

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: CONCEPTUALIZING BLACK RESTORATIVE PRACTICES: THROUGH THE LENS OF BLACK TEACHERS WHO TEACH BLACK YOUTH IN SCHOOLS

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Restorative justice practices were established in schools to minimize the number of students being expelled and/or suspended from school. However, since implementation, restorative justice practices have done little to minimize the disciplinary gap between Black students and their white counterparts. Black youth are suffering at the hands of Eurocentric curricula and school disciplinary practices, in the form of school suspension and expulsion that destroy their Black identities. This embedded case study examined practices employed by Black teachers to restore Black youths' identity in schools and their relationship with schooling.

This study aimed to conceptualize a race-centered framework for restorative justice practices by analyzing the pedagogical approaches of Black high school teachers, situated within the context of an urban secondary school. Black restorative practices' is a conceptual framework the researcher believes can be used to support the academic achievement of Black youth in schools and restore their relationship with schooling. Four lenses are used to inform how Black restorative practices are conceptualized: (1) healing, (2) identity confirming, (3) community, and (4) protection. Findings indicate that Black teachers are employing culturally sustaining

practices that are healing, identity confirming, promote communal learning environment, and provide a space of protection for Black youth in schools.

CONCEPTUALIZING BLACK RESTORATIVE PRACTICES: THROUGH THE LENS OF
BLACK TEACHERS WHO TEACH BLACK YOUTH IN HIGH SCHOOL

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

The problem, simply stated, is that Black youth are suffering from Eurocentric curricula and school disciplinary practices, in the form of school suspension and expulsion, which destroy their Black identities. In fact, Black youth report more negative experiences in school than their white counterparts (Parris et al., 2018), including less caring from teachers and less equity in student support (Bottiani et al., 2016). Together, Eurocentric curricula and disciplinary practices prevent many Black youths from achieving success in school, resulting in damaging consequences. School disciplinary practices unjustly target Black youth and do not acknowledge structural barriers that limit their full participation in schools (Allen & Boyce, 2013). Eurocentric curriculum perpetuates acts of violence towards Black youth by silencing their voices and decentering their lived experiences (Johnson et al., 2017). Furthermore, data show schools are not a safe space for Black youth to learn, grow, and develop. As a result, Black youth leave school at alarming rates. The National Center of Education Statistics (2024) reports that Black youth drop out of school at a rate of 6.4% compared to 4.2% of white students. Black youth should have the opportunity to advance their knowledge without the threat of harm, degradation, and violence. So how can educators create spaces of healing and restoration to support the development and academic achievement of Black youth?

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore classroom practices implemented by Black teachers that restore the identities of Black youth in schools and their relationship with schooling. My goal is to conceptualize a race-centered framework for restorative justice through the practices of Black teachers; that is, Black restorative practices. Restorative justice practices, although shown to decrease the number of students being suspended from school (Gonzalez,

2015), have done little to decrease the disciplinary gap between Black youth and their white counterparts. Davis (2019) explains that restorative justice is at risk of losing its relevance if: (1) practitioners continue to ignore the racial harm that exists and (2) they do not become more skillful at “identifying, navigating, and transforming racial harm” (p. 5). For restorative practices to be “Black restorative practices” or center blackness, these practices must recognize the social identities of Black people, where they have been, but most importantly, where they are going. Black restorative practices have the potential to create a sense of belonging for Black students in schools and build confidence and a belief that they, too, belong there. Researchers must investigate how restorative justice can center the identities, histories, and experiences of marginalized groups and those who could benefit most from its implementation.

I begin by discussing the disciplinary disparities in the rate at which Black youth are suspended and expelled from school to showcase the negative consequences of school disciplinary practices and to substantiate the need for the restoration of Black youth. For example, a report by the Learning Policy Institute found that racial disparities in school disciplinary processes have persisted over the years and continue to affect Black youth at a disproportionate rate (Leung-Gagné et al., 2022). Black youth receive out-of-school suspensions at three times the rate of white students (Leung-Gagné et al., 2022). Out-of-school suspension and expulsion are associated with negative long-term consequences, including dropping out of school, delinquent behavior, unemployment, and poor academic achievement (Theriot et al., 2010).

Also, I discuss how eurocentric curricula often intersect with white supremacist ideology that promotes racism and symbolic violence against Black youth in schools. For example, Coles (2016) found that symbolic violence had a negative impact on the social and academic identities

of Black youth in high school. Furthermore, in a study on the ethnic-racial socialization of Black youth's school engagement and achievement, Black youth reported experiencing teacher discrimination based on racial identity (Lambert et al., 2024). Teacher discrimination is associated with lower school bonding (Kyere et al., 2020), more disciplinary actions (Butler-Barnes & Inniss-Thompson, 2020), and poorer grades (Assari & Caldwell, 2018). Ultimately, I am inclined to believe the push out (Morris, 2016) of Black youth through school disciplinary practices and Eurocentric curricula communicates the idea that Black youth are not wanted or needed in the education system.

Black youth miss out on valuable instruction time due to exclusionary practices, which involve the removal of students from classrooms (Leung-Gagné et al., 2022). In a report of public schools in the US during the 2015-16 school year, on average, Black students lost 82 days of instruction due to out-of-school suspension versus their white counterparts, who only lost 21 days (Losen & Martinez, 2020). These numbers are even more alarming when disaggregated by gender. For example, Black boys lost 132 days of instruction and Black girls lost 77 days of instruction per 100 students enrolled (Losen & Martinez, 2020). Kearney et al. (2023) describe this phenomenon as educational deprivation: "lacking resources and access to teaching and learning options" (p. 138) that leads students to become disengaged from the educational process. Education deprivation limits Black youths' academic and social trajectories and minimizes their opportunities to achieve a better quality of life.

Black youth also experience education deprivation due to chronic school absenteeism. A report on communities of color by Word in Black Racial Equity Fund discovered absenteeism rates amongst students of color soared from 17% in 2018 to 32% in 2022 (Siid, 2023). A report by the DC Policy Center discovered that Black students were 3.6 times more likely to miss out

on instructional time than their white counterparts due to school absenteeism (Saddler, 2024).

Black youth are missing school at an alarming rate, which may be a result of their fractured relationship with school due to school exclusionary practices and curriculum violence (Boutte & Bryan, 2021; Coles, 2016; Haynes & Caines, 2024; Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2010).

Ultimately, the suffering of Black youth in schools is not limited to their experiences with schools' exclusionary practices; it is also because of years of social conditioning and educational malpractice through eurocentric curriculums. Jackson (2007) describes educational malpractice as a "chronic and debilitating systemic condition" (p. 5) that disrupts the learning of Black youth and prohibits them from performing well, academically. Black youth experience educational malpractice in the form of curriculum violence that silences their voices and the discrediting of their lived experiences by eurocentric curricula and instruction in schools. Curriculum violence refers to the "deliberate manipulation of academic programming that ignores or compromises the intellectual and psychological well-being of learners" (Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2011, p.2). eurocentric curriculums misrepresent the histories of Black people and project negative images of Black families and communities (Ares & Cochell, 2022). Black voices are not acknowledged in contemporary curricula that only reflect the experiences of dominant culture (Givens, 2016; Griffin & Turner, 2021; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), thus subjecting Black youth to symbolic violence in schools.

Johnson et al. (2017) describe the symbolic violence Black youth experience in schools as intentional and unintentional metaphorical bullets educators shoot that "kill the spirit and humanity of Black students" (p. 61). These metaphorical bullets are described as rejection, silencing, and disrespect (Johnson et al., 2017). For example, Black youths' voices are silenced by the centering of European stories, they are disrespected by the over-surveillance of their

bodies, and their experiences, culture, and languages are often rejected within traditional curriculum (Johnson et al., 2017). Further, Black voices, which could position students to contribute their perspectives in school, are minimized as school personnel often associate Black language with lower intelligence and reject policies that promote the inclusion of Black vernacular (Deák, 2007; Baker-Bell, 2020). Many educators are not “sympathetic to the primary language of Black youth, such as Ebonics, and treat it as gibberish” (Jackson, 2007, p. 5), which contributes to the neglect and disparagement of their voices in schools. The spirit and development of Black youth are often neglected, and they are forced to reject their Black identities, languages, and lived experiences to accommodate the practices and teachings of white dominant culture in schools.

However, one attempt to solve the problem of Black youth suffering in schools came in the form of the aforementioned restorative justice practices, which were implemented in schools in the early 2000s. Restorative practices were intended to reduce the number of students suspended from school and to restore the individual and the school community after an infraction (Gregory et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2015; Payne & Welch, 2018). Restorative practices are derived from restorative justice and is an approach used in education to mediate youth who have committed a violation against students, teachers, and relationships in the wider school community (McCluskey et al., 2008). Historically, restorative justice referred to the process of restoring offenders, in the criminal justice system, back to productive citizens in society once an infraction occurred. To restore means to bring back, reinstate, restore, reinstitute, or repair (Merriam-Webster, 2023). The premise of restorative justice is to restore the relationship between the parties in conflict and to achieve spiritual harmony in the community, including reparations to the harmed party, thereby fostering community peace and ensuring that individuals

will follow community norms (Jenkins, 2006). This process is reactive, initiated by an act of harm. The onus is placed on the individual to be better than the environment, creating a space for the individual, who could potentially cause harm, to flourish and reject unfavorable behavior. There has been little interrogation of the role the environment plays in dehumanizing an individual, which may cause them to engage in behaviors that harm others.

Restorative practices were adopted in K-12 schools to restore students and the school community, and with the hope that they would decrease the disproportionate rate at which Black youth are suspended and expelled from schools (Ziedenberg et al., 2024). However, given that Black youth are still disproportionately excluded from school, some scholars have argued that restorative practices have contributed to racial disparities in school discipline (Darling-Hammond, 2023; Davison et al., 2022; Gregory et al., 2018; Payne & Welch, 2015). Ultimately, the implementation of traditional restorative practices in schools has not resulted in a decrease in the rate at which Black youth are excluded from schools through disciplinary action and may possibly reinforce the persecution and criminalization of Black youth in schools.

Black youth suffering in schools has persisted even after the implementation of restorative practices in K-12 education. Gonzalez's (2015) case study analysis of the implementation of restorative justice in Denver Public Schools (DPS) found that over 10 percent of Black students were still being suspended, as compared to 2.28 percent of white students. While Black youth made up only 13.4% of the total population in the DPS (US News, 2024), they accounted for 38% of students suspended from school (Gonzalez, 2015). Furthermore, according to an article by the DC Justice Lab on the implementation of restorative justice in schools, Black youth in DC Public Schools make up 92 percent of students suspended from schools (Ziedenberg et al., 2024), although they are only 55 percent of the

student population. The disproportionate rate at which Black youth continue to be suspended and expelled from school conveys a lack of consideration and care given to their academic and social development.

Although research has shown that restorative justice practices have decreased the number of students being suspended and expelled from schools, it has not shown to decrease the disproportionate rates at which Black youth are pushed out of schools compared to their white counterparts. What I believe to be missing from restorative practices, which will reduce the disproportionate rate at which Black students are subject to disciplinary exclusion, is attention to the Black experience. Blackness is an inheritance, a legacy that, when fully embraced, gives thanks and reverence to ancestry and lays the foundation for continued progression within the community. I explore concepts of Blackness through the internalization-commitment stage of William Cross's (1971) Black identity development model. This details how Black people internalized an image of high-esteem and made a commitment to walk in the light of that esteem. It is the Black person's evolution from a negative self-image to the embodiment of a positive self-image. In his research, I take an asset-based approach to Blackness. My goal is to draw on Black literacies, histories, and experiences to frame how Black people have remained resilient and productive in the fight to ensure that their Black youth are educated. The resiliency displayed by Black people in the United States will help define an asset-based philosophy for the healing and restoration of Black youth in schools.

In this dissertation, I define restorative justice as a redemptive process for rebuilding self-worth, fostering a positive self-image, and healing from past societal transgressions to restore an individual to their whole self. Because the restorative process “demands power-sharing based on the premise that all parties in conflict are active participants in

the identification of harm, and in reaching an agreement for restitution” (Gavrielides, 2014, p. 219), I believe it is important to consider this process and how it connects to the history and experience of Black people in the United States. Furthermore, it is important to understand the restorative process to show the lack of restoration Black youth have received in schools.

I urge scholars, educators, and researchers to consider practices that place Black people at the center of their own experiences. There is a need for proactive practices that nurture and support Black youth, while restoring their social identities and relationships with schooling. Centering Blackness within restorative practices is a concept I plan to interrogate in this dissertation to better understand how to save our Black youth from curriculum violence and school leaving, while illuminating their identities and experiences. The goal of this research is to examine ways educators can restore Black youth's relationship with school, minimize reliance on corrective and punitive practices, and help them move toward a safer, more secure learning experience. For this reason, I propose centering Blackness in restorative justice practices to reinforce Black identities and restore their relationship with schooling.

Research Questions

Many scholars highlight the lack of cultural awareness in restorative justice practices and call for more effective restorative processes in communities of color (Arrigo & Schehr, 1998; Gavazzi, 1996; Jenkins, 2004b; Pattison, 1998; Umbreit & Coates, 1999). It is important to interrogate the colorblind approaches used with Black youth in schools. Many scholars discuss the need for restorative practices that mitigate the effects of color, which is often associated with racial disparities in discipline practices (Addington, 2021; Carter et al., 2017; Gavrielides, 2014). Race and restorative justice should no longer be seen as side issues but starting points for research because race is at the forefront of how conflict is pursued and addressed (Carter et al,

2017; Gavrielides, 2014). Because race is a “consequence of slavery and conquest” (Carter et al., 2017, p. 209) it is important to include race in conversations regarding restorative justice because race is seen as “the trigger to understanding society’s reaction to diversity and cultural difference” (Gavrielides, 2014, p.222).

What I believe is the missing link in supporting Black youth through current restorative practices is Blackness and the cultural experiences of Black youth, including their values and beliefs. I define Blackness as an expression of acknowledging an individual’s Black identity and the role it plays in how they navigate society. Furthermore, Black-centric practice is an indigenous approach that embodies and values the cultural practices, beliefs, and knowledges of Black history, while acknowledging the struggle and degradation of Black ancestry. Because race is a signifier that influences how specific behavior is interpreted and detected over time (Okonofua & Eberhart, 2015), it is important to consider the experiences of Black youth when addressing the restoration of Black youth. Centering Blackness in restorative practices has the potential to address cultural issues in restorative practices by acknowledging the Black experience and mitigating the harm Black youth experience in schools.

The suffering Black youth experience in schools at the hands of culturally destructive pedagogies and practices deserves to be interrogated. Black youth struggle to legitimize their Black selves against the constant framing and reframing of the ‘white standard’ for how they should present themselves in schools (Rollock et al, 2011). Furthermore, as stated above, curriculum violence culturally and socially positions Black youth as slaves (Dumas, 2016) by destroying their languages and literacies and devaluing their histories and experiences. With their voices stricken from the records, Black youths’ experiences are diminished and cast aside to uphold the values, experiences, and beliefs of white dominant culture. It is imperative that

scholars and educators interrogate the silencing of Black voices in school and reposition those voices as a starting point for developing practices to support Black youth in schools.

The call for practices that truly support Black youth in school is now. For Black youth to legitimize their Black lives in the educational arena, their experiences should be validated and centered. To center Blackness is to position Black culture through an asset-based lens, drawing on Black literacies, practices, and beliefs to provide healing for Black youth and create opportunities for them to operate at their greatest potential. Many practices in schools take a deficit-based approach in supporting Black youth. In relying heavily on punishment to govern students' behaviors in schools and resisting diverse cultural practices, school administrators and educators have denied Black youth the opportunity to operate in school in a joyful manner. I attest that positioning Black people at the center of their healing and restoration is integral to initiating the process for repairing and, in some instances, establishing a healthy relationship with schooling.

The research questions I use to guide this research are listed below.

1. How do Black teachers' classroom practices center Blackness in restorative justice practices, reinforcing Black students' identities, and helping to restore Black students' relationships to schooling?
2. How do Black high school students respond to classroom practices of their Black teachers?

Significance of the Study

Schools have become violent spaces that erase the culture and cultural understanding of minority groups in America. Furthermore, schools are not socially neutral and exert the feelings and expressions of the dominant class (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). The violence transpiring in classrooms in America places dehumanizing assumptions on the languages and culture of Black

youth (Johnson et al., 2017). Like in the early 1860s, schools are grounds for teaching the ‘less civilized’ how to become civilized from a white dominant lens.

Having restorative practices that center Blackness could possibly offset the disproportionate rates at which Black students are suspended from school. Black people have worked to advance their knowledge and strived for means to educate their youth. Black youth should have the opportunity to advance their knowledge without the threat of harm and violence. **For restorative practices to be “Black restorative practices” or to center Blackness, these practices must recognize the social identities of Black people, where Black people have been, and, most importantly, where they are going.** Restorative practices that center Blackness have the potential to create a sense of belonging for Black students in schools and build a sense of confidence and motivation that they, too, belong in schools. In all, restorative practices that center Blackness have the ability to create safe spaces and spaces of refuge for Black students by allowing Black students to show up as their full selves in white-dominant spaces.

Chapter 2: Framing & Literature Review

I identify as a social change agent who advocates for the equitable distribution of scarce resources. As a child, I was peculiar and always sought understanding in a complex world. I excelled in school and always knew that I would go to college and make an impact on society. I am the son of a housekeeper, and I attended public school in the South for 13 years. My experience with schooling has been volatile, where I was often scolded for having a confident personality and for challenging the narrow views of school officials and administration. I've had my experience with zero tolerance policies and the lack of care to ensure that I would make it to my high school graduation or college. I originally approached this research to understand the role zero tolerance and punitive practices played in supporting the school-to-prison pipeline for Black youth. Barely escaping the prison pipeline; being jailed a month after I turned 18, I was always curious of who really cared for my success academically and socially? However, after taking courses like "Sociology of Education, School Exclusion, and Politics of Education" as a PhD student, my curiosity expanded to focusing on the systemic structures (seen and unseen) that prevent Black youth from being successful academically and socially.

Cultural capital is a concept that piqued my interest during my studies. Cultural capital, introduced in the 1970s by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, was used to explain the inequalities in scholastic achievement presented to youth of various social backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, education institutions presume ownership over cultural capital (Sullivan, 2001) and thus assess who has access to it and who does not. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital contends that only white elites possess the capital needed to climb the social ladder and be positioned at a place of social wealth. After learning about cultural capital, I immediately challenged the perspective that only white elites have

cultural capital. I thought, surely Black people in the United States possess cultural capital. How else were Black people able to build schools and communities all while surviving racism and lynching? My curiosity led me to discover many scholars who substantiated the idea that Black people also possessed cultural capital that allowed them to flourish in the social and educational arenas (Allen, 2013; Carter, 2003; Carter, 2007; Malone, 2008; Meghji, 2019; Rollock et al, 2011; Wallace, 2015; Wallace, 2017). Black cultural capital is suggested as the reason why Black youth can navigate systematic structures and institutions (Carter, 2003; Carter, 2007; Wallace, 2017). Gaining knowledge of Black cultural capital has shifted my understanding and provided a new perspective for how Black people in the United States situate their Blackness and position themselves as an asset to their communities.

An example of Black cultural capital is the strength and resources Black people in the South used to mobilize and develop communities and schools to educate themselves and their children post slavery. Black people operated with a passion that their children deserved to be educated, and they deserved to have the same opportunities as their white counterparts. Having this understanding of Black resiliency, I became curious to how Black educators supported the development of Black youth, while strengthening their communities. Black communities like Greenwood in Tulsa Oklahoma (also known as “Black Wall Street”), Hayti District in Durham NC, Seneca District in New York, Gullah Geechee Corridor in South Carolina, Harlem, NY, Pennsylvania Ave in Baltimore, MD, and U Street in Washington, DC, are examples of how Black people mobilized to develop schools and communities that flourished in the face of social injustices and racism. Schools flourished and Black youth excelled. Instead of focusing on student responses to institutional policies, I wanted to investigate what schools are doing to

prevent harm and school leave for Black youth. What practices are being employed to support the development of Black youth, while establishing a healthy relationship with schooling.

I begin this review of literature with an overview of Black identity in the United States (US) and how Black identity is framed in the United States by Black people. It is important to begin changing the narrative on how Black people are viewed in the US and how Black people have overcome stigmas placed on them. Then I discuss restorative practices that were designed to minimize expulsion and suspension rates in schools for Black youth. My discussion on restorative practice will uncover how Black people are not placed at the center of their restoration and healing. Next, I explore three concepts, Black Space (African Centered Education), Justice Oriented/Solidarity Teaching, and culturally sustaining pedagogies. These concepts inform what it means to center Blackness within restorative practices and shed light on how we can strengthen current practices to support our Black youth in and out of schools.

Brief History of Education and Restorative Justice

Education of Black People in the United States

It is important to understand that throughout the history of American education, Black Americans have simply wanted to be educated without the fear of violence and persecution (Anderson, 1988). Whether it was secretly acquiring literacy during slavery, publicly demanding support for education post-slavery, or mobilizing and developing their own education and social institutions, Black Americans consistently navigated racial terrorism to gain literacy skills. Many Black Americans had to “steal” their education during slavery times and lobbied for a quality education post slavery (Givens, 2021; Williams, 2005). Under the persecution of state laws that prevented the teaching of reading and writing to Black people, Black Americans in the south sought education in secrecy. For example, Black Americans often had to hide books

and old newspaper articles beneath their undercoats in hopes of finding opportunities to practice reading and writing (Hines, 2022). Whether acquiring literacy skills in secrecy in the south or navigating systematic barriers in the north, “white racial terrorism” (Hines, 2022, p.4) consistently threatened the educational advancement of Black Americans. In this section on the brief history of education for Black Americans, I will provide insight on their quest and aspiration to obtain basic literacy skills while educational and judicial systems in the United States worked to prohibit them from accessing basic literacy skills.

Education of Black People – Slavery Times (1739-1865)

Black Americans’ relationship with education has been one of aspiration and hope. During slavery, Black Americans were prohibited, at times by law, from learning how to read and write. Plantation owners and slave masters believed it would jeopardize the control and power they had over the en-slaved if they learned how to read and write (Williams, 2005). Thus, Black Americans' acquisition of education was pursued in secrecy during slavery. Jarvis Givens (2021) describes this secret acquisition of learning as fugitive pedagogy; because of the antiliteracy laws established in the U.S., Black Americans had to come up with alternative means to gain literacy. Most White Americans did not want Black Americans to become literate. Laws such as slave codes were written to block the enslaved from “mental instruction” (Williams, 2005, p. 13). Plantation owners and slave masters believed that Black Americans were only suitable for obeying their masters. Plantation owners hurled insults and derogatory words at the en-slaved at the mere thought of them learning how to read and write. Frederick Douglas’s slave master once stated, “a nigger should know nothing but to obey his master; to do as he is told to do” (Williams, 2005, p. 25). Black Americans did not believe this for themselves. Black Americans believed literacy was a tool to advance towards liberation. An enslaved man was

documented stating “no manner of good treatment could ever compensate me for being deprived of his liberty” (Williams, 2005, p. 26). Ultimately, no matter the relationship Black Americans held with the plantation owners, they believed literacy would be an important tool for navigating themselves to freedom.

In 1740 the United States enacted antiliteracy laws, known as slave codes, that prohibited Black Americans from reading and writing and declared writing for enslaved individuals an illegal activity (Givens, 2021). In the late 1780s, Virginia’s legislative branch proposed a bill to ensure the education of every white child in Virginia proclaiming that the brightest white male ‘youngster’ would go on to college (Anderson, 1988). However, Black children, who harvested Thomas Jefferson’s plantation and contributed to the bulk of his wealth, were not to participate in a formal education. Around the 1830s, other states such as South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Alabama created anti-literacy legislation that criminalized the teaching of the enslaved looking to learn how to read and write (Williams, 2005). In 1831 a law was passed that prohibited the gathering of free Black people in any schoolhouse, church, and any meeting space for the purposes of teaching them to read and write (Givens, 2021). Antiliteracy laws in southern states made quite a feat for the enslaved to gain literacy skills.

The antiliteracy laws not only prohibited Black Americans from learning to read and write they acted as an additional layer of surveillance for the enslaved (Givens, 2021). Many enslaved individuals relied immensely on oral and auditory systems of information to assist them in becoming literate (Williams, 2005). Unbeknownst to the enslaved, this oral and auditory system would inadvertently cause them to develop acute memory and perceptions skills they could use to help navigate themselves to freedom (Williams, 2005). For example, enslaved

youth would eavesdrop on the conversations of their slave master and mistress and carry messages back to the rest of the enslaved community (Williams, 2005). Many enslaved youths realized earlier in life that learning to read and write would come with great obstacles, so they took great measures such as eavesdropping, to take back the conversations of their slave masters to their parents, in hopes of their parents' devising plans for them to escape to freedom.

Black Americans, both free and enslaved, used literacy skills as a strategy for dealing with slavery as well as a means for escaping it (Williams, 2005). In the 1840s Black Americans strategized to overcome the laws created to prohibit them from learning. For example, Black youth, who were free, would camouflage their books with old paper to not be spotted traveling to attend lessons in the home of a free Black people (Williams, 2005). Historical documents note sites of the enslaved "climbing into holes in the ground under the cover of the night" and "attending schools run by free blacks" (Givens, 2021, p. 28) to acquire literacy skills. Enslaved individuals would barter goods in exchange for reading and writing lessons from formerly enslaved individuals. Furthermore, enslaved were sighted "stealin' a meetin' in the woods" (Givens, 2021, p. 28.) to acquire an education. Education for the enslaved served as the cornerstone of their freedom and liberation. Black Americans fought to gain skills in reading and writing to attain information and power that White Americans worked to keep away from them (Williams, 2005). Becoming literate meant the enslaved would have access to news of the war and ideas to escape to freedom.

Sundays were a prominent day of the week for the enslaved to learn to read and write (Williams, 2005). Sunday presented the most opportune time for learning because it was a time when slave masters were away from plantation partaking in Sunday fellowship and church service. Black Americans would gather in "secret places" to study and read their books (Givens,

2021; Williams, 2005). For example, a former slave from Edenton, North Carolina described seeing negroes gathering “under large oak trees and in secret places” (Williams, 2005, p.21) reading spelling books. Another slave, James Curry from Person County North Carolina, recalled lying down in the piazza, reading the great bible while his master’s family was gone away from the plantation on Sundays (Williams, 2005). Furthermore, the enslaved who learned to read and write would teach their children in their rooms when their masters were not home. An enslaved girl, Mattie Jackson, recalls not knowing how her mother learned how to read or write, but her mother would teach her at night in the home of their master (Williams, 2005). The enslaved showed perseverance under the threat of persecution, by law, to acquire literacy skills because they understood that learning to read and write would be a tool for their liberation and freedom.

Education of Black People – Post Slavery (1866 – 1953)

After emancipation, many Black Americans used political unrest to prepare them for life after slavery by learning to read and write (Williams, 2005). Formerly enslaved individuals who had never read independently desired to acquire the skill of reading to read books they had never read before. For example, an eighty-five-year-old woman who was once enslaved expressed wanting to read the bible for herself and teach the young because she believed she must do it (Williams, 2005). Education became a tool to prepare the newly freed for what lay ahead in the early days of post-slavery. The formerly enslaved once secret tactics for becoming literate developed into a public demand for support of education (Williams, 2005). The foundation of the newly freed educational movement was rooted in their desire to “control and sustain schools for themselves and their children” (Anderson, 1988, p. 5). Black Americans believed education to be a communal practice and not an isolated endeavor (Givens, 2021). Communal practices

demonstrated that education was tied to an overarching goal of Black group development versus individual achievement (Givens, 2021). Many Black American families believed education was an inheritance that is passed down to future generations to provide strength and opportunities to succeed in an oppressive environment (Givens, 2021).

As Black Americans began to surge in their aspirations of gaining a quality education their once secret spaces were now one room schoolhouses or rundown buildings. In the south, most of the one room schoolhouses were so small that many people described the students attending school as “bursting out of the seams” (Walker, 1996, p. 43) of the walls of the schoolhouse. During the winter months, children had to gather around wood burning stoves to keep warm (Walker, 1996). In the North, many learning spaces for Black Americans were tucked away in the back of schools that were attended by White Americans. Black Americans had to enter these buildings through the back entrance because they were not allowed to go through the main entrances. Black Americans in the North and South were both given secondhand textbooks that dismissed the historical perspectives of African Americans in America (Hines, 2022).

Although having similarities in their learning materials, education for Black Americans in the North looked different than education did for Black Americans in the South post emancipation. Black youth in the North experienced countless indignities when pursuing an education. Black youth were forced to enter the schoolhouse through backdoors, were ignored by their teachers, and constantly received failing grades for their work regardless of the quality of the work (Hines, 2022). They had to contend with the racism that was embedded in the school routines, curriculums, and interactions with school administration (Hines, 2022). Black youth read books from authors such as Henry William Elson who wrote that African Americans were

biologically inferior (Hines, 2022). In 1928 Elson wrote that African Americans were “a listless class who aspire to nothing: who are content to live in squalor and ignorance” (Hines, 2022, p. 10). Black youth were not seen as equals to their white peers in schools regardless of their intelligence, talent, or ability to perform well in school (Hines, 2022).

Black Americans in the South were persecuted by southern laws that trapped them in agricultural labor that depended heavily on coercive control (Anderson, 1988). Forced into labor through political and civil subordination, many Black Americans only had access to a system of what some scholars describe as “second-class education” (Anderson, 1988; Shujaa, 1994; Woodson et al., 1969). Black Americans in the South developed makeshift schools, which became known as Native Schools, to educate themselves, their peers, and their youth (Anderson, 1988). These schools are described as “Native” because they were not formalized by the state education system but were created from the grit of the formerly enslaved, native to the land, who desired to be educated. Between 1890 and 1915, Black Americans in the South were able to develop a system of universal common schooling for Black children that served as an avenue for Black advancement in an oppressive society (Anderson, 1988).

While Black Americans in the South were developing their own system of school, Black Americans in the North were working to develop curriculums that counter white racist curriculums. Around 1915, Carter G. Woodson launched the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. White supremacy and anti-Black racism were embedded in the curriculum of American schools, so Woodson along with other educators worked to counter what Black youth were learning in schools. Black youth lived under constant racist imagery in schools, popular media, newspapers, and film (Hines, 2022). White authored textbooks omitted the histories of African civilizations, justified American slavery as a necessary institution, noted the civil war as

a struggle between equal causes, claimed Reconstruction was a misrule by Black people, and portrayed Black Americans as a social problem (Hines, 2022). The goal of Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and history was to establish bodies of text that promoted the inclusion of Black history and culture to help offset the racist narratives Black youth were being subjected to.

Around the 1940s, Black educators believed there should be a curriculum that emphasized the agency and autonomy Black Americans held in shaping significant events in America's history (Hines, 2022). Black educators and scholars introduced a new teaching curriculum for history lessons that centered the Black experience. Madeline Morgan and Bessie King, both teachers from Chicago, developed Supplementary Units. Supplementary Units were an alternative to traditional educational teachings in that they worked to address the negative discourse around Black identity (Hines, 2022). Supplementary Units emphasized the importance of Africa to world history, linked African cultures to cultures in the New World, noted Black people role in the exploration and settlement of the Americas, described slavery as a system of violence and exploitation, the role of Black Americans in military service, Black Americans progress nationally, and the prominent place of Black history in American history (Hines, 2022). Incorporating Black history in the curriculum served as vindication of the past and social, economic, and political recognition in the present (Hines, 2022).

Education of Black People – Civil Rights Movement (1954 – Present)

In the late 1950s, after the historic ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, desegregation became an initiative in the United States to achieve racial equality (Gellerman, 2014). In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional (Warren, 1954). However, in their pursuit to gain an equitable education, Black

youth suffered greatly in their attempt to integrate into predominantly white institutions. Many Black youths faced violence in the form of racial slurs and physical abuse at the hands of white mobs who were against integration. For example, in 1960, four young Black girls by the names of Ruby Bridges, Gail Etienne, Tessie Prevost, and Leona Tate became the first Black youth to integrate into William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana. On the first day of school, these Black youth were met with people shouting racial slurs and throwing items at them, and holding signs with phrases that negatively targeted their racial identities (Dawson, 2024). Like the Louisiana four, more than a decade later in Boston Massachusetts, Black youth were bussed from one side of the city to the other to integrate predominantly white schools. The busses carrying the Black youth were met with bricks flying through the windows, signs with words stating, “Nigger Go Home,” and pictures of monkeys hanging in windows of homes and businesses (Gellerman, 2014). Black youth who made it to school were met with mobs of white locals who spit and hurled insults at them and insisted they leave (Gellerman, 2014). These examples of violence and resistance are among a multitude of events embedded in the history of Black youth’s relationship with schooling and their attempts to access an education.

Black Americans integration into white spaces to access “better” education did not achieve the racial equality that *Brown v. Board of Education* sought to achieve, but subjected Black youth to an induction into the schooling process. Shujaa (1994) describes the schooling process as follows:

The schooling process is designed to provide an ample supply of people who are loyal to the nation-state and who have learned the skills needed to perform the work that is necessary to maintain the dominance of the European-American elite in its social order. For African-Americans, individual success in schooling is often simply a matter of demonstrating one’s ability to represent the interests of the European-American elite. Through such a process, African people as a group are able to derive little benefit from the schooling of our members and even then, it is most likely to be in the interests of the European-American elite for us to do so (p. 10).

Shujaa (1994) describes schooling as a process of maintaining existing structures of power and privilege. Other scholars share the same sentiments describing schooling as a process that minimizes the cultural knowledge and beliefs of minoritized groups and considers the education and social practices of minority groups to be primitive white westernized standards (Adjei, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2019; Ladson-billings & Tate, 1995). Black youth are being schooled and not educated in schools which strips away their identities, silences their voices, and contributes to the erasure of their Black histories, and if existing structures of power and privilege are constantly reinforced, Black youth will continue to be denied a sufficient education that supports their well-being and development in society.

I contend the practices displayed in present day schools prevent Black youth from obtaining a quality education. School administration has emphasized schooling Black youth versus providing them with an educational environment that allows them to learn without the threat of harm. K-12 education perpetuates acts of physical violence on Black youth more than on any other racial student group; these acts include tearing up Black students work and physically removing Black students from their desks (Martin et al., 2018; Peguero, 2011; Peskin et al., 2006; Sanders-Phillips, 2009). For example, a 2016 New York Times article detailed an event where a teacher tore a first-grade Black students' work in half, instructing the student to stand in the corner, and scolding the student for confusing other students (Taylor, 2016). Also, a video surfaced of a school resource officer throwing a Black girl from her desk for allegedly refusing to put away her phone (Gholson & Robinson, 2019). These acts of physical violence Black youth had to endure in schools are schooling practices that prevent them from reaching their academic potential. Scholars have expressed the need to remove the focus from schooling Black youth to providing them with a safe and healing educational environment "that locates the

members of a culture with their cultural history, facilitates the transmission of cultural knowledge, and affirms cultural identity” (Shujaa, 1994, p. 11). If Black youth are to have safe and caring learning experiences, schools must shift from practices of schooling to practices that educate and heal Black students.

Black Teachers

I would be remiss if I did not create space to discuss Black teachers and the history of many Black educators who fought to combat white supremacy and anti-Black racist curriculums in schools. Later in this literature review I will review a concept called Black Space. The review of Black Space centers practices utilized by Black teachers to support the healing and care of Black youth in schools. However, I will take this time to discuss how Black Teachers have historically provided spaces of care and healing for Black youth in schools by centering their lived experiences and incorporating Black history in their curriculums. Amid battling their own social injustices, lack of credentialing opportunities due to racism, Black teachers remained steadfast in their pursuit to empower Black youth in schools.

During slavery, when education for Black people was informal, Black Americans were self-taught or taught by Black Americans who were self-taught. Black teachers, during slavery, were often parents to the Black youth they taught. With limited knowledge, Black teachers would help their Black youth understand and rationalize things they heard from their slave masters regarding the war. Because literacy was mainly “oral and aural information” (Williams, 2005, p. 9), Black teachers taught their Black youth to listen to the conversations of their slave masters for context and to remember as many words as possible to help with strategizing plans for freedom. For example, an enslaved boy in Winchester, Virginia notes his parents encouraging him to try to remember everything he could while the slave masters were speaking

to support the family with devising a plan to escape slavery (Williams, 2005). Ultimately, during slavery, Black teachers supported Black youth with understanding and conceptualizing their role in the liberation of enslaved Black people.

Black teachers helped the en-slaved navigate education in secrecy to avoid being caught by their plantation owners. Under the risk of persecution by anti-literacy laws Black teachers rallied enslaved Black Americans in their homes and taught them how to read and write with the limited resources available. For example, in the 1840s a free Black woman from Savannah Georgia allowed free Black individuals in her home each morning to study their lessons (Williams, 2005). Rejecting the ideas of the anti-literacy laws, Black teachers consistently worked to ensure that Black youth continued to be educated because they knew the importance of Black youth having the ability to read and write.

Post slavery, Black educators served in multiple roles to ensure the success and wellness of Black youth, while navigating segregation, racism, and acts of prejudice that worked to minimize their skill and ability as teachers (Clark et al., 2013). In addition to teaching, Black educators served in many social and civic activities in Black communities (Givens, 2021). For example, Black teachers visited state capitals to lobby for additional resources to support the educational advancement of Black youth (Walker, 1996). Although Black teachers were passionate about the educational advancement of Black youth, they found themselves in the complexities of navigating their personal development and the educational development of Black youth. Black teachers were at a juxtaposed position because they wanted to advocate for the educational advancement for Black youth, but they knew they would be met with harsh consequences (Walker, 1996) such as lack of credentialing opportunities and their own educational advancement.

Black educators faced many challenges as they worked to establish themselves as teachers in the United States (US) educational system. Black educators were often met with resistance when trying to pursue credentials to “legitimize” themselves as teachers in schools in the United States. Black educators were often limited by race and racism when looking to seek progressive education that would provide them with opportunities for permanent positions in schools (Hines, 2022). For example, Black educators were often denied credentials that subsequently forced them to be long-term substitutes due to “subjective licensure exams given by white administrators” (Hines, 2022, p. 7). Black teachers were often pushed out of schools for having opposed political and intellectual views than their white counterparts (Givens, 2021). Carter G. Woodson witnessed his cousin Charles Barnett being fired in the 1900s due to having “opposing political and intellectual views than their white counterparts (Givens, 2021, p. 75). Under the threat of job loss and lack of educational progression, Black teachers worked to create a voice for themselves and their students in the US educational system.

As Black teachers positioned themselves in the US educational systems, they never stopped pursuing educational liberation for Black youth. Black teachers took a progressive approach to teaching by helping students develop their own ways of seeing and engaging with the world through interpretation of experiences both in and outside of the classroom (Hines, 2022). Black teachers would use poetry to increase Black literacy culture in their schools (Givens, 2021). Black teachers would pull from Black histories, journals, and encyclopedias to challenge “the prevailing anti-Black ideologies of science and history” (Hines, 2022, p. 53).

Furthermore, Black teachers often challenged the standards in school curriculums (Givens, 2021). Black teachers created their own textbooks, lesson plans, and other instructional activities to create an alternative Black curriculum (Hines, 2022). For example, during the 1940s

in Chicago IL two Black teachers by the name of Madeline Morgan and Bessie S. King reframed both world and US history to encompass the perspectives of an alternative Black curriculum (Hines, 2022). The alternative Black curriculum was called “Supplementary Units”. Supplementary Units were described as an “intercultural education” (Hines, 2022, p. 46) that emphasized the agency Black people held in shaping events in world history (Hines, 2022). The Supplementary Units consisted of several key arguments,

Emphasizing the importance of Africa to world history; linkages between African cultures and the New World; the participation of Black people in the exploration and settlement of the Americas; slavery as a system of violence and exploitation fought against by both Black activists and enlightened white allies; the bravery and heroism of Black Americans who engaged in military service throughout the nation’s history; the incredible progress of Black people community in the local history of Chicago (Hines, 2022, p. 52).

Black teachers were often embedded in Black communities and were doted on by their community members as leaders, counselors, and second parents to Black youth (Foster, 1997; Milner & Howard, 2004). Many Black teachers lived in the same community and attended the same churches as the Black youth they taught (Milner & Howard, 2004), which provided opportunities to nurture strong relationships with their students and their students’ parents. Black teachers living in the same community as Black youth presented a level of care and balance that extended learning beyond the walls of schools (Clark et al., 2013; Milner & Howard, 2004; Milner, 2006). Milner and Howard (2004) expressed the level of care Black teachers exhibited “fostered relationship building and spaces for teachers and students to interact” (p. 291) that were not burdened by the restrictive practices presented in schools.

Furthermore, Black teachers often served as remodels for Black youth in schools. Whether it was an expectation of the community or a personal commitment, Black teachers' role was more than modelling behavior for Black youth, but they served as activists

who challenged educational inequities for Black youth (Maylor, 2009). Black teachers maintained a standard of excellence with Black youth and although sympathizing with their experiences, they continue to challenge them to be better (Griffin & Tackie, 2017). Black teachers operate in familiarity with their Black students. Black students often look at Black teachers as their “auntie” or “uncle” in schools which allow Black teachers to share and gain information that goes beyond the academic content and practices in schools (Griffin & Tackie, 2017; Milner, 2006). For example, Black teachers can connect with Black youth by sharing stories on their experiences growing up, cultural beliefs, and community practices (Griffin & Tackie, 2017; Milner, 2006) to support their learning and development in schools.

Black teachers always gave more than they were paid to do. Black teachers often acted as counselors, countering the narratives of Black youth that were spoken to them at home. Black teachers consistently functioned as a counter to the negative appraisals Black youth received about what they were capable of doing and offer positive perspectives of their “possibilities through education” (Walker, 1996, p. 122). Black teachers were interested in supporting Black youth holistically in schools, so they made space for Black youth to feel free to come to them and talk about personal problems (Walker, 1996). For example, an Elementary teacher describes their students coming to their classroom, sitting on the floor, and telling them about their personal problems (Walker, 1996). Black teachers often expressed that they were taught as a child to care for their communities (Walker, 1996).

Black teachers today continue to hold multiple roles in schools. They continue to build relationships with their Black students and support them with feeling connected to their schools (Griffin & Tackie, 2017). Black teachers continue to enhance cultural understanding amongst their counterparts and school administration, who are of different racial backgrounds (Griffin &

Tackie, 2017). Furthermore, Black teachers bring a unique mindset to teaching that helps to mediate positive student outcomes (Blazar, 2024). For example, Black teachers were found to have a positive effect on student outcomes such as decreasing absenteeism, improving math scores and English/Language Arts proficiency, and increasing self-efficacy in Black students (Blazar, 2024). Overall, Black teachers have shown great impact in supporting Black youth in schools and it is important to consider their practices to understand how we can better support and restore Black youth in schools today.

Restorative Justices

Restorative justice practices were introduced in the legal system by Barnett and Eglash in the 1970s, as an alternative to punitive disciplinary practices (Latimer et al., 2005). During this time, Barnett (1977) and Eglash (1977) urged the adoption of a new paradigm of restitution to replace the old paradigm of punishment in the criminal justice field. The goal was to restore individuals and their relationships, instead of isolating victims and offenders from one another. Rideout et al. (2010) define restorative justice as an “approach that focuses on repairing the harm caused by offending behavior while holding the offender accountable for his or her actions” (p. 36). Essentially, restorative justice was designed to provide opportunities for offenders, victims, and the community to address their needs and seek resolutions that are healing, reintegrative, reparative, and prevent future harm (Rideout et al., 2010).

Restorative practices were first introduced in schools in 2003, when Denver Public Schools (DPS) piloted restorative justice practices. DPS implemented restorative practices as a response to the growing number of students being suspended and expelled from schools. In 2008, after a report released by the US Department of Education on the increased rates of suspension and expulsions in schools, the state of Maryland chose Baltimore City Public Schools

(BCPS) to pilot restorative practices in their schools. During this time BCPS wanted to shift its disciplinary policies away from punitive practices to restorative practices. Furthermore, in 2015 DC Public Schools decided to expand restorative justice in their schools to improve school climate, minimize the trauma and prohibit the cycle of violence students faced, and lower the disparities in the number of Black students being suspended from school (Ziedenberg et al., 2024). Ultimately, restorative practices were implemented in schools to reform the way all students were being disciplined and to leverage options that did not result in the suspension or expulsion of the child for minor offenses.

In schools, restorative justice attempts to “ameliorate the caustic political dynamic between Black youth in urban communities and predominantly white educators in K-12 schools” (Daneshzadeh & Sirrakos, 2018, p. 17). Rooted in five key objectives: relationship, respect, responsibility, reflect, and reintegration (Restorative Solutions, 2022), restorative justice works to neutralize student and teacher power dynamics in schools. Restorative justice begins with the relationship. The relationship is at the center of restorative justice because restoration is needed when a relationship is disrupted or harmed in any way. Next, restorative justice stands on principles of mutual respect. Respect creates a mutual understanding between parties involved to commit to providing a safe experience. Once mutual respect is established, then the responsibility of accountability takes effect. Responsibility is holding accountability for parties involved to take responsibility in their role in the disagreement. After the responsibility of accountability is established, then repair begins. Repair occurs with the party who causes harmed work to repair the harm, while acknowledging that some parts may not be repairable (Restorative Solutions, 2022). Finally, restorative justice relies on the principle that the person

who caused harm should accept responsibility for the harm caused and be accepted back into their community (Restorative Solutions, 2022).

Ultimately, the goal of restorative practices in schools is to restore relationships by reflecting on decisions made and lessening the likelihood of a negative decision reoccurring; creating lines of respect and responsibility for all parties involved; and reintegrating the offender back into the school community. Schools began introducing restorative justice practices like circles, conferences, and victim-offender mediations to reach an agreement between offender(s), victim(s), and community to integrate the student back into the school's community (Latimer et al., 2005). In schools' circles are used to address problems such as bullying in the classroom; conferences are used to address serious incidents such as violence and school crimes, and mediations are used to manage and monitor minor incidents (Lodi et al., 2022). Restorative justice practices showed potential to support all students in schools through remediation and exculpation by encouraging restitution by the offender through objective treatment, atonement, and habilitation (Latimer, 2005). However, Black youth continue to be disproportionately affected by disciplinary practices and continue to face harm and symbolic violence in schools.

Restorative justice practices have the potential to mitigate the harm and symbolic violence Black youth face in classrooms, if practices are embedded/actualized to operate using a culturally competent lens. Having a culturally competent lens is having the ability to appreciate and celebrate one's own culture, while gaining knowledge for navigating another culture (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lustick, 2020). Cultural competence is the ability to link learning with a deep understanding of culture (Ladson-Billings, 2014). An example of restorative justice practices incorporating a culturally competent lens is shown in a 2020 study on the math anxiety of Black and Brown students in elementary school. Winnik (2020) describes the usage of

restorative justice circles as a tool that allows Black students the opportunity to bring their identities into a communal space and co-construct a math identity. Furthermore, Winnik (2020) contends that using care and developing a reciprocal relationship with students when implementing restorative justice circles can help students better understand their identities in connection to who they are and how they view themselves in relation to the content they are learning.

Researchers argue for more communal spaces to be provided in classrooms to repair the harm of Black identities caused by systemic physical, symbolic, and epistemological violence (Gholson & Robinson, 2019). In their 2019 study, Maisie Gholson and Darrius Robinson propose a conceptual framework for the restoration of Black youth in mathematics called Mathematics for Justice, Identity, and meta-Cognition (MaJIC). MaJIC works to support Black students with fostering positive attitudes around math by empowering them to see themselves as competent doers and “acknowledging improvement in the discipline requires effective navigation of prejudice, discrimination, and racism in and out of the classroom” (Gholson & Robinson, 2019, p. 351). Gholson and Robinson (2019) used group projects to cultivate space for Black learners to communicate their thoughts and ideas and silhouette activities to showcase external messages received about math and internal messages they tell themselves about math.

Although some researchers have found ways to incorporate culturally competent practices to center Black youth in restorative justice, other researchers continue to express a lack of restoration for Black youth in schools that have a predominant number of Black youths attending. For example, in a study on the influence of race on restorative discipline, Payne and Welch (2015) found schools were less likely to implement restorative practices when the school’s composition consisted of proportionally more Black students. Payne and Welch (2015)

test the correlation between racial threat and the use of restorative practices such as student conferences and peer mediation and found that schools with a higher percentage of Black students are less likely to use restorative practices when responding to student misbehavior. Many schools with higher percentages of Black youth attending appear to have no interest in restoring them. Current (traditional) restorative practices are not always used to support Black youth in schools and if they are used traditional restorative practices appear to lack the cultural understanding needed to support Black youth.

Ultimately, race matters when it comes to restoring Black youth in schools. Racial composition is not often accounted for when implementing restorative practices in schools (Payne & Welch, 2015). When Black voices and bodies aren't accounted for during the decision-making process it lessens the opportunity for learning and the reassessment of important values involving restoration (Oko Elechi et al, 2010). Racial harm is reinforced when institutions and practitioners refuse to acknowledge how racial harm impacts the way Black youth are supported in schools. Davis (2019) explains that restorative justice is at risk of losing its relevance if practitioners continue to ignore the racial harm that exist and if they do not become more skillful at “identifying, navigating, and transforming racial harm” (p.5). To not lose its relevance, restorative justice must look at how it can center the identities, histories, and experiences of marginalized groups and those who could benefit most from its implementation.

Conceptualizing Blackness

Nigrescence: Black Identity Development

To educate Black youth, educators must “learn who the children are and not focus on who we assume them to be” (Delpit, 2003, p. 18). For schools to successfully restore Black youth and implement restorative practices that center Blackness, they must first consider the

Black identity and experiences Black youth face. Black youth are constantly pushed to the margins and persecuted for their cultural values, practices, and beliefs. In this section, I attempt to describe the transformation of Black people in the United States from a negative group identification to a positive group identification. I use the Black Identity Development model to shed light on the transformation of the Black person from self-loathing due to internalized racial discrimination to positive racial group identification (Cross, 1971). In this study, I refer to identity as a set of “comprehensive gains which the individual, at the end of adolescence, must have derived all of his pre-adult experience in order to be ready for the tasks of adulthood” (Erikson, 1959, p. 101). So, Black identity development is imperative to understand how Black youth conceptualize their being in schools.

Being Black is described as being part of a lineage that extends back to Africa and existing in the lived experience of their ancestors to celebrate blackness as identity and being (McDougal & Jayawardene, 2013). For the purpose of this research, I will use the Black Identity Development Model to substantiate Black identity and the role it plays in education. Focusing on a racial identity model as a foundation for understanding Blackness is important because it brings awareness to existing social and structural barriers of Black people in the United States (Chavous et al., 2003). I use Black identity over other models such as the Negro identity because Negro identity is often viewed from a deficit perspective. For example, Erikson (1959) describes Negro identity as “mild, submissive, dependent, somewhat querulous, but always ready to serve, and with occasional empathy and childlike wisdom” (p. 37). Black identity promotes a healthy identity in that it accounts for the “cultural, spiritual, historical, educational, economic, and social realities” (Burt & Halpin, 1998, p. 7) of Black people in the United States.

Black identity in the United States has evolved from being a negro to being Black. The evolution of the Black identity in the United States is detailed using Nigrescence by William Cross in the 1970s. Nigrescence, a pioneering construction of the Black identity development model, is a theory developed in 1971 by William Cross, a researcher and theorist in the field of ethnic identity. Cross (1991) described Nigrescence as “an identity change process as a Negro-to-Black conversion experience, the kind of process that could be seen in Black behavior during the Harlem Renaissance” (p. 189). In short, Nigrescence is the “process of becoming Black” (Cross, 1994, p. 120). The Nigrescence model (Table 2.1) is considered in five stages: pre-encounter, identifies the identity to be changed; encounter, feeling to desire to change; immersion, describes the process to changing one’s identity; internalization, is the decrease in response to being identified as a Negro; and internalization-commitment, is the embodiment of the new identity (Ritchey, 2014).

Table 2.1 Nigrescence Model

William Cross’ 1971 Nigrescence Model

<u>Stages</u>	<u>Identity</u>
Pre-Encounter	Pro-White/Anti-Black
Encounter	
Immersion – Emersion	Anti-White/Pro-Black
Internalization	Humanist
Internalization – Commitment	Humanist Social Activism

For this research, I will focus on the later stage; internalization-commitment. In *Shades of Black*, Cross (1971) describes the internalization-commitment stage as the following: having shifted from the insecure and anxious moments of early conversion to confidence in personal standards of Blackness; from uncontrolled rage toward white people and a perception of them as a distinct and evil biologic group (whitey-as-devil perceptions) to controlled anger toward systems of oppression and injustice and racist institutions; from symbolic rhetoric to quiet, dedicated, long-term commitment; from unrealistic urgency to a sense of destiny; from anxious, insecure, rigid, inferiority feelings to Black pride, self-love, and a deep sense of Black communalism (p. 159).

At the internalization-commitment stage of Nigrescence, Black people go through a self-realization process where they move away from poor self-worth and move towards encompassing a positive Black self-image (Benjamin et al., 1998). Black people redefine what it means to be Black and unsubscribe from mainstream society's views and opinions of them. Black people have a strong in-group affiliation and no longer have aspirations for disassociating with Blackness (Chavous et al., 2003). Furthermore, Black people in the United States have developed a high sense of racial centrality making it normative to “emphasize racial group membership as part of their overall self-concept” (Scottham et al., 2008, p. 2). Black people have worked to make it okay to acknowledge their cultural differences, while appreciating the value in those differences. For the purpose of restoring Black youth in schools, it is important that educators move away from deficit mindsets that devalue the culture and histories of Black youth and move towards healing and placing value on their lived experiences. Ultimately, Black people's lived experiences should be one that is valued, not

persecuted. The internalization-commitment of Black youth in schools is the internalization that I am somebody, I belong in this space, and I am committed to being somebody in this space.

Acknowledgment of racial identity in schools is important for supporting Black youth with reaching educational attainment. Chavous et al (2003) found that Black youth perceptions on their racial identity led to positive academic outcomes, if they had “high centrality, strong group pride, and positive beliefs about society’s views of Blacks” (p. 1086). Also, they found that Black youth who held positive views on being Black held stronger attachments to school (Chavous et al., 2003). Furthermore, research assumes that Black youths' perceptions of oneself and their academic attitudes and engagement in schools is partially due to their experiences in schools (Chavous et al., 2003).

Facets of Being Black (Blackness)

Black identity is not monolithic and there are many facets to being Black. In an Afrocentric Poll conducted in 2013, Black people were asked to define what it means to be Black. The outcome was compiled into 6 themed areas: Struggle and Resilience, Ancestry, Pride, History and Legacy, African Descent Community, and Physicality (McDougal & Jayawardene, 2013). Struggle and Resilience is connected to the efforts of Black people to “accomplish goals, be creative, and remain confident in the face of adversity” (McDougal & Jayawardene, 2013, p. 2). Ancestry refers to the continued honoring and acknowledgement of those who came before; pride is the promotion of positive racial identities associated with Black people; history and legacy is pulling from the past to restore a positive sense of self; and African descent and community is being in alignment with community and the spirit (McDougal & Jayawardene, 2013).

Another component of Blackness describes being Black at the intersection of brilliance and being troubled. A double consciousness, as discussed in W.E.B Dubois “Souls of Black Folks” Dubois (1903) describes the plight of the Negro in America as simply wanting to be a Negro and American without losing the opportunity to self-develop. The negro in America was kidnapped from their native land, torn apart from the families, brainwashed into thinking they had no value, culture, or traditions, and degraded and conditioned to worship white skin and white dominant culture (Dubois, 1969). Essentially, Black people in America grew up rootless; thinking they are inferior to white dominant culture (Jones, 1973). So, to be Black one must have the bandwidth to draw from their racial identities to accomplish goals and remain confident, while being aware of and fighting racism constantly (McDougal & Jayawardene, 2013).

Furthermore, Blackness is reclaiming the forgotten ancestry that was stripped away from Africans when they were forcibly removed from their native land. In the same Afrometrics Poll, one person participant described being Black as “a result of being a part of an ancestral lineage that extends back to Africa” (McDougal & Jayawardene, 2013, p. 2) and existing in the lived experience of their ancestors to celebrate Blackness as an identity and place of being. Coming into Blackness is a renewing of the mind for Black people. Evolving from a place of feeling inferior and inadequate, the Black person in America has regained a sense of self pride and empowerment to live life with intention and walk in purpose. It is important for educators to understand that a Black child being expressive with their clothes, hair, or language is not a rebellion against school policy or procedure, it is a proclamation that their ways of being deserved to be presented in the space without threat of harm. Because schools have constantly placed restrictions on how Black youth are able to show up, understanding that Blackness is the

act of displaying homage to their ancestors and an acknowledgement of their position in society will support educators with supporting our Black youth.

Conceptualizing Black Restorative Practices

Centering Blackness in restorative justice practices, which I call Black restorative practices, is a new concept that was not explicitly defined in the literature. Gavrielides (2014) urged for a framework of restorative justice for race. Scholars contest that understanding race when it comes to restorative justice will help to develop an understanding of the racial dynamics of student-educator relationships and aid in a stronger restorative justice movement (Carter et al., 2017; Gavrielides, 2014). Building a racial understanding can help to improve the racial dynamics of student-educator relationships and provides insight into practices that are both preventative and restorative (Addington, 2021; Carter et al., 2017). Black restorative practices is my attempt to provide a framework of restorative justices that centers race. During my investigation of the literature, I found three major themes I believe could help conceptualize Black restorative practices. These themed areas include Black Space or African centered education, justice-oriented solidarity, and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

Black Space and African Centered Education

Black Space was conceptualized as a direct response to anti-Blackness (Ross, 2016) to resist the control of whiteness (Anderson, 1988). Ross (2016) describes Black Space as a makeshift land that “provides makeshift citizenship to people who humanity is consistently made impossible on the outside” (p. 30). Black communities, educators, and families have always cultivated spaces for Black youth to thrive in liberated ways of being, and Black families have positioned themselves as a space for restoration and renewal. For example, Black families have established community practices of protection and provision by adopting children born out of

wedlock and taking the elderly into their homes (Royse & Turner, 1980). In their study on the Strengths of Black Families, Royse and Turner (1980) found that Black families urged Black students to finish college by stressing the importance of education and instilling in them the belief that success comes with hard work. Cultivating spaces for Black youth, Black families laid the foundation and standard for future generations to succeed in their personal and educational endeavors.

In schools, Black educators have created spaces of healing and restoration for their students. They have created Black Space, where Black youth can exchange stories of the past and present, engage in resistance and healing, and make sense of their Black lives (Jackson, 2020). In Jackson's (2020) study, *Relationship Building in a Black Space: Partnering in solidarity*, she discusses with a group of high school students a time where her college professor "engaged in anti-Black linguistic racism" (p. 443) towards her work by persecuting her for using Black language in her writing assignments. Demonstrating vulnerability, Jackson created a space for her and her students to discuss past traumas and investigate how they were affected by those actions. Ultimately Jackson and her class engaged in ways that illuminated Black culture practices and language to adopt a classroom philosophy where Black students can exist freely without persecution. Recalling this account of the past, Jackson demonstrated how Black Space helps Black students understand their histories and personal traumas by centering the history and culture of communities of African descent (Banwo, 2023; Jackson, 2020; Johnson et al., 2017).

To foster a space of healing for Black youth, Black space interrupts the curricular violence to which many educators expose Black youth and supplements curriculums with materials that focus on Black struggle and liberation (Johnson et al., 2017). Not only does Black Space supplement curriculums with materials on Black liberation, but it is designed around the

lived experiences of Black students (Jackson, 2020). For example, Jackson (2020) discusses how her, and another Black teacher collaborated to construct curriculums that incorporated multiliteracies and digital stories that allowed their students to “conceptualize their understanding of race, racism, Blackness, and anti-Blackness” (p. 448). Black Space interrupts curricular violence by emphasizing the role one’s understanding of their identity as a Black person in white spaces plays in their ability to reach successful educational attainment.

The physical space of Black Space is constructed differently depending on demographic locations and experiences. I believe it is important to note how some scholars described the Black Space they created or engaged in. In an ethnographic study on African-centered education, Boudunrin Banwo (2023) describes the physical characteristics of a classroom at Mary Mcleod Bethune Academy where the institution placed emphasis on African-centered education. Banwo (2023) describes a space where walls were painted green like the forest, statues and images of historical Black figures were posted on the walls, students dressed in brown and orange kente cloth played drums, and young men began to dance as they entered the room. Teachers wore shirts with symbols and phrases on them such as “Denkyem, adaptability; Dwennimmen, humility and strength; and Sankofa, go back to the past and bring forward that which is useful” (Banwo, 2023, p. 128).

Ultimately, I describe Black Space as an intentional counter space designed to heal, nurture, and restore Black youth to thriving in educational spaces while affirming their Black identities. Black Space works to minimize the harm inflicted on Black youth by eurocentric philosophies that reject their past traumas and Black language. Black Space creates an environment for Black youth to understand why harm occurred while simultaneously serving as a restorative justice response to the harm (Jenkins, 2004; Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, Black

Space allows Black youth to have political ownership over shared institutions (Daneshzadeh & Sirrakos, 2018), while emancipating them to becoming aware of their responsibility to foster unity and obtain self-determination (Jenkins, 2004). Meaning, Black youth have the autonomy to co-construct spaces that promote a sense of belonging and care, while removing the fear of persecution by school punitive practices. Thus, moving Black youth from a survival state of mind to a manifestation of empowerment and liberation.

Justice Oriented Solidarity

Justice Oriented Solidarity (JOS) is a tool used to disrupt anti-Blackness and provide non-Black educators with practices that provide safe spaces for Black students like Black Spaces created by Black teachers. JOS refers to a collaborative and reciprocal relationship between educators, administrators, and students that garners a collective effort to support and sustain students culturally, linguistically, and racially (Jackson, 2020). JOS dictates an education that is critical and rigorous and affirms the identities of students of color (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). Additionally, solidarity leads educators and administrators to support groups that suffer from social injustices (Kolers, 2014). Operating in a reciprocal relationship, teachers share the responsibility of addressing anti-Blackness with Black and white students, while fostering an environment that allows them to learn from one another (Jackson, 2020). Working in solidarity provides a conscious synergy between those whose identity affiliations are similar and different (Razfar & Rumenapp, 2013).

Justice and solidarity are not mutually exclusive but work to complement one another when it comes to care practices for Black youth. Meulen (2016) argues solidarity is not a contender for shifting the focus away from justice practices, but a partner in liberal approach to equity. Avery Kolers provides examples of what it means to operate in solidarity in his article on

The Priority of Solidarity to Justice. Kolers (2014) contends “solidarity is a principal means for ordinary citizens to promote equity by affirming the equal status of victims” (p. 420). Black students are often victims of discriminatory practices in the classroom where their identities and cultures are not being affirmed. Justice oriented solidarity amends the relationships of those who’ve benefited from injustices that positioned them for positive educational advancement. Justice oriented teachers are community oriented. Justice-oriented teachers believe it is important to maintain a deep grounding and connection to their communities. For example, in Kohli and Pizarro (2016) study *Fighting to Educate Our Own: Teachers of Color, Relational Accountability, and the Struggle for Racial Justice*, a teacher expressed “I treat teaching as a community responsibility and mission. I am here for my community, and I serve my community by serving these students” (p. 77). Additionally, Banwo (2023) explains how teachers viewed learning as a communal process where students would collaborate on social learning activities. Justice oriented teachers have deep ties and responsibilities to their communities to foster a safe and empowering space for their students to engage in intellectual conversations without the persecution of their identities, specifically who they are in relation to the communities they come from. Fortunately, teachers who exhibit a justice-oriented perspective understand that collective action (community) is a tool for combating eurocentric violence in the classroom (Johnson et al., 2017).

Another important aspect of JOS is the emphasis placed on affirming the identities of students of color. Jackson (2020) explains how justice-oriented individuals understand how society views and treats Black students, so they can create practices to affirm Black youths’ feelings and expressions. For example, in studies by Maxine De Royston, Jarvis Givens, Na’ilah Nasir, Kihana Ross, Sepehr Vakil, and Alea Holman on caring for and nurturing the identities of

Black males in schools discuss the role Black educators play in being proponents of justice-oriented teaching. Black educators who were instructors of all-male classrooms described their process for creating a classroom community where their students worked to address their emotions and communicate with one another how certain actions made them feel (Givens et al., 2016; De Royston et al., 2017). Black educators modeled new ways of being for Black youth by feeling and expressing emotions to establish a community that acknowledged their struggles in navigating white dominant society, while teaching techniques for healing (Givens et al., 2016; De Royston et al., 2017).

In conclusion, JOS provides an opportunity for justice-making for Black youth and works as both a preventative and restorative component where Black youth work in collaboration with educators to build “understanding, empathy, and respect” (Addington, 2021, p. 10). JOS ensures all voices are recognized and respected during the decision-making process and makes for the learning and reexamination of important values in relation to the social conditions of the community (Oko Elechi et al., 2010). Furthermore, JOS is an important tool for restoring Black youths’ relationships to schooling because it not only seeks to redistribute maldistributed resources, but “affirms and acts on the equal status of all as person” (Kohlers, 2014, p. 427) countering the narrative that justify the mistreatment of Black youth in schools.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) is a framework for centering and sustaining the cultures of communities of color. CSP focuses on sustaining the identities and culture of young people, families, and communities of color. Because membership in these groups often intersects with gender, sexuality, disability, migration, language, and class (Alim et al, 2020; Paris, 2021), it is important that those identities are sustained to provide care and holistic support

for them. Unlike culturally responsive and relevant practices, culturally sustaining practices “sustain the cultural and linguistic competence” of students of color while building their competence in dominant culture (Paris, 2012, p. 95). Paris (2012) describes how the terms responsive and relevant do not fully capture the educational goals to maintain heritages, value cultural and linguistic sharing, and sustain multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Alim et al. (2020) describe CSP as “a critical, anti-racist, and anti-colonial framework that rejects the white settler capitalist gaze and the kindred cis-heteropatriarchal, English-monolingual, ableist, classist, xenophobic, and hegemonic gazes” (p. 262). In schools, CSP repositions Black youth as a resource and asset to teaching and learning (Jackson, 2020). CSP recognizes the “violent white imperialist” (Alim et al., 2020, p. 262) agenda of schooling that forces the assimilation of students of color into white dominant culture. It reimagines education in the context of oppression and domination and draws on the “strength and wisdom from centuries of intergenerational revitalization, resistance and revolutionary love” (Alim et al., 2020, p. 262) of one’s community, even when faced with brutality.

CSP calls for a divestment from whiteness and colonial frameworks and an investment in diverse community languages, practices, and knowledges (Paris, 2021), because whiteness is grounded in Eurocentric knowledge’ and beliefs and focuses on the individual instead of the community. Black youth often waver between denying their histories, culture, and language to succeed in school (Paris, 2017). CSP names whiteness as the problem for the “deeply entrenched, structural racial and economic inequalities” (Alim et al., 2020, p. 261) and promotes the recentering of communities of color. Furthermore, CSP recognizes that if the cultural practices and beliefs of formerly enslaved people allowed them to thrive during Jim Crow, they should be sustained (Alim et al., 2020). During Jim Crow, Black communities were able to

combine limited resources to build institutions of higher learning that fostered educational advancement for their Black youth. The cultural practice of community involvement, exhibited by Black people, is one example of sustaining these practices that can support youth in schools.

In conclusion, CSP works to position the cultural practices, values, and beliefs at the center of their learning and counters the violence of white colonial thought. Carter (2007) attests that schools are places where teachers transmit cultural knowledge, so it's important that teachers begin to develop practices that sustain the cultural practices of Black youth. CSP supports the concept of Black restorative practices because it helps to combat cultural bias at the hands of eurocentric teachings, practices, and philosophies. It is important for educators to develop cultural competency for Black youth to shift their attitudes towards their cultural diversity (Betancourt, 2003).

When investigating each theme, I found reoccurring components that I believe spoke to a centralized model for what Black restorative practices do. In this section, I discussed themes of Black Space, Justice Oriented Solidarity, and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, I believed could assist in conceptualizing Black restorative practices. With the previous themes, I was able to draft a centralized framework I believe embodies cultural sustainable practices that would decrease the harm Black youth experienced in schools and support them with operating to their fullest potential in schools. I will discuss the centralized framework in the next section.

Conceptual Framework

Black restorative practices is a conceptual framework that describes practices employed within Black communities to restore Black youth (Table 2.2). I define “restore” as the revitalization of Black youths’ identities that helps them develop a positive relationship with schooling. Black restorative practices serve not only as an intervention for addressing student

behavior but also as a preventative measure to decrease alienation and disengagement of Black youth from school. Ultimately, Black restorative practices work to support Black youth in developing positive relationships with school and in advancing their academic trajectories. I have adopted four lenses to inform how I conceptualize Black restorative practices in this study: (1) healing, (2) identity confirming, (3) community, and (4) protection.

In this study, I define healing as resisting the violence of a eurocentric society and school system and embracing cultural pluralism and equity. Healing is central to restoring the trust between Black youth and their schools. Scholars have expressed that healing spaces work to minimize the ways Black youth suffer from the injustices imposed by teaching practices that are Eurocentric and anti-Black (Jackson, 2020). In this study, I will focus on how Black teachers create spaces of healing for their Black students in the classroom. For example, scholars describe safe spaces for Black youth as those that engage them in healing and resistance to systems of oppression and violence (Jackson, 2020). Therefore, I will examine how Black teachers engage in and promote practices that support Black youth in resisting cultural and symbolic violence perpetrated by the dominant culture and what measures are taken by Black teachers to reduce trauma in their lives.

Identity-confirming means reinforcing how Black youth understand and rationalize the role their Black identity plays in how they are seen and how they show up in the world. For example, scholars explain that the restoration and healing of Black youth is accomplished by helping them make sense of their Black identities and personal traumas (Jackson, 2020). As an example of trauma, cultural and racial biases in disciplinary practices often push Black youth out of schools and “softly kill the spirit and humanity of Black youth” (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 61). Identity-confirming practices give Black youth opportunities to reclaim aspects of their

identities stripped away by Eurocentric philosophies and teachings. Therefore, I will examine the practices Black teachers implement to promote positive representations of self-worth and value in Black students' identities, as Black people.

I define community as a group of individuals in the same geographic location who work collaboratively to form reciprocal relationships of healing, protection, and love. Communities play a critical role in how Black youth are socialized. For example, many Black communities foster a communal environment that enables Black youth to learn cooperatively, socially, and critically (Banwo, 2023). Furthermore, Paris (2012) expressed that supporting Black youth requires sustaining the cultural competencies of their communities. Emphasis on communal practices and community involvement is an important component for protecting, healing, and confirming the identities of Black youth. I will examine how Black teachers create a community of shared commitments in the classroom and foster an environment that enables Black youth to co-construct strategies to address behavioral concerns.

Protection refers to protecting Black youth from cultural biases in school disciplinary policies and practices and in curriculum and instruction. Protection, which counters the curricular violence Black youth experience in schools, is a significant aspect of restoring Black youth. For example, “violence transpires in classrooms where educators hold dehumanizing assumptions about the history, culture, and language of Black youth” (Johnson et al., 2017, p. 61). Further, because “disciplinary actions are highly racialized and are ingrained in the structures of discipline within schools” (Nasir, 2013, p. 491), protection is important for mitigating the harm caused by these actions. I will examine how Black teachers may modify classroom instructions and curricula to include the histories and culture of Black youth, to protect them from curricular violence. Also, I will examine what preventative actions, if any,

Black teachers employ to protect Black youth from unjust disciplinary practices implemented in schools.

Table 2.2 Black Restorative Practices Framework

Table 2.2 Black Restorative Practices Framework		
Term	Definition	Examples
Healing	Resisting the violence of a eurocentric society and school system and embracing cultural pluralism and equity	Replacing eurocentric curriculums with Black literacies and history Curriculums design around the lived experiences of students
Identity Confirming	Reinforcing how Black youth understand and rationalize the role their Black identity plays in how they are seen and show up in the world	Sharing experiences, feelings, and emotions Allowing of Black languages and dialects in the classroom Students discuss their past traumas, address their emotions, and communicate how actions made them feel
Community	Individuals in the same geographical location working collaboratively to form reciprocal relationships of healing, protection, and love	Teaching as a community responsibility Relationship Building Students collaborate on social learning activities
Protection	Countering the cultural bias in school disciplinary policies and practices and in curriculum and instruction	exercising cultural competency to understand student behavior before initiating disciplinary actions acknowledging cultural differences

Chapter 3: Methods

Positionality

I am a Black American; a descendent of Africans enslaved in the United States. I am a first-generation college student who comes from a low socioeconomic background and small city in rural North Carolina where only 20% of individuals over the age of 25 have a postsecondary education or higher (US Census, 2021). In my community formal educational attainment was often seen as aspirational, a goal determined by white Eurocentric standards that promised access to a better quality of life. However, access to education was often met with institutional barriers, violence, and competition amongst myself and my Black peers.

As an adolescent, school became routine for me. I would go to school, get good grades, and behave so that I would not get in trouble with my mom when I got home. However, the systemic processes governing schools did not provide me with the liberty to show up as my full self. Schools did not recognize me for my individual talents and the unique perspectives I contributed to the curriculum. I am reminded of a time in the ninth grade where I questioned my teacher about water pollution in my environmental science course. I asked a question to better understand how washing machines were contributing to water waste. My teacher did not fully explain why washing machines contributed to water waste, in a manner I could understand, so I remained persistent in my pursuit to get him to help me understand. Instead of my teacher taking the time to help me better understand the topic, I was sent to the principal's office for disturbing the class.

Another moment that is embedded in my mind was when I was in 6th grade, and I learned my aunt had died due to cancer. That same day, I was suffering from an asthma attack and did not have the energy to fully participate in class activities and discussions. In an attempt to soothe myself I placed my head on my desk and was immediately scolded for not participating

in class. I was then sent out of the classroom where I faced in-school suspension. At that moment, I did not have the words or energy to express what was happening to me, but due to school policies I was only met with punitive actions instead of care and concern. I quickly realized that my pain and hurt was not welcomed, nor recognized in that educational setting. That day in that 6th grade classroom I was suffering from things out of my control, but the school's response to my suffering initiated my resistance to the practices and procedures implemented in schools.

Like decades ago, I believe educators today are still focused on punishing Black youth versus restoring them. Earlier this year, I received a call from my mom informing me my niece, who is in the 6th grade, was suspended from school because she did not inform school administration that a fight occurred in the girl's restroom. My niece, who is in the 7th grade, honor roll student, and athlete on the girls' basketball team was punished due to being in the restroom during an altercation and not reporting it. I question, if adults are not successful with preventing altercations at school, how do we expect a child to prevent an altercation she was not involved with? Furthermore, I questioned why the result of her witnessing an altercation between other students turned into a week-long suspension and removal from learning and instruction.

Reflecting on my academic journey, I have found myself at a crossroads and a point of tension in my research. My research focuses on the restoration of Black youth in schools and the role educators play in ensuring Black youth are being restored. As a Black youth, I still suffer at the hands of eurocentric philosophies, practices, and protocols. Although I recognize that age may have caused me to reach the statute of limitations to be considered a Black youth, I identify as a Black youth who is currently navigating institutional barriers and being met with policies

and procedures that kill my experiences, histories, and languages. Even with those who look like me, or those who consider themselves amongst the minority and marginalized groups, I have faced some of the most systemic violence. Furthermore, I have experienced a lack of care and restoration in my own academic journey. I realize the double-consciousness Blacks Americans face in navigating being Black and being American, but I often question where the safe spaces for Black people are. Where is my safe space in my academic journey, and who is providing care to ensure that I do not wither in it?

As an external outsider, I have been “socialized within a community different from the one in which I am conducting research” (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 407); I do not have the experience of teaching Black youth in schools and creating a learning environment that is healing, protective, and caring. However, I do have experience being a Black youth navigating schooling. I have never worked as a teacher or school administrator in K-12 schools, and I may be biased because of the harsh disciplinary action I received during my tenure in K-12 schools.

My approach to navigating my feelings and conducting valuable research to support the development of Black youth is using an ethnographic lens. Although I am not conducting an ethnography, I used what I learned about critical ethnography to guide my practices in research. I gained knowledge of ethnography or ethnographic research while taking *Critical Perspectives in Ethnographic Research* with Dr. Lui during the Fall 2023 semester. Atkinson (1998) describes ethnography as having a twofold meaning; a qualitative research method researchers use when appropriate and one serving as a philosophical paradigm for making a total commitment. Working with a vulnerable population, such as Black youth, I believed it would be important that I made a total commitment to the research, space, participants, and myself.

In general, I plan to use an ethnographic lens to guide my research, however parts of my research will require me to be critical of how I show up in the classroom space and the role the environment plays in restoring Black youth to their full selves. Critical ethnography is described as conventional ethnography with a political purpose (Thomas, 1993). Helping to engineer social change in how Black youth are seen, supported, and disciplined in school, I believe required a critical lens. Thinking critically in ethnography charges researchers to rethink “comfortable thoughts” about a social phenomenon and engage in direct actions such as political activism (Thomas, 1993). Critical ethnography maintains an “ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain” (Madison, 2005, p. 5). Because critical ethnography is my reflexive understanding of who I am in relation to others (Liu, 2023), I believe it is important to understand how I show up in the classroom and what actions I am choosing to take to change the narrative of how Black youth are seen and their behaviors are interpreted.

Engaging in research while using a critical ethnographic lens provides the opportunity to check any bias I may have and the feeling around my personal feelings. Bias is possible to show up during the planning, data collection, and analysis phases of research and is the greatest threat to trustworthiness (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010; Chenail, 2011). Bias is defined as any factors that may prevent “unprejudiced consideration of a question” (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010, p.

1). Ethnographic research helps to protect against researcher bias through the collection of field notes, audit trails, researcher positions, member checks, and triangulation which serves as an attempt to limit and acknowledge bias as well as promote validity and reliability (Dieckman, 1993; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Using a critical ethnographic lens while conducting research

allows the opportunity to interrogate bias and further develop my role as a participant observer at the research site.

Having a clear understanding of my role as a participant observer is important while engaging in my research. The participant observer role allows me to further investigate who I am at the research site and establish my role as a participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Prior to conducting research at the research site, I volunteered with the school during the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school year, conducting workshops with the students and sitting in on class presentations. I served on panels speaking with students regarding my academic journey and my experiences working at an institution of higher education. I slowly began to build a rapport with the students and solidified myself as a participant in their space. As a continuation of building my role as a participant, I would ask teachers to sit in their classroom and support them with delivering class materials to students. One teacher asked me to be a judge for her students' semesterly projects.

Having a critical perspective when it came to approaching the research site was important because I had to interrogate myself, who I was to the space, what my presence signified, and the power dynamics showing up in the space. My research for this project is centered around how Black teachers display community for their Black students. Prior research discussed various measures for creating and sustaining community for Black students in schools. One of those measures was this idea of creating Black Space. Black space is designed to dismantle, interrogate, and name anti-blackness, while creating opportunities for Black students to share experiences of relative traumas, resistance, and participate in opportunities for healing (Jackson, 2020). Also, through further investigation of the literature, I realized Black spaces could possibly be duplicated through justice, solidarity teaching and culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Through justice solidarity teaching, Blackness takes precedence over anti-Blackness (Jackson, 2020). Students are encouraged to learn through communitarian practices with the creation of informal and formal learning circles (Banwo, 2023). Furthermore, Jackson (2020) explains how justice solidarity teaching sustains and affirms Black students' humanity and "fosters a reciprocal relationship based on collaboration" (p. 438). Having knowledge of Black culture and the measures Black teachers take to resist anti-blackness in the classroom guided my understanding of the work it takes to sustain the cultures, histories, languages, and literatures of Black students.

Culturally sustaining pedagogies, I believe, helps to maintain Black spaces in schools because it seeks to perpetuate, foster, and sustain linguistic and cultural pluralism (Paris, 2012). By fostering and sustaining a students' language and culture, culturally sustaining pedagogies "build on the students' evolving identities in order to prepare youth to recognize, accept, and challenge social injustices" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 36). The Black spaces teachers are creating in their classroom are igniting culturally sustaining practices to support the overall well-being of students and returning them to their whole selves, where Black students can emancipate themselves from mental slavery (Banwo, 2023). In all, through critical ethnographic research I was able to decipher cultural practices of Black teachers in schools and how they contribute to a schools' subculture to support Black students withstanding the violence of anti-blackness.

Research Questions

This research is critical ethnographic case study designed to answer the following questions:

1. How do Black teachers' classroom practices center Blackness in restorative justice practices, reinforce Black students' identities, and help to restore Black students' relationships with schooling?
2. How do Black high school students respond to the classroom practices of their Black teachers?

Methodology: Embedded Case Study

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) define case studies as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 37). Case studies are used to explain how and why a certain phenomenon works and contributes to the researchers' knowledge of that phenomenon (Yin, 2014). A case study provides an opportunity for “intensive analyses and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by space and time” (Algozzine & Dawson, 2017, p. 9). Furthermore, case studies are important for situations that require one to separate the phenomenon's “variable from its context” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 38). The phenomenon this study seeks to explore is how Black educators create practices and collaboration amongst themselves and students in their classrooms to support the restoration, development, and care of Black youth in schools.

A case study was important for investigating this phenomenon because it provided insight into the practices implemented in classrooms to support Black youth at school that emphasizes restorative justice as an alternative to traditional disciplinary actions. Case studies provide an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the inner workings of an organization or individual (Schoch, 2020). The type of case study I used in this research is an embedded case study. An embedded case study allows for subunits to be investigated to provide overall claims for the governing unit (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). In this study, the overall case is one high school, and the embedded cases are four teachers and their classroom practices. The four teachers were named by the Vice Principal, Co-Founder and Executive Director, and Dean of Culture to be

teachers who do well with implementing restorative justice while elevating the Black experience in the school.

Study Setting

DC Public Charter Academy (pseudonym) is a free, open-enrollment, non-selective, restorative justice implementing public charter school located in Washington, DC. DC Public Charter Academy has been implementing restorative justice practices since its inception in 2016. Eighty-one percent of the students enrolled in the school are Black or African American, and 56% of all students are economically disadvantaged (DC School Report Card, 2024). Less than 23% of students received an out-of-school suspension during the 2022-2023 school year, with fewer than 1% receiving an in-school suspension or expulsion (DC School Report Card, 2024). Administrators have held varying opinions on how restorative justice practices are implemented in the school. Some teachers expressed that current practices do not get to the root of the issue with students and give students a pass to continue being disruptive in the classroom.

DC Public Charter Academy is located in Washington, DC, and is governed by the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board. The District of Columbia Public Charter School Board oversees 134 public charter schools and educates over 46,000 students (DC Public Charter School Board, 2024). DC Public Charter Academy is a high school serving grades 9 through 12. For the 2024-25 school year, there were 386 students enrolled, with 81% of those students being Black or African American (DC School Report Card, 2024). Student-to-teacher ratio is 9-to-1, and student-to-staff ratio is 6-to-1 (DC School Report Card, 2024). Of the teachers at DC Public Charter Academy, 67% are Black or African American, 50% are female, 39.1% are male, and 10.9% have an unknown gender identity (DC School Report Card, 2024).

DC Public Charter Academy is a STEM-focused school offering specialized enrichment programs in tech, coding, robotics, 3D printing, and sports. In addition to offering programs in tech and coding, DC Public Charter Academy offers a 4-year computer science program, dual college enrollment, advanced placement, blended learning, and career and technical education. The DC Public Charter Academy's mission is to prepare its students to thrive in the world and make it better. Ultimately, DC Public Charter Academy's goal is to engage students in real world opportunities that foster voice development and student leadership.

Because I am examining how Black teachers center Blackness within restorative justice practices, it is important that I choose a school that implements restorative justice practices. DC Public Charter School was founded in 2015 and has implemented restorative justice practices at its school since the 2016-17 school year. Interviews took place in participants' classrooms and the teacher's lounge, and observations took place in the classrooms of the teachers at the restorative justice implementing school. Furthermore, because Black restorativeness centers the identity, safety, and well-being of Black youth, at least half of the school's body will consist of students who identify as Black as defined by enrollment.

Recruitment

Community nominations is a process for selecting study participants based on the recommendations of individuals in that community and on the potential study participant's work (Foster, 1997). Community nominations are a sampling approach that draws on an emic perspective of how the school community views the work of Black teachers teaching Black youth (Foster, 1991). To begin the community nomination process, I sought the advice and perspective of the Vice Principal of the school, who was a former History teacher, modeling coach, and cheerleading coach. I had partnered with this teacher, helping to judge history

projects and serving as a guest speaker in her class, discussing topics such as college and career readiness. I observed how the former teacher, now Vice Principal, cared for their students in the classroom and held many discussions with them regarding Black liberation. I believed the Vice Principal could provide insider knowledge on other teachers who were operating with similar passion and care for their students. The Vice Principal nominated four teachers who they believed exhibited care and healing for Black youth through curriculum instruction and restorative justice.

After receiving the four nominations for the four teachers, I spoke with the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the school to discuss my research and to inquire which teachers they believed did a good job implementing restorative practices and handling students with care. The Co-Founder then gave me a list of teachers they believed met the criteria I was seeking, and I matched the names with those provided by the Vice Principal. Next, I met with the Director of Alumni Engagement. I asked about connecting with alums who graduated in the last two years to request nominations for teachers they believe showed care for them in the classroom. Alumni information was not available; however, the Vice Principal polled 5 graduating seniors and received a list of teachers they believed supported them at DC Public Charter School.

The next step in the recruitment process was a targeted email to the nominated participants, including details of the study (the full recruitment email is provided in Appendix B). The Vice Principal provided contact information for each nominee that will be used to provide them with details of the study. I set up a time to meet with each potential participant to provide them with details of the study and answer any questions they have before confirming their participation. I asked each participant to review the study information and sign a consent form (Appendix A) to indicate their agreement to participate. I provided each participant with my

contact information in case they had questions during the study. Once I received signed copies of the consent form, I scheduled a time to meet with each participant for an initial interview, during which we discussed the days and weeks I would conduct in-class observations.

Ultimately, to identify potential participants for the study, I used a combination of criteria-based sampling (Patton, 1990; Patton, 2015) and community nomination (Foster, 1997). The ideal sample size included four total participants (two male teachers and two female teachers). I gained access to participants through my preexisting relationship with the high school's Vice Principal. In the beginning, I looked for Black educators who identify as Black and who taught Black youth in high school. Educators who identified as Black were important to this study because, historically, Black educators have helped Black youth develop their own ways of seeing and engaging with the world, both in and out of the classroom (Hines, 2022).

Participants

This study includes four participants. Because individuals in case studies are “presumed to be representative of the population being studied” (Schoch, 2020, p.249), I chose four Black educators who teach at DC Public Charter Academy to represent a larger population of Black educators. These teachers were named by the Vice Principal, Co-Founder and Executive Director, and Dean of Culture as effectively implementing restorative justice while elevating the Black experience in the school. The teachers taught grades 9 through 12; two were male, and two were female. The subjects these teachers teach range from Math, ELA, History, and US Government. See Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Participant Data

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Years of Experience</i>	<i>Race</i>
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<i>Edward Taul</i>	Male	AP Government & US History	14	Black
<i>Marva</i>	Female	US History & English	10	Black
<i>Fashionista</i>	Male	English	10	Black
<i>Ms. Collier</i>	Female	Algebra & Honors Algebra	20	Black

Data Collection

Because data collection involves “asking, watching, and reviewing” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 106), I collected data through interviews, observations, and student feedback. The use of multiple sources of evidence allowed me to address a range of behaviors and practices Black teachers employed in the classroom to support Black youth. Below, I describe my plans for how I collected substantial evidence to support the research questions I intend to answer by conducting the research.

Interviews

I conducted three semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes with each participant to obtain information I could not access through observations (Dark et al., 1998). I used a semi-structured, multiple interview protocol (Yin, 2014). In the first interview (Appendix A), I gathered information about the participants' teaching background, such as years of teaching, and teaching philosophy used to develop curriculum, how they defined Blackness, how their identity as a Black person informed the way they interacted with Black youth, and what it means to them to restore Black youth in schools.

The second interview (Appendix A) asked questions related to how each teacher set up and created space for Black youth to learn. I followed up with questions on what I observed

during the classroom observations and the different documents I collected (e.g., curricula and lesson plans). The second interview allowed me to gain each participant's perspective and to triangulate their data with my observations. The goal of the second interview was to engage with each case to gain a clear understanding of how healing, care, and restoration were being operationalized in the classroom.

The third and final interview (Appendix A) consisted of questions regarding patterns I found across cases and my interpretations that went “beyond the narrow scope of the study (Yin, 2014, p. 91). I created questions for this interview after reviewing the first two interviews and the observation data. I uncovered themes and an overall understanding of the practices implemented in each teacher's classroom. This final interview provided insight into how the teachers saw restorative practices as culturally sustainable and healing for Black youth in the classroom. Furthermore, it allowed me to seek clarification and a deeper understanding of the data collected, and to gain insight into how best to support Black youth and their relationship with schooling through the words of Black teachers.

All interviews were conducted in person at DC Public Charter School. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission from each teacher. I transcribed all interviews using Descript transcription software, which enabled efficient uploads, automated transcription, and iterative refinement through its built-in editing tools. After transcribing interviews, I compared the transcription to the audio recording for accuracy. Finally, I returned the interview transcripts to participants for corrections and confirmation.

Observations

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) describe observations as another primary data collection method for case studies. Observational data provide a “firsthand encounter with the

phenomenon” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 137) rather than secondhand knowledge, such as interviews or sources not directly connected to the phenomenon. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) further explain that observations should “take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs” (p. 137). I conducted observations in the classrooms of the Black teachers, where they interacted with and taught Black students. I observed each teacher during three full class periods (approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes each) for a total of 12 observations. Prior to observing each teacher, I met with them to discuss the study and create a schedule for conducting the classroom observations.

To understand what is important to observe, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) recommend considering your theoretical framework, problem, and questions of interest when completing an observation. I observed how teachers interacted with and supported Black students in their classrooms. I looked for instances of care and protection for Black students, as well as the ways teachers allowed their students to share their life experiences. I was sensitive to how care unfolds in the classroom, and I examined how participants attended to Black literacies and histories (Jackson, 2020). I also looked for identity-confirming practices that offered opportunities for students to engage in dialogue that helped them understand their Black identity and its role in how they showed up in the classroom (Jackson, 2020). Additionally, I looked at practices that protected Black youth from unjust disciplinary actions and fostered relationship-building and students’ social learning.

During the classroom observations, I took written notes using a thematic Excel sheet to document classroom activities (Appendix A). The Excel sheet included deductive themes and examples of each. Deductive themes included healing, identity confirming, community, and protection, which I used to identify potential Black restorative practices. I made note of the

classroom space, setup, and artifacts (posters and/or signage) on the walls. Artifacts are potential sources of data that signal meaning in the environment in which they are found (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I used descriptions of artifacts I observed in the classroom to triangulate and supplement my interview and other observational data.

Exit Ticket

To address the second research question regarding how students respond to their Black teachers and classroom practices, I implemented four exit-ticket activities (one per teacher) on the last observation of the four teachers' classrooms (Appendix A). An exit ticket is a "brief, informal assessment activity conducted at the end of a class or lesson to gauge student understanding and provide teachers with quick feedback" (Center for Teaching Excellence, 2024, p. 1). The Exit ticket was co-developed; the teachers and I worked collectively to create one exit ticket for all their classes. I met with the teachers after conducting the initial in-class observation. I provided them with an outline of the Black restorative practices' framework. We worked collaboratively using Google Docs to craft five survey questions to provide insight into how Black high school students responded to the classroom practices of the four Black Teachers. The exit tickets provided me with insight into how Black students feel about their Black teachers' practices. Exit tickets were distributed and collected by the teachers (participants) and given to me for data analysis. Please see Appendix (A) for the Exit Ticket questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing and iterative. I read through the interview transcripts and observation notes to ensure their accuracy. Next, interviews and observation data were analyzed using a hybrid thematic analysis that incorporated both deductive and inductive codes. Deductive codes were based on the four lenses of the Black restorative practices' conceptual

framework and prior literature. Inductive codes were derived from themes identified while reading interview transcripts and observation notes. A hybrid thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and determine themes in the data (Braun & Clark, 2006) and to identify deductive codes developed from previous research. I followed a 6 step process for analyzing data, (1) developed the code manual; (2) familiarized myself with the data; (3) summarized the data and identified initial themes; (4) applied the template of codes and additional codes; (5) connected codes and identified themes; and (6) corroborated and legitimized the coded themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Ahmed et al., 2025).

Data management began with coding language-based and visual data. Saldaña (2013) describes code as a word or phrase that provides summative meaning to a portion of “language-based or visual data” (p. 3). I coded transcripts, field notes, and documents using deductive codes to summarize themes in participants' responses and behaviors exhibited during classroom observations (Saldaña, 2021). Each interview, set of field notes, and document had a code to support the retrieval of information for analysis and writing up findings.

Case Analysis

Interview data were analyzed using deductive coding and themes. Deductive codes included healing, identity confirming, community, and protection. The code "healing" was used when a teacher mentioned embracing cultural pluralism and equity in their practices. The code "identity confirming" was used when a teacher mentioned reinforcing how Black youth understand and rationalize the role their Black identity plays in how they show up in the classroom. The code "community" was used when the teacher mentioned fostering a collaborative workspace to build reciprocal relationships between students and the teacher. The

code "protection" was used when the teacher mentioned employing techniques that counter cultural bias in school disciplinary practices, curriculum, and instruction.

I read through each interview and coded the data based on the deductive codes. Next, I summarized the interview data, identified additional themes, and added them to the code manual. Next, I applied additional codes and themes to the interview data to support the cross-case analysis. Finally, I looked for interpretative data to understand its overall meaning (Wolcott, 1994), clustered the themes, and confirmed the findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Observational data were analyzed using deductive coding and thematic analysis. Deductive codes included healing, teacher as observed exhibiting practices that embraced cultural pluralism and equity; identity confirming, teacher was observed exhibiting practices that reinforced the identities of Black youth and the role those identities play in the world; community, teacher was observed exhibiting practices that fostered a collaborative work space for students; and protection, teacher was observed exhibiting practices that countered cultural bias in school disciplinary practices and curriculum and instruction. I read through the observation notes and coded the data using deductive codes. Next, I summarized the observation data, identified additional themes, and added themes to the code manual. Then, I applied additional codes and themes to the observation data to support cross-case analysis. Finally, I looked for interpretative data to understand the meaning of it all (Wolcott, 1994), clustered the themes, and confirmed the findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

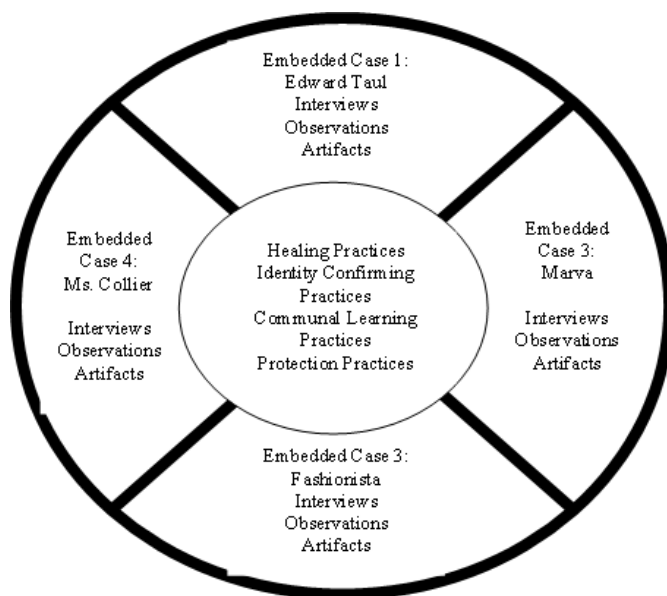
I performed a parametric analysis of the exit ticket data. Parametric analysis is useful for Likert-scale data because it helps to “yield largely unbiased answers that are acceptably close to the truth” (Sullivan & Artino, 2013, p. 2). I collected exit tickets from each teacher, then reviewed each exit ticket, adding the outcomes to an Excel spreadsheet. Then I grouped the

outcomes into a survey scale and calculated a total score for the scale items. After calculating the total score for each response, I wrote up the findings and tentative assertions.

Cross Case Analysis

Once data were collected and analyzed for each case, I conducted a cross-case analysis to highlight common relationships across cases (Stake, 2006). I set up a “case-quintain dialectic” in which I attended to each case individually and to the phenomenon as a whole to emphasize common themes across cases (Stake, 2006). Stake (2006) describes the case-quintain dialectic as a methodological approach in which the researcher balances an in-depth understanding of individual cases with the broader shared phenomenon. I set up the case-quintain dialectic in an Excel worksheet, noting the findings from each case. Next, I merged the findings across cases around the concepts in the proposed framework, Black restorative practices. For example, the first a priori category, healing, I aligned any quote, observation, or artifact that mentioned attributes for creating spaces of healing for Black youth with this lens of the Black restorative practices’ framework. Finally, I wrote up my findings and tentative assertions.

Figure 3.1 Case Quintain



Rigor/Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in this study, I adopted Lincoln and Guba (1985) four pillars for establishing trustworthiness. The four pillars included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure credibility, I conducted member checking by sending transcripts to participants for review and asking follow-up and clarifying questions during participants' third interview. Also, I triangulated using multiple data sources to compare and cross-check the collected data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I compared and cross-checked the data from the interviews I conducted, observation notes, and artifacts collected during classroom observations. I engaged in reflexive journaling (Lincoln & Guba, 1982) to evaluate my thinking regarding the phenomenon. Transferability was established by providing a thick description of my research site and information on influential participants in the study, such as the Vice Principal, Dean of Culture, and President of the school (Stahl & King, 2020). To ensure dependability and confirmability, I documented the research process extensively by evaluating the findings, interpretations, and recommendations based on the data (interview transcripts, observations, codes, and concepts) received from the participants in the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Data Management

IRB requires that all signed IRB consent forms, fieldnotes, artifacts, interview recordings, and interview transcripts be kept in a secure location and be accessible only to me and my Advisors. To keep track of my thoughts, speculations, and assumptions, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest I transcribe my own interviews. Transcribing the interviews myself allowed me to gain further insight into the data that I collected. I used Descript, an online transcription system, to transcribe the interviews. Descript transcribed the interviews, and I then reviewed the

transcripts and compared them to the original recordings to ensure transcription validity.

Completing these actions allowed me to move between the “emerging analysis and raw data of interviews, field notes, and documents” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 200). To support the organization and maintenance of the collected data, I used the Dedoose software system.

Dedoose is a web-based software application designed for qualitative and mix-methods research.

The Dedoose system provided support for me with keeping up with the overall inventory of my data set.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, I present the study findings to answer the central research question through thematic statements related to the four lenses I use to conceptualize Black restorative practice framework: healing, protection, community, and identity confirming. First, I provide an overall description of the high school selected as the site for this study. Second, I provide an overview of each embedded unit of analysis, which are the individual teachers and describe each study participant. Third, I present responses from each individual teacher connected to the categories related to the Black restorative practices' conceptual framework. I then present the cross-case analysis by describing data representative of across the embedded unit of analysis (teacher participants). Below I provide the codes for each embedded unit of analysis (see table 4.1)

Table 4.1 Embedded Units: Parent and Codes and Categories

Research Question	Parent Codes	A priori Categories
RQ1: How do Black teachers' classroom practices center Blackness in restorative justice practices, reinforce Black students' identities, and help to restore Black students' relationships to schooling?	- Replacing Eurocentric curriculums with Black literacies and history - Curriculums designed around the lived experiences of students	Healing
	- Sharing experiences, feelings, and emotions - Allowing the usage of Black languages and dialects in the classroom - Students discuss their past traumas, address their emotions, and communicate how actions made them feel	Identity Confirming
	Teaching as a community responsibility	Community

- Relationship Building
(teacher/student relationships and student/student relationships)
 - Students collaborate on social learning activities
 - Exercising cultural competency to understand student behavior before initiating disciplinary actions
 - Acknowledging cultural differences
- Protection

DC Public Charter Academy

In this embedded case study, I investigated the practices of Black teachers who teach Black youth in high school. I focused the study on one public charter high school in Washington, DC. The high school is a restorative justice-implementing school with 80% Black student enrollment and a predominantly Black staff. I studied four high school teachers who identified as Black. See Table 4.2

DC Public Charter Academy is situated in Washington, DC, and operates in a historic, century-old building that previously served as a seminary. The school building is three levels. On the first level were the reception area, cafeteria, and meeting spaces. While visiting the school, I noticed the building was locked, and to enter, I had to press the ring camera doorbell on the outside. The receptionist unlocked the doors from their desk, which allowed me access to the building. Upon entering the building, I walked up to the reception desk, informed the front desk staff who I was meeting with, and signed in on the visitor log. However, on some days, I would contact the Vice Principal, who would be waiting for me at the reception desk, to lead me to the classrooms of the teachers I would be observing for the day. On days that I made it to campus before school started, I observed students being welcomed into the building by school staff. Students who carried a bookbag or purse had their bags checked by school staff before

being allowed to enter the building. I never asked why the students' bags were checked, but I assumed it was for security.

As I made my way through the main floor hallways, I saw inspirational posters on the walls. One poster stated, "Our mission is to prepare our kids to thrive in the world and change it for the better." Another poster stated, "We will prepare our graduates to be college-ready, have career-ready tech skills, and lead change in our communities and the world." On every other floor, flags from various colleges and universities were posted on the ceiling beams. At various points in the hallway were desks where school staff on hallway duty would sit to ensure students were not loitering. Interactions between students and staff appeared amicable, with students feeling free to engage in jovial conversation with staff in the hallways.

Participant Profiles

Edward Taul (participant-selected pseudonym), a Black male high school US Government and History teacher who taught 12th-grade students. When I met Edward Taul, he was a high-spirited person who spoke with passion and intent when discussing his relationship with his students. Edward was a short, stocky, brown-skinned man who wore a mini afro haircut. During our first meeting, Edward was dressed in dress slacks, a polo shirt, a blazer, and Air Jordans. Edward mentioned that he connects with students in his class by wearing similar sneakers to theirs. Edward did not intentionally wear the same sneakers as the students; his choice was by chance, creating an opportunity to connect with his students. Edward had been teaching for 14 years.

Edward is from Louisiana, where he attended K-12 schools and earned a bachelor's degree in theatre arts and speech communication from a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Also, Edward earned a master's degree in program and curriculum and in

human development, and holds a doctorate in educational leadership. Edward said his biggest influence in education growing up was his father. Edward described his father as a community servant who empowered people in his community. Edward's philosophy for teaching Black youth is based on his belief that "*Black and brown youth do not succeed based on talent, but exposure.*" Ultimately, Edward loves it when students reach that "aha moment" and understand the concepts being taught in the classroom.

Marva (participant-selected pseudonym) is a Black female high school teacher who taught 10th-grade English and 11th-grade U.S. History. Marva had been teaching for 10 years. Marva is part Panamanian. Marva was raised and attended K-12 schooling in New Jersey. Marva's effervescence preceded her before she said a word. Marva was a slender, brown-skinned woman with silky black hair that touched her back. Marva possessed a warm smile that welcomed me, and the blend of her Northeast boldness and island warmth created a space that made me feel comfortable speaking with her. Marva appeared very self-assured, and her bold style showcased a mix of street-smart edge and cultural pride. Marva almost always wore something Afrocentric, whether it was her earrings, ring, bracelet, or an HBCU sweatshirt.

Marva was raised and attended K-12 schooling in New Jersey. Marva attended a Historically Black College and University in North Carolina and earned a bachelor's degree in communication and English. Marva was inspired by her college professors and Black educators such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Marva Collins; her greatest inspiration was her dad. Marva expressed that although her dad was not an educator by trade, he was an educator in practice. Also, Marva was inspired by music and artists such as Lauryn Hill, whose music was poetic and often told stories of Black relationships and liberation. Marva's philosophy for teaching Black youth is "*Black youth aren't broken, and they deserve a quality*

education.” What Marva loves most about teaching is imparting knowledge to students, encouraging them to critically analyze the world, and helping students through her own lived experiences and knowledge.

Fashionista (participant selected pseudonym), a Black male high school teacher who taught 9th-grade English. Fashionista had been teaching for 10 years. Fashionista grew up in Southeast Washington, DC, where he attended K-12 schooling. Fashionista’s vivacious personality commanded the attention of those he encountered. Fashionista was a tall, slender, brown-skinned man with locs. Fashionista prides himself on his expressive, bold sense of style. Fashionista would often wear color-coordinated outfits, in which his shoes matched the colors of his shirt. Fashionista was a friendly, charismatic individual who interacted with his students in a caring, jovial manner. Fashionista took pride in being from Washington, DC. He relished the fact that he lives in the same neighborhood as some of his students.

Fashionista attended the local community college before transferring to a Historically Black College and University in Eastern Maryland, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in criminal justice. Fashionista’s inspiration for teaching comes from his 9th-grade English teacher, who is now his current supervisor. Fashionista describes his 9th-grade English teacher as “someone who never gave up on me,” and he applies that philosophy to the Black youth in his 9th-grade English class. What Fashionista loves most about teaching is the “challenge.” Fashionista expressed that wearing multiple hats as a teacher challenges him and centers him on becoming a better version of himself, not only for himself but also for the students.

Ms. Collier (participant-selected pseudonym), a Black female high school teacher who taught 9th-grade Algebra I and honors Algebra I. Ms. Collier had been teaching for 20 years.

Ms. Collier possessed a stoic demeanor that embodied a high sense of self-awareness and grounding. I sensed that Ms. Collier spoke with intention because she would always ask for confirmation that I understood what she meant when answering my interview questions. Ms. Collier was a tall, slender, brown-skinned woman who wore glasses and a short haircut. Ms. Collier dressed in either a button-down and jeans or a Nike sweatsuit on days I observed her class. She often joked with her students during lessons and spoke with warmth but a discerning tone when discussing important topics.

Ms. Collier grew up on the South Side of Chicago, where she attended a majority-Black elementary school for the gifted and talented and a majority-Black high school. Ms. Collier explained that she was suspended from school 26 times but consistently tested in the 99th percentile. Ms. Collier attended a Historically Black College and University in Washington, DC, where she earned her bachelor's degree. Ms. Collier describes every school that she attended, from elementary to college, as being filled with predominantly Black students. Ms. Collier states, "I've always been exposed to my people." Attending predominantly Black schools, Ms. Collier explains how most of her influences growing up were Black women teachers. Notably, Ms. Collier's biggest influences were her English teacher, Dr. Berry Elmore, her History and Economics teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Arrington, and her Middle Eastern Precalculus and Calculus teacher. The participant's demographics are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Teacher Participants (n=4)

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Subject(s)	Number of Years Teaching Experience
Edward Taul	Male	12 th Grade AP Govt 12 th Grade US History	14

Marva	Female	11 th Grade US History 10 th Grade English	10
Fashionista	Male	9 th Grade English	10
Ms. Collier	Female	9 th Grade Algebra I 9 th Grade Honors Algebra I	20

Findings that Address Research Question 1

The central research question this study addressed was: How do Black teachers’ classroom practices center Blackness in restorative justice practices, reinforce Black students’ identities, and help to restore Black students’ relationships to schooling? I used responses from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and artifacts noted during classroom observations to answer this research question. I found that all four teachers demonstrated practices aligned with the four concepts in my theoretical framework, Black Restorative Practices. In this section, I present data from each participant representative of these concepts.

Healing

When teachers engage in practices that resist systems of oppression and violence by centering the history of Black Americans in the United States and their lived experiences, they create spaces of healing for Black youth. The teachers in this study described created spaces for healing that considered the lived experiences of Black youth in their classes. Those spaces incorporated influential figures in Black history and included discussions about African American history. The teachers described such spaces of healing as those in which students knew their teacher loved them and wanted to see them flourish in school.

Edward Taul, one of the first teachers I interviewed and observed in the classroom, described his goal to combat the negative experiences that his students had in their commute to and from school by providing a safe environment where Black youth felt supported. He spoke candidly about how he wanted to shift the narrative of how Black youth saw the world around them versus how they saw themselves in his classroom.

I often paint pictures or think of how students, when they describe to me their walks home, their walk home is sometimes filled with not the best visual sites of success, whether it be the man that's standing on the corner who's been there since the time they left from school to the time they come back from school. Graffiti, unnecessary amounts of trash; those things don't necessarily symbolize pride, but when you can come into this building and see these symbols, you understand that I'm part of a community. I feel safe inside this community, I understand the importance of achieving inside this community and I know that no matter what steps I take, I'm gonna be supported.

Edwards Taul's commitment to providing a space where students felt they belonged and in which they could take pride was visible when I observed his classroom. In his classroom, there were posters hanging on the walls and on the back of the classroom door that promoted a space that is open to students communicating their needs and affirming of multiple identities that students may embody. A few of the posters read "No racist, transphobic, or ableist slurs," "No sh*t talking," and "Communicate and Advocate for your needs." The posters conveyed that negative behaviors and languages were not welcomed in the classroom, and where self-advocacy is greatly appreciated.

To create a space of healing, Edward Taul believed that every student around him should feel loved. Whether through his actions or by verbally letting students know the love he had for

them, Edwards' main objective was to ensure students knew they were loved. In Edward's initial interview he stated, "any student that's around me knows that they're loved." One way he promoted a space where students felt they were loved was by welcoming their various backgrounds and teaching to all of their experiences. During Edward Taul's initial interview he expressed the importance of understanding and teaching to his Black students' "hodgepodge of experiences."

There are students that have two parents in a household. There's some parents, some kids that be raised by a single mother, a single father. There are, unfortunately, some kids that I've taught that are revolving door kids, and that's an unfortunate terminology that I picked up about three or four years ago, revolving doors, students are students where at one time or another, someone in their mother, parent ship has been incarcerated. Also have some students that are being raised by, you know, non-traditional parents, being an auntie, uncle, grandmother, have also some students that have been replaced due to parents not being able to keep up with parental responsibilities due to drug addiction, incarceration. So it's a hodgepodge of different experiences. Because of that, I have to teach to all those experiences. And, just like, you know, when you're putting a lesson together, is it something that is hands on? Is it something that's visual? Is it something that's problem solving? I have to teach through all those various experiences to make sure that I'm getting the best out of all of my students, so that all students know I'm talking directly to you while talking to everybody at the same time.

Teaching to students' experiences aligns with the theme of providing a space for healing for students and promoting a space where Black youth are seen. I observed Edward's commitment to providing a space of healing for his students during his AP Government course.

During his lessons, Edward shared information about Black history, including his family's history in the United States. On the day of the first observation, Edward recounted a story about his grandfather, who came to the U.S. from the country of Malta. Edward described his grandfather's journey from Malta and the first thing he saw upon arrival: the Statue of Liberty. Edward asked the class whether they knew the Statue of Liberty's original name, and the students opened their laptops and began their search. After waiting for a period, Edward responded, "Columbia."

Then Edward asked if the students knew what was written at the base of the Statue of Liberty, and they replied that they did not. Edward responded, "give me your tired, your poor, your huddled." One male student asked why the Statue of Liberty was not in Washington, D.C., and Edward explained that Washington, D.C., did not have the infrastructure to hold it. Then a female student responded, "I feel like the Statue of Liberty would look weird sitting in the middle of Anacostia." The class clamored and laughed. Another example: while Edward was giving a lesson on the history of Washington, DC, he cited Barry Farms, a former predominantly Black neighborhood in the city. Edward discussed the businesses and organizations that used to exist in the neighborhood, and due to gentrification, how only one building remains of the once-flourishing Black neighborhood. By incorporating historical events and context into his curriculum and allowing students to make connections to their lived experiences, he demonstrated a form of healing for Black youth in schools.

Edward Taul crafted his lessons around geographic locations in close proximity to where his students lived or visited to capture their lived experiences. During one lesson, Edward Taul described the Archway in Chinatown and a big, tall building on 8th Street in Washington, DC. Edward Taul led the students through a visualization of the area, allowing them to name

landmarks they were familiar with located near the area Edward discussed. During his interview, I asked Edward about the importance of making connections with their lived experiences and Black histories for students, and he responded to how important it was to make those connections.

Yeah, absolutely. When they're engaged and know where they come from, they move differently. And you see it immediately because they go, you know, someone really sacrificed for this opportunity to happen. What am I doing with it? Am I throwing it away? Am I in love with this arrogance that I don't understand that I'm part of a bigger picture? What is my lasting legacy? Am I doing something for my younger sibling or the, or my, you know, future family? What, what are my moves? And when kids start to do that, you see it immediately and that's great.

Edward's way of providing a space for healing for his students was to connect his lessons to students' lived experiences by discussing the historical context of the neighborhoods they lived in or frequently visited. For Edward, healing students in the classroom meant engaging them in conversations about their past experiences. Engaging in practices that incorporate his students' lived experiences, Edward believes, helps them envision their legacy and reposition how they show up in his classroom.

Like Edward Taul, Marva emphasized the importance of understanding the lived experiences of Black youth in her classroom and the need for teachers not to make assumptions about who they are and their abilities. Marva's way of providing a space for healing for her students was making sure they felt seen, and to do that, she would connect her lessons to their lived experiences. Marva, a HBCU graduate, described how her Black professors in college would always connect their students' lived experiences to their lessons, and she aimed to do the

same with her students. During an interview, Marva discussed how she tries to incorporate life experiences in her curriculum and why making connections to their lived experiences was important for Black youth's learning and development.

I try to incorporate life experiences. I connect what we're learning to get them engaged and to illustrate examples, I might connect something that we learned to, something that I've experienced and in hopes that it resonates with them and their own experiences.

It's important to know where they're from and who they are, the essence of who they are, so you don't generalize. So you can understand what they might be dealing with. So you can help them overcome some barriers while then introducing them to the world of academia simultaneously. But it'll be kind of foolish to think that we can introduce them to this thing where it's forcing them to think critically and focus on something if they have immediate circumstances that are preventing them from really even connecting with that.

Marva's way of providing healing for her students was creating a space for understanding. Healing is connectedness in Marva's class. While observing Marva's class, a student "interrupted" Marva while she was teaching to ask for some lotion. Without missing a word or losing her place in the lesson, Marva walked over to her desk, grabbed some lotion out of her purse, and handed it to the student. During her second interview, I asked Marva about this interaction, and she explained that she often needs lotion, so she understands why the student will need it. Lotion was important for her as an adult, so she saw it as important for the student. Marva continued expressing the dangers of making assumptions about Black youth and how making assumptions about Black youth can be compromising to their academic development and achievement. Getting to know Black youth is a way to counter harsh

stereotypes and become more understanding of their lived experiences, helping avoid compromising situations as a teacher.

We also have to get to know our kids so we don't assume that they are broken, assume that they come from broken homes. Can't make that assumption, that's a dangerous assumption to make. And as a parent, I would be pissed if someone made that assumption about my children. So we can't make the assumption, but it's important to remind them that unfortunately, like I'm here to, we are here to help you not fall victim to this unfortunate stereotype because it can put you in a very compromising situation if you are ever labeled and categorized as such.

Healing practices were also exhibited during Marva's class lessons. While supporting a student with an upcoming project, Marva engaged in providing historical context of Black Americans in the United States. During Marva's 10th-grade English class, a discussion was initiated on the word "civilized". Marva asked her students to define what "civilized" meant. As students quested to find the meaning of the word, Marva began to provide examples of how Black people were often viewed as uncivilized. Although this was Marva's English class, Marva took the opportunity to give the brief history of the first human being discovered in Africa. Marva connected the brief history lesson to the class discussion by stating, "colonizers believed Black and indigenous people were not civilized." Marva's way of providing healing practices for her students in the classroom was replacing eurocentric curricula with discussions around the history of Black and indigenous people.

Marva's classroom setup created a healing space for Black youth through her incorporation of Black heritage posters, signs, and flags, as well as photos of historical African figures. On one side of the classroom, the Black American flag (colors red, black, and green)

with the symbol of Africa sketched in the center was draped on the wall. Next to the Black American Flag was a poster with the colors red, black, and green, and the words “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced” written on it. Beside the poster was a picture of James Baldwin, a Black American writer and civil rights activist. On the opposite side of the classroom was a picture of King Taharqa with the words “Builder of the Pyramids - King Taharqa” written on it, and beside it was a poster with the words “The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.” A flag with the words “Black Panther” was draped across the teacher’s desk, with various Afrocentric board games like Ebonopoly and books by Black authors in the cupboards beneath it. Marva’s classroom setup created a space where Black youth could see themselves beyond their current circumstances. Incorporating Afrocentric artifacts in the classroom provides a space of healing for her students because it rejects a negative self-image of Black people and promotes positive self-images of Black people and their histories.

Like Marva, Fashionista had images of Black figures posted around his classroom. Fashionista provided a space for healing for his students by incorporating positive self-images of Black historical figures and posters, along with affirming language, in the classroom. In front of Fashionista’s classroom, there was a poster of John Lewis, a Black American civil rights leader, with the words “When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to do something.” There was a poster of James Baldwin, a Black American writer and civil rights activist, reading a newspaper. Also, there were pictures of Sha’Carri Richardson, a Black American track and field athlete; Martin Luther King Jr., a Black American civil rights leader; Simone Biles, a Black American gymnast and Olympic gold medalist; Quincy Wilson, a Black American track and field athlete; and Stephen Curry, a Black American

basketball point guard. When asked during an interview what the pictures in his classroom meant, Fashionista expressed that by incorporating figures of Black figures with whom students are familiar was his way of supporting Black youth in engaging in learning in his classroom.

So, because it is a science dominant space, I had to, you know, figure out how to still implement that language arts and English reading kind of perspective. So, what really just inspired me is just to have pictures, quotes, and images of people who they can relate to. So I, you know, I did like Martin Luther King, the Bayard Rustin, just a bunch of people that are like in the area that have done work that have, you know, pretty much made an impact. So I, you know, I try to just really go off people that they know, Steph Curry, LeBron James, Kobe Bryant; so that's where those images in my classroom came from. And, you know, when they like, who was this Mr. Garner? I'm like, well, this is such and such. Do you know, you know, what struggles he had? Like, Kaepernick, you know, him not kneeling down and stuff like that. So I think we were able to just put all of these, you know, situations and images together and understand like, you know, in life you gonna have challenges, persevere just like Gabrielle did, or just like Kaepernick did, or just like, you know LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, you know, so that was the motivation, just to give them some type of inspiration.

Like Marva and Fashionista, Ms. Collier incorporated images of prominent Black people in the music industry on the walls of her classroom. These prominent Black people included Lecrae, Black American gospel artist; Beyonce and Jay-Z, Black American music moguls; Common, Black American rapper and actor; Nipsey Hussle, Black American rapper and songwriter; and Chance the Rapper, Black American rapper. Under each image were words that empowered and may help create a space of healing and empowerment for the Black youth in her

classroom. During her interview, Ms. Collier described how she connects images of prominent Black people to her students and how they show up in the classroom.

The bulletin board has the hustlers of the week, so that's like student of the week. We go off of hustle points here; so honor, unity, self-advocacy, tenacity, leadership and empathy. If you look at the poster, I put prominent people of color, who are actually in the music industry, because they're go-getters, they're hustlers. You have the gospel artist, Lecrae, under honor, you've got Beyonce and Jay-Z for Unity. You've got Common for self-advocacy; Nipsey Hussle for tenacity, DJ Khaled for leadership and Chance the Rapper for empathy. And they all actually embody that core value, which is why I selected them.

In addition to displaying images of prominent Black people, Ms. Collier also pulled from the philosophies and teachings of historical Black figures and incorporated them in her teaching to support Black youth in the classroom. During an interview, Ms. Collier discussed how she learned from prominent figures like Marva Collins, a Black American educator and founder of the Westside Preparatory School, and Joe Clark, a Black American educator, and how she used some of their teachings to counter negative behaviors in the classroom. Ms. Collier stated, “so I think part of reaching back to what have black educators done before, to see what I can learn and what part can work in today’s age.” Drawing on the practices of historical Black educators allowed Ms. Collier to strengthen her approach to supporting her students and create a healing space for them in the classroom. Not only was it important for Ms. Collier to pull from prominent Black educators, but she also emphasized the importance of Black youth knowing their histories to learn and better understand how to become better versions of themselves.

So I think it's very important that we take from our past and bring it to our presence so that kids can learn number one, about like, hey, this is part of your history, this is part of your culture, but also like this is how our culture operates. We're very familial people, we're very caring people. People act like we're aggressive and we're this and we're that but at the end of the day, we're actually the polar opposite when you get down to the root of it. And so allowing kids to go like, hey, don't be that version that they think you are, be the version that we know you are.

Collectively, each teacher displayed practices that created spaces of healing for their Black youth by incorporating historical Black figures into their lessons, drawing on students' lived experiences to enrich their curricula, and displaying Black culture throughout their classrooms. Edward and Marva created spaces of healing for their youth by ensuring that they felt seen in the classroom and by connecting with them through their lived experiences. Marva, Fashionista, and Ms. Collier displayed images of prominent Black people in their classroom to connect with their students and create a space where students felt empowered to want to learn and achieve. All the teachers operated with a mindset of wanting to show their students how to be better versions of themselves, by healing any negative thoughts they may have of themselves and their histories.

Identity Confirming

When teachers engage in practices that reinforce how Black youth understand and rationalize the role their identity plays in how they show up in the world, they are exhibiting identity-confirming practices. The second a priori category (see Table 4.1), identity-confirming, aligns with the second lens of the Black restorative practices' conceptual framework. Teachers in this study exhibited identity-confirming practices through daily check-ins with their students

on their emotions and feelings, relating to the languages Black youth used to express themselves, and building a strong teacher-student rapport.

Edward Taul's commitment to confirming his students' identities was evident on his first day of observation. When I asked Edward to describe the identities of the students he taught, he stated "there is no silver bullet answer, I can only give you a phrase and it is really based off of my favorite song by Amel Larrieux which is 'Infinite Possibilities'." Edward continued to emphasize that, as a teacher, it is important for him to manage all those possibilities to ensure students recognize themselves and their potential in the world. Furthermore, to confirm his students' identities in class, Edward began each class with an unorthodox greeting that set the tone for the day's mood. While observing his class, Edward opened the class by saying, "Hi, kids, how are you all doing today? On this edition of 'what the hell we're going to do today', I want to start with, how are you doing today?" The gesture of asking students how they were doing and offering space during class time to share allowed students to express their feelings and emotions, and gave Edward the opportunity to help them rationalize them.

Like Edward Taul, Fashionista was not certain of the identities of his students, but he recognized that they were in transition, exploring their own identities. Fashionista stated, "I wouldn't say that I know offhand the identity of these kids because they're going through, you know, a transition of really identifying who they truly are." However, during an in-class observation, I saw Fashionista making connections to his students' identities. For example, during student presentations, a student expressed that they dealt with anxiety and were nervous about the presentation. As the student presented his project, he appeared visibly anxious. Fashionista stood to the side of the student, providing encouragement, saying, "Take your time," "You got this." When the student finished the presentation, Fashionista affirmed the

student by providing gratitude for the student's courage and expressing that he, too, deals with anxiety.

In addition to connecting with the identities of Black youth in his classroom, to confirm the identities of Black youth today, Fashionista expressed that he employed practices that welcomed the languages of Black youth. Fashionista expressed that he was intentional about observing his students' behaviors, not to objectify them, but to create a space of understanding and establish practices to govern his classroom.

Because, if you listen to the conversations that they have amongst each other, like clock that tea, like, you know, that's their thing of like addressing, oh, that's on point! Like, yep, that's exactly what it is. Like, yep, girl, you got it right. Like, or whatever; however they engage with the conversation. When someone hits the target, I've noticed like, alright, snaps, and you know, those tapping of the fingers, those things acknowledge like, yeah, you're hitting it on the nose. Cool, so now I'm doing nonverbal, you know, gestures to show, yeah, you're hitting on the nose like, you know?

Fashionista's way of confirming his students' identities in the classroom was to adopt the nonverbal hand signals students used to communicate with each other as a way to establish practices governing classroom behavior. An example of Fashionista establishing practices to govern classroom behavior was through his adaptation of the "snapping of the fingers" he observed his students participating in. While observing Fashionista's class, I noticed he would snap his fingers whenever a student participated or supported a classmate with their work. During Fashionista's second interview, I inquired about this behavior and why Fashionista engaged in it. Fashionista stated, "snapping of the fingers is telling them that you're right on the point, you hit the target, like great job, like, you know, kudos to you." Finger-

snapping became a practice that served as positive reinforcement for student success and positive behavior in the classroom. Fashionista's implementation of finger-snapping confirmed his students' identities by recognizing it as a respected, authorized form of communication in the classroom.

Both Fashionista and Marva engaged in practices that incorporated Black languages and nonverbal hand signals to support Black youth in the classroom. Colloquialisms like “clock that tea,” used by Fashionista to connect with Black youth and support them in the classroom, are the type of colloquialisms Marva used with her students. In her initial interview, Marva describes adopting the languages and dialects of the Black youth she taught, as well as using modes of communication she observed among Black elders and educators growing up.

I tend to use colloquialisms; not all the time 'cause I am an English teacher, but I have a way of using nonverbal communication. The ways in which I grew up knowing from the elders and I'm able to communicate through proximity. I'm able to discern what the students might be experiencing and I give them space to be human because they are like, you know, because I am. And I try to connect to their experiences, while still simultaneously holding them accountable. So the way that I connect, I might give a look, a side eye and I don't have to say much 'cause who likes to be put on blast.

When asked during her final interview about the importance of Black youth being able to rationalize their identities and how they show up in the world, Marva professed that Black people are often treated differently than their counterparts in the world. Marva implied that Black youth may not have been taught they would be treated differently directly, but through their experiences and interaction with systems, they may have been taught it indirectly. Marva explains,

Okay, I'll start with this, there's already an understanding and whether black children have been taught this directly or indirectly what they've heard, there's an understanding that black people get treated differently and they probably felt that indirectly or directly.

We also have to understand we are not a monolith.

In addition to Marva's actions of allowing Black languages and dialects in the classroom, Marva's classroom decorations promoted a space that affirmed the identities of Black youth by showcasing posters with affirming language. Having posters with affirming language in her classroom created a space that confirmed her students' identities by reinforcing positive ideologies and empowering students to have autonomy over their education. On the left wall of the classroom, there was a poster that read "I accept myself for who I am and create peace, power, and confidence in my mind and heart." On the white board in front of the class were various posters that read "I am capable of learning new things", "I can try new strategies", "I can learn from mistakes", and "I can keep going when things are tough." Ultimately, Marva's use of affirming language posters throughout her classroom created a space that confirmed the identities of Black youth by allowing her students to express emotions, communicate how actions made them feel, and acknowledge their potential in the classroom.

Like Fashionista and Marva, Ms. Collier also adopted some of the languages of the Black youth in her classroom. Ms. Collier would often greet the students by saying "hey friend" or "hey twin". During one of her class periods, Ms. Collier went from desk to desk, greeting each student and asking how they were doing that day. Ms. Collier set intentions to support her students' feeling seen in the classroom and not "go under the radar" by connecting with each student individually and acknowledging them by name. When I asked Ms. Collier why she interacts with her students the way she does, she explained,

Why I do the things that I do, why I talk to the children the way I talk to the children, I want them to feel seen. That's the first thing that's very important for me. I think a lot of the times children will go under the radar if you let them. They'll sit right there and they'll just be a body in the room and I never enjoyed feeling like a body in the room. I wanted to feel like I mattered in the spaces that I took up. And so for me, even if it's one touch for the day, one comment for the day one, I saw you, I heard you, and I'm listening to you for the day. I've done my job, and I try to get to all of them multiple times if I can.

Ms. Collier's passion for supporting Black youth in her classroom stems not only from her 20 years of teaching and supporting Black youth in the past but also from her current interactions with Black youth today. During a conversation with her class, Ms. Collier inquired about the trajectory of their success and their belief in themselves. Her students' responses prompted self-reflection and a recalibration of how she could support Black youth in her classroom.

I asked the class, I said, how many of you all actually believe in yourselves? Like when you're trying to do stuff, like are able to tell yourself like, I believe I can do this. Two people raise their hands and it's 19 people in the class. Wow. Right. So, that spoke volumes to me where I was like, okay, so I clearly have been doing something wrong 'cause usually by the third month my kids know like, we can do anything. So I was like, maybe I haven't been setting this tone, right? We gonna set it right now. It's always a new day to start some new things, right? So for them I would say like, yeah, they're very like, they're kids.

Ms. Collier, like Edward Taul, implemented identity-confirming practices by investigating how her students saw themselves and their beliefs around their ability to achieve. Ms. Collier's way of confirming the identities of her students was by investigating the beliefs of her students. Ms.

Collier's awakening to set a different tone and outlook for her students motivated her to explore alternative ways to connect with them. Ms. Collier's passion to ensure her students felt seen required her to do a deep dive into her practices in how she chooses to show up for students so that they may show up for themselves. When asked how she connects with her students to build this rapport of them feeling seen, Ms. Collier responded,

So I always have to find ways to make things relatable and connectable for kids. I need you to be able to go, you know what, she sees me and because she sees me, I feel myself in this class. I feel like I belong in this space. And it's not always just the numbers, right? Sometimes it's like, oh, you like that artist I like, oh, you like that show I like, oh, you be watching that show, Ms. Collier? I do watch that show, did you see that new documentary? I did see that. Did you check it out? Hey, you should watch this I know you like this. You should watch this; just finding and learning about them and then applying that on a regular basis.

All four participants adopted practices that supported how Black youth expressed their identities and showed up in the world. Edward used the start of his class to check in with his students and allow them class time to express themselves. Fashionista, Marva, and Ms. Collier adopted practices that welcomed the languages of Black youth in the classroom, sometimes using those languages to connect with their students. In addition to welcoming the languages of Black youth in the classroom, Ms. Collier set intentions to get to know her students and their beliefs about themselves and their achievements.

Community

When teachers view teaching as a communal and collaborative effort, they build space for Black youth to flourish and succeed in schools. The third a priori category (see Table 4.1),

community, is aligned with the third lens of the Black restorative practices' conceptual framework. Teachers in this study built community with their students in the classroom by being authentic, genuine, and transparent. Teachers described transparency as a tool for building a communal learning environment. Also, teachers built a community among the students in their classroom by arranging desks in groups to foster classroom collaboration.

A practice that teachers participated in to build community was showcasing transparency and authenticity to their students. Teachers expressed that Black youth appreciate transparency and that it encourages students to operate with transparency and authenticity in the classroom. For example, Edward described what he loved most about teaching as getting students to that “aha” moment. When I asked Edward how he gets students to that moment, he responded, “being transparent.” Edward further explained, “I tell my kids I'm sorry when I'm wrong. I am self-correcting. I'm very self-reflecting.” Also, Edward expressed that being honest was a communal gift to his students. Edward adopted the practice of being transparent to set the tone that honesty was welcomed in the space and their identities, experiences, and knowledge were welcomed too. When describing how he builds community in the classroom, Edward responded,

So my communal gift that I can give to my kids is being available, being honest. I don't wear dress shoes just to let kids always know, man, this is where I'm from. They're like, man, where you get them J's from? Like, this is where I'm from, this is who I am and I'm not interested in fitting into anyone's box or mold to make someone feel comfortable and neither should you. Like education helps you break the mold and helps you break your own rules. But also part of me building community, don't you break my rules.

Transparency in building a communal learning environment was a consistent practice among most teachers. Like Edward, Fashionista expressed how students appreciate transparency

from their teachers. Also, like Edward, Fashionista explains that having similar fashion choices draws his students' attention, allowing him to build community in the classroom as well. Transparency and sometimes fashion choices became a practice for Fashionista to make connections with his students, and the beginning of building a communal learning environment for both his students and himself. When I asked Fashionista why it was important to have transparency to build community with Black youth, he responded,

I think students love the real, they love the transparency, they love someone that they can relate to. And you know, me being my black self and sometimes wearing the same clothes like you or the same shoes that, you know, one of my students, that's an automatic connection there. You know, if I didn't believe in who I was or the things that I like, we probably wouldn't be able to identify, you know, in that space.

Like Edward's and Fashionista's practices of being transparent with students, Marva emphasized the importance of being authentic in creating a communal learning environment for her students. During her final interview, Marva stated "to feel comfortable in a space you have to welcome authenticity, and you have to model what that looks like." Not only is it important to be authentic, but teachers must also model the behaviors they expect of their students.

Another practice shown by teachers to create a communal learning environment for Black youth was demonstrated by their classroom arrangements. During observations, I noted that every classroom space was set up so that each student worked as part of a pair or a group. During the second round of semi-structured interviews, I inquired about the way each teacher had their classroom space set up. Edward and Marva described how their space was set up to promote community and collaboration amongst their students.

So our, the space inside of our school community is connected to us having like grouping tables, even how they're angled together that they're made to fit, like puzzle pieces. I think that's a really great thing because I think that collaboration is really important.

Edward Taul

So, I arranged it this way, and initially I had it in an amphitheater type style where it was like, round, kind of like a U where the teacher was in center, right? And that was in the beginning to highlight like, you know the lessons that'll be taking place and to establish that, you know, this is your introduction to this class and these are the things you're gonna be learning. But, I then move the desks to have them facing each other because that, then encourages collaboration and working together; same thing, collaboration.

Marva

In addition to arranging desks in groups and pairs to build community and encourage collaboration, Marva inquired about students' life experiences and worked to connect those experiences to class discussions. To build community for the students in the classroom, Marva believed that students must know the teacher cares. When asked about how she builds community in the classroom with Black youth, Marva responded,

I build community through having conversations asking students about their lives about, you know, about how they're feeling. A lot of text to life connections. I use, in my history class specifically, I connect it back to real life all the time. I highlight the importance of an education and having an education where we've been, so when I connect it to life, they know that I care and that builds community.

Although Marva built community by inquiring about the life experiences of Black youth, other teachers, like Fashionista and Ms. Collier, began each school year by establishing relationships

and building community with their students through role-playing and implementing icebreaker activities in their curricula. Role-playing and icebreaker activities were used as a practice of getting students to get to know each other in the classroom, but also as a way for the teachers to learn and understand their students. During their interviews, Fashionista and Ms. Collier explain why they implement role-playing and icebreaker activities at the beginning of the school year.

And I always like to role play depending on, you know, where we are in the year. So, you know, in the beginning of the year, I do a lot of community building. So I would say, hey, I need two students to act out someone is trying to get a pencil with a purple eraser, but there's only one purple eraser and boom, they have a fallout. What does that look like, you know? Hey, right there that didn't, you know, work out too well. You see that they got into it, they're over upset about a pencil here. This is how we can do it.

Fashionista

I like to do in the beginning of the year, I like to do a lot of icebreakers, I like to do a lot of just like getting to know you activities. I allow students to choose who they wanna partner with group with. Sometimes I'm intentional about the group because, maybe a couple months in, I've learned everybody, right? I know them all and I'm like, that personality would pair really well with that one. It was just crazy because in my first period class, they figured it out on their own. Everybody got a buddy; I ain't gotta tell nobody who to go to, they all got a buddy.

Ms. Collier

In addition to getting to know the students in their classrooms, some teachers believed it was important for their students to get to know who they were beyond being their teacher. A practice that Marva and Fashionista developed to build community in their classrooms was to be open

about their identities and to allow students to ask questions about them. Both teachers described their process of building community with their students by welcoming inquiries about their personal lives.

To eliminate any, it's like to demystify any...kids wanna know more about their teacher. Right? So sometimes even when I speak, the first thing that they say when I first open up my class in the beginning of the year is, where are you from, right? They ask me questions and I notice that kids like mystery, right? They wanna figure it out. They tend to kind of tune out when a teacher is like, yeah, and I'm from here and I'm, they tell 'em the whole life story first day. The kids are like, okay. Right? And so I put little things up and if they wanna ask, that forces them to ask and I'm, it's like I want, I encourage them to ask questions, right?

Marva

One thing I've always been an advocate for is just autonomy and allowing voice like, you know, immediately when I came in, I was already myself. I don't mind kids asking me questions about, you know, my sexuality or my sexual preference, just for them to understand exactly how to address me, you know? Just being an open book. I told them my story as, you know, a young adult now and as a ninth grader, you know, and we were able to just relate on a lot of things. Oh, Mr. Fashionista, I'm, you know, I lived here, or, you know, my parent knows you, you went to school with my parents. So it was just like the connections was already being made, and we were just like fostering those relationships. So whatever you knew already about me, you know, because I probably went to school with their parent, or just from me telling you who I am and where I come from.

Teachers adopted the practice of allowing students to ask questions about teachers' identities to give students autonomy in the classroom and encourage them to be willing participants in the communal learning environment. A practice Ms. Collier developed in her classroom to build community was to serve as a mediator and advocate for her students when disagreements arose.

Because I'm big on like leading with kindness and leading with love. And so I think also building community a part of that for me is like, standing up for my students, right? Like when it's another student, that has wronged them; it's like, hey, hey, you know that that was not okay. You know? And then like having a private conversation with that kid a little later. I might have to say something in front of the class to stop it in the moment but there's always like a follow up in terms of like, hey, do you know that you did harm to our community in this way? Like, this is how you negatively impacted a member of our community and how are we going to rectify that?

Overall, each teacher created a communal learning environment for Black youth by being transparent and open about their life experiences, allowing students to be active participants in the teaching and learning process, and being advocates or mediators between students when conflict arises. Through advocacy teachers worked to build a rapport with students that students could trust their teachers to protect them with at school.

Protection

When teachers exercise cultural competence and acknowledge cultural differences to understand student behavior before implementing punitive consequences, they engage in practices that protect Black youth in the classroom. The fourth a priori category, protection, is aligned with the fourth lens of the Black restorative practices' conceptual framework. Teachers

in this study exhibited protective practices in their interactions with Black youth and alternative methods for addressing student behavior in the classroom.

Lack of protection in the classroom for Black youth could cause Black youth to distance themselves from school and have a lack of interest in what is going on in the classroom. Fashionista and Edward both discussed practices that worked to get to the root of students' behaviors and understand how to support them before imposing consequences. To protect students from misdiagnosis of their behavior, both Edward and Fashionista discussed how they approach understanding a student's behavior to offer guidance on navigating the classroom space.

So it's like understanding, like it's okay to have a rough day. It's okay to say, hey, Mr. Fashionista today I'm not doing nothing. I don't feel like it, cool. And I'll let them, I'll give them that grace, you're sleepy, cool. You're hungry? Understand, here you go. And it's like really checking the boxes and understanding like, hey, although we're going through these things, these things cannot stop you from your day to day.

Fashionista

Students are not safe, they don't feel like this is a great place for me to learn. And they start, you know, distancing; and that distancing can be in a lot of different ways. They can be disruptive, they can start falling asleep in class, they start talking to friends and so on and so on. But if they're, if you're providing space for them to be safe, then they're gonna go out of their way to engage in the lesson because they know that the risk level of them not feeling safe has been reduced.

Edward

Fashionista's ability to understand students before imposing a consequence for their behavior was observed during a class period when he called out the behavior of two female students. While a male student was reading out loud, Fashionista looked over at the two young ladies and asked them to stop. One young lady responded to express that she was not talking. Fashionista responded, stating that he knew, but that they were playing around. Fashionista asked the student to move to another table to do work. The young lady became visually frustrated and upset and mumbled under her breath. Fashionista asked the student to go outside the classroom with him to have a conversation. The two stepped out and returned approximately three minutes later, smiling and laughing together.

Like Fashionista, Marva also implemented practices of protection when interacting with students in her classroom. For example, during a class observation, I saw Marva offer students the option to get a drink of water or step outside the classroom for a five-minute breather when they were not participating in class or becoming disruptive to their classmates. During an interview, I inquired why Marva took these measures rather than sending her students to the office or giving them a write-up. Marva discussed how she empathized with her students and their experiences before imposing a consequence for their behavior. Marva explained, "If I know that you're going through something, then I'm gonna acknowledge that because you're human first, but know you still are accountable for this, this, and this."

To protect Black youth from disengaging in lessons while promoting a safe learning environment, Edward explained that he listened to students to understand their position in society. Edward discussed how culturally Black youth don't feel safe or believe they have anyone that they can talk to. Students are experiencing several factors in life that teachers may

not account for in school, so when teachers are working to protect students, they should allow space for students to be heard.

And it comes with not a lot of advice, it just comes with just listening. I've found through time that kids feel very unheard and it's a scary place to be as you are walking into this, this, this stage of adulthood and no one wants to listen to you. You are dealing with the pressures of social media, you are watching a political climate that is violent, you are watching a president that is told the world that you make the capital city unsafe. These kids need people to talk to. They're there, there's an albatross that hangs on their neck sometime, and that's why I think that often they wear all black clothes and consistently have their hood over their head because it's a walking depression that they're in.

Edward

As another act of protection, teachers like Marva implemented practices that demonstrated cultural competence to understand student behavior before initiating disciplinary action. For example, while observing one of Marva's classes, there was an incident where a male student came to class with headphones on and visibly refused to do any work or respond to the teacher. Marva provided three opportunities for the student to participate or go to the hallway to take a minute to collect himself before recommending that the student go to the hallway to collect himself. During Marva's second interview, she expressed that she understood the student had a hard time emotionally when things happened outside of the classroom because it was a pattern. Marva explained that she wanted to provide the student the opportunity to participate in class without the threat of punishment. Marth expressed that she would have a follow-up conversation with the student and a phone conversation with the mom to discuss expectations

and how disheartening it was for the student to show her, as his teacher, disrespect. When I asked Marva why provide the opportunity to a student who is showing disrespect, she responded.

But I look at it like, I don't see my children, my students as broken. I see them as young people who have so many gifts and they are so deserving of having the exposure that's gonna help them unearth those gifts. And if they don't unearth those gifts, they tend to be, that's when you get people who are lost, right? That's when they start following the stereotype because they're trying to figure out like who they are. So for me it's really important to like to present them with alternatives, you know, or just remind them of the alternatives.

Marva's way of providing protection to her students in the classroom was by understanding where her students were emotionally and finding alternative ways to address their behavior without implementing punitive measures. Marva's methods for providing protection through understanding her students' emotional intelligence are similar to Fashionista's protection practice of meeting students where they are in life and development. During an interview, Fashionista thoroughly explained that, in his work as a teacher, he must not force a student to be what he wants them to be, but should work to gauge their capacities and capabilities.

I feel like, in doing this teaching work, you can't show up and force the kids to be what you want them to be. You pretty much, you meet them where they are and then also stepping back from when the teacher had to be like, hey, I can put myself in your shoes. You know, I'm the same and I can only relate to certain things. So it's more relatable, I think, when we do things that are outside of what they're, you know, the normalcy is and kind of like it doesn't hit home, they're not able to make that personal connection. So if they see Kendrick Lamar or Drake, yeah, that's their favorite rapper, but also let's go

through these lyrics to, you know, annotate or really dissect what did he mean by these, these lyrics or this song, you know, stuff like that. So they're just able to make a personal connection. And I think that's, you know, meeting them where they at...

Yeah, I just feel like I can't say it enough, you have to definitely take the teacher hat off and understand where they are in the development stage. You have to understand their communities and where they come from, where they are intellectually, what they're already exposed to, and just really giving them space to express, to feel, to be like, you know, why are we doing this?

Like many other teachers, Ms. Collier adopted practices that acknowledge her students' cultural differences to protect them in the classroom. When students' temperaments are high and they become defensive, Ms. Collier works to redirect their behavior. She further explains that she recognizes her students need more understanding by the way they respond when redirected in the classroom.

I think because a lot of the times I can tell just based on the way they get so defensive very quickly, I can tell by the way they get upset very fast by redirection. And I mean, simplest thing of just like, hey, watch your language. Now you mad at me 'cause you cursed and I'm trying to understand how we got there. Or you got up and threw a pencil at somebody and all I asked you was, why did you throw that pencil?

Understanding how students exhibit certain behaviors in the classroom is a practice that Ms. Collier has adopted to stay culturally relevant. Ms. Collier emphasized staying culturally relevant with Black youth today as a way to connect with and protect them in the classroom. Ms. Collier protected students in her classroom by being intentional about how they express

themselves so they would not perceive their behaviors as negative but as part of their cultural practice. During her final interview, Ms. Collier discussed how she seeks to understand students' cultural practices, such as telling jokes, so as not to misjudge their intentions and to connect with them "no matter what".

And culturally relevant, depends on my demographic; my demographic is black and brown children. Majority black children, right? Very few brown, but a lot more black. For me it's like, I have to be in the know with what they're in the know with. I don't know if you're familiar with six seven; I'm sure you've heard the six seven joke by now. The kids go six, seven, and nobody knows what it actually means. I finally did the research on it. It's this joke the kids tell and you say the numbers and all of a sudden it's a whole riot for kids. They light up, they cracking up. It's this whole thing but like, I had to learn what that was because if you're talking about it, I need to know what it is because I need to be able to connect with you no matter what.

All participants described practices they employed that rationalized student behavior prior to implementing a punitive action against them. These practices include being understanding, providing a safe space where students can let down their defenses, and being culturally sensitive and relevant to the behaviors of Black youth in the classroom. In all, each teacher worked in their classroom to provide a space of protection for the Black youth they teach.

Cross Case Analysis

After analyzing the four embedded units of analysis, I conducted a within-case analysis of the four participants who demonstrated practices aligned with the Black restorative practices' conceptual framework. I used data from the responses of the four participants during the semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifacts noted during observations to develop themes. I

identified four themes connected to the a priori categories selected from the Black restorative practices' conceptual framework (i.e., healing, community, identity-confirming, and protection). Table 4.3 provides an overview of participants' contributions to thematic statements and descriptive codes.

Table 4.3 Cross-Case Themes Related to RQ 1

Thematic Statements	Participants	Descriptive Codes
1. Black educators describe the role the Arts (Black sitcoms, Music, Books, etc.) play in the development of Black youth and restoring their relationship with schooling.	Edward Marva Fashionista Ms. Collier	• Influence of Black Sitcoms • Music and Black youth identity development • Creative lesson plans using Black historical figures
2. Black educators describe employing acts of care and discipline as tools to connect with Black youth and restore their relationships with schooling. Acts of care and discipline include mutual accountability, allowing autonomy, and redirection.	Edward Marva Fashionista Ms. Collier	• Providing space to share feelings • Remaining calm and understanding • Engaging in active listening • Provide instruction or knowledge • Opportunities for self-governance

In this section, I discuss cross-case themes related to the research question and conceptual framework. Throughout the section, I provide data examples across participants, data sources, and embedded units of analysis to support the within-case themes. I discuss the following within-case themes: Black educators' use of the arts to support the restoration of Black youth's relationship with schooling; Black educators' use of care and discipline to support Black youth in schools.

When answering the central question: How do Black teachers' classroom practices center Blackness in restorative justice practices, reinforcing Black students' identities, and helping to restore Black students' relationships to schooling, two major themes arise. Collectively, participants discussed the influence the Arts (Black Sitcoms, Poets, etc.) had on them as Black youth growing up, and how the Arts can support Black youth today. The second theme was this idea of balancing care and discipline to support Black youths' relationship with schooling.

1. Black educators describe the role the Arts (Black sitcoms, Music, Books, etc.) play in the development of Black youth and restoring their relationship with schooling.
2. Black educators describe care and discipline as a tool to connect with Black youth and restore their relationships with schooling. Acts of care and discipline include accountability, autonomy, and redirection.

Theme 1: Influence of Black Arts in supporting Black youth

The first major theme that surfaced during the interviews was the role the arts played in the development of Black youth and how they show up in the classroom. Marva described how music from Black artists such as Nas and Lauryn Hill, along with Black media and films such as Reading Rainbow, Roots, and 'A Different World', played a major role in her development growing up. Those interactions with Black media evoked curiosity for her as a Black youth, which she believes is missing from the lives of Black youth today. Marva connects getting Black youth invested in learning to learning about themselves and believes the missing piece is the lack of positive Black media influences and recognition of African cultural practices, such as observing the African holiday of Kwanzaa.

I think in order to, for kids to be invested in learning, they have to be invested in learning about themselves. It's to evoke curiosity, first and foremost, the kind of curiosity that we, uh, were encouraged to have through the music that we listened to from Nas and Lauryn Hill to Reading Rainbow, to seeing Roots come on all of the time, 'A Different World';

and the themes that came up on that show, like those are the things that were immersed in our culture naturally. And we had older parents, so that was, we had older teachers.

Those things were emphasized more. It was treated more delicately, where even the celebration of Kwanzaa that was seen all over the place in the nineties.

Marva explained that the arts play a major role in the identity of Black Americans, shaping how they show up and see themselves in the world. Marva expressed that Black Americans are often described as not having culture. Marva believed that Black Americans were resilient in how they forged their own paths to prosperity under the scrutiny of whiteness. Marva described how it is important for Black youth to see themselves in the essence of Blackness, to not be influenced by stereotypical behaviors seen on television and perverted interpretations of music. Marva explained,

So when you take away the orchestra, the art classes, when you pervert our music, when you change the imagery so that instead of seeing the Cosbys and 'A Different World,' seeing images that made us want to go to college, that made us want to have a beautiful black family and a beautiful home. Not in the gaze of whiteness, but just like, nah that's the essence of blackness. You see black art on the wall when you change that and you pervert it to make it into something that's stereotypical, to make it something that's like watch, you know, baddies, they know exactly what they're doing. They know exactly how to, how to degrade our identity, how to take away our sense of pride, and they're doing it with the next generation through the music.

Like Marva, Ms. Collier believes the arts are important to keeping Black youth interested in learning and attentive in school. Ms. Collier details the influence that Black media's portrayal of Black educators had on her as she was growing up. Seeing Black sitcoms like 'Hanging with

Mr. Cooper' and 'The Steve Harvey Show' and Black films like 'Marva Collins Story' and 'Eastside High' gave her purpose and direction. Ms. Collier describes how the actors in these films portrayed Black educators who wanted to support the underserved and provide a space that balanced care and discipline. Ms. Collier explained,

I had a lot of representations of black educators that I could look at and go, that's something that I could model, that's something I could be like, that's an inspiration for me. 'Hanging with Mr. Cooper,' The Steve Harvey Show,' there's a movie called the 'Marva Collins Story', Joe Clark; like I could go on and on, right? But it's like we had these things where it was like, oh, this movie shows you this educator that while they might seem a little militant or they might seem this, their purpose is clear. Their direction is clear, they want the best for these people who are underserved, right? And misrepresented or underrepresented, they want to do something differently. And yes, they found a balance of care and discipline.

In addition to growing up with influences from Black media and film, Ms. Collier discusses how incorporating music into her course materials has supported her in supporting Black youth in the classroom. Ms. Collier used music to connect with Black youth and support them in learning math in the classroom. Ms. Collier explained that she writes math raps to connect with Black youth and make learning culturally relevant.

So music is one way, right? I actually make math raps for kids. I found myself playing them quite often this year; I never used to play 'em in class. That's the crazy part, like it is a whole separate entity for me that I do online, I'm actually relaunching it next week; like a whole nother level, like professionally shot everything. But for me I try to make everything as culturally relevant as possible, right?

Music is also a tool Fashionista uses to connect with his students and have them invested and interested in learning. To get students engaged in the lesson, Fashionista would use song lyrics by Black rap artists like Tupac Shakur and have students analyze them. At times, students were able to connect rap lyrics back to their lives and discuss how the music resonated with their experiences. Fashionista explains how he encourages his students to tap into their emotions with inspirational rap lyrics. Fashionista describes how he guides students through an activity in which they analyze rap lyrics.

What do you hear? What, what resonates with you? And they're able to like pick out and then, then we're tapping into the emotion. We're tapping into listening to music. That's like helping you come out of whatever dark spot you're in, whatever, you know, we don't want to hear anything that's talking about killing, shooting, and violence.

Like Marva and Ms. Collier, Edward describes how shows such as Sesame Street influenced his development as a Black youth. Shows like Sesame Street increased Edward's love of education and provided guidance on how he approaches his lessons today. Edward explains how he incorporates the animation (colors, music, sounds, and jokes) portrayed in Sesame Street in his lessons. Having a colorful lesson has been a way for Edward to connect with his students and build a positive teacher-student relationship.

Oh, this is easy, I'm a Sesame Street kid, I am a kid that was on Sesame Street at one time and grew up loving Sesame Street. I love the colors, the music, the sounds, the jokes, and that's even to the point of how I attack lessons. My lessons are colorful, there's stories, there's games; They're all the things that made me fall in love with education. And I think because of that, that's why I believe my students and I have such a great relationship.

Adding imagery to his lessons was a way Edward influenced the restoration of Black youth's relationships with schooling. Edward's colorful lessons provided a space where students could dream and believe in themselves. Edward believed Black youth's imaginations had been stripped from them by society and by what they may see on social media. By providing colorful lesson plans, Edward is able to invest in Black youth and restore their will to dream. Edward explains,

I think that's a, that's a callback to what Sesame Street gave kids and what I try to give kids, I try to give kids the power back of their imagination. Yeah, I'm teaching you the Constitution and Amendments, but what happens if you were running your own country? How would you build out these things? That to me is what learning really is. Where does the next great inventor come from? It comes from imagination through knowledge. Let me give you back your imagination. That unfortunately has been taken away from you, from a cell phone, a IG, a TikTok. Let me give you back the things that make you unique, especially for black kids. Let me give you back your vibranium.

Edward further explained how he tries to make learning fun, much like the Black Panther Party did for Black youth back in the 1970s. Edward explained, "We think back to the Black Panther Party and how they taught Black children. It's always in song and rhythm and rhyme and color and thought." Black teachers like Edward correlated creating a safe space for Black youth in the classroom to envisioning learning as a colorful, fun, interactive space that opened Black youths' imaginations.

Overall, the influence of Black arts in educating Black youth presented a space where Black youth could feel empowered, inspired, and liberated. Many teachers expressed that popular culture and social media have had a negative impact on Black youth socially,

emotionally, and academically, so it was important to draw on Black arts and media to promote more positive images of Black youth and success. Promoting positive images through Black arts gives Black youth the ammunition to dream and imagine themselves beyond their current circumstances. Incorporating Black arts in the classroom provides a space where Black youth can be inspired and have aspirations for something different. Showcasing the Black arts in education today promotes an urban experience that is not relishing in poverty.

Theme 2: Balancing care and discipline when supporting Black youth

Another major theme that surfaced during this study was how teachers balanced care and discipline to support Black youth in the classroom. While observing teachers in the classroom, I noticed that students had the autonomy to participate in class in ways that supported their learning styles. For example, while observing Edward's class on two separate occasions, I noticed how students had the autonomy to interrupt the teacher during class time without the threat of punishment. One day, I observed a young male student answering his phone during class and walking in and out of the classroom. At one point, the student came back in with food. However, once the student was settled in his seat, he opened his laptop and began actively participating in class, answering questions and helping other classmates. There was another instance in class when a young female student was talking on the phone at the start of class. The young lady stopped the teacher and informed him that a parent wanted to talk to them. The student walked over to Edward and stated to the person on the phone, "because you not about to have me looking crazy." Edward responded, "I am in the middle of teaching right now." The student said goodbye to the person on the phone, walked to their desk, took out their laptop, and began actively participating in class.

During his interview, I inquired about the dynamics of students having, as it appeared to me, autonomy in how they show up in class. Edward responded,

Oftentimes just inside of various school communities, students are overly managed.

They're not allowed to walk into this 17, 18-year-old transition with this feeling of, okay,

I now understand what it's like. I now understand what it means to manage these things. I

do it and go here, you know, if you mess up, it's on you. But do know I gave you the

supports to be successful? Like you cannot say I failed because of Dr. Taul. You can say

I failed because I poorly manage these freedoms.

That's something that happens; understanding that allows me to give kids the necessary

empathy they have and not really be in their business. Like I, they trust me and I trust

them to know that they can make the right decisions and not take advantage of the

autonomy that they, that I give them. And they also know that there's an expectation for

them to still do their work.

Providing students with empathy is a practice that each teacher exhibits in their classrooms.

Providing empathy in the classroom became a practice used to support Black youth and prevent

Black teachers from becoming offended or feeling disrespected by their students'

behavior. Empathy became a tool that allowed Black teachers to put into perspective how their

actions might affect or provoke certain behavior in their students. For example, Fashionista

discussed allowing students autonomy to express their grievances with him if they believed he

mistreated them.

And then I'll also let 'em tell me about myself. You know, if they were like, Mr.

Fashionista, I felt like you did too much; or, you know, I'm like, okay, well I'm doing too

much because I, what, I know you care Mr. Fashionista, but I'm already dealing with other stuff and you, you know, this, that, and third.

Like Edward and Fashionista, Marva also exhibited practices that allowed Black youth to have autonomy in her classroom. For example, while observing Marva's class, I noticed students had autonomy in the classroom during her interaction with one male student. While making observations, a male student had his head on his desk, wearing a hoodie and headphones. Marva walked over to the student, gently tapped him on the shoulder, and asked about his work. Marva asked if the young man wanted to get a drink of water and affirmed to him that he was making good progress on his work. Marva stated, "see you've completed step one, so let's see what we need to do for step two." While standing next to the student, Marva pointed to his work to show him his progress and encouraged him to keep working. The student picked up his pencil, opened his book, and continued with his work.

During the interaction with the young male student, Marva exercised care by exercising patience with the student, reinforcing positive feelings about the progress the student was making on their work, and providing direction on how the student could reengage with his schoolwork. Marva exercised discipline by holding the student to the expectation that they must complete their work and encouraging them to keep working. Marva expressed that building community in the classroom involved creating a safe space for students while holding them accountable. Marva explained,

To build community is to create a safe space. So I can be stern and firm and hold kids accountable and still say, okay sweetheart, let's get it together. That nurturing piece, which some people might vibe with, some people don't. I just do it because that's a natural thing that creates a community where students feel like, okay, this person cares,

this person shows up as their authentic self; therefore, I can show up as my authentic self.

Marva's commitment to balancing care and discipline with her students was evident in how she nurtured and supported them through their work in the classroom. Marva believed that balancing care and discipline in the classroom was a way to create a community in the classroom where students felt cared for.

Like Marva, Ms. Collier employed care and discipline when responding to an altercation in the classroom between a male and a female student. While observing Ms. Collier's class, a male and a female student engaged in an altercation that became physical. Ms. Collier was standing outside the classroom door at the initial start of the altercation, but immediately rushed in once she heard the commotion. Ms. Collier separated the two, sending the female student to the hallway for a discussion and asking the male student to wait in the classroom until she returned. The male student immediately began to plead their case, and Ms. Collier responded, "I'm not saying you're in trouble; I'm saying I need to have a conversation with you both to understand what happened." After speaking with the female student, Ms. Collier returned to the classroom, listened to the male student's side of the story, and offered the student advice on how to avoid further altercations.

Although a major disruption occurred in her classroom, Ms. Collier exercised care and discipline before taking punitive action against the students. Ms. Collier exhibited patience and compassion with both students by remaining calm and allowing both students to share their feelings about the situation. Furthermore, Ms. Collier demonstrated support for each student and fostered a non-judgmental environment that allowed both students to take accountability for their actions while learning to better manage their feelings and emotions in heightened situations.

Overall, Black teachers worked to create a safe classroom space for their Black youth by balancing care and discipline. Black teachers showed students that they can be heard in the classroom and that their needs can be met, but they are responsible for participating in class and completing their assignments. Black teachers approached disciplining Black youth with compassion by not overly managing them, allowing students to express their grievances to the teacher, and affirming them while holding them accountable.

Chapter 5: Findings Continued

Findings – Research Question 2

Answering Research Question Two.

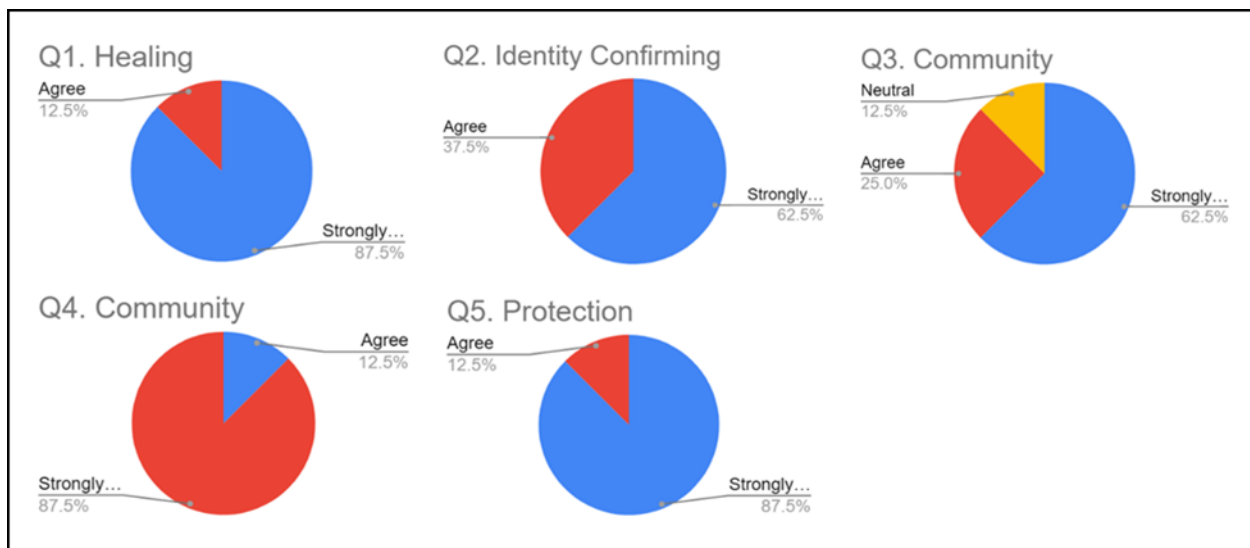
The secondary research question this study addressed was: How do Black high school students respond to the classroom practices of their Black teachers? A Likert-scale Exit Ticket was co-developed with teachers in the study, using categories from the Black restorative practices conceptual framework to guide the development of each question. Question one focused on how students perceived their teachers' practices as healing practices. Question two focused on how students perceived their teachers' practices as identity-confirming practices. Questions three and four focused on how students perceived their teachers' practices as promoting a communal learning environment. Question five focused on how students perceived their teachers' practices as fostering a space of protection in the classroom. Question six was an open-ended question that offered students an opportunity to express additional feelings about their classroom experiences with their teacher.

Across the five-item exit survey, students in Edward Taul's class ($n = 8$) generally reported positive perceptions of instructional practices (see Figure 5.1). Overall responses yielded a mean score of 4.75 ($SD = 0.49$) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), indicating favorable student perceptions. Regarding question one (healing-centered classroom practices), students reported positive perceptions of practices intended to create a healing space in the classroom. A significant number of students (100%), $n = 8$, selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." The mean response was 4.88 ($SD = 0.35$), suggesting favorable responses with low variability. Students' positive perceptions of healing practices were evident during a class discussion on Black businesses that once operated on Florida and New

York Avenues in Washington, DC. Edward spoke to his class about the riots that occurred in 1968, and students shared stories from their parents and grandparents, comparing what the neighborhood used to be to what it is now. For question two (identity-confirming classroom practices), students' responses indicated strong endorsement of practices that confirmed students' identities. A significant number of students (100%), $n = 8$, agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 4.63 ($SD = 0.52$), reflecting consistently positive perceptions with relatively low variability.

Regarding questions three and four (communal learning environment), student responses related to communal learning practices were consistent by item. For Question three, students indicated strong endorsement of practices that promote a communal learning environment. A large majority of students (87.5%) $n = 7$ agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 4.5 ($SD = 0.76$), indicating moderate variability in responses. For Question four, responses were also positive, with 100% of students ($n = 8$) agreeing or strongly agreeing. The mean score was 4.875 ($SD = 0.35$), indicating generally favorable perceptions of communal learning practices captured by the item. Students in Edward showed a strong sense of community. For example, during a class period, three male students began a friendly competition to see who could answer the most questions. All joked with each other about using study guides to answer questions in class. One male student stated, "chill out, this mine, I'm not even looking at what you shared," when talking to the other male students. All students praised one another when answering questions in class. For question five (protective classroom environment), students reported positive perceptions of practices designed to promote a sense of protection in the classroom. All students (100%) $n = 8$ agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 4.875 ($SD = 0.35$), suggesting positive perceptions with low variability.

Figure 5.1 Survey Responses from Edward Taul's 12th Grade US Government Class

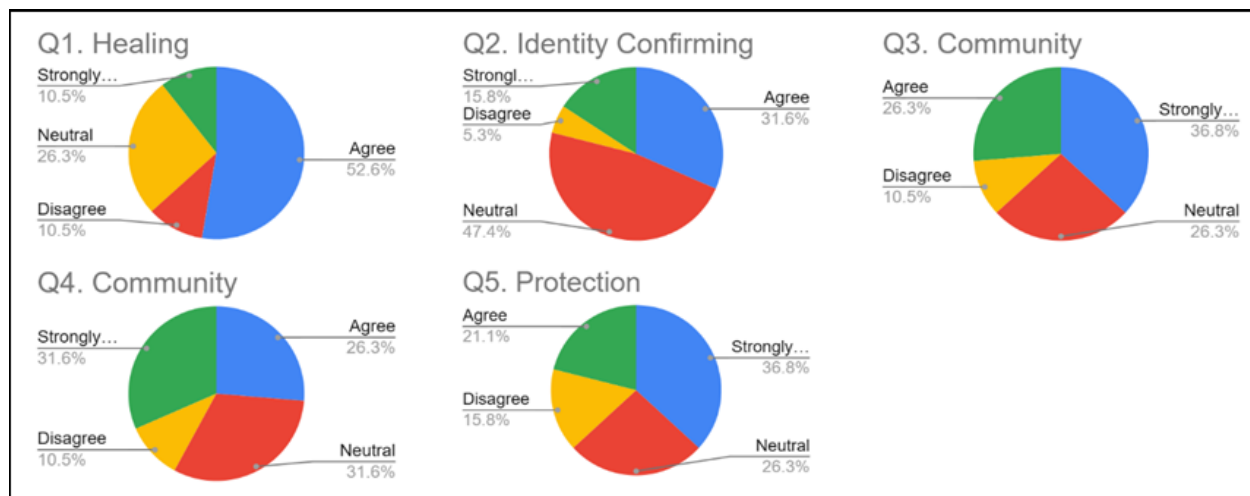


Across the five-item exit survey, students in Marva's class ($n = 19$) generally reported positive perceptions of instructional practices (see Figure 5.2). Overall responses yielded a mean score of 3.74 ($SD = 0.97$) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), indicating favorable student perceptions. Regarding question one (healing-centered classroom practices), students reported positive perceptions of practices intended to promote a space of healing in the classroom. Most students (63%) $n = 12$ selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." The mean response was 3.60 ($SD = 0.83$), suggesting generally favorable responses with moderate variability. For question two (identity-confirming classroom practices), student responses suggested mixed or less clearly formed perceptions, with 47% ($n = 9$) agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 47% ($n = 9$) selecting the neutral response. The mean score was 3.6 ($SD = 0.84$), indicating overall neutrality with moderate variability in responses. Although there were mixed perceptions in the student survey, I observed students responding positively to Marva's identity-confirming practices. During one class period, I observed a female student speaking with Marva about an assignment, and the student asked whether she should use "Black" or "African American" when describing her identity on her assignment. The two engaged in a

thoughtful conversation about the history behind why some people chose to identify as one rather than the other. The student smiled and responded firmly, “I’ll choose Black.” Marva assisted the student in understanding her Black identity.

Regarding questions three and four (communal learning environment), student responses related to communal learning practices were consistent by item. For question three, students indicated a positive endorsement of practices that promote a communal learning environment. The majority of students (63%), $n = 12$, agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 3.89 ($SD = 1.04$), indicating notable variability in responses. For question four, responses were also positive, with 58% of students ($n = 11$) agreeing or strongly agreeing. The mean score was 3.79 ($SD = 1.03$), indicating generally favorable perceptions of communal learning practices captured by item. Students showed favor for communal learning spaces during a class meeting, where Marva encouraged them to work together to read a passage and discuss its findings. Students clumped into groups, bounced ideas off one another, and debated various concepts noted in their reading. I observed four male students in a group discussing the passage they were reading. One leaned forward slightly, hands moving as he said, “Books are the backbone of society.” The other students laughed and gave their varying opinions about the statement. Seeing this interaction, I felt students favored working in a collaborative workspace. For question five (protective classroom environment), students also reported positive perceptions of practices designed to promote a sense of protection in the classroom. A majority of students (63%), $n = 12$, agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 3.79 ($SD = 1.13$), suggesting positive perceptions with notable variability.

Figure 5.2 Survey Responses from Marva's 10th Grade English Class

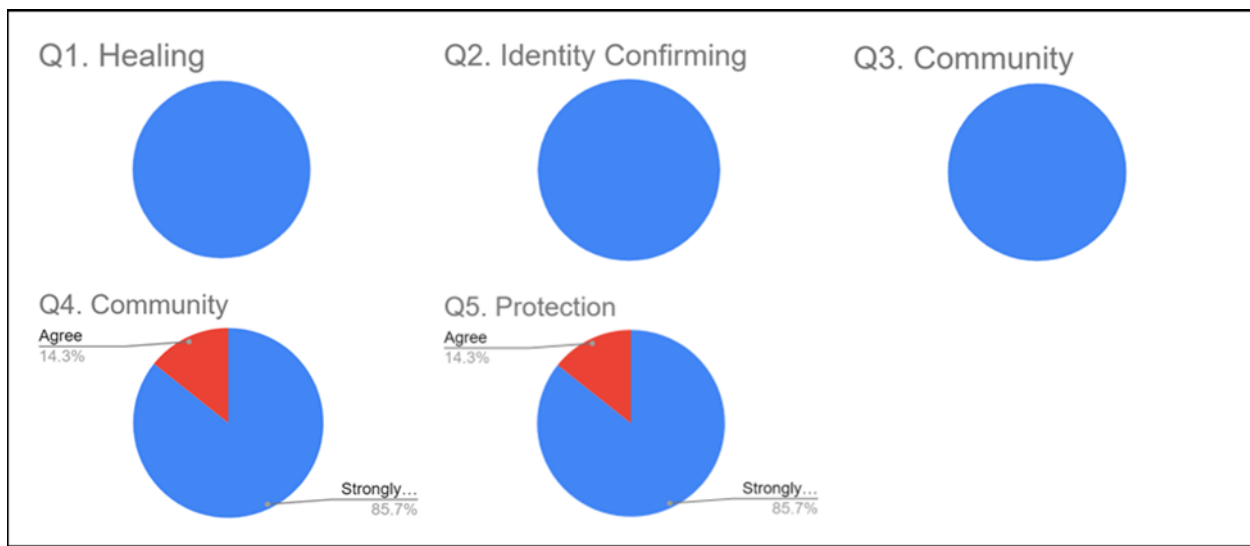


Across the five-item exit survey, students in Fashionista's class ($n = 7$) generally reported positive perceptions of instructional practices (see Figure 5.3). Fashionista received low survey response rates that are not representative of the number of students in his class ($n = 18$). Responses from Fashionista class were representative of the number of students who showed up for class on the day the survey was distributed, $n = 7$. Overall responses yielded a mean score of 4.94 ($SD = 0.24$) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to (Strongly Agree), indicating favorable student perceptions. Question one (healing-centered classroom practices). Students reported positive perceptions of practices intended to create a healing space in the classroom. A significant number of students ($n = 7$, 100%) selected "Strongly Agree." The mean response was 5 ($SD = 0$), indicating favorable responses with no variability. Question two (identity-confirming classroom practices). Student responses indicated strong endorsement of practices that affirm students' identities in the classroom. A significant number of students ($n = 7$, 100%) selected "Strongly Agree." The mean response was 5 ($SD = 0$), indicating favorable responses with no variability. I observed students' positive responses to Fashionista's identity-confirming practices during an exercise in which he had students write three positive

characteristics about themselves on sticky notes and post them around the classroom. Students participated in a gallery walk, reading each other's posted notes and smiling in amusement as if to confirm that what each had written about themselves was true.

Questions three and four (Communal learning environment). Student responses related to communal learning practices were consistent by item. For Question three, students indicated strong endorsement of practices that promote a communal learning environment. All students (100%) $n = 7$ strongly agreed. The mean score was 5 ($SD = 0$), indicating no variability in responses. For Question four, responses were also positive, with 100% of students ($n = 7$) agreeing or strongly agreeing. The mean score was 4.86 ($SD = 0.38$), indicating generally favorable perceptions of communal learning practices captured by item. I observed students in Fashionista's class participating in collaborative learning environments and assisting one another with in-class assignments. Students appeared readily available to support one another and offer encouragement to those who needed extra time on assignments. For example, one student offered encouraging words to a classmate while completing an in-class assignment, and Fashionista responded, "I like the encouragement, James." Question five (Protective classroom environment). Students also reported positive perceptions of practices designed to promote a sense of protection in the classroom. All students (100%) $n = 7$ agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 4.86 ($SD = 0.38$), suggesting positive perceptions with low variability.

Figure 5.3 Survey Responses from Fashionista's 9th Grade English Class

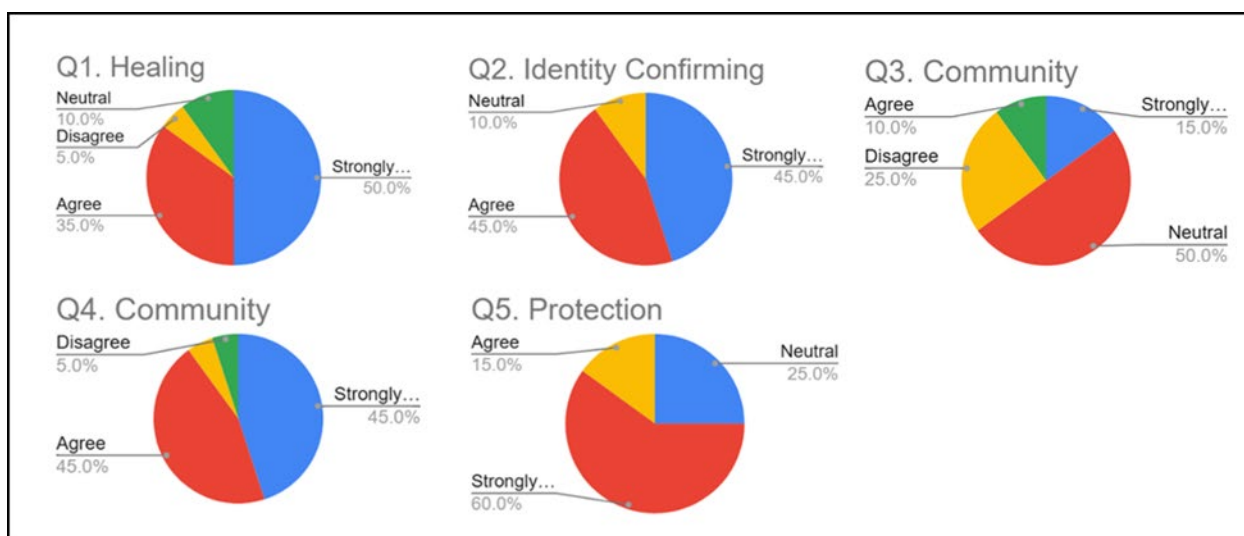


Across the five-item exit survey, students in Ms. Collier's class ($n = 20$) generally reported positive perceptions of instructional practices (see Figure 5.4). Overall responses yielded a mean score of 4.09 ($SD = 0.95$) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), indicating favorable student perceptions. Question one (healing-centered classroom practices). Students reported positive perceptions of practices intended to create a healing space in the classroom. Most students ($n = 17$, 85%) selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." The mean response was 4.30 ($SD = 0.86$), suggesting generally favorable responses with moderate variability. Question two (identity-confirming classroom practices). Student responses indicated strong endorsement of practices that confirmed students' identities. A large majority of students (90%), $n = 18$, agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 4.40 ($SD = 0.67$), reflecting consistently positive perceptions with relatively low variability. I observed students responding positively to Ms. Collier's identity-confirming practices during a class period. Ms. Collier called on a student to explain a problem on the board, and the student responded with the correct answer. Ms. Collier showed excitement by

clapping her hands and walking over to the student, “dapping” his hand. The student smiled with gratification and continued helping the teacher explain the other problems on the board.

Question three and four (communal learning environment). Student responses related to communal learning practices varied by item. For question three, half of the students (50%) selected the neutral response, suggesting mixed or less clearly formed perceptions. The mean score was 3.15 (SD = 0.99), indicating overall neutrality with notable variability in responses. For question four, responses were more positive, with 90% of students (n = 18) agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 4.30 (SD = 0.80), indicating generally favorable perceptions of communal learning practices captured by this item. Question five (protective classroom environment). Students also reported positive perceptions of practices designed to promote a sense of protection in the classroom. A majority students (75%) n = 15 agreed or strongly agreed. The mean score was 4.35 (SD = 0.88), suggesting positive perceptions with moderate variability.

Figure 5.4 Survey Responses from Ms. Collier's 9th Grade Algebra 1 Class



Cross-Case Analysis

Students felt most strongly, and most uniformly, about healing, identity-confirming, and protection practices, as reflected by high mean scores (≥ 4.20) and agreement from approximately four out of five students. Collectively, students reported positive perceptions across all dimensions (overall $M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.95$). However, **students expressed the strongest and most consistent positive perceptions** regarding classroom practices related to **healing, identity confirming, and protection**. In contrast, **one aspect of communal learning (Q3)** exhibited greater variability in student responses, indicating less consensus and more diverse student experiences in this area.

Responses to the research question: How do Black high school students respond to the classroom practices of their Black teachers? Overall, the results indicate that Black high school students respond positively and affirmatively to the classroom practices of their Black teachers, particularly in areas connected to healing, identity confirming, and protection. Across these dimensions, a substantial majority of students reported agreement or strong agreement, with high mean scores and relatively low variability, suggesting both strong endorsement and shared experiences amongst students. These patterns align with scholarship indicating that Black teachers often draw on culturally and racially affirming pedagogies that foster emotional safety, validation of identity, and care in the classroom. At the same time, the greater variation observed in one aspect of communal learning suggests that while students generally value these practices, their experiences of community-building may differ based on classroom context, instructional structures, or peer dynamics. Taken together, the findings suggest that Black teachers' classroom practices are largely experienced by Black students as supportive and affirming, while also highlighting areas where students' responses are more differentiated,

offering important insight into the complexity of student-teacher interactions within racially shared educational spaces.

Table 5.1 Strongest dimensions (highest means + high agreement counts)

1. Protection (Q5)

- Mean = 4.30, SD = 0.96
- **41 of 54 students** (76%) agreed or strongly agreed
- This dimension had the **highest mean score**, indicating strong overall endorsement, though with some variability.

2. Community – Item 4 (Q4)

- Mean = 4.28, SD = 0.90
- **44 of 54 students** (81%) agreed or strongly agreed
- High agreement and relatively low variability suggest this aspect of communal learning was widely experienced and positively perceived.

3. Healing (Q1)

- Mean = 4.24, SD = 0.89
- **44 of 54 students** (81%) agreed or strongly agreed
- This dimension reflects both strong endorsement and relatively consistent responses across students.

4. Identity-confirming (Q2)

- Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.83
- **42 of 54 students** (77%) agreed or strongly agreed
- Responses were positive and among the **least variable**, suggesting shared student perceptions.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Introduction

This embedded case study explored classroom practices implemented by Black teachers to restore the identities of Black youth in schools and their relationship with schooling. I used a single public charter high school in Washington, DC, that is a restorative justice implementing school, to investigate the practices of four Black teachers who teach Black high school students that may support their relationship with schooling. I collected data from all study participants through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and artifacts noted during the observations. I then used a hybrid thematic analysis, including both deductive and inductive codes, to analyze the data and answer the following central research question: How do Black teachers' classroom practices center Blackness in restorative justice practices, reinforce Black students' identities, and help restore Black students' relationships to schooling? In addition to data from each embedded case study, I collected Likert-scale survey responses from students in each participant's classroom to answer the secondary research question: How do Black high school students respond to the practices of their Black teachers?

In the next section, I share how the findings from this study align with or differ from previously presented literature. I also discuss the broader meanings and significance of my findings. I present the four key findings from this study and share how the themes confirm, challenge, or extend the literature review in Chapter Two. The literature discusses how Black teachers have created spaces of healing and restoration for Black youth by creating spaces that “engage in anti-linguistic racism” (Jackson, 2020, p.443), where teachers create communal learning spaces where students collaborate on social learning activities (Banwo, 2023), and center the history and culture of communities of African descent (Banwo, 2023; Jackson, 2020;

Johnson et al., 2017). The findings in this study align with the literature, with teachers in this study supporting Black youth in the classroom by creating communal learning spaces, centering the lived experiences of the Black youth they support, and embracing cultural pluralism in their classrooms.

Theme 1 Literature Connection: Shared Description of Healing

Black teachers in this study described healing practices as practices that incorporated the lived experiences of Black youth, influential figures in Black history, and the history of Black people in the United States and Africa. They worked to understand and teach from the lived experiences of Black youth. These findings align with previous research that discusses how spaces of healing are designed around the lived experiences of Black students (Jackson, 2020). Black teachers in my study described how they considered Black students' commutes to and from school, experiences at home, and interactions with society when discussing classroom lessons. Findings are also aligned with previous literature describing how Black teachers model new ways of being for Black youth by acknowledging their struggles in navigating a white-dominant world (Givens et al., 2016; De Royston et al., 2017). For example, Edward and Marva created spaces of healing by connecting their lessons to the lived experiences of Black youth and acknowledging the traumas they experienced outside of the classroom.

My findings extended the work of Banwo (2023), who discussed how Black educators created spaces of healing by incorporating images of historical Black figures in their classroom decorations. Black teachers in my study not only incorporated historical Black figures into their classroom decorations but also included current prominent Black figures, photos of their personal familial lineages, and images of Black fraternal organizations established in the United States. All four teachers had posters of Black historical figures on the classroom walls to remind

Black youth of the rich history of Black Americans in the United States and of the potential to connect to that lineage. Displaying images of various prominent Black figures in the classroom showcased to Black youth the endless possibilities in the trajectory of their future and helped to combat negative images and ideologies of Black people in the United States.

Furthermore, the findings extended the work of Jackson (2020), Banwo (2023), and Johnson et al. (2017), which discussed how Black educators created spaces that helped Black youth understand their histories and personal traumas by centering the histories and cultures of communities of African descent. Not only did Black teachers in my study help Black youth understand their histories by centering the history of communities of African descent, but they also used this opportunity to strengthen their lessons and support Black youth with learning course materials. For example, Edward discussed the rich history of his family, who were from Malta, and their connection to the Statue of Liberty. Marva would often give mini-lessons about Africa to her English class to help them learn new vocabulary. Helping Black youth understand the history of Black Americans enabled the teachers in my study to guide their students in approaching learning in a liberated, connected way that embraced cultural pluralism and equity.

Ultimately, the findings in this study revealed that healing practices are not so much about restoring or mending Black youth as about believing in and affirming their inherent goodness and ability to learn. Healing practices in this study were used as a tool to unlock Black youths' potential to engage in learning that is complementary to how they see the world and themselves in it. All four teachers discussed ensuring that the Black youth they taught learned and understood the history of Black Americans, how Black history connects to their position in society, and how understanding Black history is part of their journey.

Theme 2 Literature Connection: Shared Description of Identity Confirming

Black teachers in this study described identity-confirming practices as performing daily check-ins with students to assess their feelings and emotions, using expressive language to connect with Black youth, and being intentional in building a strong teacher-student rapport. Black teachers in the study checked in with their students to assess how they were feeling and to create space for them to express their emotions without the risk of school disciplinary practices that could result in their removal from the classroom. Black teachers in this study began their classes by asking their students how they were feeling and supported them in processing situations that had occurred before class. Identity-confirming practices exhibited by Black teachers in this study served as a means of mitigating potential disruptive behavior in the classroom.

Findings extended the literature that discussed cultural sustaining practices as practices that sustain the cultural and linguistic aptitude of communities of color (Paris, 2012) and literature that discussed how Black educators illuminate Black cultural practices and languages to adopt a classroom philosophy where Black youth can exist freely without being persecuted (Jackson, 2020). Not only do Black teachers allow the use of Black languages in the classroom, but they also adopt those languages as a means for connecting with Black youth. Also, the findings extended the literature on how teachers work in collaborative and reciprocal relationships with their students to support and sustain students culturally, linguistically, and racially (Baker-Bell, 2020; Greene, 2024; Foster, 1997; Jackson, 2020). Black teachers described listening to the languages Black youth would use in conversation between one another and adopting some of those languages when communicating with Black youth in the classroom. Schools are places where teachers transmit cultural knowledge, so it's important that teachers

develop practices that sustain the cultural practices of Black youth (Alim et al., 2020; Carter, 2007; Wallace, 2017).

Furthermore, the findings in this study extended the literature on how Black youth collaborate with educators to build a culture of “understanding, empathy, and respect” (Addington, 2021, p. 10). Black teachers in my study worked with students to understand their current interests and to combat how students saw themselves in the classroom. From in-depth conversations Ms. Collier held with her students around recognizing their potential in the classroom to Edward Taul and Fashionista, allowing opportunity for their students to express their feelings and emotions at the start of class, Black students worked in collaboration with their students to foster a space of mutual respect and understanding.

Identity-confirming practices in this study were not only a tool for teachers to connect with Black youth but also a means of connecting the generations. The teachers in my study all identified as millennials, and the students they teach are Gen Z. The findings demonstrated that identity-confirming practices were used not only to restore the identities of Black youth in schools but also to bridge cultural understanding among Black individuals from different generational cohorts. Identity-confirming practices in this study allowed Black youth to approach learning in a liberated and connected way that did not minimize their Black identities.

Theme 3 Literature Connection: Shared Description of Community

Black teachers in this study described practices for building community with Black youth in their classrooms as authentic and transparent, allowing collaboration among students and teachers, and connecting life experiences to the text. Black teachers in this study fostered a communal learning environment for their students by showing up authentic and transparent. Community-building practices are closely aligned with the literature that discusses culturally

responsive practices that support Black youth in schools. The literature discusses how Black educators modeled ways of being for Black youth by feeling and expressing emotions to establish a communal learning environment in the classroom (Givens et al., 2016; De Royston et al., 2017). Modeling ways of being were consistent across all teachers participating in this study. All four teachers expressed that being authentic and transparent, humanizing themselves to their students, and making students feel comfortable being expressive in the classroom. Also, Black teachers showing up as their full selves in the classroom modeled how Black youth can show up in the classroom.

Findings from this study supported the literature that discussed how Black educators viewed learning as a communal process in which students would collaborate on social learning activities (Banwo, 2023). Black teachers in this study organized their classrooms to promote a social learning environment. Black teachers developed icebreakers and role-playing activities to get to know their students and influence collaboration in the classroom. Black teachers in this study joined in solidarity with their Black youth by joining them in the learning process. Black teachers in this study allowed Black youth to question them about their lived experiences, creating a space of reciprocal learning between student and teacher.

Additionally, the findings in this study extend the literature on how culturally sustaining practices in the classroom promote and recenter the lived experiences of communities of color (Alim et al., 2020). Teachers in this study connected “life to text” in the classroom to highlight their Black youths’ life experiences and position them as valuable members in the learning process. Black teachers in this study centered Black youth's life experiences in their daily lessons by including the history of local neighborhoods in Washington, DC, and connecting it to what their students experienced in those neighborhoods. Also, Black teachers allowed Black

youth to share real-life examples to connect with the texts they were studying. Incorporating Black history in their curriculum served as “a vindication of the past but also constitutes a necessary prelude to social, economic, and political recognition in the present” (Hines, 2022, p.113).

Theme 4 Literature Connection: Shared Description of Protection

Black teachers in this study described and exhibited protection practices by finding alternative methods for addressing Black youth behavior in the classroom besides implementing punitive disciplinary practices. Also, Black teachers incorporated protection practices as a means of exercising cultural competence when interacting with Black youth in the classroom. Black teachers' initial response to disruptive behavior in the classroom was to ask questions to understand the root cause before implementing a punitive disciplinary consequence. This finding supports the literature on culturally responsive practices, which discuss how Black educators' practices help Black youth address their emotions and communicate with one another about their feelings (De Royston et al., 2017; Givens et al., 2016). Protection practices employed by Black teachers in this study were used not only as an alternative to punitive practices but also as a tool to help Black youth process their emotions and communicate their needs in a healthy way.

Furthermore, findings in this study indicated that Black teachers exercise cultural competency to understand Black youth. The literature discusses the importance of educators developing cultural competency with Black youth to shift their attitudes towards their cultural diversity (Betancourt, 2003; Jackson, 2009; Jones, 2025; Lateef et al., 2022). Findings in this study extended the literature by not only examining the cultural diversity of Black youth but also recognizing the social and political climates they were navigating outside the classroom.

Protection practices in this study were not only used to avoid punitive consequences but also to assist Black youth in regulating their emotions.

Implications and Recommendations

In this section, I present implications and recommendations for key decision-makers based on the findings of my study. This study provides implications and insights into the practices Black teachers employ in their classrooms to support Black youth's educational attainment and restore their relationships with schooling. I encourage future and current researchers and teacher educators to consider the following notions that emerged during this study. First, the study suggests that educators center Black youth as assets to their learning and development. For example, Black teachers often incorporated the lived experiences of Black youth into their daily lessons by connecting these experiences to current class discussions. Also, Black teachers enabled students to be active participants in learning by developing role-playing activities that contributed to the social learning environment.

Next, the study suggests that educators promote communal learning environments to re-engage Black youth in school. For example, Black teachers created spaces that allowed Black youth to exchange ideas, collaborate on social learning activities, and build positive teacher-student relationships. Transparency and authenticity were foundational for establishing mutual care and respect between Black educators and Black youth in the classroom. When supporting Black youth educational development, educators should be cautious and avoid performative actions to connect with students, and should interrogate how they authentically connect with Black youth in the classroom. Also, the community created in the classroom for Black youth by Black teachers was a space where Black youth had autonomy to engage in learning. Black teachers showed understanding and care for where Black youth were currently positioned in life

and offered grace if a student needed to eat in class or step out of class to make a phone call. Educators should work to recognize the circumstances surrounding students' actions in the classroom to avoid misjudging and penalizing their behavior.

The evidence from the study suggests that Black teachers foster spaces that protect Black youth by exercising cultural competence and engaging in culturally relevant practices. For example, Black teachers described being intentional in engaging with Black youth to understand their behaviors and attitudes, and to avoid misjudging a behavior or expression as negative or disruptive. Operating with cultural competency and relevant practices, Black teachers were able to offset the number of times Black youth were sent out of the classroom and promote a classroom environment that was understanding and welcoming of Black youth's cultural practices. Furthermore, educators were able to create culturally sustaining practices by adopting the languages of Black youth and incorporating them into their day-to-day classroom discussions. Appreciation and respect for Black youth's expressive language allowed Black teachers to build a space of empathy and respect.

Finally, this study suggests that Black youth respond positively to classroom practices led by their Black teachers. Black youth believed their Black teachers provided a space that was healing, identity-confirming, protective, and promoted a communal learning environment. For educators, it is important to include their students' voices to assess classroom practices. To build a collaborative environment in which learning is reciprocal between the teacher and the student, it is important to engage students' thoughts and perspectives before making policies that govern your classrooms.

Research Implications

This study investigated the practices that Black teachers employ in their classrooms to support Black youth's educational attainment and restore their relationships with schooling. Findings showed that Black teachers employed practices that aligned with culturally sustaining practices that provided spaces of healing and protection (Banwo, 2023; De Royston et al., 2017; Givens et al., 2016; Jackson, 2020; Johnson et al., 2017) and promoted communal learning environment and identity confirming practices (Banwo, 2023; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Jackson, 2020; Razfar & Rumenapp, 2013) in the classroom. In practice, educators and school administrators should consider the lived experiences, histories, and social identities of Black youth to create culturally sustaining practices that support them in schools.

Methodologically, I employed an embedded case study to examine the practices of Black teachers at a high school implementing restorative justice. The embedded case study allowed me to analyze both the whole system and its parts to develop best practices for supporting Black youth in school. For future research, I would improve the study by conducting focus group sessions with students rather than an exit ticket survey to gain a deeper understanding of students' perspectives on how Black youth respond to the practices of their Black teachers. Holding focus groups with participants' students would provide an opportunity to gain deep qualitative insight into how Black youth respond to Black teachers' practices and how they perceive those practices as beneficial (or not) to their overall success in school.

The embedded case study design naturally presents several limitations that shape the interpretation of the findings. Because the study focused on a single setting (DC Public Charter Academy) with multiple embedded units (four Black teachers), the results are highly-context dependent and may not be broadly generalizable to other organizations or environments. Access

constraints, such as organizational gatekeeping, confidentiality restrictions, and limited participant availability, may have limited the depth or breadth of the data obtained. Additionally, managing and analyzing multiple embedded units increases methodological complexity, making it challenging to integrate diverse perspectives into a cohesive analytical narrative. Time and resource constraints further shaped the study's scope, potentially limiting opportunities for extended observation or longitudinal insight. However, these constraints do not diminish the value of the findings; rather, they highlight the need for cautious interpretation and recognition of the study's contextual boundaries.

Theoretical Implications

Table 6.1 Conceptual Framework connected to Findings

Term	Definition	Examples	Findings
Healing	Resisting the violence of a Eurocentric society and school system and embracing cultural pluralism and equity	Replacing Eurocentric curriculums with Black literacies and history Curriculums designed around the lived experiences of students	Black teachers filled their classroom with photos of Black historical figures, discussed the history of Black Americans in the United States, and filled their classrooms with Afrocentric artifacts. Black teacher incorporated the lived experiences of their students in their daily lessons.
Identity Confirming	Reinforcing how Black youth understand and rationalize the role their Black identity play in how they are seen and show up in the world	Sharing experiences, feelings, and emotions Allowing Black languages and dialects in the classroom	Black teachers amplified the languages of Black youth by adopting terms and words often used by Black youth to communicate with their students in the classroom.

		Students discuss their past traumas, address their emotions, and communicate how actions made them feel	Black teachers allowed their students opportunities during class to discuss their feelings and respond to how certain actions and interactions with their teacher made them feel.
Community	Individuals in the same geographical location working collaboratively to form reciprocal relationships of healing, protection, and love	Teaching as a community responsibility	Black teachers set up their classroom space to promote community and collaboration in the classroom.
		Relationship Building	
		Students collaborate on social learning activities	Black teachers allowed students to conduct role playing and icebreaker activities to connect with the classmates.
Protection	Countering the cultural bias in school disciplinary policies and practices in curriculum and instruction	Exercising cultural competency to understand student behavior before initiating disciplinary actions	Black teachers provide grace and understanding for Black youth in their classroom prior to offer a consequence to their behavior.
		Acknowledging cultural differences	Black teachers engage in active listening skills to understand how Black youth see themselves in society.

The findings in this research study build on existing evidence of Black teachers creating safe spaces for Black youth in schools by appreciating their languages, incorporating their lived experiences, acknowledging their cultural differences, and using teaching as a community responsibility (Baker-Ball, 2020; Banwo, 2023; Jackson, 2020; Johnson et al., 2017). The initial framework provided a useful structure for examining the phenomenon. In particular, the study

found that Black teachers employ culturally sustaining practices that support Black youths' academic success and restore their relationship with schooling. Additionally, the existing framework highlighted how Black teachers support Black youth by developing curricula that incorporate the lived experiences of Black youth, allowing for open dialogue and the expression of Black youths' feelings and emotions.

The findings also extended the conceptual framework of Black restorative practices by illustrating processes unfolding across the embedded units, including practices that draw on Black Media, Entertainment, and the Arts. Participants in this study reported that education for Black youth has not been the same since the discontinuation of television shows such as *Reading Rainbow* and *Gullah Gullah Island*. Television shows like *Reading Rainbow* made learning fun for Black youth by including colorful language and imagery. Also, participants discussed how some music today does not support the development of Black youth, unlike music in the 90s. Participants referenced artists like Lauryn Hill and the positive messaging and affirmations communicated in her music, and how it supported positive images of Black youth in society. Furthermore, the discontinuation of Art in schools has removed a creative outlet for Black youth, which participants believe is needed to support their overall development. Ultimately, the study suggests that the conceptual framework for Black restorative practices should include the Arts to support Black youth in schools.

The study's insights enriched the conceptual framework of Black restorative practices by strengthening its explanatory power and aligning it more closely with the lived realities of Black teachers in the case. All participants in the study employed practices that aligned with the four lenses of the Black restorative practices' conceptual framework. Thus, providing evidence to support the conceptual framework of Black restorative practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Black restorative practices conceptual framework is an attempt at a race-centered framework for restoring relationships with Black youth and schooling. Traditional restorative justice practices support the restoration of the school community by using circles and conferences after an infraction occurred (Latimer et al., 2005). This process is reactive and addresses victim/offender relationships. The restoration of Black youth in schools needs proactive measures that work to minimize their suffering due to institutional oppression and curriculum violence. My study expands on the victim/offender perspective by labeling Black youth as the victims and the school system as the offender.

Black restorative practices are a symbol of the future. A guide to how educators and policymakers should work to ensure the safety of Black youth in schools. Not only is it a guide for ensuring the safety of Black youth, but a means to minimize disciplinary disparities and cultural biases that are exhibited in schools. If school systems and educators are serious about restoring Black youth, they must learn who those Black youth are (i.e., identities, positionalities, etc.) and not focus on whom they assume them to be (Delpit, 2003).

The four lenses of the Black restorative practices conceptual framework work in tandem to support one another in creating a safe place for Black youth to thrive in schools. Implementing healing, protection, and identity-confirming practices is one way teachers can build community with Black youth in schools. Building community with Black youth creates a space that is proactive in fostering belonging and educational attainment. Participants in the study often mention ways they built community in their classroom, and each describes a practice of healing, protection, and identity confirming. Also, implementing healing and identity-confirming practices is one way teachers can create a space of protection for Black

youth in schools. If Black youth do not feel safe in schools, it inhibits their learning. Participants in this study often mention that Black youth do not feel safe in schools, which leads to their negative responses to instruction in the classroom. For Black youth to feel safe and protected in schools, teachers employ practices that are healing and confirm their identities.

Black teachers work steadily to combat the violence Black youth experience at the hands of school curricula that work to destroy their languages and cultural identities. Incorporating Black histories and knowledges in their curricula, Black teachers work to reclaim their minds from mental slavery and Eurocentric ideologies embedded in US school systems. Marcus Garvey attests, “the man who is not able to develop and use his mind is bound to be the slave of the other man who uses his mind” (Garvey & Azikiwe, 2019, p.20). Black youth struggle to make sense of anti-Black suffering (Dumas, 2016) and deserve opportunities to live joyfully. Black youth deserve equitable experiences in their communities and schools, and Black restorative practices may provide a resource for healing, restoration, and opportunities for them to thrive amongst their peers.

Appendix A

Recruitment Script

Thank you for your participation,

My name is Carlos Williams, and I am a doctoral student in the Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership program at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am conducting a research study to examine how Black teachers restore and repair students' relationships with schooling and you are invited to participate in the study. To be eligible for this study, participants should be individuals who are 18 years or older, identify as Black, and teach at Washington Leadership Academy Public Charter School. If you agree, you are invited to participate in an interview with me.

The purpose of this study is to understand the teaching practices and philosophies Black teachers use to demonstrate care and support Black youth with meeting their fullest academic potential. The study will be conducted in three parts

- (a) classroom observations (approximately 4 instructional days), over the span of the study
- (b) three interviews with the teacher throughout the span of the study. The interviews will take place in a location agreed upon with the interviewee and will include some demographic questions. The interviews are anticipated to last approximately 45 mins, with the option for audio recorded for accuracy of responses.
- (c) artifacts inclusive of lesson plans, class assignments, etc. will be collected throughout the span of the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain anonymous during and after the study. To ensure confidentiality, a pseudonym will be assigned to each of you in place of your name. All identifying information from the collected data will be removed and responses from each interview will be coded using a numeric identifier.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me by email at cwilli39@umd.edu or by phone at 704-451-9648

Thank you for your participation,

Carlos Williams
University of Maryland, College Park
Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership program
Doctoral Candidate

Interview 1

Survey Questions (Demographic Information)

1. Please provide me with a pseudonym to refer to you as in the study:
2. Years of teaching experience:
3. Do you identify as Black? Circle your answer: Yes or No
4. Which grade(s) do you teach?
5. Which subjects do you teach?

Interview Guide

Tell me about your background (schooling) and who were your influences growing up?

1. What do you like/love most about teaching?
2. Tell me about your students?
 - a. How would you describe the identities of the students you teach?
 - b. What characteristics would you use to describe the students you teach?
3. What influences your belief and approach to teaching Black youth?
4. Define what it means to be Black?
5. How would you define Blackness?
6. How does your Black identity influence the way you interact with your students?
7. How do you build community with your students?
8. What does it mean, to you, to restore Black youths relationship to schooling?

Interview 2

Semi-Structured Starting Questions

*The questions on this list are a base set for each participant. I will also ask individual follow-up questions based on the data I have gathered on each participant (curriculum, lesson plans, etc.). Some questions may be omitted based on the flow of the conversation.

**Prior to the interview, remind participants: You are free to “pass” on any questions you do not wish to answer, and to stop the interview at any point. Your participation in this study is voluntary and can be rescinded at any time without penalty, including in the middle of this conversation; if you have any questions, please let me know. Additionally, just a reminder that all data collected during this research process--including your responses to these questions--are and will remain anonymous; no identifying information will appear in any publications/presentations/etc that come from this study.

***Tell participants: The purpose of this interview is to learn more about how you believe acts of care, healing, and restoration are taking place in your classroom. If at any point you want to share a story, an anecdote, or a bit of information that you feel is important, please feel free to do so whether or not it pertains to a posed question.

1. Describe your classroom space. The set up, whether you set up the classroom space and why you set up the space the way you did?
 - a. What influenced the way you set up your classroom space?
2. Do you believe it is important to be intentional to set up space for Black youth to learn in schools? Why?
3. Describe the way you set up the desk in the classroom.
 - a. Why did you set up the desk the way you did?

Interview 3

Semi-Structured Starting Questions

*The questions on this list are a base set for each participant. I will also ask individual follow-up questions based on themes that were presented in the data collected and practices implemented in the classroom. Some questions may be omitted based on the flow of the conversation.

**Prior to the interview, remind participants: You are free to “pass” on any questions you do not wish to answer, and to stop the interview at any point. Your participation in this study is voluntary and can be rescinded at any time without penalty, including in the middle of this conversation; if you have any questions, please let me know. Additionally, just a reminder that all data collected during this research process--including your responses to these questions--are and will remain anonymous; no identifying information will appear in any publications/presentations/etc that come from this study.

***Tell participants: The purpose of this interview is to learn more practices taking place in the classroom. If at any point you want to share a story, an anecdote, or a bit of information that you feel is important, please feel free to do so whether or not it pertains to a posed question.

1. Do you believe it is important for educators to master the skill of care and discipline when restoring Black youth relationship with schooling? Why?
 - a. In what ways can educators develop this skill set?
2. Why are strong emphasis placed on incorporating Black literacies, Arts (television shows, music, books, etc.) into lesson plans, when it comes to supporting the educational development of Black youth in school?
3. Do you believe it is important for educators to try to understand their Black students and the communities they come from when supporting them in schools? Why?
4. Why is it important to you to model behaviors and practices in the classroom that support Black youth with how they show up in class?
5. Further explain your background and experiences and how those experiences support you in the classroom with supporting Black youth.

Observation Tool 1

Teacher/Subject					
		Healing Resisting the violence of a monocultural and monolingual society and embracing cultural pluralism and equity	Identity Confirming Reinforcing how Black youth understand and rationalize the role their Black identity plays in how they are seen and show up in the world	Community Individuals in the same geographical location working collaboratively to form reciprocal relationships of healing, protection, and love	Protection Countering the cultural bias in school disciplinary policies and practices and in curriculum and instruction
What's Happening? What do I see? What's going on?					
Artifacts					
Thoughts/Reflection					

Exit Ticket Survey

1. Do you feel that your teacher created a space in class that embraced your background and welcomed your everyday speech and knowledge?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. Did your teacher create a space that helped you to understand your identity in the classroom and recognize how you see yourself in school?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. Did your teacher provide opportunities during the lesson for you to share your personal experiences and stories with the class?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4. Did your teacher acknowledge your learning style and provide instructional support that helped you confidently engage with the lesson/assignment?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5. Did your teacher create an environment in class where you felt respected and appreciated?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Please provide any feelings you have on your experiences in class with your teacher.

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