) by stating that:

> BFT advocates for a self-defined image of Black womanhood, seeks to clarify the lives of Black women, and places their distinct set of experiences and ideas at the center of

analysis by dismantling the pervasive Eurocentric viewpoint that is given universal status (Collins, 2000).

In this step of the Listening Guide, I used the transcripts of each participants' interviews to construct "I" Poems. To construct an "I" Poem, I utilized two rules:

> (a) underline or select every first-person "I" within the passage you have chosen along with the verb and any seemingly important accompanying words and (b) maintain the sequence in which these phrases appear in the text. The[n] pull out the underlined "I" phrases, keeping them in the order they appear in the text, and place each phrase on a separate line, like lines in a poem. (p. 5)

For each woman, I completed a listening and created an "I" Poem using the process outlined above. In the original transcript, I highlighted each time the participant used the pronoun "I" and the phrase that followed. Next, I typed the "I" phrase into another document, preserving the sequence from the transcript, creating the poem. After constructing a full poem, I read it multiple times. After reading, I wrote memos about my noticings and the voice that I heard throughout the poems. This step in the process helped me to gain insights into how each woman spoke about herself and her perspectives. Sometimes, the voice would echo my reflections of the participant; other times, it would provide me with a totally new perspective. At the start of each findings chapter (Chapters 5-8), I condensed the "I" Poems for each woman to build a composite to illustrate their story.

Since Black Feminist Thought advocates for a self-defined image of Black womanhood, the "I" Poems center the first-person perspectives of these BWPSTs. This process helped me to hear how these women spoke about themselves, and it highlighted their voices in a powerful way. The "I" Poems invited me to listen to another voice that I could not hear in the traditional

transcript. I isolated their words in order to hear how they positioned and spoke about themselves. This was particularly powerful as, "hooks (1994) makes it explicit that Black female teachers carry with them gendered experiences and perspectives that have been (historically) silenced and marginalized in the discourses about teaching and learning" (Milner, 2006, p.91). By creating these "I" Poems, I actively listened to their voices in an effort to disrupt this silence.

Listening for Contrapuntal Voices. The next step, listening for contrapuntal voices, brings the analysis back into relationship with the research questions. As outlined in Gilligan et al. (2006),

> This step offers a way of hearing and developing an understanding of several different layers of a person's expressed experience as it bears on the question posed. The logic behind this step is drawn from the musical form counterpoint, which consists of the combination of two or more melodic lines. Each melodic line has its own rhythm and "melodic curve" (the shape and movement of a melody within a range of low and high notes). These melodic lines of music are played simultaneously and move in some form of relationship with each other. (p.7)

This step in the Listening guide helped me to uncover the complexity in each participants' narrative. In this phase of the analysis, I started to interrogate the many layers of my participants' expressed experiences as they related to my research questions. In this analysis, the counterpoint was each woman's ghosts that haunted their narratives. By the time I got to this step, I had listened to each transcript at least three times. After *Listening for the Plot* and creating the *"I" Poems*, I listened again to attune my ear to the ghosts that haunted their stories. Once I identified the ghosts, I then listened to the interview again highlighting portions of the transcript that spoke to each ghost. After each of these listenings, I also wrote memos as a strategy to record my

observations and areas for continued exploration. This process illuminated many truths in these women's stories. As Collins explained, "The narrative requires that the story be told, not torn apart in analysis, and trusted as core belief, not 'admired as science'" (p. 258). The woman's stories were indicators of their lived experience, legitimizing their knowledge and viewpoints as sources for scholarship. Again, it became important to actively listen to the contrapuntal voices as they were presented rather than trying to quantify or code them in particular ways.

Composing an Analysis. In this final step, I continued to listen to and read each transcript. I listened to make sense of how these women were narrating their stories and their realities. Using a BFT lens, I understood their "experiences as a criterion of meaning" (Collins, 2000, p. 258). By noting each woman's ghosts and hauntings, I was able to identify and make connections to their teaching ideologies and their experiences in their teacher education program.

The Listening Guide was particularly helpful in making these connections because this process was complex, and it did not derive its meaning from counts or presumed coherence. These BWPSTs' stories were not linear. I used the Listening Guide as a strategy to understand each woman's reality and standpoint. Black women's voices are often absent from teacher education conversations (Milner, 2006), so this process helped me spotlight the voices of Black women. This approach to data analysis valued and uplifted their complexities, making space for me to imagine alternative worlds and to make recommendations for teacher education in the future. I use direct quotes from each participant to keep their voices as the focal points in this analysis.

Reporting. In Chapters 5- 8, I present my findings, exploring and answering the first two research questions for Caresha, Taylor, Tanya, and Sade. By unpacking their ghosts from their schooling experiences, I explore how their ghosts shaped their teaching ideologies and

experiences in their teacher education programs. In these four chapters, I answered: (1) How have Black women's schooling experiences impacted their teaching ideologies? (2) How are BWPSTs experiencing and learning in teacher education programs? In each chapter I outline each participants' background, ghosts, teaching ideologies, and their experiences in their teacher education program. I illustrate how their ghosts have shaped their teaching ideologies and shaped how they experienced their teacher education programs. These chapters help to support the final empirical chapter where I freedom dream to imagine new possibilities for teacher education.

Freedom Dreaming as Methodology. In the final empirical chapter, Chapter 8, I answered the following question: How can teacher education programs better support BWPSTs? To do so, I developed and engaged in a Freedom Dreaming methodology (Love, 2019). Love (2019) defined freedom dreaming as "dreams grounded in a critique of injustice" (p. 101). She goes on to say, "these dreams are not whimsical, unattainable daydreams, they are critical and imaginative dreams of collective resistance" (p. 101). Freedom Dreaming as methodology hinges on critiquing injustices, imaginative dreams, and collective resistance.

To critique injustice, I centered the narratives of the Black women in this study. Through their engagement with interview questions and conversations in BWT, they made meaning and we theorized about their experiences as Black girls and as Black women in their teacher education programs. The goal in this dissertation was not just to understand their experiences, but to situate them in larger contexts to understand how systems in teacher education have supported or inhibited BWPSTs' development. Congruent with Collins (2000), I utilized their lived experience as a criterion for credibility when making knowledge claims to engage in Freedom Dreaming. Their stories were evidence that teacher education needs to be critiqued to better reflect the developmental needs of BWPSTs. Love (2019) stated:

Freedom dreaming gives teachers a collective space to methodically tear down the

educational survival complex and collectively rebuild a school system that truly loves all

children and sees schools as children's homeplaces, where students are encouraged to

give this world hell (p. 102).

In this same vein, freedom dreaming allows an opportunity for dreamers to step outside of our

current reality to imagine what could be and what should be.

In Chapter 7, I introduce each section by summarizing each focal participants' story,

ghosts and hauntings, and experiences in teacher education. To build imaginative dreams of

collective resistance, I imagined how teacher education programs should have engaged each

woman by constructing recommendations that reflected her needs. Each of these

recommendations calls for reorganization and reimagination of the foundation of teacher

education. Love (2019) claimed that, "Freedom Dreaming for intersectional social justice is what

movements are made of" (p. 103). With this work, I intend to start a movement with Black

women at the center. This methodology is important because we have to build and fight for the

reality that we want, because it does not currently exist.

Chapter 5: Caresha
A Black Girl Who Always Knew She Would Be a Teacher

I am from East Town[1]
I mattered
I'm the kid that has a smart mouth
I want to mouth off to teachers
I know stuff
I can do this
I can become a teacher
I want to do this for the rest of my life
I was born and raised there
I graduated from there
I chose East Town
I've walked these streets
I've sat in those desks
I give my students my all
I just have this whole big heart
I talk to my grandmother
I literally call her everyday
I call her my heaven on earth
I didn't mean to disrespect her
I wasn't being disrespectful
I just raised my hand
I went to the office
I just had to be a child
I was still ready to be a fun learner
I was still optimistic
I became determined
I became optimistic and determined
I always had that spunk within myself.

I Poem from Caresha's Interviews

Background

Caresha was from East Town, and she took great pride in her hometown. She was

dedicated to giving back to the children of East Town, and she strived to be a role model. She

had strong familial ties, and she referenced her grandmother often in our conversations. Her

grandmother named her, and she often provided Caresha with a sense of security and support. As

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[1] East Town is a pseudonym for Caresha's hometown.

a young girl, Caresha was too young to officially start Kindergarten but also too old for daycare, so a Kindergarten teacher at her local school made some calls and promised to look out for Caresha. As Caresha recalled:

> I was really, really small and itty bitty, and the way that my birthday fell for some reason, even though it's in January, I couldn't start with the East Town School District. And my mother was like, "What am I going to do? She's too old for daycare." And things like that. And the teacher, which is my kindergarten teacher, at the time she was Miss T, she's remarried now, but she was like, "You know what? I'm going to take her. I'll accept her. I'll try to figure it out with the school district, but I want her. I'm going to take her." And from that moment on the teacher just was looking at me and she made sure that I felt comfortable. She made sure that everything was everything. She made me feel as if I mattered. So I was like, okay, I want to be a kindergarten teacher. (Interview I, line 8)

This experience with her teacher sparked her love for teaching and her passion to support kids like herself. She recalled really loving elementary and middle school, but things started to change as she transitioned to high school. She referred to being exposed to more "things" and seeing much more than she ever did in elementary or middle school. She also felt like high school turned into a system or a factory for the students in her school:

> I feel like when high school came around, I feel like since that's the end of their public school career, our public school career, I feel like they're just like, "Let's get them in, get them passed, get them out." …[2] So, I feel like the teachers now are just like ... Well, the high school teachers then were just like, "I know you don't understand, but, hey, I've got to keep going or I'll get in trouble." So, I just feel like, once they reached high school, it

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[2] "…" denotes pauses in the dialogue, typically denoted by the speaker pausing to think about their statement.

became a system. We just became a system. Not to relate it to the justice system, but I feel like that's how it became. It no longer, "Oh, we care. We want you to grow. We want you to be better." It became get them in, feed them, get them out. Get them in, feed them, get them out. So, it was just like there's no time for fun when you're on a schedule.

(Interview II, line 28)

In this interview, Caresha expressed that she did not feel like there was a culture of care or joy in the school anymore. Instead, her school had external benchmarks they had to reach, no matter how the students performed or learned the content. Caresha described herself as an "optimistic and determined learner" in high school, and that determination propelled her into college and to even pursue a graduate degree. She had worked extremely hard with the help of some impactful teachers, so she led with that mantra as an educator. She prioritized supporting her students' behavior and encouraging them to work hard to positively impact their futures. Listening to and analyzing Caresha's educational stories, I found that she was haunted by the ghosts of *investment in individual responsibility* and *adultification*. Shaped by these ghosts, her teaching ideologies centered on student safety through control and compliance as a prerequisite for learning. Her teacher education program did not challenge her ideologies or provide space for her to greet her ghosts, so she perpetuated these carceral beliefs in her teaching practices.

During the time of the study, Caresha was enrolled in a one-year alternative route teacher education program to earn her teacher licensure credential in elementary education. This program was based in East Town, attracting natives of East Town as a mechanism to increase retention. This program partnered with teachers from the school district in East Town and with adjunct professors at a small, local, private university to lead learning cycles for pre-service

teachers. A main goal for this program was to train teachers quickly to help fill vacancies in the school district.

Important Dimensions of Caresha's Schooling Experiences

First Ghost: Investment in Individual Responsibility

      High School Experiences: Learning You Have to Save Yourself. As a student, especially in high school, Caresha did not always feel safe in her school building. She shared a description of structural issues that allowed for the perimeter to be breached by students — and even people that were not associated with the school community:

> So, how my high school was, it was pretty much some doors, like the back part of the school, our gym doors, you were able to jimmy them open, and then there was an area where it was like the pod is what we called it. It was the oldest part of the school, and there was a door. I remember, it was like the emergency door. It never worked. So, people were able to come in and out of the school. It was kind of like a scary situation, because incidents did take place. It was an eyeopener, because it was like, "Wow. What's going on?" But, yeah. It wasn't that bad. It was just high school, I started to see everything. Some of us learned to stay away from that part of the building, and that kept us away from that stuff. Don't do anything crazy, and you good. (Interview II, line 17)

In this quotation, Caresha described a faulty emergency door that caused the school to be vulnerable to safety issues. This was most likely an outcome of dispossession (Fine & Ruglis, 2009) of this majority-Black school, resulting in funding gaps that did not maintain pace with the needs in the building. The issue with the door and subsequent issues with safety were due to structural inequalities, but this structural reality carried important lessons for how these students learned how to engage in society; these students were taught how to navigate this space despite

this evidence of dispossession. Caresha shared that her solution to this door issue was to stay away from that part of the building, and to "not do anything crazy." In other words, the logic was that if a student controlled their behavior and avoided dangerous situations, then they would be safe. Ultimately, individual students were responsible for their own safety, making a systemic problem a personal one. Rather than focusing on the structural racism that most likely caused the reduced budget that did not cover necessary repairs, students lived in ways to maintain as much control as possible over their own safety. Undoubtedly, Caresha learned safety was largely a product of an individual's decisions and actions.

These lessons stayed with Caresha. As a future teacher, she took on safety in her classroom and focused on the behavior and actions of individual students as a catalyst for change in her hometown. She wanted to support students in learning how to behave in order to turn East Town around.

Experiences in Teacher Education: Hoping for the Future. Moving on from high school, Caresha remained haunted by her *investment in individual responsibility* as a mechanism for systemic change. Caresha was incredibly proud of East Town, but she was also cognizant of the social issues that affected it. Her approach to teaching stemmed from a deep insider perspective, and she often communicated her hopes for improvements in the neighborhood. From her experiences as a student, as described above, she was taught that individual behavior (from students and teachers) was ultimately responsible for student achievement and safety in her school. Her teachers helped her to believe in herself encouraging her to graduate, so as she transitioned into teacher education, she wanted to motivate her students in the same way:

I can show them that where you come from... It doesn't matter where you come from. It doesn't matter what you look like. You can be successful no matter what the world says

or what the world puts against you. I was like, yeah, I can do this. This is what I want to

do. So if it wasn't for Mr. K and Miss T, I don't think that, as far as me believing in

myself, I don't think I would have had it if it wasn't for those two teachers. (Interview I,

line 10)

She credited her success and drive to become a teacher to two teachers that had a positive

influence on her. She further individualized success by stating that a student can be successful no

matter what the world puts against them or what they look like. She expressed that if a teacher

believed in a student and if they worked hard enough, they could overcome anything. Her

meritocratic beliefs (Meroe, 2014) linked success to working harder and fueled her drive to

become a teacher to support the next generation. While student drive was important, again, this

individualized responsibility for success did not take into consideration the ways her city had

been systemically dispossessed (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). She credited these teachers for teaching

her to believe in herself, which ultimately encouraged her to finish high school and college. She

thought about teaching as a way to support students by changing their behaviors to support their

success in school:

Technically, I would love to have kindergartners. And I say kindergarten specifically

because that's where you start. That's where the kids' minds are fresh. That's where

you're able to correct things that you don't feel like at this age students should know.

That's where you make the most impact, at the beginning and the end of a student's

career in school, I feel like, because that's where my impact was made for me, at the

beginning and the end of my school career. (Interview I, line 17)

In this instance, Caresha used the word *correct* when referring to students' knowledge when they

came to school. Using the word *correct* signaled the need to fix something, and in this instance

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she was referring to the knowledge that the students built at home. She expressed that changes needed to be made so that students could have a chance to be successful and to fulfill their dreams. However, she stated that the onus for these changes were on individual students and teachers. She seemed to ascribe to the meritocratic ideals that have often been sold in the United States: if someone just cares and works hard enough, then that person will be successful. If teachers can just "correct" what a student learned at home, then that student will be successful. In her experiences as a student, she was haunted by *investment in individual responsibility*, as she was taught that she could protect herself and encourage uplift through personal actions and behaviors.

Second Ghost: Adultification

K-12 Experiences: Needing Protection as a Child. Caresha's second ghost was adultification. Hardaway et al. (2019) used the term adultification to "describe a phenomenon which effectively removes and reduces the consideration of childhood as a mediating factor in Black youths' behavior" (p. 36). In their analysis, adultification referred to treating Black girls as if they were older, removing their space to be children. Actions such as asking questions were taken as disrespect, and these students were often warned against making mistakes because of the way the world perceives Black bodies. Historically, adultification was often tied to harsher punishment and disciplinary practices for Black students.

Caresha attended elementary through high school with a majority Black student population, and a majority Black teaching population. She referred to having more white and Hispanic teachers in middle school and high school, but the student population remained majority Black. As she transitioned into high school, she remembered the shifts in culture between elementary and middle school to high school:

It's just we saw more, because we had a candy store that sat on the corner of our school. So, we saw more things, different things that we didn't see in elementary school or things that our teachers didn't let us see in elementary school. So, it wasn't too bad, but it was like, "Whoa, never saw this before." It was kind of like a culture shock. (Interview II, line 13)

In this reflection, Caresha shared a glimpse into her reactions as to what she saw in these spaces. She hinted at these things being more advanced than what she was ready for at that age. She described the way that her elementary teachers tried to shield them from those things, but it became inevitable as she moved on to middle and high school. She goes on to say that there was not much after a certain age that the teachers could shield them from. The shifts in her views of the world significantly impacted her drive to become a teacher. She wanted to help students like herself, who were exposed to different things, to resist and to keep working towards their goals.

When Caresha made it to high school, she reported a change in her feelings towards school. She started to dislike school, and she sensed a change with how the teachers regarded the students. She commented:

I did enjoy school. I enjoyed school the most when I was elementary, middle, because it was easy. It was fun. It was exciting. But when I got to high school, I got into a lot of trouble. So, I was just like, "I don't like school anymore. You get in trouble for everything. You can't really do anything. The teachers think you're trying to make them look bad if you know certain things a certain way." It was just a lot. So, I was like, "I hate school." (Interview II, line 33)

Caresha mentioned that teachers assumed students were trying to make them look bad "if you know things a certain way." In this excerpt, Caresha described a common tension felt by Black

girls. She worked hard and was expected to get good grades, but if "you know something in a particular way" or if a student shared it in a particular way, then they could be perceived as challenging the teacher. Instead of knowing being a good thing, Black girls were seen as trying to compete with or undermine their teacher. There were many points during Caresha's schooling career where she had been adultified or warned about how her behavior could be seen as "too grown," forcing her to mute and dim her shine. Even with teachers that she trusted, respectability was important in the quest to succeed and to "get out" of East Town:

> And he just let us know one day, "Hey, once we get grown and we get out on the streets, nobody's going to look at us like kids anymore. If you do this or do that, this may happen." He just exposed us to the real world. He was another teacher that made us feel like ... As a teacher, some of our teachers don't even care if we come to class on time. He's not even talking to us about class. He's talking to us about real life and how we need to respect ourselves, respect others, and be mindful of things that we're doing. (Interview 11, line 67)

Caresha described this teacher as one of her favorite teachers, as he took time to show the students that they mattered. She said, "He was not even talking to us about class, but he was talking about real life." This is significant because as a majority Black student body, this teacher took time to tell them how their actions would be perceived in the "real world." He warned them against being in the streets and acting "too grown" because they could not afford to make mistakes. As Black children, they had real consequences waiting for them. He would encourage them to act like adults because they were so close to finishing high school, and Black bodies are not typically afforded grace in the United States. However, acting like an adult was not always a

good thing at Caresha's high school. She reflected on particular teachers that would often talk about the girls acting "too grown:"

> I believe she was my reading teacher. For some reason she just had it out for the females in the school. It was just like she would always tell us, "Y'all little girls think y'all grown, and y'all think that just because this looks like this and this looks like that, y'all can do whatever." And we were all just like, "Okay. We just came in the class. What did we do? Where did we go wrong?" But it was just like she was one of those teachers. For some reason, she just had it out for I guess the younger generation. (Interview II, line 73)

This teacher — seemingly unprovoked — would tell the girls in the school that they thought they were "acting grown" for just existing. Caresha remembered being confused and frustrated by this teacher's words and behaviors, because she did not feel like she deserved that treatment. This teacher repeated narratives that Black girls often have to disrupt. Their bodies are often oversexualized, their actions and behaviors are interpreted as disrespectful, and they are often hypervisible and over-disciplined in school settings (Morris, 2016). This Black woman teacher contributed to this narrative by constantly telling the girls in the class that they were acting too grown:

> One day I didn't mean to disrespect her. I didn't feel like I was being disrespectful. But one day she was just going off like, "Y'all do this. Y'all ain't going to be this. Y'all ain't going to do this." At one point, I just raised my hand, and I'm like, "What did we do? What did we do? How does this relate to our reading lesson? I'm not about to sit in class and be bashed, because I didn't do anything." And she went off. "See? This is what I'm talking about. You go into the office, and you think you're grown." And it was just like, "You still didn't answer my question, but okay. I'm going to go to the office." So, I went

to the office, and my mom was called, different things like that, but it was just like she

covered her butt the entire time. "I wasn't going off. I was talking to a certain student. She

just jumped up and started talking." As a kid, you can't call an adult a fibber, but it was

like she's fibbing on me. So, I just had to be a child and was like, "Don't say anything.

Don't listen." Not to say don't listen, but don't take what she's saying to heart. (Interview

II, line 74-75)

In this instance, Caresha chose to stand up for herself with this teacher. She asked this teacher a

simple question, but it was received as disrespect. Consequently, Caresha was sent to the office.

This offense led her to be removed from her classroom. Her removal from the classroom was

pertinent, as it reflected the ways that Black girls are overrepresented in suspension and

expulsion data due to subjective infractions like disobedience or defiance which are left to the

discretion of the teacher or administrator (Annamma et. al, 2019). She even said that the teacher

lied about what happened in the classroom, but Caresha discussed this tension between taking on

the child's role, defending herself, and being careful to not challenge her teacher by telling her

side of the story. She dealt with the tension of wanting to stand up for herself and her classmates,

but her simple question was interpreted as disrespectful, and she was ultimately punished. From

these instances, she revealed that she had to learn how to communicate in order to be successful.

She had to turn down her "attitude" so that she could be heard:

I always had that spunk within myself, but from middle school to high school I had to

figure out how to use it in a positive way without getting in trouble, because I would

always used to be ... I'd just pop off and just say what I want, because y'all can't talk to

me like that. Respect is given as well as received. But I had to learn it's a certain way that

you tell people certain things. So, that way, you won't get in trouble. You can prove your

point without getting disrespectful. And once I learned it and I got the hang of it, nobody

can stop me now. (Interview II, line 120)

As a Black girl, she learned how to protect herself in school in order to avoid different forms of violence. She learned to navigate the physical space of the hallways, avoiding the unprotected door. Similarly, she learned to navigate the discursive space, making sure not to speak out in ways that would be perceived as disrespectful. In these ways, she learned to walk a metaphorical tightrope as successfully as she could. She was smart and determined in school, but she learned how to use her voice in the ways that were expected in that system as a means for protection. Along with scores of Black women throughout history, who have had to navigate respectability (Durham et al., 2013) steeped in whiteness, she learned that walking this tightrope could protect her — and, by extension, her students. This skill and coping mechanism produced success for her, as she said, "I got the hang of it, nobody can stop me now." Her internalization of respectability as a means of protection translated into her teaching ideologies.

Caresha's Teaching Ideologies

The ghosts that haunted Caresha, the *investment in individual responsibility* and *adultification*, also haunted her teaching ideologies. Caresha's teaching ideology centered on compliance and control to encourage safety in her classroom. While in high school, Caresha was encouraged to act respectably to protect herself. Controlling her own actions helped her to be successful in school, so her teaching ideology reflected this logic because she wanted to show her students how to be successful by also controlling their actions.

Caresha repeatedly expressed that the key to teaching was to love her students and provide them with a safe environment to learn. She claimed that order and compliance were the prerequisites for learning (McClain et al., 2021). As a student, she was constantly trying to

balance being a hard worker while also not being "too smart" and acting too grown. She had to learn how to operate in order to be successful in school. Drawing on these experiences, she wanted to show her students how to also be successful. Not surprisingly, then, her ideology for her classroom was centered on compliance and behavior:

> I chose kindergarten because I want to be that impact on kids. I want to be that change that they need to see. I want to be that change that, years later they come back in and say, "Oh, because of you, I need to be involved. Because of you I changed things." I just love them. They're easy to just control. And then they're little bitty kids, they're just so sweet. (Interview I, line 18)

In multiple instances throughout our interviews, she described her approach to teaching using the word "control." She explained that a successful classroom or a successful teacher must "correct" students' behavior and control them so that they can operate in the systems of the school. She also explained that strong teaching involved giving students knowledge and providing space for students to repeat it back to her to demonstrate their understanding:

> To me, good instruction —I'll say instruction that's successful — will be your students is able to give you feedback. So with the program, they teach us how to give explicit direction, and you'll get a repeat back. It's basically like a call for understanding. Not to say the perfect instruction, but good instruction will be your student will be able to tell you three things: What they're doing, how much time they have, and where are they completing it? I will give my students explicit directions and I'll make sure that I put some things in it, because that way, even though they're listening to me, they'll know those three things. If I tell a kid, "Hey, I need you to pull out a piece of paper," or, "Hey, you have five minutes to fill out a piece of paper, fold it, and write your name out..." Out

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of that sentence I can ask my kids, "Now, what is it that we're doing? How many minutes

do we have? And what is our action on it?" And I can have about maybe half of my

classroom send me, "We have five minutes to fold a piece of paper and put our name." I

feel like if you can get to the main point without just wrapping words together, your

student will be able to be successful in that assignment. I feel like if you stick to those

three things your student will be very successful in what they have to do. (Interview I,

line 34-35)

In describing good instruction, Caresha focused on students' compliance with and repeating her

directions. Her goal was to ensure that students understood the expectations and that they were

on task. By employing these strategies for compliance, she provided a space for students to learn

new material without being tempted to engage in undesirable behaviors. This was the strategy

that she herself had learned in school to navigate the system; not surprisingly, she created a space

for her students to do the same. She expressed her notion that students could become successful

if they knew how to follow directions, act in certain ways, and conform to the systems within the

school. In addition to the cooperation aspects of compliance, she also conveyed that these

behaviors could help build a safe environment for her students to learn:

I hope that the one and only thing that my students will be able to say about my future

classroom is that this is our safe place. I can go here for anything. When I'm here, I feel

safe. I feel like those things matter to students, because once they feel like they're in a

safe environment or they feel relaxed in an environment, then they're able to actually, not

to say open all the way up, but they're actually able to relax and be a kid. You'll get more

out of them than you expect when you just make them comfortable. (Interview I, Line 45)

Caresha wanted to build a safe environment for her students, and she seemed to conceptualize safety in very specific ways. With a classroom centered on compliance, expectations were clearly communicated, potentially minimizing distractions or unsafe behaviors. Caresha wanted to build an environment where students could relax and be kids, something she was not always afforded.

These notions of good teaching show evidence of Caresha's ghosts, *individual responsibility* and *adultification*. She learned to stay clear of her ghosts by walking a metaphorical tightrope in school, both in the physical and interactional spaces. In turn, Caresha's ideologies were haunted by her schooling experiences. She strived to build a safe classroom where students were not adultified and where they had a blueprint for how to behave in order to avoid trouble. As a Black girl navigating the school system, she often had to figure out how to be seen and heard in ways that reflected whiteness, so she wanted to provide the tools for her students to protect themselves as well.

How BWPSTs Experience and Learn in Teacher Education Programs: Caresha's Experiences in Teacher Education

As I have argued thus far, Caresha was haunted by the ghosts of *individual responsibility* and *adultification*. Throughout her time in school, Caresha learned how to be a good student by learning how to interact and to speak to people so as to not be perceived as disrespectful or aggressive. She learned these strategies in order to protect herself in a school system that often pushed out Black girls. In turn, her teaching ideologies were haunted by these ghosts, guiding her to perpetuate behavioral norms that were steeped in whiteness.

Caresha entered into her alternative route program with a lot of these views from her K-12 experiences. Her one-year program was located in East Town, and they partnered with the

local school district to place teachers for student teaching and lead teaching after graduation. Each cycle in the program was led by either a mentor teacher or an adjunct professor from a local university. While teacher educators have an opportunity to help pre-service teachers to reconsider their own understandings of schooling, Caresha's teacher education program never challenged her. Instead, her program fortified her belief that control and compliance were the prerequisites for learning. In Caresha's own description, her instructors focused on classroom management for a majority of the year. Consequently, Caresha's inclination to control her students was reinforced by her program's emphasis on classroom management. Describing her program, she said:

> So it's a one year program. And the first, I think it's maybe 10 or nine cycles. Each cycle we learn something different. In the beginning like the first six or seven cycles we learned how to have classroom management, things like that, and we move into how to have your classroom structured. You move into lesson planning. And eventually by the time you get to the end we're teaching our own classes where our mentor teacher is just standing and watching us in facilitating. (Interview I, line 24)

In Caresha's recollection of her teacher education program, over half of the approximately 10 cycles were dedicated to classroom management. Pre-service teachers did not focus on lesson planning or actual content until cycle six or seven, signaling that managing student behavior was the priority. This structure reinforced Caresha's ideologies by focusing on individual behaviors as a strategy to increase achievement and access for Black students. Because her program was packed into a year, there was not much time for them to make connections to structural issues that impacted education in this country or for the pre-service teachers to engage in identity

development work. In fact, Caresha claimed that she would not repeat the program again because there was no room to meaningfully engage with the content:

> You think that you're pushing all the main ideas into one year and it's like, you still have students that's like, "Okay, I learned that, but how do I apply this?" Like it's still some things now and I'm like, "Yeah, I don't remember us learning that and I don't remember us learning that, because it was literally read it, done, read it, done." You're trying to get this reading in to complete this assignment and once you hand that assignment in, you forget what you read. So I feel like, no I wouldn't complete this program again.
>
> (Interview III, line 47)

Similar to her high school career, the culture in her teacher education program was to get students in, deliver the content, and get them out. She shared that there were instances where she had to turn in an assignment, but she was not clear on the concept to actually implement it in the classroom. Her teacher education program essentially perpetuated her hauntings because they provided no space for her to greet her ghosts. To greet her ghosts, she needed an opportunity to witness to her ghosts or to re-memorize her stories and the stories of the other Black teachers in her program. She reported that because most of the teachers in her program were Black, the program, "never did anything special to celebrate us." They never talked about race, and they never talked about the historical, social, political, or cultural contexts of schooling in the United States. As a pre-service teacher, Caresha did not get the opportunity to interrogate her schooling experiences to uncover the ways that she might have internalized anti-Blackness as a protective measure. She did not have the opportunity to re-articulate her concepts of good teaching to reflect more liberatory pedagogy. Instead, she continued to be haunted by narratives of individual merit and adultification, and her ideologies, steeped in whiteness, were fortified in her

program. She prescribed to respectability politics, as a means for survival and improvement among her students, and her teacher education program reinforced these beliefs. She was never given space to reflect on her experiences as a Black girl in school, and they were not given space to think about and challenge systemic issues that impacted East Town. She had been taught that East Town children needed to "get out" or that they needed to rise above. These beliefs were grounded in anti-Black ideologies that were hidden in meritocratic beliefs.

Summary of Caresha's Case

Caresha was an "optimistic and determined" student out of necessity because she was haunted by the ghosts of adultification and individual responsibility. As a student, she learned how to be respectable in a world that denied her grace and opportunity to explore youthful curiosity. As a Black girl, her curiosity, confidence, and voice were regarded as threatening or "too grown," so she learned to navigate school by taking ownership over her own behaviors and walking the metaphorical tightrope. Utilizing these strategies that were steeped in whiteness, she garnered success. Consequently, she wanted to support her own students in finding this success, so her teaching ideologies reflected control and structure for her students. She wanted to create a safe environment by focusing on management to ensure students clearly understood expectations for behavior. Her alternative route teacher education program also focused heavily on classroom management as a prerequisite for learning and building a successful classroom. Her program did not support Caresha in greeting her ghosts as she was never provided time to interrogate or situate her schooling experiences in a larger historical, political, and social context. Her cohort in the program was majority Black, but they never shared space to witness to each other's stories or rememorize their own. Her program reinforced her carceral teaching ideologies without access to liberatory pedagogy.

Chapter 6: Taylor
A Black Girl who Chooses to Resist Systems of Whiteness

I was going to be an economist
I was overwhelmed
I had left that program
I really wanted to teach math
I wanted to work with Black girls
I advocated
I just feel so defeated
I care so much
I don't want to do harm
I'll help
I'm so work-driven
I'm unapproachable
I don't have room to mess up
I don't have that luxury
I've never had to talk like that
I'm unsure of myself
I'm always questioning
I was pretty disruptive
I feel like we kind of have to ask for what we need
I went to school with a lot of white people
I've never seen a lot of white people in [my city]
I really didn't like going to school
I was pretty smart
I was reading
I was in her advanced group
I did pretty good with content
I needed help
I stopped liking school
I had teachers who didn't like me
I really did not know why
I was never a bad student
I'm just not used to people being mean to me for no reason
I felt the wrath
I would walk inside the school
I didn't have a uniform shirt
I had got sent to her
I don't know - math was pretty great
I never really had very nice teachers
I didn't need people being tough
I didn't really need that
I feel like my body started growing
I got in trouble
I didn't want to get in trouble

I was the only Black person
I really don't like power dynamics
I specifically say Black children
I just don't think that they're living up to what they say
I don't think my professors are equipped
I don't think it's very authentic
I'm just very disruptive
I'm happy about that
I was very curious
I also just feel like centering us.

I Poem from Taylor's Interviews

Background

Taylor grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood in a metropolitan city in the northeast region of the United States. As a young Black girl in elementary and middle school, she remembered loving school. Both her elementary school and middle school were in close proximity to her home, so she was not only physically close to her school, but she was also emotionally close with her teachers and school community. Taylor's mother served as the PTA president while Taylor was in elementary school, so her mother was also connected with the teachers and the school leadership. Taylor said, "If I didn't do something, my mom knows, maybe by the end of the day" (Interview II, line 13). She also spoke about how community members knew her and her family, so when she and her siblings would walk to school, she always knew someone was looking out for them. Overall, Taylor felt supported and connected to her elementary and middle school communities.

In high school, her circumstances changed. She no longer attended the neighborhood school. Instead, she started attending a highly regarded STEM magnet school. This school was almost an hour from her home, so she could not walk to and from school. Aside from the distance of this school, her mom began working outside of the home, so she was not able to volunteer as much. Taylor described this school as "very competitive and hardcore." When her

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high school was founded, it only accepted white males, so the school was built to support and reflect white, patriarchal norms of schooling and achievement. Many of her classmates and teachers were descendants of early graduates or alumni themselves so they perpetuated these norms. There was a culture of high expectations, but it lacked compassion and care from the teachers—especially towards Black students. Taylor stated, "I think I really started hating school when I got to ninth grade" (Interview II, line 24). She no longer had a community committed to lifting her up. Instead, she felt as though the teachers were just waiting for her to fall.

During the time of the study, Taylor was enrolled in a two-year alternative route program to earn her teacher licensure credential in secondary mathematics education. With sites in multiple cities, this program advertised to candidates across the country. They also recruited candidates from many different professional backgrounds, so no previous teaching experience was required. At the time, this program was advertising their mission as "taking whiteness out of education," but Taylor found that this was not a reality. Listening to and exploring Taylor's educational stories, I found that she was haunted by the ghosts of *deservingness* and *competition*. Shaped by these ghosts, her teaching ideologies centered on building an inclusive classroom space especially for Black children. Taylor began greeting her ghosts and had strong values and ideologies going into her teacher education program, so when she noticed that her program was not living up to its mission, she was able to resist their practices that reflected whiteness.

Important Dimensions of Taylor's Schooling Experiences

First Ghost: Deservingness

K-12 Experiences: Realizing the Difference between Tough and Mean. In elementary and middle school, Taylor's teachers supported her and pushed her to perform at her highest level. Her teachers showed her that she mattered through their compassion and concern for her and her family:

> But I just remember, as soon as my mom picked me up from school, Ms. S would be like, "She needs to go over these," as we were going home. So I would be reading them and hold them up in the backseat so my mom could see them. So yeah, she was really tough. She didn't play about me. I don't know why. I feel like it was everybody, but especially me. Yeah. But I was pretty smart. I was reading, I was in her advanced group. But yeah, she was tough. (Interview II, line 16)

In this quotation, Taylor talked about how Ms. S would assign additional work to make sure she was on top of her skills. In saying Ms. S "didn't play about me," Taylor signals how Ms. S cared for her by raising expectations for her and showing her tough love. She did not interpret Ms. S pouring into her as a result of her performance, as she thought everyone in the class also received this treatment. Even though she was in the advanced group, her teacher was still tough on her and still encouraged her to practice her skills outside of school.

She remembered different teachers being hard in her early years, and supporting her math identity. She recalled, "Sixth grade was the first time that I had a really good teacher, and to me, she built my math confidence. She was a Vietnamese woman, and she was really hard on me" (Interview I, like 22). Her teachers showed her that she deserved good instruction by building her confidence and pushing her to rise to expectations. She described this teacher as a "really good

math teacher" because of the ways that she allowed her to grow as a mathematician by challenging her. She became accustomed to her teachers caring about her and providing supportive and rigorous learning environments.

In her competitive STEM high school, things changed for Taylor. She started receiving different messages about who was deserving and who was not. Although founded as an all-white school, when Taylor attended, the school had a mix of white and Black students and a mix of Black and white teachers. While no longer legally segregated, the foundation of racism and sexism still supported the structure of this school. Taylor did not feel like her teachers, who reflected this problematic past, cared about her or any of the other Black students:

> But yeah, I never really felt like I had any teachers at high school that looked out for me or anything. And they were pretty mean. I remember one teacher, he had worked at another high school that you would consider low-performing, and he was like, "I'm so happy I'm here. I'm working with kids like you all who actually care about school," and stuff. And I just remember, most of the people who go to that school, if not all, are Black. And the school I went to was mostly Black, but it was kind of mixed as well, and I just was like, "I don't know." I was like, "He does not like black people," after he said that. Yeah, it was just weird, he was like, "They didn't care about school, all they did was fight." And I was like, "Okay." (Interview II, Line 30)

Taylor spoke about her teachers in high school much differently than she spoke about her teachers in elementary and middle school. In several instances, she described these teachers as "mean." This teacher explicitly stated that he was glad to be at that school because these kids cared about their grades and consequently that made them deserving of good instruction. Because the Black children at his former institution "didn't care about school," they did not

deserve his instruction. In this framing, he turned education into a transaction, insinuating that students must act in particular ways to be worthy of an education.

She also discussed another teacher that would only teach one side of the classroom because he felt like only kids that paid attention deserved to learn:

> That was kind of his thing. But I just remember that I don't really think he liked us. So it was kind of clear that he didn't like us. So I don't know, he gave us the material and then I don't remember him. . . . I don't know, he did PowerPoints, so that wasn't really fun, and then I don't think a lot of us liked him, so I just remember there were side conversations going on in class and he wouldn't address them because I think he was like, "The people who want to listen are going to listen. The people who don't aren't." (Interview II, line 43)

As Taylor described it, there was clearly a pattern of these teachers deciding who was and who was not deserving of instruction and education. In her experience, these interactions seemed highly related to students' race, as these teachers would make comments about wishing the school would go back to how it used to be and about how the school did not used to let "you all" in—referring to Black students. At points in high school, Taylor began to think about her relationships as transactional too. She knew that she was treated decently, but that was because she did not have behavior issues and was a hard worker.

> But also, I remember, if I were to get something wrong, I really like feedback, so I would ask him [her teacher], "How can I change it for the test?" Or something. And he would kind of scribble something on the page. You really could not read what he said. But yeah, I just do not think that he liked us, and you could tell. You could tell. And I feel like he treated me kind of okay, but that was because I really wasn't a behavior problem. I came to class to do my work. I knew I wasn't good at science, so I was like, "I know I can't play

around in here." And so, I felt like he appreciated that, but he was not very helpful.

(Interview II, Line 44)

In this teacher's class, Taylor was actively requesting feedback on her work, but this teacher would just scribble on her paper. Because of who she was (a Black girl), she was treated poorly and did not receive the support she deserved. She goes on to report that this teacher would laugh and joke with white students but would not interact with the Black students.

Lastly, in high school, there was a very exclusive honors program. Students were only admitted if they came from one of two feeder middle schools or if they tested in. Mostly affluent, white students were in this program because their parents were able to pay for expensive tutors to help their students to test in, or they lived near one of the middle schools. Ford (2014) described how gifted education programs often disadvantage minoritized students, "As historically and currently operationalized, gifted education represents such a program or vehicle for promoting inequities. Educators and decision makers have consistently failed to recruit and retain an equitable percentage of these two culturally different groups as gifted" (p. 143). Taylor's experience reflected Ford's observation: like many Black students, she never had an opportunity to access the honors program due to these gatekeeping policies. Taylor recalled the principal regarding the honors students as the "cream of the crop" and pouring in a lot of resources to make sure they were learning at the highest level. The honors students had teachers that were former professors or held advanced degrees. As a result, the honors students had access to more colleges and more resources while the other students were ignored. Again, she received messages about who deserved quality education and resources, and these messages were animated by white supremacy.

Post-Secondary Experiences: Refusing to Strip Black Children of Their Joy. Not only was Taylor sent messages about who was deserving of care and quality instruction in high school, but she also encountered these messages when she began working after college. As an AmeriCorps member, she was assigned to work in an all-boys charter school. In this school, she quickly realized how the school director would create policies to align the Black boys with whiteness:

> There's a narrative about Black children in general, and [the school director was] trying to change that to make that more white. I just hated working there because you had to walk a certain way. The first two weeks of school was like a bootcamp, which I just felt like very weird participating in. Then the kids had to walk a certain way and they can only wear certain types of shoes. At least here in [northeastern city], and I'm quite sure with other Black spaces, hair is very important. Your shoes are very important like a part of your identity. I was like, to me, they're just telling these children like, "Okay, everything that is important to you is not okay, so I need to change you." (Interview I, line 18)

In this quotation, she discussed her discomfort with some of the school's practices. In our interview, she went on to say that she felt like this school leader was trying to create a certain environment to appeal to white donors that could continue to help fund the school. According to Taylor, appealing to these donors meant stripping these students of their identities. In order for these students to *deserve* funding or to *deserve* to learn in this school, they had to remove their Blackness. Taylor was very clear that she did not like working in that environment and was drawn to teachers that resisted this deficit narrative and treated their students with respect. As this memory illustrates, the school sent clear messages about who deserved to be taught, but Taylor did not agree with this narrative and vowed to operate differently as a teacher.

Second Ghost: Competition

K-12 Experiences: Fighting for Your Spot. As previously described, Taylor experienced a drastic shift in school culture between elementary and high school. She went from a tough but supportive school, to a competitive and hostile environment.

> Everybody [in high school was] kind of cutthroat. But they were a little cutthroat; it was a science and engineering school and math school, everybody wanted to do that. And I feel like in middle school, if I needed help, my teachers would notice and they would be like, "Oh, you need to come to coach class." Or my classmates would be like, "Oh, let me help you with that." It really wasn't like that. It was a little mean. (Interview II, line 25)

Taylor no longer felt a closeness between her school community and her family. One of the biggest shifts was the culture of competition that emerged at her high school. Taylor was the first in her family to attend this school, so it was a big deal. She felt pressure to endure the hardships that went along with her enrollment because of the emphasis that her family members placed on this opportunity.

> But yeah, high school was a little hard, because like I said, the school was really tough, it was really competitive. So yeah, the environment was tough. And I remember in ninth grade year, some of the teachers are alum, and one of the teachers was basically saying how, "Oh, it didn't used to be like this." He was white, and he was like, "It didn't used to be like this. If you had a C, you got put out. The school didn't used to be like this." And it was kind of like, "Now you all are in here, they changed the rules up." So yeah, high school was just tough. (Interview II, like 12)

Teachers in her school would make remarks like these about the state of the school. Grades were a part of the competition. This teacher reminisced about the time when they could remove

students who did not score above a C. This teacher used coded language to signal his distaste for the changing school population, as he insinuated that the Black students did not deserve to be in the school. Relating to his story about deservingness, he waxed nostalgic for the competitive nature of the school, celebrating antiquated practices of exclusion. These statements were hard for Taylor to hear because, like the "nostalgia" represented by a Confederate flag, they invoked a history that excluded people like her, expressing a longing for a time when she would not have been allowed to fully participate. Such messages contributed to her having a difficult time in high school.

The sink-or-swim culture was perpetuated because this was such a sought-after school. Each student had to perform to maintain their precarious spot. Unlike her earlier schooling experiences, there was no longer the spirit of collaboration or support because students were competing to remain enrolled. Overall, students were expected to navigate their academic and social lives on their own—especially as minoritized students. Students were responsible for at least four hours of homework per night and even on the weekends. Taylor recalled times during the weekends when she planned to spend time with her family and grandparents but had to complete hours of homework to keep up with her classes. There was a pressure to perform well on tests not only to keep your spot at the school but also to avoid embarrassment when school administrators publicly displayed scores after the test.

> But yeah, I think it was math. Like I said, none of my teachers were nice, but I did pretty good in math. I think if you got above an 85, your name would be on the board, like after you took a quiz. And my name was usually on the board, and so that was really nice, to know that I was doing well. (Interview II, line 35)

Taylor described the practice of displaying students' grades on tests as a tactic to encourage and shame students into performing. She said none of her teachers were nice, so it seemed as though these grades were not posted for celebration purposes but to expose who was and was not performing. It also contributed to rankings, as students received their rankings often—especially in the honors program. Overall, her high school experience consisted of working hard and working often:

> I put in a lot of work in high school, and I don't know, I felt like I just did okay in it. And that was kind of sad to me because I just remember, I was always doing work. I would come home, take a nap, eat my dinner, and then I'm doing homework. And so yeah, it was just crazy. (Interview II, line 64)

Taylor seemed to be overworked in that environment especially because she did not feel like she was very successful in this high school. Consequently, the ghost of competition shaped her decisions for college and teacher education.

College and Teacher Education Experiences: Choosing a Supportive University.
Taylor chose to attend a small women's, liberal arts college. She was intentional about this choice as she wanted to avoid the overly competitive environment she experienced in high school. She went to a school that mirrored her elementary school where everyone knew each other and everyone was supportive. She says, "I will never regret where I went to college, because it was really what I needed. I didn't need people being tough. I didn't really need that. Because the world is tough enough, I don't need that." (Interview II, line 67). She needed a place that was more nurturing to her as a Black woman, especially in comparison to her high school.

Similarly, she chose her teacher education program because of the level of competition. As an educator, she was serious about supporting and teaching Black students, especially Black

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girls. In contrast to her high school teacher, she treated teaching Black students as a privilege. She wanted to be in a program that did not just accept every person that applied or that showed interest: they claimed to accept people that had a passion and commitment to these students. Their model was to accept anyone that personified the mission, so it was not about fighting over spots. If a candidate was committed to teaching, then they could have a chance.

This ghost of competition was often driven by white supremacy and capitalism. This ghost impacted Taylor's experiences in school and her decisions even after she left high school. This ghost still haunted her as she thought about her classroom and figured out how to shape her priorities as a teacher.

Taylor's Teaching Ideologies

The ghosts that haunted Taylor, *deservingness* and *competition*, also haunted her teaching ideologies. Taylor's teaching ideology questioned the normal power dynamics between students, teachers, and the curriculum. Her high school experiences were steeped in competition and her teachers made comments about who was deserving of quality instruction. In her future classroom, she vowed to make changes to support students' learning in liberatory ways. She believed that teaching Black students was a privilege, and that students should be regarded as human first.

> I still believe that to this day. I was thinking about, when I first started teaching, how much of a privilege it is to work with Black students. I used to get and I still do get upset. I just feel like so many people have access to Black students. I don't think some people should, but basically, the way that I'm trying to teach now is by teaching or treating the students like it's a privilege for me to be working with them, not the other way around, and really value them because I was thinking if they didn't come to school for whatever

reason, I wouldn't have a job. I really take that responsibility very seriously, sometimes too seriously, but I guess I take it on for the other people who I don't think are taking it as serious enough. They really deserve the best from us. We should be very thankful for them. (BWT meeting 5, line 70)

Taylor's quotation was beautiful, and Taylor was clear in this moment about her approach to teaching. This quotation also reflected her ghosts in specific ways. Taylor was haunted by her ghosts, but through conversations with Taylor, it was clear that she had already started to greet her ghosts. She was reflective about her experiences, and she used her ghosts to guide her teaching ideologies. In this quotation, she said, "it is a privilege for me to be working with them." This was important because that was not how she was treated in school. She saw how teachers treated Black students, and she heard their comments. She took notice while working in that charter school about how the school leaders would try to change the Black boys' behavior so that they could fit white middle-class norms. That school did not regard teaching Black students as a privilege, and that school saw it as a necessity to "fix" those children. She also stated that she valued her students. She does not say she valued them because of how high their grades were, but she valued them with no additional expectations. High school was tough for Taylor as she tried to learn how to navigate her classes, interactions with teachers, and social circles. She adjusted enough to graduate and make it to graduate school; however, she did not wish for her students to engage in the same navigation. She wanted to create spaces that were different from the ones she experienced:

Going off what Tanya just said. I've been in spaces where I didn't feel welcome. So, I really feel part of my mission is to make sure that students feel invited in the classroom. And so, I don't want to be other teachers in that way or another teacher that they had. I

really want to make sure that when they're in my classroom that they're welcome. And I really feel like I like choice a lot as a person. I really like options. So, also giving my students options because sometimes doing what everyone else is doing just isn't fun. But yeah, I really just feel like sometimes I always think about some of my students who are most marginalized in our classroom, and sometimes I think like, "What would make this easier for them?" Or, "How could I make it easier for them? Or more accessible or whatever." So, really just making sure that everyone feels included, because I just know how uncomfortable it is to not feel seen. (BWT meeting 6, line 85)

Taylor clearly stated that she did not always feel welcomed in her classes, so she wanted to make sure that she created an inclusive school environment. She moved away from thinking about how to increase competition, and she rethought deservingness. She mentioned that she thought about the students that were most marginalized in her classroom, and she tried to make her lessons more inclusive for them. They deserved to be included in the content, and they deserved a teacher that would work hard to make sure that they had a fair chance to be engaged in the classroom. She did not try to teach them how to navigate racist systems, she tried to figure out how to adjust the environment so that it better fit her students' needs.

Transitioning from a student to a teacher came with a lot of reflection for Taylor. As a student in her teacher education program, she continued to fortify her voice and step into her role as a disruptor. She wanted to create a new environment for her students that was the opposite of the one that she had in high school. Taylor was haunted by these ghosts of *competition* and *deservingness,* and they helped her become more vocal. In our conversations, Taylor signaled that she started greeting her ghosts through her critical comments about how she experienced school and the impact of structural oppression on her experiences. She clearly communicated

how she wanted to disrupt power dynamics in her classroom and the utilization of standardized test scores to instead uplift student voices. Her ongoing reflection has shaped her teaching ideologies and has pushed her to also see and treat her students as human beings:

> I spoke about it earlier, but I just think sometimes, the dynamics that we put or the hierarchies that exist with students and teachers, I don't like them because sometimes it's like, "You're the child, I'm the adult," instead of like, "This is a learning environment or community. I learn from you and you learn from me," and that type of thing, but I also think it's just very collaborative. Like I said, I don't know everything, and sometimes the students, they have really good perspectives on how to do math. So that's specific to me, but I'm quite sure they have different ways on reading and things, so yeah. (Interview I, line 60)

Her view of good teaching was building a collaborative environment where the power was shared between students and teachers opposite of her experiences even in elementary and high school. In elementary school, she learned a lot and her teachers cared about her, but they still upheld the traditional authority format of schooling. The teacher was the knowledge creator, and the students were the sponges. She was cognizant of these experiences and pushed to provide an environment that supported students' needs. She took teaching seriously and clearly expressed how it was a privilege to teach Black students because many teachers did not treat it as such when teaching her and her classmates. She took issue with schools and teachers that tried to strip students of their identity to make them more "palatable" and more aligned with whiteness. She operated on the assumption that all students deserved to learn, not just the ones that acted or spoke in certain ways.

How BWPSTs Experience and Learn in Teacher Education Programs: Taylor's Experiences in Teacher Education

Taylor entered her teacher education program because they advertised themselves as a liberatory program that aimed to "take the whiteness out of education." Taylor was drawn to this program because of its values, but she also witnessed alumni teachers of the program, and she was impressed by the ways they interacted with students.

However, once enrolled in the program, Taylor realized that her alternate route program did not practice what they preached. In fact, she often found herself in conflict with her lead teacher, the coaches, her professors, and the content. Because Taylor had already started greeting her ghosts, she was able to repel the white supremacy that permeated this program. One way that she disagreed with her program's beliefs was in the instance of standardized testing:

I want to give you one specific example. So, again, I don't care for standardized tests because I feel as though the people who do well on it are the people who have the resources to do well on it. And then also, COVID, so many things went away. I know one college system, I think in California, they did away with standardized testing. They had to become more creative on who they're going to let into their program. And I was talking to a professor because this class really focused on getting test scores, getting math scores to inform instruction. And also, well, I was just like, I just kind of don't agree with that. First of all, it's hard to get students in to take the math. So if I have 80 kids, only about 50 of them took the math and then you want me to make instructional decisions based off of very incomplete data. And then also students... When March hit, it was around spring break and then students were supposed to come to school, but some students didn't have computers until the school year that we're in now. So it just didn't make a lot of sense.

And so I was like, "I just think it's stupid to use standardized testing data in general, but especially, how do I inform instruction with all these gaps?" And I'm just like, "No one has standardized testing is racist classes, all these things. Why are you pushing it onto us to use this?" And basically, my professor was like, "Standardized testing actually is a really good measure of where your students are." And I kind of told her it's a really lazy measure and a non-creative measure of where your students are, because, first of all, I know so many of my students, as soon as they see a test, they kind of freeze up. Whereas, if I were to just read the problem to them or just put it up in a non-threatening way as a warmup, easily. They could do it easily. (Interview III, line 23-24)

Taylor had strong ideas about the usefulness of standardized assessments. During the pandemic, there was low attendance for students to take the exam, so she did not see a reason to make instructional decisions with incomplete data. She said that these assessments were "lazy and non-creative" because they did not accurately provide information about what students knew. She raised her issues to her professor, but the professor insisted on continuing to use standardized tests. Taylor was frustrated because she read literature on the shortcomings of standardized tests and how they typically disadvantage minoritized students; however, her program refused to use different measurements. Taylor claimed that teacher education programs cannot be anti-racist without disrupting hegemonic practices, yet, hers was resistant to rethinking their practices.

Not only did Taylor resist the ideologies of her professors, but she also resisted and rejected the white supremacist practices of her teaching placement. In one instance, she discussed feedback that she received from the coaches in her school:

I don't even know if this answers it, but one thing that a lot of my coaches have been telling me ... And they're not Black ... One thing that they have been telling me is, I guess

my enthusiasm or something? I need to be more enthusiastic as I teach. I really think that that's problematic. I don't like that advice. Because I'm not a performer, like I'm not an entertainer. So, that's hard for me to like, "Hey! How are-" (BWT meeting 7, line 69)

She received feedback stating she needed to be more enthusiastic, and instead of internalizing that feedback she problematized it. She refuted the assumption that she needed to entertain or perform for students, an assumption, "that is rooted in historical tendency to situate the black body as a source of entertainment, amusement, and spectacle" (McGee & Kazembe, 2016, p. 99). She did not aim to be performative; she just wanted to teach as her authentic self. She shared the fact that her coaches were not Black, because she felt as though this was racialized feedback. Her coaches wanted to push her to interact with her students the same way that they interacted with them. She shared many instances where institutional actors in her program encouraged her to sustain the status quo.

> I would say support is sometimes just like blind faith, like at my school, my coaches whenever I try to introduce something or it's not always, but at least sometimes they're just like, no. Like let's do something like... I've never heard of that before. So, I don't know about that. And sometimes I'm just like, let me try it, let me fail. So that I see on my own that won't work. Rather than just feeling like, "Oh, wait, I've never heard of that. No, we're not going to do that." So I guess just like blind faith, because sometimes I feel like again our research things or I read up on things before I ever even introduced to more people. It's just always disheartening or whatever when they're like, no. Because I'm like, you didn't even see everything I had to show but I just feel like since I'm not as experienced, they're just like, absolutely no. Okay, well not say absolutely not, but they're just like, "No," and I just feel like when I came into it, I would say how well the students

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did on the exam. And I really feel like part of that was because I snuck in those non-

traditional ways. (BWT meeting 8, line 65-66)

There were instances where she wanted to try new instructional strategies, but she was told that

they would not work. She wanted to have autonomy over her instructional strategies and freedom

to do things differently without being met with conflict. Taylor came into her program with clear

teaching ideologies, and if she had not had these beliefs, she thought her program would have

encouraged her to perpetuate whiteness in her classroom and through her pedagogy. Had she not

already started greeting her ghosts, then she might have been stifled by the traditional teaching

philosophies of her teacher education program.

Summary of Taylor's Case

Throughout Taylor's experiences in school she was haunted by the ghosts of

deservingness and competition. As an adult, through her own exploration, observations, and

support from colleagues and family, she began to interrogate her experiences as a student. This

reflection process shaped her teaching ideologies as she wanted to disrupt her own experiences to

create new futures for her students. Because she had already started engaging in this reflective

and critical work, she resisted some of the practices and policies in her alternative route teacher

education program. She claimed her program would most likely describe her as "disruptive"

because she navigated her program with a critical lens and voiced her concerns confidently. She

boldly claimed that if she did not enter her program with values, then she might have perpetuated

their hegemonic practices without criticality. By greeting her ghosts, she was able to access more

liberatory tools and ideas that were not always supported in her program and in her student

teaching site.

Chapter 7: Tanya
A Biracial Black Girl Navigating White Spaces

I am Tanya.
I wasn't driven to find a job in business
I didn't have the passion
I'm a religious person
I need to change paths
I'm fighting against something
I wanted to go into education
I think good instruction is flexible
I actually have an improv comedy background
I have a more liberal view
I was treated in school
I'm fortunate
I'm lighter skinned
I have my unconscious biases
I believe that everyone is good
I'm really short
I look quite young
I handled COVID very well
I have really good time management
I'm thriving in this program
I'm speaking too much
I am speaking more
I'm taking up too much airtime
I have to remind myself
I'm paying to be here
I'm going to keep talking
I'm going to keep getting my points across
I was typically one of the only Black students
I had a biracial role model before
I always felt happy to be going to school
I was a theater kid
I liked math
I was not the best at math
I wasn't the worst at math
I'm going to work as hard
I may not be able to outsmart you
I'm definitely going to be able to outwork you
I'm going to work
I can get something done
I definitely work
I break
I have had those breaking points
I was going to become a teacher

I'm going to speak my mind
I remember saying
I was talking too much
I was saying too much
I found my voice.

I Poem from Tanya's Interviews

Background

Tanya is a biracial woman from a southern state. She attended a predominantly white suburban school from elementary through high school, and she attended the same school as her brothers. She recalled being one of very few Black children in her school, and one of even fewer Black students in her honors and AP classes. She remembered being in the remedial reading groups in elementary school until one teacher noticed that she was not having difficulty with comprehension or decoding but just took more time to read texts. By the end of that school year, Tanya moved to this teacher's most advanced reading group. She remembered always being in advanced classes from then on. She also reported loving school and feeling safe at school;

> But I liked school. I liked being there. I liked being with my friends. I liked my classes. I don't think there was ever a time when I did not enjoy being in the school building and being around the people I was around. I would say school was always a place that I felt safe at. I would say I had the typical girl drama in middle school, where there were friends who I didn't necessarily want to be around, or I wasn't looking forward to having to talk to that person. But school in general was never, I always felt happy to be going to school. (Interview II, lines 37-39)

Although she always felt happy going to school, her high school was very competitive. In order to be successful at this high school, Tanya enrolled in advanced classes, participated in everything associated with theater and comedy improvisation, and took on leadership roles. Success could not be achieved unless a student was always working. She remembered receiving

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very different advice from her parents about her performance in school. Her mother, who was her white parent, would tell her to try her best and to not take school and her activities so seriously. On the other hand, her father, who was her Black parent, reminded her often that she had to work twice as hard to get half as far as her classmates. She also saw a difference between how teachers would treat her and her brother in school. He was naturally good at school, and she would argue even more advanced than her, but he was treated much differently because of his darker skin. She recalled her brother,

> And he's like kid genius. He applied to [Ivy League University] on a whim because my
>
> parents told him he had to apply to an Ivy and got in, and then just went there. That's just
>
> him. It just comes easy to him. And he's really a math-science brain, he's an engineer
>
> now. So I had that, looking up to that my whole life and trying to reach that bar.
>
> (Interview II, line 57)

Throughout her interviews and interactions in the BWT group, two ghosts seemed to haunt her as she was stepping into her role as a teacher/institutional actor: *hypervisibility/invisibility* and *meritocracy*. Shaped by these ghosts, Tanya's teaching ideologies centered on flexibility and understanding and meeting her students' needs. She recalled particular professors who supported her growth while enrolled in her teacher education program pushing her to find her voice in the classroom.

During the time of the study, Tanya was enrolled in a one-year university supported teacher education program to earn her teacher licensure credential in elementary education as well as a master's degree. Many of the students enrolled in this program graduated from the same university for their undergraduate degree. Taylor chose to continue in this program after completing her undergraduate career because of her close relationships with her professors who

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were women of color, as they supported her and encouraged her throughout her journey in college.

Important Dimensions of Tanya's Schooling Experiences

First Ghost: Hypervisibility/Invisibility

K-12 Experiences: Threatening White Comfort. As a Black student at a predominantly white school, Tanya experienced moments of hypervisibility and invisibility. For example, during BWT, Tanya shared an example of preparing for a theater showcase, where she was collaborating with a white student to do the marketing for the show:

> And so I was in charge of marketing and publicity, and we had decided, me and this other girl who were both co-chairs of it, we're going to chalk all of the sidewalks outside of the school one Saturday, about like come to our show, with the show dates and everything. And she had dance rehearsal Saturday morning. And I was like, okay, I'm going to go and get started on this. And her mom called me and yelled at me and told me, "How dare you go do this without my daughter being there?" and, "You can't do that!" "this is unacceptable!" like screaming. I was a high schooler. And this adult woman is screaming at me about how I, how dare I try and do this thing that I've been assigned to do without her daughter being there. And I just remember hanging up the phone and just crying. (BWT meeting 4, line 122)

In this situation, Tanya simply took the initiative to get started on the marketing plan for their show. Tanya thought she was doing what she was supposed to do by getting their tasks done quickly and well. Yet, this mother saw her progress as a threat. This mother's behavior was inappropriate, and her accusations reflected stereotypes of Black girls as trespassers in (white) spaces. In this moment, this mother chose to speak to this Black girl as if she was an adult

(adultifying her), while also insinuating that she could not lead this task on her own—without a white supervisor. Because she was a Black girl taking initiative, she was singled out and humiliated. Had she been a white girl, it seems unlikely that this mother would have had the same reaction or engaged her in the same way. Situations, similar to this one, reflected the ways that Tanya thought about taking up space. She felt tension with trying to be a good student and participating in class and extracurricular activities and wondering if she was doing too much. The ultimate penalty of "doing too much" could end in animosity from her white counterparts just like it did in this situation. In this instance, she was hypervisible to this white parent, as the parent doled out a disproportionate and inappropriate response. Yet, confusingly, as Tanya described, Black students were invisible in the theater program when it came to receiving worn props and not garnering lead roles in productions.

Similarly, Tanya had an experience in high school where her high academic performance was questioned. As someone that was engaged in theater, she wanted to become a critic in a theater society that operated like the Tony Awards. In this student-run organization, students voted for other students to become critics, and they would watch theater shows at the local high schools and write reviews. At the end of the year, they would host a celebration gala to present individual and crew awards. Tanya said, "And like I said, my high school, it was like, you had to be on everything, doing everything. And the only thing in theater I wasn't doing was being a [Theater Critic]" (Interview II, 31:58). Since she really wanted to be a critic, she applied. At the time, her friends were critics, and they could have easily voted her in.

> So I had applied, and to apply you write a review. And I wrote a review, and it was
> supposed to be blind. They weren't supposed to know whose it was. But they found out
> that it was mine, and they said that Tanya could never produce this type of writing. She

must've worked longer than the designated time on this. We're not going to let her in because we don't think that she can write this way again. Because I was known as a bad writer, and that's just something that stuck with me, that my friends said that about me, and that it was something that I had done in the designated time. And it also upset me because there was another white girl whose mother, I think I talked about her mother in another meeting, the one who yelled at me about chalking the sidewalk. Helped her with it, and she had another friend who was a [Theater Critic] review it for her, which was again outside of the rules. And they knew that and they let her in over me. So that was something with my writing that's always stuck with me. That I am a bad writer.

(Interview II, line 116)

Even during BWT, Tanya viewed herself as a "bad writer" because of what her high school peers said about her. She applied to be a critic and wrote a strong review and application, but she was denied from this organization because her classmates did not think she could produce such strong work on her own, and they did not think she would be able to do it consistently. This was an instance of her being hypervisible, because, even though all submissions were supposed to be anonymous, the white students singled this Black girl out. Instances like these made her feel self-conscious about her abilities and the space she took up. When she was seen as doing well and writing a strong critique, she was questioned and received hatred and doubt from her classmates that she regarded as friends. This ghost of hypervisibility haunted her decisions around how to operate, especially in white spaces.

Teacher Education Experiences: Tokenizing Practices. Tanya actively worried about how others perceived her in academic spaces and whether she was being given opportunities for her talents and effort or because she was a palatable Black girl that contributed to diversity quotas. For example, Tanya originally graduated with a business degree from undergrad and planned to pursue marketing. Her minor was in education, but she was apprehensive about pursuing teaching as a career because of low compensation. Nearing graduation, she was solely looking for jobs in marketing. After several attempts, she realized that she was fighting against her real passion, and, as a religious woman, she realized that she was missing her sign from God. She decided to pivot and commit to education. Long after the master's program deadline, she reached out to the education department at her university and asked if they would make an exception for her. They did, and she began the program that summer shortly after graduation. In the first full semester of the program, administrators asked her multiple times to speak at admissions fairs for prospective students.

> And I think it's interesting because I've been the one, two, three times now who's been chosen to speak at admitted students' event. So I was asked to fill out a form to get... They have a meet our students page on their website. And there's always part of me in the back of my mind that's like, "Am I being chosen as your diversity?" Like, "Look, we have Black people at the school." To make that kind of figure assumption. And so that's something I've thought about a lot, especially with these admissions things that I kept getting asked to do. Because I didn't go through the admissions process, they opened it up late for me. (Interview I, line 75)

In this example, she questioned the motive for administrators and professors asking her to participate in these admissions fairs, since she did not complete the normal admissions process.

She wondered if they asked her to engage in these activities because she was hypervisible as a Black girl or because they truly valued her voice.

Additionally, in her teacher education program, she self-identified as a leader and reported that she performed extremely well despite being in a pandemic. She attributed her performance to being organized and a strong time manager, so she had time to work on and complete school assignments and responsibilities. Even though she knew she was doing well in the program, she still questioned whether she was receiving opportunities based on her merit or because her identity was being tokenized. In the second semester of her program, she was offered a long-term substitute position with a school in the local district.

> They just saw me as someone who they thought could do it. And so they recommended me to the principal and then I interviewed, and then I got hired [crosstalk 00:02:41]. I am actually one of two who is long-term subbing. And the interesting thing about that is that the two people who my... who [my university] chose to long-term sub, only two people of color in my program. So the two black girls in my program are the two who got selected to long-term sub, which I think is very interesting. (Interview III, line 8)

She went on to say she did not believe her program placed the two Black girls in long term sub positions just because they were Black, but she believed that the program saw them as "Black excellence, and knew they could step up to the plate." This is another example of her and her Black classmate being hypervisible. Their "excellence" put them in a position to take on more labor than their white classmates, because they were perceived as being able to "step up to the plate." Her early transition into a classroom, reflects the absent presence that many Black teachers experience. Were administrators seeing these Black women as subjects while truly considering their wellbeing? Was this program ready and willing to support these Black women

throughout this transition? Or did they need to fill positions at schools that needed people to take on these long-term roles? Not only is absent presence at play, but also adultification. Why did these two Black women have to be accelerated into a long-term subbing position? Why can't Black teachers develop at a reasonable pace before administrators ask them to fill vacancies? It begs us to wonder, who was this transition ultimately serving? Did her program believe that this transition would support Tanya's development providing her with more opportunities than just taking classes and student teaching? Or, was the main focus to support the district's needs in providing two teachers for these substitute roles? Tanya was a great candidate to step into this role because she came from a culture of working hard to reach goals — often overworking— so this role was no different. She was excited that she was asked to transition into a paid position, even though she did think it was "interesting" that the two Black girls were the only ones asked to transition. Tanya was haunted by hypervisibility as she was singled out in different ways throughout her schooling experience.

Second Ghost: Meritocracy

K-12 Experiences: Resting was Not an Option. Since Tanya's K-12 schooling experience revolved around competition, she often compared herself to other students. In a meritocratic schooling system, students were taught that hard work correlated with success. As Tanya described her work ethic, these meritocratic beliefs were evident in her push to work hard and compete with other students. She said that she was "not the best or worst at math", but she was still glad to be ahead of many other students. She took pride in working hard and, consequently, getting results.

> Going back to that third-grade teacher. So, this third-grade teacher had me, and my
> brother, and my little brother. So, she had all three of us. And she was talking to my

parents one day about the three of us. And when she was saying something about me, she said that I may not know everything, but I'm going to work as hard as I can to make it seem like I do. And I feel like that's something that I've brought with me throughout elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. Is that I may not be able to outsmart you, but I'm definitely going to be able to outwork you. (Interview II, line 98)

In this quotation, while highlighting her reputation for outworking others, she simultaneously diminished her own intelligence. She seemed to internalize the perceptions of her (lesser) smartness, and, due to her indoctrination into this meritocratic system, she felt confident that working hard would compensate for this shortcoming. Since the culture of the school was dependent on competition, Tanya learned to compete to succeed. Therefore, she was involved in many organizations while taking honors and AP courses.

I felt like you had to be busy at all hours of the day. So, I was a theater kid, and I did every single thing that I could get my hands on in theater. You had to be in leadership, you had to be ... It was very much that toxic kind of, you have to be going all the time, all wheels burning and doing everything perfectly. It was kind of what success was looked at. Anything less, you were kind of looked down upon. (Interview II, line 89)

In this interview excerpt, Tanya shared her sense that, in the achievement culture of her high school, it was unacceptable to rest. She remembered constantly talking with her peers about grades, and it was always a competition among students to be the highest performers. Like Taylor, Tanya remembered test scores being posted publicly so all students could see how they compared to other students. Even though standardized tests were not a real concern at her school, unit tests and semester exams were extremely important.

Understandably, then, Tanya spent much of her K-12 career comparing herself with other students, as she was always trying to perform well and to access the most difficult classes. During an interview, she reflected on comments from her dad, her Black parent, about needing to work harder than her white counterparts. In her home, grades below an A were unacceptable, so she worked hard to appease her parents and to fit into the culture at her high school. Ultimately, pressures from school, parents, and extracurriculars took a physical toll on Tanya.

> That kind of attitude, where I'm going to work until I can get something done, and get it done and right. I feel in elementary school, and all the time, I definitely work till I break. I have had those breaking points in every single point. (Interview II, Line 99).

Here, Tanya remembered working herself until she broke. As early as elementary school, she would repeatedly get to a point where she would have episodes of exhaustion and burnout. While Tanya primarily remembered school as a joyful place, the ghost of meritocracy haunted her throughout her schooling experiences and impacted the ways that she thought about teaching and being a good teacher. Meritocracy fed the intense competition in Tanya's school, and in order to be successful, she had to compete. Overall, she did very well, but there were consequences for her achievement. Her ghosts shaped her teaching ideologies, because instead of maintaining or perpetuating meritocratic beliefs in her own classroom, she wanted to disrupt these notions by becoming more flexible and responsive to her students' needs.

Tanya's Teaching Ideologies

Tanya's teaching ideologies were haunted by the ghosts of her Black girlhood. As a student, Tanya was either hypervisible or invisible in a heavily meritocratic system. As she began greeting her ghosts, Tanya's teaching ideology prioritized students' learning needs,

adjusting her instruction to support their understanding. She wanted to become a teacher that helped students to be seen, as she sometimes felt overlooked in school.

> I think my experience as a student is definitely something. I didn't think I'd reflect on my elementary school years so much when it comes to teaching. And I think one thing that I've really noticed when I sit back and I've gotten to watch my cooperating teacher teach, is I always am sitting there thinking, "Man, I remember being that student who had their hand up forever and then was ignored." How can I as a teacher, even if I can't, address their comment in that moment? Make sure I say, "Hey, I see your hand, I'm going to come back to you. Or we don't have time for a comment right now. I'm going to come back." Or remembering things and how I felt as a student when things would happen. How can I make sure that those don't happen when I'm in my classroom? Or that they do happen, if it was a good thing. How can I make a student have that same experience?
>
> (Interview I, line 36)

Tanya hoped to be intentional in her classroom to make sure that she was disrupting her own negative experiences as a student. She cited times when she did not feel like her teachers saw her and consequently overlooked her, giving her the sense of being invisible. She wanted to be sure that her students were visible in the classroom, and she wanted them to know that their participation was important to their community. As a student, she had a confusing experience of never knowing when she would be hypervisible or invisible and subject to the corresponding consequence. During her K-12 education, she was hypervisible when white students and families felt threatened by her abilities and strong will. In the teacher education program, she was hypervisible when her Blackness was a commodity that they could advertise. Jarringly, these (mostly unpleasant) moments of hypervisibility would be countered by moments of invisibility.

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In K-12, she was invisible when she was ignored by her teachers or overlooked in theater productions. She was encouraged to achieve, but if she did it too well then her white counterparts perceived her as a threat. Her presence or absence seemed shaped by the white gaze. Her Blackness was made to conform to white supremacist narratives of who she was and how she was (or was not) of value.

Similarly, as a student, she was taught to engage in and navigate through a meritocratic system. That often translated into overworking for Tanya. There was a system of expectations at her school, and all students needed to meet and exceed them. As a teacher in training, Tanya hoped to disrupt that narrative, with the help of her teacher education program, by focusing on students' needs rather than her own notions of how students should experience school.

To me, I think good instruction is flexible instruction, and really building the instruction around the student. And not around some like idea of where you would like the students to be at. One thing that I've really enjoyed about my program is how much they emphasize that, and how much they emphasize the importance of, if you're not working towards a student, the students not going to get it. No matter how much you try to cram it into them. You need to look at what they need from you, not just what you expect them to get out from you. And I think one thing that I've been really appreciative of, is that I actually have an improv comedy background. And that has been more helpful than I could have ever imagined, when it comes to leading and doing instruction. Because it's so much easier for me to be like, we're not getting it this way, how can I do a complete 180 from what I had planned to do it in a way, that my kids or my students will understanding? (Interview I, line 33)

At Tanya's high school, there were essentially two ways to be successful: get good grades in the most advanced class and participate in as many extra-curricular activities as possible. The school expected students to be busy and to excel in all activities. This way of life fed a toxic culture of over-achievement. Opposing that culture, she did not want her students to conform to a rigid path to success; she wanted her instruction to be flexible. She thought more critically about what her students needed and not just what information she could share and push them to cram. To be flexible and responsive to students' needs, she leaned on her improv background. Tanya was very clear that students might not always understand the material as she first presented it, so she was open to adjusting as needed—engaging in improvisation. This was a stark contrast to her own experience where her teachers made few adjustments to accommodate her needs. Instead, she was taught that in a meritocratic system one must rise to the occasion, outwork those one could not outsmart, no matter the cost to their wellness. Her ideologies were heavily shaped by the ghosts that haunted her, but she was also impacted by specific professors in her teacher education program.

How BWPSTs Experience and Learn in Teacher Education Programs: Tanya's Experience in Teacher Education

The ghosts of Tanya's schooling significantly impacted the ways she experienced her teacher education program. Even as a strong and confident student, she questioned her role and her place in her program. Due to instances where she was made to feel small because of her achievement and work ethic, she considered shrinking herself as a mode of protection in her teacher education classes.

One thing that I've noticed in my grad program that I hadn't remembered experiencing in undergrad or in K-12. Is this feeling that I'm speaking too much. And I don't know if it's

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coming from the fact that I am speaking more in these classes than I did in my

undergraduate classes? Or that I have more to say? Or that my cohort is just more quiet

than my other classes? This is the first time I've ever felt like I'm taking up too much

airtime. Or there'll be times when I won't answer a question because I answered the last

three questions the professor asked, but then no one else will talk so I just let it go by.

Because I feel like I'm taking up too much airtime. And that's something I've been

thinking about a lot. Because this is also one of the least diverse spaces I've been in. Even

considering I came from business, which isn't known for its wild diversity. But it

definitely is the most white dominant space, especially white female dominant space,

which I think is interesting, the gender dynamic of that as well. Because typically I was

used to being in male dominated classes, and that just creates a whole different dynamic.

But I've noticed in these classes, I just feel like I'm talking a lot and taking up almost too

much airspace, and I have to remind myself that like I'm paying to be here, I'm going to

keep talking, I'm going to keep getting my points across and asking my questions. But I

did think that that was an interesting thing to note, that I'm now in this less diverse

demographic and group of people. And suddenly, I feel like, I'm talking too much. And

I'm taking up too much airspace, which is... I've had the feeling of I'm taking up too much

physical space and like shrinking myself. But I've never felt that in like an academic

space of like, "Oh, I'm talking too much. I need to stop talking." (Interview I, line 84-85)

She questioned whether or not she was taking up too much space in her graduate classes. In the

past, taking up space had consequences. She was yelled at by a white mother, and her academic

integrity was questioned by her white classmates. In her graduate classes with white women, she

questioned her position and voice much more compared to when she was in classes with mostly

white men. As a Black girl and now as a Black woman, she never knew when she would be hypervisible or invisible, and she never knew how others would respond to her presence. Tanya's concern with taking up too much space was grounded in traditional conceptions of white femininity and stereotypical conceptions of Black womanhood (Acosta, 2019). Since she was actively speaking in class, while the white women were not, she expressed concern that her voice was dominating the space. Since white women are often positioned as needing protection and Black girls are positioned as the aggressor (Morris, 2015), Tanya had to be particularly careful to not subject herself to violence. As a Black woman, this tension was hard to navigate. She could have chosen to protect herself from violence by suppressing her voice. She could have chosen to protect herself by leaving this environment. This ghost could have continued to haunt her if particular professors did not support her in building confidence in her voice. She learned what it meant to be loved and cared for in the classroom through some transformative women of color professors in her program.

> I felt cared for as a person. And it was like, I was okay if I made a mistake. If I messed up, if I said the wrong thing, I was like, "You're trying, you're learning, you're growing. Let's see how we can help you learn and grow." And so just that the support that was there and the true... When you talk about teachers having a love for their students, I really felt the love between myself and some of my professors. (Interview III, line 45)

In this quotation she reflected on how she felt love and acceptance in her program. This experience was different for her because there was a culture shift between her graduate program and her other schooling experiences. She was given space to make mistakes, helping her to learn and grow. She was not loved for how hard she worked, but she was just loved for being her. This love was reflected in the ways that she thought about teaching. She wanted to focus more on how

to adapt to the needs of her students. She pointed out that each woman of color professor eliminated an assignment during the pandemic because they were responsive to the pre-service teachers' needs. These professors showed compassion, showing the pre-service teachers how to be responsive and show compassion in their own classrooms. Tanya even brainstormed about assessing her students differently.

> And I know one thing that I'm really hoping to do in my future classroom, is to end every test or every, if there's a written test assessment, with what do you know that wasn't shown on this test, to give them a space to share what they know about the unit that I didn't necessarily ask about. So, I've been thinking about how can I incorporate different things into these assessments or different types of assessments? When the district has limited me to say, "You have to use our final assessment." (Interview I, line 44)

She wanted to provide students an opportunity to share their knowledge even if she did not ask it on the test. Reflecting the compassion that her professors showed her, Tanya wanted to build a space where students were able to showcase their knowledge instead of trying to mold their knowledge to her expectations.

Lastly, she learned to respond to the ghost of meritocracy by taking time for herself. From conversations with her professors and mentors, she realized that she could not be the best teacher possible if she did not know how to restore herself. Working until reaching a breaking point was no longer an option if she wanted to stay in the teaching field.

> And I know that education is something that's so easy to get so wrapped up in and to feel like you have to be working for your students 24-7. But that was hours that I took to myself each day were what allowed me to be at 100% when I'm working for my students. So that would be my biggest thing is to remember, to take time for yourself because you

can't help if you're running on zero. And there are definitely some days where at the end

of the day, I am emotionally at zero. So I need to do something to get myself back to 100.

(interview I, line 56)

Tanya ultimately wanted to show students how to care for themselves and not create

environments where they burned out. She stated:

I would definitely say I'm learning to become... This is going to sound weird, but like a

soft teacher, not in the way of talking soft or not being hard on the students or having

them stretch themselves, but just in a way of understanding and accepting and meeting

students where they're at. (Interview III, line 24)

The women of color professors supported her in learning how to think about teaching in new

ways. She was becoming a soft teacher, as she was learning to meet students where they were

and to support them as people and not just as students. Her ghosts impacted her teaching

ideologies and the ways that she experienced teacher education. She sometimes second guessed

herself in her teacher education program because of the ghost of hypervisibility that pushed her

to question if she was receiving attention based on her identity. Her professors of color supported

her by caring for her and allowing her to be herself. This experience pushed her as a student as

well as her formation of teaching ideologies. This program began to allow Tanya to greet her

ghosts as particular professors disrupted the narrative of school that she was used to. While there

were moments when she felt tokenized in her program, these women of color professors helped

her to lean into her voice and showed her that she deserved unapologetic space to learn and to

grow.

Summary of Tanya's Case

Tanya was haunted by the ghosts of meritocracy and hypervisibility/invisibility. Throughout her schooling experience, she worked hard to garner success. Her high school culture centered around competition, so Tanya was celebrated for working harder than other students. In her different schooling contexts, Tanya radiated between being invisible and hypervisible, forcing her to question the space she took up. Her teaching ideologies reflected her ghosts because she prioritized building a classroom community that disrupted her own experiences, and the women professors of color in her teacher education program helped her to strengthen these ideologies. As a student, she always felt pressure to be the best, but in her teacher education program her professors showed her compassion and helped her to strengthen her voice. By the end of her program, she no longer questioned if she took up too much space. Her professors helped her to greet her ghosts by centering her needs. They helped her to develop her identity as a Black woman teacher and to trust her own voice and to be bold in her values.

Chapter 8: Sade
A Black Girl Mathematician Rethinking Her Success as a Student

I was a Black girl that could do math
I can do it
I can get through it
I have a plan
I did not have to miss sleep
I was good at it
I had the scores
I scored a five
I believe everybody can learn math
I feel like math is powerful
I went to a KIPP school
I did call it a system of assimilation
I was fast at school
I had the highest score
I should have had freedom
I was questioning everybody
I had been labeled bossy
I was Black girl who could do math
I was one of the rare people
I was valued
I got into a lot of trouble
I was able
I was successful
I always wanted to be a teacher
I am a person
I would get frustrated
I am not being heard
I have grown
I am still working on my ability
I got it.

I Poem from Sade's Interviews

Background

      Sade was a Black woman who had always been told that she could do math. When she was young, her mother encouraged her to do anything and to be anything she wanted in life. She remembers her mother saying, "If you want to do it, child, if you've got a plan, go" (Interview II, line 62). Sade described her mother as, "that type of parent," because as early as elementary

school, her mother would purchase advanced math workbooks challenging Sade to solve and explore the problems on her own. This was around the time that her math interest began, as she would challenge kids in her neighborhood and in her classes, and she would tell them, "I can do the math you do." From first through seventh grade, she attended a traditional public school in a southeastern, rural region. She recalled always being good at math and loving to engage in the subject. Sade was also a lively and talkative student, as evidenced by her progress reports that would often note how much she would like to volunteer in class and engage her classmates in conversation.

In eighth grade, she transitioned to a local charter school, and she described it as "one of those school choice charters that come in areas that are 'rural' or 'bad,' with hopes of turning them around and giving students access" (Interview I, line 14). While on the surface this seemed to be a noble mission, it begged Sade to question, what were they promising access *to*? She ultimately described her school as a "system of assimilation," noting the ways that the school policies centered whiteness. Becoming a teacher was complicated for Sade, as she was haunted by the ghosts of her secondary and post-secondary education. In particular, she was haunted by a *system of precarious elitism* and the *silencing of her voice,* and these ghosts shaped her teaching ideologies and her experiences in her teacher education program. Her teaching ideologies centered on providing her students grace and problematizing typical roles of power in her classroom. Her teacher education program provided space for her to greet her ghosts, so she actively pursued liberatory strategies to implement in her classroom.

During the time of the study, Sade was enrolled in a one-year university supported teacher education program to earn her teacher licensure credential in secondary mathematics education as well as a master's degree. Many of the students enrolled in this program graduated

from the same university for their undergraduate degree. In undergrad, Sade worked in a math education research lab that supported a partnership between professors from her undergraduate HBCU and the predominantly white graduate institution. Through this partnership, she built relationships with professors from the teacher education program and they encouraged her to apply to graduate school to extend her critical exploration of math education in the United States.

Important Dimensions of Sade's Schooling Experiences

First Ghost: System of Precarious Elitism

K-12 Experiences: Surviving Standardized Testing. Transitioning from elementary and middle school to high school, Sade remembered clear differences in her experiences in her traditional public schools and the charter school. In elementary school and lower middle school, she had traditional teachers. Most of these teachers were women, and they lived in the neighborhoods where most of the students lived. She recalled having all Black women math teachers from elementary through middle school, and most teachers also taught the siblings and cousins of their students. However, when she transitioned to the charter school, she noticed the prevalence of Teacher for America teachers, and began noticing how these teachers would stay for one or two years and then leave. She provided an example of her math teacher in high school, who graduated from an Ivy League university, and only taught at the school until he returned to the same university to pursue a doctoral degree. It was clear that the long-term investment in the school had shifted between her time in elementary school to high school.

Not only was there an increase in teachers from alternative route programs and brief tenures at her charter high school, but Sade also noticed that she was indoctrinated into a system of elitism. Specifically, her charter schooling experience was shaped around tools of meritocracy (Saa Meroe, 2014), like tracking, labels, testing, and rankings. To emphasize the value the school

placed on higher education, her high school's homerooms were named after the universities that her teachers attended. If two teachers went to the same university for their undergraduate degree, then preference was given to the teacher that had multiple degrees, and they would choose their graduate institutions. This information was shared with students, perpetuating beliefs around smartness by tying the names of their teachers' institutions with their teaching abilities and content knowledge.

To track students, starting in middle school, Sade's school used a series of tests. These rankings followed students through high school and graduation. Sade reported that testing caused her to be tired of school, as the administrators and teachers in her schools centered everything around tests. She grew weary of testing: They took benchmarks tests, standardized tests, college entry exams, and formative assessments. In the weeks prior to important assessments, the students would engage in Benchmark Readiness Weeks, even though the whole year was already dedicated to test preparation. Sade recalled an instance where they were invited to a lock-in before the start of the end-of-year standardized assessments to continue preparing for the exams:

> **Sade**: [My school] was so committed. Yeah. I'll use the word committed. Sorry, [my school] was so committed to us understanding the value in doing well or feeling like we had impact on the test. We did a lock-in. The Friday night before testing week, you stay all night at the school and you don't go to sleep, and so you don't go home until 7:00 Saturday morning, and you probably sleep until like 2:00. Now that I'm thinking about that, that doesn't sound like a great idea either, because you're [not] sleeping
>
> **Mariah**: That was doing test prep, or y'all were having a good time?
>
> **Sade**: Oh, it was mixed. You might be doing test prep at 2:00 AM. You also might be making ice cream at 2:00 AM, but it was like 30-minute sessions. One thing I will give

them credit for was it was 30-minute sessions, so as soon as I'm done with something, I'm moving. It's time for us to move anyway.

Mariah: Really?

Sade: Yeah, and it became activities like three-point shootout, making ice cream, and then we'd do random things that are quote-unquote fun, but aligns to some type of teacher standard. With ice cream, you were understanding precision, because I remember us having to use the measurements, or talking about when chemicals combine, what's the reaction? Why does the salt in water make it colder? I think why soda water is something colder than regular water. We talked what is in it, and all these different cool fun facts. Going into testing, and they also ... We just knew [my school] took testing very serious, because every two weeks we were testing, and I don't think they realized, but every two weeks we remember somebody saying, "Hey, we're prepping for a test," or, "Hey, don't forget y'all got this test." Whether that was Benchmark, ACT Aspire, they'd just always give a diagnostic. (Interview II, Line 24-28)

Testing was so important in Sade's school, administrators added additional test preparation time like the "lock-in"[3] event described above, or they would hold mandatory tutoring sessions after school or on weekends. Students were compelled to attend these events, as they would fail their classes if they did not commit and participate in these additional learning activities. Even beyond administrative mandates, there were social forces pressing students to participate. As Sade described it, "smart meant wealth", signaling the way social capital circulated in her school through the accumulation of markers like good grades and high test scores:

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[3] Lock-in: An event planned by Sade's school administrators. The words "lock-in" signal control of space and confinement. In this instance, students were locked in a space to participate in activities to support their test-taking skills. This was a carceral activity disguised as fun to confine students to a space, encourage them to miss sleep, and to prepare them for standardized assessments.

For example, in my class, and I don't know if this is universal, but there's this understanding of smart means wealth, and I did not understand that at all, because I knew my family wasn't, quote-unquote, wealthy, but for some reason you would get these attitudes of that because of how you had been labeled and grouped within schooling. (Interview II, Line 83)

In this example, Sade makes a claim about the ways that smartness operated as property in her school (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011). Smartness was wealth because, with high performance, Sade was able to access additional activities or learning opportunities; even her friendships were dictated by this system of precarious elitism. As Leonardo and Broderick argue, "a substantial part of the ideological work of schooling constructs and constitutes some students as 'smart' while simultaneously constructing and constituting other students as 'not-so-smart'" (p. 2214). At Sade's school, systems and practices enforced this "smart" versus "not smart" dichotomy, and these were often tied to white supremacist ideals of respectability. This was a *system of precarious elitism*, as students were constantly reminded how they could lose their "wealth" if they did not perform.

To further illustrate the ways these systems and practices functioned, consider Sade's account of how student grades and test scores were made public. Similar to Tanya and Taylor, Sade's school used these scores to simultaneously encourage and shame students into doing well:

It was standardized tests, and we knew because our results would be posted on the wall. We knew, and if you didn't grow, or if you grew. When results came out, it was like a cheerleading list. We would look and we would know who made it, who didn't make it, who was going to Hour of Power, who was about to sit down. Yeah. It was a cheerleading list. You would go through and be like, "Okay, where's my friend at? You

grew, girl. You're going to Hour of Power with us. Oh man, girl, did you go to sleep?"

Then it was like, those conversations, and we would start having them, and that was their

way of holding us I guess accountable. Yeah. I think their intent was to hold us

accountable for standardized testing, and for our scores. (Interview II, line 81)

If students wanted to go on field trips, class celebrations, or attend exclusive breakfasts and luncheons, then they were expected to perform. If students did not "grow" on the assessments or had multiple behavior issues, then they would be excluded from the celebrations and activities. Sade recalled some students never getting a chance to attend field trips or to engage in the fun activities. This system of tracking and grouping students effectively resulted in the school choosing Sade's friend group for her, because she had common experiences with the other "good" kids, as they also had access to the activities due to their behavior and performance on exams. Sade states:

Yeah, because of behavior, because of behavior, or literally, like I said, character or

standardized tests. Those two things, and it was this idea of, if your character is bad, then

we can't allow you to go anywhere, and if your test scores are bad, you can't have fun.

You can't play. You've got to keep studying, and so that's what it became" (Interview II,

line 91)

Sade's metaphor of smartness as currency is compellingly illustrated in these examples. Sade's smartness and compliance gave her status and access in her school, and it was clearly tied to her worth and social capital.

Because Sade established her worthiness early on in her time at the charter school —she was labeled as smart and good at math — her school poured resources into her. In high school, she described her experience taking calculus.

Okay, so I'll tell you of a treacherous experience. It's not treacherous because I guess I

had fun, but I don't think [it] was healthy. When I was in high school, from the time I got

to school until 12:00, I was in one class, AP calculus…From the time I got to school, I

had Morning Meeting. Left Morning Meeting about 8:15 AM. From 8:15 AM to 11:45

AM, I was in calculus, straight through. That was calculus, on Monday-...That was

Monday through Thursday, but I'm not done. On Friday evenings, you have a [inaudible

00:11:22] from 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM. That's also his [her math teacher]. Also, you have a

small group that you're in that stays after school once a week, that they don't care what

you have going on, you will fail if you don't participate in. I was a student who had a job.

I played sports. I did the whole nine, and so, yeah. I remember my job being like, "Why

can't you work on Fridays, which is a high demand working day?" I couldn't. I had

calculus on Friday evenings, and he took one of your Saturdays every two months, for

you to come in and actually practice taking the test. (Interview II, line 35)

Again, test performance played an outsized role in Sade's high school experience. Since she was

labeled as a good math student, the school created opportunities for her to do well on

standardized assessments that would ultimately support the school rankings and accreditation. In

her retelling, the "reward" for her strong performance gave her pause in retrospect, leaving her

ambivalent about her experience. On the one hand, the system for calculus demanded much of

her time, even to the detriment of her work schedule. When she would get to school, she attended

one calculus class for half of the day, in addition to evening and weekend sessions.

On the other hand, later in this interview, Sade explained that the time spent in calculus

helped to develop her math identity in ways she came to appreciate. Her calculus teacher would

challenge the typical metrics of success. While Sade had gotten accustomed to working fast and

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individually as those were the standards in her other classes, this teacher pushed her to think about concepts. In calculus, if students finished first, they would not be celebrated. Instead, they would be asked to explain how they did the problem and challenged on the concepts supporting their decisions. Sade remembered feeling frustrated and like this teacher was holding her back, because she had always been celebrated for being a quick learner and a quick performer. In retrospect, she cited being successful in college because she could clearly articulate where she was confused and could identify and understand concepts to help her to problem solve. Ultimately, her school's system, where the math kids would take advanced calculus for almost 20 hours per week, helped her to score a five on her AP exam — a win in the school's economy. Because of her calculus teacher's emphasis on understanding ideas, Sade also gained a new way of doing math that went beyond speed and instead focused on understanding.

What the school cared about, of course, was what was emphasized in relation to the calculus achievement. They were told their AP scores were important, because they could potentially lose school funding if students did not perform well on the exams. Through this precarity narrative, the school compelled many students to feel pressure to earn high scores, because they did not want to lose resources. Effectively, the school put students in a state of anxiety to incentivize their performance.

College Experiences: Fighting for Belonging. Even transitioning into college, the *system of precarious elitism* followed Sade. She spoke proudly about attending an HBCU, and how the experience at her university enriched her as a person. Despite the newfound sense of belonging, she still managed to experience the vulnerability of her smartness. Specifically, she was the only freshmen in the math department, and one of very few Black American women in the program. In college, she was no longer the "smartest" student or automatically grouped with

the "smartest" students in her classes. Sade identified as a Black American woman, so she felt isolated in her classes, as many of her classmates were males or Black students from countries outside of the United States. This feeling of isolation mattered, as Joseph et. al (2019) report that:

> Teachers' mathematics instruction can reproduce oppressive systems, such as racism, sexism, classism, and xenophobia. Related to this, mathematics is often constructed as a White, male, and exclusionary institutional space. And because of this, it can be challenging for Black girls to understand themselves as math learners. (p. 135)

Although Sade had been a star math student in her K-12 settings, she was entering a higher education setting where her place was not automatically evident to those around her, even in her HBCU. In higher education, this systemic exclusion Joseph and colleagues describe is evidenced through Black girls' and women's low participation and achievement in mathematics. Even though Sade was always supported and positioned as good in math, she was now the youngest person in her department, and she learned quickly that smartness was also wealth in the math department. This was the first time that she noticed how gendered and cultural differences impacted her experiences in the classroom. This created a dilemma for her learning. Unlike her high school calculus teacher, who celebrated understanding, her curiosity and questions needed to be managed in college. She often did not want to ask questions, because she did not want to seem like she was unknowing. Her K12 experiences taught her not to presume a secure place in a smartness economy, as she saw classmates shuffled out of the elite when scores fell or (respectable) behavior changed. In this way, the ghost of precarious elitism haunted her in college: she wanted to assume the status of being "wealthy" and successful, despite often feeling uncomfortable asking questions or engaging in tough conversations. She had to manage how she was perceived to establish her worthiness of being in that space.

Second Ghost: Silenced Voice

Middle School Experiences: Understanding Who Can Be Curious. Not only did Sade have to navigate a *system of precarious elitism*, she also had to navigate environments that silenced her voice in various ways. This ghost of silenced voice subsequently impacted her teaching ideologies and her experiences in teacher education. As a young student, Sade was talkative and lively, and she remembered being curious and excited to learn. In middle school, she was beginning to learn about the world, so she had questions and wanted to challenge the things she saw around her. However, as she got older, Sade started getting in trouble for asking questions.

> Oh, elementary, I would have characterized myself as someone who was talkative. I was just very talkative. That was like, it's on all the report cards, that, "She just talks a lot," but I did my work. I feel like I was studious. I got what they were talking about, but I just always felt like once I was done, that I should have had the freedom. It's stormy here. The freedom to talk. In middle school, I think middle school was when I started to understand a little bit about life, and so I was questioning everybody. They were very transparent. I always did the most. I always had a question, and in our community, always having a question is seen as talking back. It was a tangle that we had to work on. (Interview II, Line 93)

Transitioning from elementary to middle school, Sade had to learn how to interact and behave. She described being studious and finishing her work, so she wanted to have some freedom after completing her assignments. However, she learned that was not an option. Similar to Caresha, Sade's experience of being talkative moved from innocent excitement to pushing back, asking questions, and analyzing the world around her. In this instance she cited a "tangle" or a tension

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between curiosity and respectability. In most instances, she was expected to be smart, but she was also expected to be compliant. As a Black girl, her curiosity was interpreted as "talking back," which was interpreted as disrespectful. Asking questions and being curious became a mechanism for misbehavior, so she had to work on being compliant in order to successfully navigate this system.

High School Experiences: Balancing Bossy. As a Black girl, in Sade's experience, she was praised and hypervisible in school due to her academic performance, but the praise she earned was strongly linked to the ways her performance benefitted her school as an institution. Her 5 on the calculus AP mattered to her school administrators; her deeper understanding of math did not. But access in her secondary school came not only from academic performance, it also came from compliance. Her high school not only controlled students' access to learning opportunities, they also controlled students' appearances and bodies. There were, for example, very specific regulations about wearing jackets and earrings. Sade remembered being frustrated about only being allowed to wear earrings that were smaller than a quarter and having to leave her jacket in her locker —even if she was cold. Additionally, she remembered witnessing students being disciplined or corrected if they were "off task." If a guest came into the room and a student turned to look at them, then the student would receive a demerit for being off task. They were taught to ignore any distractions and track the teacher at all times. In this highly controlling and punitive system, Sade felt that her voice was often overlooked and many of her needs went unmet.

In high school, because of her success in the school's *system of precarious elitism*, she was chosen to attend many extracurricular activities. One activity included a trip to an Ivy League university to learn about conflict resolution. She described the area that she grew up in as

a "high conflict" area. Some of the issues in her school were due to conflicts between students or between students and teachers. Sade was chosen to attend the conflict resolution program to bring ideas and strategies back to her school. She excitedly reported that these strategies worked, and she confidently took credit for being able to provide strategies to cut down on suspension rates.

> The coolest thing I'll refer to is, after I got back from [Ivy League University], in [Ivy League University] you create a plan for discussing conflict, and how does the conflict resolution process work? All of these nice things, and when I got back, I was able to implement into my school for them to reduce suspensions. As a kid, I had no idea what I was doing. It was just pretty cool and to not send people home, but thinking about it now, whoah. We stopped suspension rates. We decreased suspension rates at our school using conflict resolution methods, and so having those opportunities, I think, made school cooler than content for me. (Interview II, line 52)

She cited that opportunity as something that "made school cooler than content" in high school. She felt joy in making a difference by analyzing the issues in the school and building solutions. This joy emerged outside of the regular school building and outside of the typical test preparation-centered curriculum. She enjoyed learning new skills and putting them into practice to make real change. Yet, when she attempted to translate these skills into other areas to address additional issues, she explained that her teachers undermined her voice, made jokes, and dismissed the students' grievances by labeling them as bossy.

> High school was the first time I was introduced to being bossy, because I had been labeled as bossy by the 10th grade, in the way of, there was a group of us. As Black girls, we had just been labeled as bossy because again, we took the initiative and said, "There's

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just a lot of mess here, and we've got to fix this, y'all. We can't keep living like this."

Yeah, and so I was introduced to being bossy, and I think that led me into being a student

who, I was very vocal about what I felt like we needed as a school, or what I felt like we

needed a break from. (Interview II, line 98)

Through these various experiences, Sade, a Black girl, encountered a difficult (and common)

tension. On the one hand, she was hypervisible in her classes as someone that could do well and

perform on assessments, ultimately benefiting her school as an institution. She was praised for

being smart and consequently had "wealth" that turned into access to trips, programs, and

scholarships that would help to support her as a scholar — including the conflict resolution

activity where her leadership skills could shine. However, if she became "too smart," problems

would arise. As she described in the interview excerpt above, when Sade and other Black girls in

her school were vocal about issues surrounding them, teachers used the "bossy" label to

minimize or ignore their concerns. Monique Morris (2016) claims that Black girls who have

challenged authority or attempted to negotiate poverty and racial isolation have often been

pushed out of school or forced to "transform" from "bad girls" into "good girls." Due to their

social capital, Sade and her friends were not pushed out of school but their voices and opinions

were nonetheless dismissed. Sade's mother had to step in and tell teachers to not call her

daughter bossy. In their private conversations, Sade's mother further challenged this label, telling

her that she is not bossy, but that she is driven and wants to make change in the world. Sade felt

like the label of bossy was associated with her group as a tactic to undermine their grievances.

Her leadership and drive were celebrated when she was assertive and overachieving in the

classroom, but not when she challenged authority in unsanctioned ways.

As a Black girl that used her voice, Sade needed to figure out how to do it in a way so that she met the standards of respectability. For example, she could be smart, but she should not challenge adults. Curiosity is a privilege that is often not afforded to Black children (Alexis Riley, AERA). Curiosity drives intellect, and intellect drove success at her school. But this self-evident formulation did not operate in such a straightforward fashion for Sade as a Black girl. She was supposed to be smart and supposed to perform — but if she leaned into curiosity, asked questions, or challenged her teachers she was labeled, and no longer heard. When her smartness was not serving the metrics in the school, it became a threat or something that needed to be "fixed."

College Experiences: Denying Confusion. Even in college, at an HBCU, her voice was often silenced. As one of the only Black women in her program, she was often infantilized by her Black male professors. She would be treated as a daughter or a granddaughter. While this treatment provided her some protection through their care for her, it also cost her, since her voice was not taken seriously. She was not able to engage in the conversations as she wanted to, because she was not seen as an equal adult. Additionally, with the difference in age between herself and most of the people in her program, she did not feel confident asking questions and being vulnerable in those spaces. She cited examples of times when her classmates would make comments about not allowing any stupid questions, so she felt isolated when it came to trying to understand the material and to connect with other students. The ghost of precarious elitism followed her here, because her academic success did not afford her a social group like it did in high school. In order for her to gain academic capital, she did not want to be perceived as confused, therefore, her voice was silenced to conceal the fact that she had questions or wanted to increase her understanding.

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Teacher Education Experiences: Refusing the Same Ol' Story. During the time of BWT, Sade was in an interesting position. During her teacher education program, she pursued a full-time job at the same charter school she attended as a student. As she reflected on her own experiences at that school, she was still haunted by the same ghosts as she was learning to be a teacher. With her history at the school, she felt that she knew the community and the school's expectations of its students. At the same time, even in her elevated position as a teacher, she was haunted by the ghost of a *silenced voice* since she was often not treated as an equal in the school. She was conflicted because in her teacher education program she was learning how school systems disadvantage Black students, while simultaneously witnessing this harm in her role as a teacher. As she described below, she was struggling to find her voice, to figure out how to disrupt in these spaces.

> But it was also the most overwhelming, frustrating process in the world. Because I was learning actively about those systems, but also actively seeing them play and not fully sometimes knowing what can I say and what can I do? And so, that was a process that I had to really overcome and try to figure out. That I'm still trying to figure out. (Interview I, line 26)

The dilemma she experienced is a hallmark for many BWPSTs. She was now transitioning into an institutional actor, working in a school that still depended on Eurocentric values and practices. Her conflict stemmed from learning how to disrupt the system but also having to serve as an institutional actor in this system. When she chose to disrupt and question the policies and decisions among teachers and school leaders, her voice was often disregarded. She was still seen as the child she was in high school, as many of her teachers and administrators were still at the

school. When she pointed out ways to make the school more liberatory, she was accused of being self-centered and not having the school's best interest in mind.

> So, I'll add a 22-year-old Black woman teacher returning to where I grew up, it was hard and I hated it here. Because there was this idea of everybody knew me or "knew me," versus what I had learned, and what I wanted education to look like. Versus people being like, "You know what you went to school in. You know how this goes." Those type of things. And it's like, "I also know that this is a systematic issue that we need to stop." And so, how do I have those conversations with people who I'm not grown yet to, or I'm not qualified in their heads yet to have that conversation? What am I supposed to do? (Interview I, Line 98)

In this passage, Sade felt conflicted. She was still haunted by the silencing she experienced as a Black girl student. She saw the systematic issues in her school, and she wanted to change them. However, the other teachers and school leaders still saw her as a little girl, so they did not take her expertise seriously. Halliday (2017) explained that:

> In contemporary discussions of childhood, one does not become an adult until they reach a certain age. However, historically this perspective has not held true for Black girls and they are typically deemed an adult or child using "ethnic, national, and international attitudes towards girlhood, that are not solely based on age." (p. 7)

Even though Sade was an adult, she was still not regarded as such by her colleagues that remembered her as a student. They wanted her as a solid math teacher with subject knowledge, but they (still) did not want her to disrupt or challenge the status quo. She felt echoes of her experiences as a student, where many of these same people wanted her to be smart and to get

scores that supported the school rankings, but they did not want her to disrupt or to "get smart" with her teachers.

Sade's experiences in school were stifling and centered on whiteness and respectability. Even in the absence of white people (both in high school and college), whiteness was at work. Due to this, her experiences were carceral and extreme. Her high school in particular focused on controlling students' bodies and voices in order to benefit the institution. As a Black girl that could do math, she learned how to navigate these systems and to excel. She was haunted by the ghosts of *systems of precarious elitism* and *silenced voice*, as she internalized strategies in order to cope and succeed. Resisting rest, following white-centered behavior parameters, and learning how to take tests became her reality, and she was good at it. It was not until her teacher education program, where she began to unpack the unhealthy aspects of her learning experiences in K-16.

Sade's Teaching Ideologies

The ghosts that haunted Sade, the *systems of precarious elitism* and her own *silenced voice,* also haunted her teaching ideologies and the development of her math identity. Sade's teaching ideology questioned the normal power dynamics between students, teachers, and the curriculum. She did not believe that a teacher should hold sole power in the classroom. She believed that students should be regarded as human first, and teachers have a duty to regard students' humanity primarily.

Through the support of her teacher education program, Sade expressed how she was disrupting her own beliefs about what it meant to engage in mathematics.

> For me, I'll be specific about this year. For this year, good math looked like no, I don't get
> to determine what's right and wrong. Well, I'll say what I don't. [inaudible] don't gives a

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negative connotation. But for me, good math teaching has been, I don't get to determine what's right and wrong, I don't get to determine who's deserving of grace, and then I have to choose to always be willing to learn. And for me, those have been the biggest ones. Especially in a pandemic, in a rural area. It's like every day, no matter how hard it gets, it's like you don't get to decide who deserves that patience. You just have to give it to them, and trust that they're going to do what's best with it. (Interview I, line 63)

In this excerpt, Sade shared her conception of good teaching. She stated that she, the institutional actor, does not get to determine what is right and wrong. This was a form of disruption. Growing up in a highly surveilled and policed school, her approach to content reflected a right and wrong dichotomy. She was a product of a system that valued being correct in order to choose the "right" answers on standardized tests. If a student did not get a high score, then they could not attend social events. If the answer on a test was not right, then they would not get points. In class, students were celebrated for speed and accuracy. So they needed to get to the right answer quickly, and someone would tell them if it was right or wrong whether that was a teacher or a standardized test.

In her conception of good teaching, she tried to push back on what she learned as a student. She did not feel like she needed to be the person to determine right and wrong, as that could stifle students. She did not want to silence their voice, she wanted them to be able to explore and to be curious - things that she was not afforded as a student. As she mentioned before, in her majority Black community, it was not respectable to question authority. Power was always in the hands of adults. When she says, "I don't get to determine what's right and wrong" she is complicating the typical form of authority that is present in classrooms. She is speaking about "destabilizing a particular form of power and domination" (Phillip, 2011, p. 305). She is

beginning to interpret her teaching context through a new set of axioms that have been disrupted throughout her teacher education and her reflection processes.

She also discussed how she does not get to decide who is deserving of grace. In her teacher education program, she often felt like she did not deserve breaks or extensions, because she was so often told she did not deserve these things in high school.

> Yes. Okay. Also, I'm going to be very honest about that, there's this guilt piece attached to me feeling like I should ask for more time, or just something. I should have an excuse. That's how it feels. Like I just don't want to have an excuse. I know I can get through it. I have a plan. Just make it work. Because it's worked so far. But what I notice is it didn't have to work like that. I did not have to miss sleep. I did not have to be inhumanely tired. And I literally just had to ask them. But most times, it became a back and forth.
>
> (Interview I, line 29-30)

Her high school experience was responsible for the foundation of her math identity, so being shown and told that her individual needs did not matter was very impactful on her student identity in college and graduate school. Oftentimes, she and her classmates were not shown grace and were not given multiple chances to engage in the school systems. They did not have opportunities to talk about events happening in the world or even in their neighborhood, they were encouraged to keep performing and to push those things to the back of their mind. If she did not continuously perform and "grow" on tests, then her wealth would be snatched away from her. So she always had a pressure to perform and she only deserved the perks that she "earned" in the system of elitism. As she began to learn more about these systems and how they can be detrimental, she tried to create opportunities to honor students' humanity. And she made it a habit to raise these issues to challenge the status quo.

Some things that have been really like, "You should leave out the door." Have been the fact that literally my students' humanity has not been valued, when I felt it was critical. So something big can be going on in the community and we bring it up and they're like, "Well you know ACT and I'm like, "Hello, I do not..." And so as these tangents of like... Being very specific, the phrasing I got in an email on Friday was putting our philosophical beliefs aside before our leadership meeting. And it was like, "Was that to me?" And I was like, "Okay. I'm not going to respond to this till Monday. (Interview 6, line 11)

Sade expressed frustration because she felt that her students' humanity had not been recognized nor valued. She wanted to be able to bring up issues that were happening in the community and not just focus on the next exam. She was even asked to put her philosophical beliefs aside ahead of meetings, as school administrators did not want to engage in conversations that disrupted the systems in the school. It was clear that her teaching ideologies were impacted by her ghosts, as she tried to use her elevated position as a teacher to advocate for students' needs. She also tried to disrupt the traditional power dynamics between students and teachers by clearly stating that she did not want to be the arbiter of right and wrong dimming students' curiosity as her own curiosity was often dimmed in middle school and high school. She ultimately wanted to provide students with opportunities and experiences that she did not receive as a student.

How BWPSTs Experience and Learn in Teacher Education Programs: Sade's Experience in Teacher Education

Not only have the hauntings of the *system of precarious elitism* and *silenced voice* impacted Sade's teaching ideologies, but they also impacted her engagement with content and her professors in her teacher education program. Sade's development into an institutional actor

was complex. These hauntings impacted her experience in her teacher education program and her development into a teacher. Due to the *silencing* and *system of precarious elitism*, Sade relied on smartness as capital. She wanted to be wealthy in high school, college, and graduate school. To gain this wealth, she depended on her individual capacity and did not want to show weakness through asking for help or extensions on deadlines. These hauntings impacted her interactions with graduate school faculty members and cohort colleagues especially as she began teaching full time during her program. Sade cited many instances of being overwhelmed with the course load and being "inhumanely tired," but she would not ask for help. She did not feel like she deserved it and did not want to be seen as someone trying to take advantage.

> And also, I don't know, it [inaudible 00:18:38] is I made a correlation, and that may be why I'm so heavily pushing this. And it was this idea that I feel guilty for asking for help, because I was made to feel like those things that I needed weren't things that I truly needed. As a student in a rural area, I was made to feel so many things that I felt like, "Oh my God, I need sleep." Like, "No, you don't. You need to do my work, and you need to sit here, and you need to be quiet." (Interview I, line 73)

This quotation revealed how she felt guilty about asking for help. She can pinpoint exactly where those feelings came from. She went to a school where the main objective was for them to perform and to comply even if that meant their humanity was pushed to the side. Sade learned that she had a right to learn, even when personal things were happening in her life. She no longer had to just fight through alone like she learned in high school. Her teacher education program ended up adapting her assignments to directly support her new students. She wrote units for the upcoming quarters, so her progress in the program directly impacted her students and helped her with her teaching load.

Even though there was this nurturing and... I feel like honestly, nurturing love and support, there was no lowering of expectations. And, for some reason in my experiences, those two never seem... they seem to struggle to always go together. (Interview III, line 29)

Overall, in her teaching program she reported that she felt nurtured and felt like there were high expectations, and in her experience, those two things did not typically correlate. As she was haunted by the precarious system of elitism and silence, it took her a while to really understand that she could ask her advisor for support and that she could ask for help without being perceived as weak. She learned to engage with her professors casually without feeling pressure to uphold a level of respectability. She unlearned much of what she adopted in high school about teacher and student dynamics, and her program helped to support this transition. Her professors showed her that you can be nurturing and kind, and maintain high expectations. She also learned that it is ok to be curious and to participate and let your voice be heard in the classroom.

In this closing quotation, it is clear that Sade's program supported her shift in ideology. She reflected on her own experiences to realize her school experiences were not always healthy.

I did not know... and I think this humbleness came from the fact of, going into this program and thinking like, "I had a quality education." Thinking that, I had been in this space that loved me, taken care of me, and pushed me, or supported me at maximums. And so, I realized that, so many things we felt were healthy, were actually things that led to these insecurities around my academic performance. (Interview III, line 31)

Her program focused on identity development and exploration, so she had opportunities to begin greeting her ghosts, and she was able to consider different ways to support students. She had the

opportunity to question her status quo in order to begin thinking about new futures for her students. Because Sade had to navigate a system of precocious elitism, she was always in danger of losing her privilege and wealth. She was taught to always work harder despite what might be happening personally, and consequently, she adapted these coping strategies in her teacher education program. She declined support and chose not to communicate her issues because she did not want to lose her position, something that was a true threat in her schooling experience. Secondly, she experienced a silenced voice in many of her schooling experiences that pushed her to shrink herself and overlook her own needs. She learned that her ways of navigating school had been unhealthy in the past, and her teacher education program helped her by facilitating reflection exercises as well as being nurturing towards her as she began to explore her math and teaching identity.

Summary of Sade's Case

Sade was haunted by the ghosts of a system of elitism and silenced voice. Her case was particularly complex because she went back to teach at the same high school she attended as a student. She began greeting her ghosts in her teacher education program, as her program focused on identity development and the social foundations of education in the United States. In addition, Sade's professors supported her and were responsive to her needs. She expressed her appreciation for her program as they cared for her while maintaining high expectations, and they also supported her in being critical of her own schooling experiences. She did not realize that she did not have a healthy relationship with math until she began to interrogate her experiences in graduate school. Her teacher education program supported her in redefining her teaching ideologies to disrupt her own experiences as a gifted math student. She engaged in critical work in her teacher education program, but she met resistance when she tried to implement new

liberatory strategies at her school. She had to navigate the tension of greeting her ghosts and building a new future in a school that thrived on carceral systems of discipline to accompany rigorous instruction.

Chapter 9: Freedom Dreaming: Building an Unimagined Future in Teacher Education

And basically, my professor was like, "Standardized testing actually is a really good measure of where your students are." And I kind of told her it's a really lazy measure and a non-creative measure of where your students are, because, first of all, I know so many of my students, as soon as they see a test format, they kind of freeze up. Whereas, if I were to just read the problem to them or just put it up in a non-threatening way as a warmup, easily. They could do it easily.

Taylor, (Interview III, line 24)

The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

Audre Lorde

I open this chapter with these two quotations, because they highlight the need for change, as well as the dilemmas we face in imagining it. In this first quote, Taylor, frustrated by the inaction of the professors in her teacher education program, expressed the need to explore new strategies to measure student learning. Her program claimed to be anti-racist but still depended on antiquated ways of evaluating student knowledge. At the same time, Lorde used the metaphor of the master's tools and the master's house to illustrate the complexity of reform. On the quest for liberation, it is not sufficient to utilize the tools of the oppressor and to ignore structural oppressions. Instead, reform calls for immense creativity, ingenuity, and disruption. Teacher education reform is imperative as the United States is in a crisis, especially in the midst of a pandemic. Many teachers, including Black teachers, are leaving the profession at alarming rates. How do we imagine new possibilities in a system haunted by the ghosts of white supremacy? Like ghosts, white supremacy is shapeless, taking new forms as institutions shift: de jure desegregation went away, only to be replaced by new forms of anti-Blackness, like tracking and

vocational education (Constantine et. al, 1998). Although I am aware of these contradictions and caught in the same tangled webs, like my ancestors before me, I dream of freedom anyway (Kelley, 2002).

This dreaming is important, because we need to know what kind of world we want to struggle for. Despite countless initiatives to increase the number of teachers of color in K-12 classrooms, these demographics have remained stagnant (Carver-Thomas et al., 2017). Because Black teachers have a long history in the U.S. (Foster, 1997), these numbers do not reflect anything but the ways that schools have become inhospitable to us when we have other professional options. To yield new results, it is time for education scholars and practitioners to get creative and to imagine a new future. In this chapter, I answer the third research question: How can teacher education programs better support BWPSTs? To answer this question, I am using Freedom Dreaming as a method, imagining different configurations of teacher education and schooling that would allow my participants to flourish as educators. To do this, I will provide a summary of each woman's experience in her teacher education program along with recommendations that could have better supported her developmental needs. Importantly, the eight ghosts I identified in their narratives — individual responsibility, adultification, deservingness, competition, hypervisibility/invisibility, meritocracy, precarious elitism, and silenced voices — all reflect the white supremacy that shapes US institutions in general and US schools in particular. Since teacher education is a part of these institutions, it is not clear that any solution I propose can completely evade hauntings. Importantly, none of the women in my study — focal participants or otherwise — came away from their education without ghosts. But still we dream.

Drawing on the hauntology framework, though, the goal is to find ways to greet these ghosts, to bring them into consciousness, since, like the dead who can't find their rest, they are seeking the help of those they haunt to bring about greater justice. I illustrate the various ways teacher education can help BWPSTs greet these ghosts of white supremacy by creating opportunities for witnessing, rememorizing, transforming, historicizing, making the money make sense, and resting. I narrate how this would work by re-imagining how this might have looked for each of my focal participants. By freedom dreaming, I am trying to create a world that exists beyond the constraints of the one that we have now. In many ways, the BWT group was my first attempt to freedom dream and recreate a new space for BWPSTs to learn and be liberated. As I do this work here, I also bring in some of the voices of other BWT participants. Through this study, I consider what I have learned through these women's stories and push my imagination further toward our collective liberation.

	Caresha	Taylor	Tanya	Sade
K-12 Schooling	Traditional Public	Magnet Public School	Traditional Public	Charter School
Type of Teacher Education Program	Alternative Route	Alternative Route	University-Based	University-Based
Haunting in Teacher Education	Haunted	Greeted ghosts outside of teacher education program	Greeted ghosts with certain professors Haunted through some programmatic failings	Greeted ghosts through teacher education program
Ghost 1	Investment in Individual Responsibility	Deservingness	Hypervisibility/ Invisibility	System of Precarious Elitism
Ghost 2	Adultification	Competition	Meritocaracy	Silenced Voice
Ideologies	Safety and Compliance	Building an inclusive space for Black children	Flexible and attentive instruction to meet students' needs	All students deserve grace, and challenged traditional power roles

Table 3. Outline of focal participants' K-12 schools, teacher education programs, hauntings, ghosts, and

ideologies.

Caresha: Building a Foundation

As a native of East Town, Caresha's ultimate goal was to return to her hometown to support a new generation of students. As outlined in Chapter Four, Caresha was an "optimistic and determined" student, and she was haunted by the ghosts of *adultification* and *individual responsibility*. Throughout school, Caresha learned to protect herself by ascribing to respectability politics because her curiosity, confidence, and voice were typically regarded as threatening or "too grown." She learned to navigate school successfully by taking ownership over her own behaviors. Understandably, she wanted to support her own students in experiencing this success, so her teaching ideologies reflected her investment in control and structure, investments solidly on the carceral continuum (Shedd, 2015). She expressed the need to prioritize behavior to create a safe environment.

Her alternative route teacher education program reinforced the carceral elements of her teaching ideology because it also focused heavily on compliance and order as prerequisites for student learning. This one-year program was extremely accelerated, and the pre-service teachers spent most of the year focusing on classroom management strategies. With this emphasis, there was not enough space to consider other important topics like teacher identity and development. When I asked how her program supported her as a Black woman teacher, Caresha responded:

> I don't feel like with the name that we have, I don't feel like they have taken time and said, "Okay, you as an African American teacher, this is how we're going to support you as an African American teacher. This is how we are going to let you know that we value your ethnicity. We value that you are an African American teacher." I'm not saying that because I'm just Black. I haven't seen that with my mentor teacher either, and she is Caucasian. I think it's like a district-wide thing, they don't really support some of the

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things unless it's like religion, or like something that you honor and they don't. Things

like that. Like as far as like, welcoming some traditions and I did see that throughout the

program. We have a student, she is Hispanic. Well, our resident teacher, she's Hispanic.

And Hispanic Heritage Month, we got together for her and we did a few things, as far as

the program wide. Now the district, I don't know what the district may have done for her,

but as far as the program, that was one thing where I was like, "Okay." *(Interview III, line*

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In this quotation, Caresha made it clear that her program did not take the time to support her

identity development as a Black teacher. Caresha claimed that her district did not "really support

some of the things unless it's like religion, or like something that you honor and they don't."

In his framework, Gorksi (2009) referred to this type of inclusion strategy as *Teaching*

the Other. He claimed that, "othering language defines a person or group as being outside of the

realm of normalcy. Such language helps to maintain hegemony, attaching a negative value to

identities or ideologies that differ from the hegemonic norm" (p. 313). Instead of pushing

towards inclusion, this tactic only helped to further delineate and other people's identities in the

school community. Caresha went on to share how the residents in her program celebrated

Hispanic Heritage Month because there was one Hispanic woman in their cohort. While this

seems like a nice and inclusive gesture, Gorski (2009) characterized this approach as, "a

tendency to frame multicultural education as respecting diversity; a focus on sensitivity and self-

reflection; and a failure to connect either of these to educational inequities" (p. 314). There was a

clear failure to connect these celebrations to pre-service teachers' understanding of larger

political, historical, cultural, and social implications of cultural differences for their work in

education. Considering what white supremacy had meant in Caresha's education as a Black girl

and her continued haunting by the ghosts of *adultification* and *individual responsibility*, even a celebration of Black History Month would not have addressed her developmental needs. Without these connections, her program did not support her in greeting her ghosts, instead perpetuating her hauntings as she was never provided time to interrogate or situate her own schooling experiences in larger contexts.

Even though Caresha's program was only one year, they could have provided space to support their pre-service teachers' identity development and understanding of the social contexts that impact education in the United States. As I imagine more below, one approach to supporting this development is to cultivate spaces where BWPSTs can witness and (re)memorize.

Witnessing

In the hauntology framework, Yoon and Chen (2022) argued that witnessing can address ghosts and hauntings. Yoon and Chen explained *witnessing as*:

> A spirit-led process of being haunted. It is receiving and often recording an account of injustice; it is to be with ghosts and feel traces of their pain, even though you cannot experience it directly. Heeding hauntings begins with witnessing: with being in relation with ghosts, with recognizing that ghosts are always horrifying but not always malevolent. (p. 83)

Teacher education programs have the opportunity to either support BWPSTs in interacting and greeting their ghosts, or they will perpetuate anti-Blackness causing the hauntings to continue. By creating opportunities for witnessing, teacher education programs can support BWPSTs in exploring the complexities of their personhood acknowledging not only the oppression but also the power in survival and resurgence. For example, in BWT, as Black women, we listened, reflected, and shared our experiences as Black girls and Black women in a protected space. We

made commitments to listen without judgment and to be brave in sharing our stories. There is power in sharing an account of injustice because it makes visible the invisible.

What would it mean to witness Caresha's ghosts? We could honor the ways she learned how to cope and navigate school by controlling her own actions to the best of her ability. This became her normal way of life. At the same time, we could have conversations about structural oppression and the ways it impacted her experiences of safety in her school. Through communal conversations and storytelling, BWPSTs can witness each other's stories acknowledging collective hurt. By sharing their stories, they bring light to the injustice and open the door for healing and reconciliation.

Teacher education programs have a responsibility to provide a space for BWPSTs to witness one another's stories. In BWT, all the participants were victims of state sanctioned violence when they were Black girls. They learned how to be resilient and to operate in these violent systems. By building a community for BWPSTs to witness to each other's stories, teacher education programs can support these women in "being in relation with ghosts" instead of ignoring them or fearing them. This is essential work. Even in a one-year program, there must be space for BWPSTs to critically analyze their journey to becoming institutional actors. By building a community for these Black women, there is a space for understanding that their stories are not singular but connected through the ways these systems tend to dispossess minoritized people. Their stories are historically situated; therefore, a strong understanding of the history of Black teachers and Blackness is imperative. Witnessing is not possible without situating Black women's position in a larger context. Not only are BWPSTs haunted by their own ghosts, but they are also haunted by the ghosts of the institutions that they inhabit. By witnessing, Black women can promote exchange and conversation. What if BWPSTS were encouraged to build

upon each others' stories of coping, surviving, and thriving as Black girls in school? What if there was an opportunity for BWPSTs to greet their own ghosts as well as support the ghosts of those in their community? What if BWPSTs realized they were not alone? The goal here is not just to build community, but to build a critical community that supports the process of BWPSTs being in relation with their ghosts. The importance of community in witnessing and rememorizing (discussed below) is that this process can be painful —and even more painful if you attempt to engage it alone. Witnessing each other's stories has the potential to help BWPSTs to depersonalize their own ghosts to examine how systemic issues have contributed to their experiences in school.

(Re)memorizing

Being in community with ghosts through witnessing is the first step, and Yoon and Chen (2022) claimed that (re)memorizing is the second step. A (re)memory is a story that helps to "navigate the time when state-sanctioned violence is officially over and done, but the over and done stays" (p. 84). As a victim of state-sanctioned violence, a BWPST's story could be heavy. Holding the stories of other BWPSTs in a community can be heavy. (Re)memorizing makes it possible to do the work of (re)visioning, (re)cognizing, (re)presenting, and (re)claiming (Dillard, 2022). Rather than forgetting or even forgiving, "releasing the hold that memories have on us – so they no longer have power over us – is the first step in putting the past back together again" (Yoon & Chen, 2022, p. 85). When BWPSTs (re)memorize, they are taking power over their stories and they are able to use new lenses to make sense of their past experiences in school. They are no longer just coping, they are confronting their stories. They are releasing the burden of these stories so that they can rearticulate and (re)claim their teaching ideologies in liberatory ways. By releasing, they engage in a process of exploring the ways they learned how to navigate

a violent school system. Once they begin to release those strategies, there is room to rearticulate what it meant to be a Black girl in school, and how that could translate into being a Black woman teacher.

For Caresha, we can imagine her sharing the stories of adultification. We can imagine a teacher education program that named this phenomenon where Black children are seen as "too grown" in ways that rob them of the grace we grant children to fumble and learn. Perhaps in helping Caresha analyze and release the burden of this part of her own story, she could reconcile her own teaching ideology's emphasis on controlling students' behavior. This could provide space for her to reimagine her classroom management strategies to build a more liberatory learning space.

These processes of witnessing and rememorizing build the foundation for supporting the developmental needs of BWPSTs. As victims of state-sanctioned violence, Black girls have coped to navigate these systems, and these coping strategies have impacted their teaching ideologies. In order to rearticulate their teaching ideologies, teacher education programs should design space for BWPSTs to do the work of releasing, re-membering, and reconciling.

Taylor: Working to Change the Status Quo

As I described in Chapter 5, Taylor was haunted by the ghosts of *deservingness* and *competition*. Throughout her schooling experiences, Taylor received messages about who was deserving of a quality education. She also had to navigate an extremely competitive STEM high school that was founded on racist and sexist ideals. As an adult, through her own exploration and observations she began to interrogate her experiences as a student. This reflection process shaped her teaching ideologies as she wanted to disrupt her own experiences to create new futures for her students.

She entered her alternative route teacher education program with strong values and ideas for building a liberatory classroom. She was drawn to her program because their (stated) mission was to take the whiteness out of education; however, she quickly found that this was not how they operated. Because she had already started engaging in this reflective and critical work, she resisted some of the practices and policies in her teacher education program. She claimed her program would most likely describe her as "disruptive" because she navigated her program with a critical lens and voiced her concerns confidently. In one example, she discussed an incident at her practicum site when a Black teacher's concerns were not taken seriously:

> I actually have a couple instances where some of my classmates... One of my coworkers, she was a veteran teacher. She took on a mentor teacher and the mentor teacher was saying some really uncomfortable things about her locs, like, "How often do you wash them?" And she brought it up to a couple people and the only person who listened to her was our director who was our principal. And she was just saying how she even brought it up to her coach in our program and the coach was like, "Oh, I know this person and they don't have a racist bone in their body." *(Interview III, line 27)*

In many ways, her program did not live up to their mission. In this interview excerpt, Taylor shared an incident that happened to her Black coworker. When the microaggression was shared with a coach in the teacher education program, the coach immediately engaged in racial gaslighting (Davis, 2017), invalidating Taylor's coworker's complaint by claiming that the white teacher didn't "have a racist bone in her body." Taylor also shared other instances when she or her colleagues would raise issues of racism or bias, and the program would continue to gaslight and uphold hegemonic policies. Since Taylor did critical reflection about her own schooling before and during the program, she was able to resist the white supremacist practices and

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ideologies. However, she boldly claimed that if she had not entered her program with values, then she might have perpetuated their white supremacist practices without criticality. Taylor started the work of greeting her ghosts, but her program should have fulfilled its mission by actually attempting to disrupt whiteness. Instead, they opted to uphold the status quo. In order to better support BWPSTs, Taylor's program could have been more creative in truly attempting to disrupt in order to transform their program. We imagine that now.

Transforming

With their stated mission of taking whiteness out of education, Taylor's teacher education program needed to interrogate what that meant in practice. By continuing to do things as they have always been done, they continued to privilege the privileged. Instead, her program could have helped teachers greet their ghosts by transforming. Returning to Yoon and Chen, we see that transforming means "taking steps to return, repair, and reckon with having no good options, and yet having all options" (p. 87). Since Black women are transitioning into institutional actors on their journey to becoming teachers, working within the institution may feel like a teacher has no options. Transforming is the work that supports a realization that another world can be achieved and allows for new and unimagined options. Teacher education programs have the potential to transform in order to better support Black women's freedom dreaming.

First, teacher education programs can center the needs of BWPSTs. Referring back to the racial matching literature (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; Easton-Brooks, 2013), Black teachers are often recruited with an emphasis on the outcomes for the students, without critically tending to the outcomes for (or needs of) the teachers. By centering Black women, and marginalized populations, all pre-service teachers can be better supported:

But I also just feel like centering us will be very nice. Making events that were thought

with us in mind, because a lot of times the events are, how do I get someone who doesn't

know about people of color to learn about people of color? Even though you're trying to

center marginalized people, you actually ended up centering non-marginalized people.

And so center us, make them feel uncomfortable, and then make us feel affirmed, so.

(*Taylor, Interview III*, line 88)

As Taylor explained here, teacher education programs should plan events with BWPSTS in

mind. Taylor did her own freedom dreaming in this quote, imagining alternative ways of

working, a strategy for transformation. Imagine if, when Taylor's classmate shared the

microaggression about her locs, the program held space for her and supported her. What if the

program prioritized Taylor's classmate's safety instead of gaslighting her? What if they planned

conversations and opportunities to repair this harm instead of ignoring it? For that reason, I argue

that teacher education programs need to build their curriculum, learning activities, policies and

practices, and partnerships with minoritized teachers at the center.

For example, most teacher education programs facilitate student teaching opportunities to

expose students to different types of classrooms and schools. In their student teaching

placements, they are expected to utilize the practices and strategies they learned during

coursework with real students while receiving feedback from a veteran teacher or instructional

coach. This experience is very central for pre-service teachers, as it helps to enhance their

pedagogy and impacts their decision for their future full-time placements.

However, sometimes teacher education programs focus on student teaching placements

that are comfortable for the people in charge, which means these placements exhibit very little

diversity (Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). That was the experience Joan Scott, another BWT

participant who was in a university-based, undergraduate teacher education program, had in her program:

> So I think if they would have got more familiar with [a metropolitan school district], or even [a rural school district], where there are a lot of Black students and students of other ethnicities, I think they would have gotten themselves more familiar with those districts, then it would have been easier for me to feel more comfortable in my second residency. So I think if they would have just educated themselves on better places to stick teacher candidates who are not used to minimal diversity, I think that would help them a lot.
>
> (*Joan Scott, Interview III,* line 62)

Here, Joan Scott discussed the ways that her program could have supported her in her placement for student teaching. They mainly placed pre-service teachers in majority white districts, so a majority of the mentor teachers were also white. She suggested teaching programs build partnerships with districts with different demographics to allow pre-service teachers to be partnered with more diverse mentor teachers. This is one example how teacher education programs can better center the needs of BWPSTs, because if administrators only focus on how to prepare white teachers entering into majority Black and Brown schools and communities, then only white pre-service teachers' learning needs are prioritized. By placing BWPSTs in white spaces, teacher education programs limit access to mentors of color, let alone Black mentors. In this instance, Joan Scott was seeking guidance from a mentor teacher that looked like her, but she did not have access to Black teachers because of the limited options for school partnerships provided by her program. If her program centered Black students, then they might have also partnered with more diverse districts that were also located within thirty minutes of the university.

In both Taylor and Joan Scott's examples, their programs could have transformed to better support the BWPSTs. However, these programs mainly upheld the status quo and did not invest in more creative and innovative ways to educate their teachers. Taylor's experience could have been enhanced if her program administrators were bold enough to truly transform the policies and practices of the program to realize a new reality and future for BWPSTs.

Tanya: Relying on Women of Color Professors

Tanya was haunted by the ghosts of *meritocracy* and *hypervisibility/invisibility*. Her high school career centered around competition, so Tanya was celebrated for working harder than other students. She believed in the power of working hard as she attributed her success to doing just that. In her different schooling contexts, Tanya vacillated between being invisible and hypervisible, forcing her to question the space she took up. At the start of her teacher education program, she was self-conscious about being vocal in her classes because she did not want to overshadow anyone else and did not know how she would be perceived. The women of color professors in her teacher education program helped her to find her voice. As a student, she always felt pressure to work hard and to perform, but in her teacher education program, her professors showed her compassion and allowed her to just be herself. They also encouraged her to pursue a more balanced work and personal life. She shared her experience:

> I think throughout the course of this program, I found my voice more. And I think that
> says a lot for the professors. I think... I don't remember who it was in an interview or if it
> was in one of our big group, but I remember saying that the program was the first time I
> felt like I was talking too much. I was saying too much. Yeah. And I felt like, as the
> program went on and I found my voice and I found who I was, that feeling went away. So
> I think that that would show that it was confirming my identity and who I was and

helping me grow and find myself as an educator and find my voice as an educator.

(*Interview III,* line 37-39)

By the end of her program, she no longer questioned if she took up too much space. Her professors helped her to greet her ghosts by centering her needs. They helped her to develop her identity as a Black woman teacher and to trust her own voice and to be bold in her values. Throughout her recollection, Tanya recognized her women professors of color as being foundational in the success she experienced in her program. She provided examples of their compassion for her and their support when she was questioning her role in the program. She even commented that she probably would not have entered or repeated the program if it was not for particular professors. As mentioned in the literature review, many BWPSTs discuss transformational teacher educators, but typically these are individuals doing important work; the programs themselves do not always reflect the same liberatory pedagogy and practices. If we imagine changing the structure of a program, transformational learning experiences would not be based on luck of enrolling in particular professors' courses - they would be embedded into the entire program.

Historicizing Teacher Education

In Tanya's case, she was lucky to have transformative professors; however, her experience should not have been based on chance. The whole program could have been restructured to better support her growth across professors and across all classes. Acosta et. al (2018) argued that in order to transform teacher education, programs would "ideally be structured in such a way as to connect coursework on historical African American theories and practice with contemporary African American perspectives on teaching and learning" (p. 349). Additionally, they argued that:

Teacher education programs should take an interdisciplinary approach to the study of

teaching. Collaborating with Black Studies, African American History, Women's Studies

and Ethnic Studies departments can support teacher educators in expanding their own

cultural knowledge and in building a curriculum designed to promote the kind of critical

study that leads to positive action. (p. 349)

And lastly, "teacher education must de-center the curricular focus beyond the needs of white,

female teachers" (p. 350). Taylor's program could expand its curricular focus to include the

interdisciplinary approach outlined above. Students would be challenged to engage with different

disciplines and content to understand the educational landscape in the United States. Coursework

and the curriculum would be built to decenter whiteness by engaging in African American

perspectives moving beyond the needs of white female teachers. By restructuring an entire

program to reflect more diverse schools of thought, all pre-service teachers are exposed to this

learning and not just the ones that enroll in particular classes with particular professors. One

approach to decentering the curricular focus on white teachers is to build a solid foundation on

the history of school in the United States. Not one teacher in this country works in a vacuum. All

teachers are stepping into this role that is heavily shaped by policies, political climate, social

factors, and so on. By helping pre-service teachers to understand the larger historical, social,

cultural, and political contexts of teaching, then that can spur new articulations of what it means

to be a teacher. By designing space and providing the tools for BWPSTs to greet their ghosts and

recognize the ghosts that haunt the entire institution of schooling, teacher education programs

can transform the education landscape. This shift has the potential to produce more critical and

reflective teachers.

Sade: Removing the Financial Burden

Sade was haunted by the ghosts of a *system of elitism* and *silenced voice*. As mentioned in Chapter 6, while still enrolled in her teacher education program, she went back to teach at the same high school she attended as a student. She began greeting her ghosts in her teacher education program, as her program focused on identity development and the social foundations of education in the United States. In addition, Sade's professors supported her and were responsive to her needs. For example, she shared a story about her graduate advisor who was committed to being responsive to students' needs:

> And so, that was never something... It was always something she reminded us, like, "Hey, money should not be your concern. I need you to focus on what you're learning, what you observe and are telling me, and let me know the problems." And, even in the sense of workload... When I say access and cultural inclusiveness, understanding that like, "I have no control over this world that's happening around me." But, understanding that I still deserve the right to learn everything that I've been put in this place to learn. And so, giving me that opportunity for... No matter what tragedies occurred over the past year, because this was a long year, it was still just, flexibility and movement and still to push. (*Interview III*, line 28)

She expressed her appreciation for her program as they cared for her in many different ways. In this particular way, her program made sure that all students had access to learning experiences no matter their socioeconomic background. By alleviating some of this stress, her teacher education program supported her in redefining her teaching ideologies to disrupt her own experiences as a gifted math student. She engaged in critical work in her teacher education program, and she was able to do so because of the resources and support embedded in the program. Even in a program

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that challenged students' teaching ideologies and supported them in building a critical

foundation, more learning can be achieved when pre-service teachers' monetary needs are met.

Making Money Make Sense

In much of this dissertation, I have discussed the ways that teacher education programs

should resist oppressive systems in the quest to create more liberatory learning spaces. While it is

important to disrupt capitalist systems, the reality is that teacher education programs will still be

operating in them, and so will BWPSTs. Teacher education programs can take steps to alleviate

the impact that capitalism has on future teachers as evidenced in Sade's example above. She was

able to participate in a conference at no cost because her program allotted funds to help students

access these learning experiences. Not only do BWPSTs need funding for learning experiences,

but also for living expenses. One way to support BWPSTs is to make teacher education more

accessible through compensation. In this quote, Taylor emphasized the need for financial support

to Black teachers:

> But again, I think they're supporting Black teachers financially, that goes a long way,
>
> because I don't know a lot of programs that do that. And finances are a huge thing for a
>
> lot of people, so that is amazing. (*Taylor, Interview III*, like 86)

Additionally, Willow, another BWT participant who was enrolled in a university-based,

undergraduate teacher education program with a focus on STEM educators, echoed these same

sentiments by listing reasons why teachers should be better compensated:

> I thought you said that like bro, like teachers, professors, but especially teachers 'cause
>
> professors they're already going to get many pay raises 'cause they in the college, but for
>
> teachers, teachers, they need to get paid more. Like they need to probably even get paid a
>
> little bit like the doctor's salary because you guys don't only deal with just what's in the

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classroom. Y'all deal with what's outside the classroom. You guys are dealing with personality issues and all of that. Like, like, I don't know why teachers are getting paid the way they're getting paid because like, no, like y'all deal with like the beginning of class after class dealing with students in the hallways, the lunch rooms, like real like no like teachers, I feel like you guys are like doctors, you guys are like parents, you guys are like brothers, sisters, you know like you guys are everything just with the title of a teacher. But if we can like do bullet points y'all are practically everything. (Willow, Interview III, line 57)

Referring back to Sade's story, she took a job back in her hometown due to monetary issues resulting from the pandemic. To remain in her program she had to make a sacrifice and take on a considerable amount of labor by working full time and being a student full time. Imagine if her program provided more robust resources for her to remain in the program without seeking additional employment. That support could have allowed her additional time and mental space to focus more heavily on her growth as an educator. While Sade was fortunate to receive many different forms of support from her program, many Black students have financial burdens without many funding opportunities. Many Black students cannot take out loans or afford to be unemployed for the time it takes to pursue a teaching degree or certification, especially since teaching compensation is relatively low. More money allows students to rest and focus on their courses and teaching pedagogies allowing them the capacity to be in community and to witness and rememorize. Each of these strategies can help to support BWPSTs and allow them the space to rearticulate their teaching ideologies. While teacher education programs have to operate in the systems within the United States, they can still facilitate disruption and strategize to better center the needs and realities of BWPSTs.

Resting and Resisting

Lastly, teacher education programs can support BWPSTs by encouraging and supporting rest. In order for teacher education programs to disrupt and support a new future for education, then they must resist capitalistic ways of operating. Capitalism promotes meritocracy and competition, especially for minoritized people. As mentioned in Chapter Six (Tanya's chapter), Black children are often taught that they must work twice as hard to achieve the same success as their white counterparts. This mindset, while historically used to protect and motivate Black students, encourages the tendency to overwork. Tanya resisted the narrative about teaching as a passion project, and she rejected the notion that teachers must work for their students all day and night. Tanya shared that she prioritized time to recharge herself and to rest in order to be the best teacher that she could be. Echoing the iconic words of United States Representative Maxine Waters, Tanya learned that reclaiming her time was foundational. Similarly, Joan Scott outlined her strategy for resting and recharging:

> I think that one of the things that really helps me get back to myself, it's really simple, but I like to CloudWatch a lot, because I've noticed that of course, throughout your daily life, not a lot of people have a reason to look up. And even just I noticed the other day, I was out helping my mom in her garden and I looked up and my neck felt so much better. But I think just taking the time out to CloudWatch or just sit outside and listen to nature or to a park or something like that and just really sit and listen to what's happening out there, like a small noises and everything, because of course being a teacher you're around people all day, and then if you have a large family like I do, you're around people all day. Just finding time to isolate yourself, but in a good way, I think it's something that really helps me get my thoughts together and lay them out the way that I need them. So that when I

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do have to re-enter spaces with a bunch of people, then I'm prepared and I don't see

myself shutting down quickly. (BWT Meeting 8, line 40-42)

In this quotation, Joan Scott shared a strategy that she used to recharge. She took time to

notice the world around her and to connect with nature. While stepping outside to watch clouds

seemed like a simple activity, it can support the balancing and stress relief of a pre-service

teacher. Teacher education programs can adopt policies that disrupt our capitalistic ways of

operating in higher education. They can focus on pre-service teachers' humanity in order to

ensure they are encouraging students to take time to recharge and to care for themselves. If our

teachers are well, they can sustain longer and more fruitful tenures in the classroom which also

supports students' wellness.

Freedom Dreaming allowed me to step outside of the typical discussions around reform.

Freedom Dreaming pushed me to reject what is now in an effort to imagine what could be. In my

dreams, I see support, compensation, and joy for BWPSTs. Schooling should not be a place of

violence and survival, it should be a place of love and growth. By centering learning

opportunities for BWPSTs, teacher education programs can support healing for *all* teachers. If

teacher education becomes a site of healing then, then subsequently the next generation of

students will learn in more loving and inclusive environments. Just like the saying goes, hurt

people hurt people, but the opposite can also be true - healed people can heal people. By

prioritizing growth, joy, healing, and (re)claiming, teacher education programs have the capacity

to radically change the landscape of education in this country.

Chapter 10

Discussion: Centering Black Women in the Teacher Education Conversation

This dissertation contributes to the field because even when teacher education programs center issues of equity and justice, they seldom center the particular developmental needs of BWPSTs. Instead of being conceptualized agentically as learners, educational systems too often position Black women teachers as objects (Venus-Winters, 2019) to solve policy problems, as in the current discourse about racial matching. My dissertation reverses this tendency regarding these women as subjects asking what teacher education would look like if it did invest in Black women's development as teachers. By focusing on the learning and developmental needs of BWPSTS, counterspaces like BWT allow participants to share stories that illuminate how their schooling experiences along with their positionality are shaping their teaching ideologies. Through critical conversations, these Black women have the capacity to challenge their own stories to imagine new futures for their students. Experiences like these stand to support BWPSTs' healing and development as their authentic selves as they transition into the role of teacher in U.S. schools.

As outlined in Chapter 2, the existing literature that focuses on BWPSTs includes three themes: (1) missing identity - who are these Black women? (2) experiences of BWPSTs in inadequate teacher education programs; (3) limited transformative learning environments. Additionally, extensive literature spotlights the rich experiential knowledge that Black teachers bring to the teaching profession (Milner, 2006; Acosta et al., 2018); however the process of developing this knowledge into pedagogy is undertheorized — particularly in ways that will sustain Black women teachers in the profession (Santoro, 2011). My dissertation adds to this conversation by offering a strategy to further theorize about BWPSTs learning needs. My work

highlights the importance of Black women's positionality and its impact on their teaching ideologies and experiences in teacher education. Understanding BWPSTs experiences is important, but to continue to make progress understanding how these experiences shape their ideologies and pedagogies is imperative. Throughout this dissertation, I made it clear that identity markers, such as race or gender, do not make educators ready to teach — let alone teach in anti-oppressive ways. This development needs to be taken seriously in calls to diversify the teacher workforce.

Additionally, since many Black pre-service teachers express feelings of isolation within their pre-service programs (Milner, 2006), BWT strived to be a space for Black women to build the insider connection, to heal, and, hopefully, to build their criticality, with an eye toward the tensions and contradictions that may inevitably arise for individuals with different subjectivities. This close look at such tensions supports other teacher educators in developing a nuanced understanding of Black women teachers' development as varied and differently shaped by issues of personal history and temperament.

To strategically approach the issue of increasing teacher diversity, education scholars, administrators and policymakers must look more critically at policies, practices, pedagogies that potentially affect Black women. Black women cannot merely serve the educational system to meet policy goals. Teacher education should equally serve Black women's needs shifting them from objects to subjects.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is the small number of participants. While the findings in this study provide a proposed framework to better support BWPSTs in teacher education, with only

154

ten participants, these findings are insufficient to speak to all BWPSTs. In future studies, I would include more BWPSTs from across the country from many different programs.

Additionally, due to the stipulations of my funding and the realities of the pandemic, I operated as the sole Principal Investigator. I planned each meeting, created the interview protocols, and I led the analysis. Outside of collaborating with my advisor, I did not have the chance to collaborate with other Black women teacher educators, so I led this study from my own subjectivities. In the future, I would collaborate with other Black women teacher educators to incorporate more perspectives and varied approaches to learning and development.

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