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DISMANTLING ANTI-BLACKNESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION: CENTERING BLACK
EPISTEMOLOGIES TO (RE)CONSTRUCT ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS

EDUCATION FOR LINGUISTIC AND RACIAL JUSTICE

by

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ABSTRACT

DISMANTLING ANTI-BLACKNESS IN TEACHER EDUCATION: CENTERING BLACK EPISTEMOLOGIES TO (RE)CONSTRUCT ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS EDUCATION FOR LINGUISTIC AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Jasmyn Kymberly Jones
Old Dominion University, 2023
Chair: Dr. Judith Dunkerly

Black students and their linguistic resources are undervalued, disdained, disrespected, and disregarded in language arts classrooms. Not only is Black Language often ignored in English language arts instruction, but language more generally remains largely hidden within elementary ELA. Elementary ELA educators are tasked with teaching a vast array of skills, content, and concepts. So, teacher education programs are responsible for ensuring that preservice teachers leave prepared to take on the task of cultivating language arts classrooms that foster students' literacy development. However, traditionally, literacy teacher education and the ELA curriculum has maintained white mainstream English as the standard for which all other languages and language varieties are measured. Consequently, preservice teachers are unaware of how to cultivate instruction that supports, values, and affirms the language and literacies lives of their Black students, leaving their teacher education programs unaware of how their own ideologies about language impact their curricular and pedagogical choices. This unpreparedness, the lack of awareness, and unaddressed attitudes towards Black Language, and in turn Black students, leaves speakers of Black Language vulnerable and directly in harm's way at the hands of their language education.

This study's purpose was to trace the development and (re)framing of a language arts methods course, and preservice teachers' experiences in the course, that centers Black

epistemologies to counteract the anti-Blackness that exist in language teacher education and forward Black literacy as liberation and joy in teacher education. This inquiry was addressed through three distinct, yet interconnected articles that utilized different methodologies. The first is a personal experience narrative that recounts my experience developing and (re)constructing a language arts instructional strategies course by employing Black epistemologies. The second utilized qualitative case study to describe four preservice teachers' overall experience in the course. The third highlights a specific literary experience within the course and describes preservice teachers' critical reading of African American young adult literature positioned as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice. The major implications of this research provide an opportunity for the field of (literacy) teacher education and elementary language arts to (re)frame how courses center Black students, explore Black literacy, especially historically, build and deepen their knowledge of Black Language, interrogate ideologies about language, and combat and challenge anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism towards an equitable and just language education that centers the linguistic, racial, and cultural needs of Black students.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Reuben and Kim Jones.
I am nothing without their love and support.
I love you both beyond words.

xoxo

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I am one blessed girl. I am immensely thankful to have such a village that encourages me, prays for me, holds space for me, and loves me like y'all do.

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Y'all, this dissertation may have my name on it, but this degree is for us. We did it! I love y'all deep! THANK YOU!

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I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching English language arts is no simple task. ELA educators are tasked with teaching a vast array of skills, content, and concepts. Teacher education programs are then responsible for ensuring that preservice teachers leave prepared to take on the task of cultivating language arts classrooms that foster students' literacy development. However, this is inadequately done if literacy teacher education does not also explore, investigate, and interrogate oppressive social and educational practices, especially those that have failed Black students and other communities of Color.

Furthermore, this requires the centering of the teaching of language as an integral part of the literacy teacher education curriculum. Traditionally, literacy teacher education and the ELA curriculum has maintained white mainstream English as the standard for which all other languages and language varieties are measured. But, as a discipline, ELA must come to terms with the ways language and race have been historically conditioned to do the work of white supremacy (McClain et al., 2021; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Historically, literacy has been weaponized for anti-Blackness, in the name of anti-Black linguistic racism. For example,

- Anti-literacy laws made it illegal for enslaved Africans to learn how to read and write (Tolley, 2016).
- Language planning was used to isolate enslaved Africans from those who shared a common language to minimize the uprisings, because if they had a harder time communicating, organizing revolt would be difficult. As a result no African language survived the Atlantic crossing completely intact (Baugh, 2015).

- Since the origins of English as a school subject white mainstream English is viewed as a universally teachable subject and racialized dos and don'ts are reinforced and maintained through standardization processes (de los Rios et al., 2019; Smitherman, 1999)
- The US does not have an official language, but white mainstream English is the de-facto language. Some variations of English are privileged, and others are stigmatized. Black Language is widely ridiculed, disrespected, and criticized because Black people have been historically and contemporarily been dehumanized in schools and society (Boutte et al., 2021).
- Cases and resolutions such as the *King v. Ann Arbor* and the Oakland Ebonics Resolution made decisions affirming the legitimacy of Black Language were met with negative and distorted opinions and reactions (Smitherman & Baugh, 2002).

Seeing the ways language and literacy has been the site of racial injustice, literacy teacher educators must understand the historical contours of harm inflicted by our field to help preservice teachers recognize how these legacies will impact their classrooms and their students (de los Ríos et al., 2019). This is necessary because Black students deserve a literacy education that is built on making them aware of the talents and linguistic resources they already have and to maintain and build on the cultivation of literacy, their genius, and the culture that nurtured them (Richardson, 2000). Additionally, there is a cultural, racial, and linguistic mismatch between students and teachers. This mismatch ain't new and keeps growing. Teachers are largely white, female, and monolingual while students are increasingly multilingual and multi-ethnic (Muhammad, 2020; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

I do not mean to suggest that white teachers are incapable of teaching Black students, but I do suggest that there has to be work done intentionally and in solidarity so that teachers learn to respond and build literacy environments (i.e. language arts classrooms) that are not guided by whiteness and white linguistic and cultural norms, but rather that center antiracism, Black educational history, Black literacy, and Black Language. But that has generally been out of the scope of what teacher education programs provide. Muhammad (2020) is speaking nothing but facts when she says,

...We too often see “diversity” or “multicultural” classes as isolated efforts rather than grounding entire programs in intersectionality as we see in Black and cultural studies programs [and even] urban education courses will have classes related to poverty before having classes centered on Black and Brown excellence (p. 40).

So then, if we are struggling to “get it right” with Black students and other communities of Color, shouldn’t we be grounding teacher preparation in the “essence of Black and cultural learning theories and practices?” (Muhammad, 2020, p. 40).

So here is where I enter the chat. Moved by how we have yet to “get it right” and teacher education programs emphasis on preparing teachers for growing diversity in classrooms, multicultural environments, and culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse contexts but without grounding in the essence of Black educational history, Black and cultural theories and practices, Black literacy, and Black Language. In the three articles that follow, I trace my experience developing and the experiences of preservice teachers in a language arts instructional strategies course, an isolated effort, to demonstrate my effort and the need to (re)construct literacy teacher education, as a whole, grounded in Black epistemologies to describe what an

antiracist and anti-oppressive language education could be so teachers are reminded and recognize the power of education to cultivate the genius that exist in their students.

This introduction sets the stage for the three articles. First, it provides a description of the theoretical framework that grounds the study and its connection to the topic of anti-Blackness in language (teacher) education. Next, it presents an executive summary of each of the three articles. Lastly, it's concluded by a statement of the problem and its significance within teacher education.

A Critical Theorization of Blackness

Espinoza & Harris (1998) remind us that African Americans play a significant role in American social, political, cultural, and economic life, and have done so since the beginning of our nation's founding. As such, given this significance and the "centrality of anti-Black racism to the patterns of domination we call white supremacy" (Espinoza & Harris, 1998, p. 510), attention to anti-Blackness is critical in resisting white supremacy (Dumas & ross, 2016). Historically, white hegemony and identity has been maintained in contrast to Black people.

Our slavery became their freedom: our degraded labor produced their "free labor," our political nonexistence, their political belonging. Our ugliness, our promiscuity, our simple natures reflected their beauty, continence, refinement. Our simple joys and pleasures, our songs and dances and folktales (mocked and admired in their minstrelsy) enabled their sophistication and formed a basis for their nostalgia (Espinoza & Harris, 1998, p. 511).

What we see is the Black as the despised thing-in-itself (Dumas & ross, 2016) in direct opposition to all that is humane and white. This anti-Blackness as social construction, then, requires a critical theorization of Blackness to defy the specificity of anti-Blackness.

BlackCrit: Framing Ideas

Centering Blackness and toward a conceptualization of a Black critical theory, Dumas & ross (2016) give us their framing ideas of BlackCrit, as critical theorization of Blackness: anti-Blackness is endemic and central to how we make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life, Blackness exists in tension with the neoliberal-multicultural imagination, and BlackCrit should create space for Black liberation, fantasy and resist revisionist history that resolves whites from a from s history of racial dominance.

Anti-Blackness as endemic and central is a more specific iteration of racism as normal and permanent in US society from Critical Race Theory (Dumas & ross, 2016; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The essence of anti-Blackness is not just racism against Black people, but rather it exists at the intersection of the threat of Blackness and possibility of humanity for Black people. Thus, to insist that anti-Blackness is endemic and permanent calls for BlackCrit to intervene at the point of delineating how policies and everyday practices are rooted in and reproduce Black suffering.

The Assimilationist paradigm provides for the merging of the minority into the dominant culture. The distinguishing characteristic of race makes this unacceptable for people of Color. We see this in a neoliberal multicultural society that has embraced diversity and opportunity for all and presumes racism as no longer the barrier to equal opportunity and upward mobility. This means Black people are viewed as the least assimilable to this multicultural imagination and then are the problem and stand in the way of multicultural progress (Dumas & ross, 2016). BlackCrit rejects views of multiculturalism and falsehoods of diversity as they are often positioned against the lives of Black people (Dumas & ross, 2016; Dumas, 2016; Sexton, 2008).

Lastly, Black liberation is grounded in the belief that being Black is not a bad thing, but rather a gift (Coles & Stanley, 2021). Yet, in BlackCrit, we understand that we do not achieve liberation or restorative joy by side stepping whiteness or ridding whites from the responsibility of racial violence. Fanon (1963) reminds us “you do not disorganize a society...if you are not determined from the very start to smash every obstacle” (p. 3) because “as soon as [the colonized] are born it is obvious to them that their cramped world, riddled with taboos, can only be challenged by out and out violence” (p.3). Thus, as we recognize the place of Black liberation in collective Black struggle, BlackCrit does not advocate for physical violence but rather, necessary chaos, the first taste of freedom, and “a disruption of a dynamic that becomes the ray of hope for larger systemic change” (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 431).

BlackCrit in (Teacher) Education: The Language of it all

Dumas & ross (2016) conclude with a call to action in recognition and celebration of the trajectory of Black resistance as a refuge from the gaze of white supremacy, one in which, Black children dream weightless, unracialized, and human. Where language flows freely and existence is nurtured and resistance is breath. Where the Black educational imagination dances wildly into the night-quenching the thirst of yearning and giving breath to becoming (p. 436).

For this to be fulfilled, we must begin to think about how to combat the failure of schools to effectively educate Black students, their success in reproducing dominant racial and language ideology, and the repression of the Black body (Dumas & ross, 2016). The ways that Black bodies experience repression, violence and disdain in society is not separate from the ways they experience it in and through the curriculum in education. BlackCrit in education helps us to more precisely analyze how anti-Blackness aids in explaining how Black students, their language, and

their person, become disdained, disregarded, and marginalized in schools and educational spaces. Critical Race Theory is a general theory of racism, it is not intended to address how anti-Blackness informs and facilitates racist ideology and institutional practices (Dumas & ross, 2016). Whereas,

BlackCrit in education promises to help us incisively analyze how social and educational policy are informed by anti-Blackness, and serve as forms of anti-Black violence, and how these policies facilitate and legitimize Black suffering in the everyday life of schools (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 419).

In terms of Black Language, BlackCrit demonstrates how the linguistic violence that Black Language speakers experience in schools and in everyday life is dehumanizing and informed by anti-Blackness (Baker-Bell, 2020). Much of the language education students receive is steeped in White supremacist values. White Mainstream English is the gold standard that students are expected to aspire to.

The concept of whiteness is important in understanding the silent and visible ways in which White Mainstream English serves as the stated and unstated norms in language arts classrooms (Pimentel, 2011; Baker-Bell, 2020). BlackCrit confronts

The specificity of anti-Blackness, as a social construction, as an embodied lived experience of social suffering and resistance, and perhaps most importantly, as an antagonism, in which the Black is a despised thing-in-itself in opposition to all that is pure, human(e), and [w]hite (Dumas & ross, 2016, pp.416-417).

To illustrate how our education system caters to white cultural ways of being, their language, literacies, histories, values, knowledge at the expense of people of Color, calls for a critique of white supremacy and linguistic racism within language education.

Teacher education programs that teach candidates that Black people were passive recipients of education rather than foundational architects are deeply misguided (Coles & Stanley, 2021) Similarly, teacher education programs that teach candidates the myth of standard English (Lippi-Green, 2012) or that center white linguistic norms and hegemony as the expectation for how to teach language arts are also deeply misguided and “fundamentally entangled” in the maintenance of white supremacy and anti-Blackness in education (Mayorga & Picower, 2018, p. 217). Like Coles & Stanley (2021) I agree that teacher education must be a space that works with and in service to Black students’ struggles toward liberation by reducing harm in schools that are bound to Black suffering. To reduce and undo the harm that schooling as sites of anti-Blackness commit, teacher education must change the way it prepares all teachers.

In literacy teacher education, teacher educators might better prepare preservice teachers by emphasizing the importance of Black linguistic-cultural heritage, identity, and history in addition to knowledge of discourse modes and rhetoric (Smitherman 2006; Richardson, 2017), dissecting and developing literacy curricula and pedagogical strategies and tools on Black Language as the foundation of instruction, investigate the way anti-Blackness in education positions Black Language speakers as intellectually, morally, and linguistically inferior (Alim & Smitherman, 2012; Baker-Bell, 2020), and confronts the “Black experience of anti-Black racism and White supremacy” (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 424) through language because the historical, intellectual, and social justice perspectives and literacy experiences of Black students must be taken into account in literacy education (Richardson, 2017).

From this stance, BlackCrit is the theoretical framework from which this work is built. It is used to address, challenge, and critique the anti-Blackness that exist in elementary language and literacy teacher education, to investigate the anti-Black linguistic racism embedded in the

white supremacist and capitalistic-based literacy and language instructional strategies typically taught to preservice teachers, it interrogates ideologies about language held and maintained through white linguistic and cultural hegemony, and that centers Blackness, Black joy, and Black liberation. BlackCrit provides a critique of anti-Blackness and how it exists in educational spaces, especially in language and literacy education. For students to be able to name the harm they experience at the hands of their language education, we must prepare teachers to critically interrogate the ways they may be complicit in an anti-Black language education. But this work cannot only begin when teachers are in the classroom. Entering the language wars (Smitherman, 2022) has to begin within teacher education and needs to be an integral part of teacher preparation in order to combat linguistic racism and white linguistic hegemony.

Executive Summary

This study is organized as a three-article dissertation. Each article that follows is meant to be able to stand alone as a complete piece of academic writing. Together, they trace the development and (re)framing of a language arts methods course and preservice teachers experiences in the course that centers Black epistemologies to counteract the anti-Blackness that exist in language teacher education and forward Black literacy as liberation and joy in teacher education.

The first article is a personal experience narrative that recounts my experience developing and (re)framing a language arts instructional strategies course by employing Black epistemologies to center Black language, Black literacy, and Black students' historical, linguistic, racial, and cultural needs. The article describes how I employed Afrocentric ideas (Asante, 1991), Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020), and Black feminist epistemologies (Collins, 2000) in the course to explore Black Language, center Blackness and

Black students, their histories, culture, and language to provide space for preservice teachers to reflect on their own ideologies about language, critically read African American literature, and uncover linguistic justice for Black Language speakers and other communities of Color in language education that was designed to center white linguistic and cultural hegemony.

Recommendations are made for (re)structuring a teacher education curriculum that honors and values Black Language and Black communities, what required language and literacy courses could look like through the centering of Black epistemologies, and the solidarity and intentionality required to take up such critical work.

The second article describes four preservice teachers' experiences in the course described in the first article. Specifically, I detail how the course supported their transformation toward racial and linguistic justice, challenges that existed in their movement toward racial and linguistic justice, and how the Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy supported their interrogation of anti-Blackness in language education. The study utilized qualitative case study to investigate how this group of preservice teachers interpreted their experiences and constructed knowledge as they studied Black Language and conceptualized anti-Blackness in language education. Course structure and continuing education recommendations are made.

The third article focuses on a specific component of the course. Here, I detail two preservice teachers' experiences critically reading *New Kid: A Graphic Novel* by Jerry Craft in literary groups called reading rooms. In their reading rooms and during their critical reading they explored the potential for using African American young adult literature as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice. The reading rooms discussed in this study were designed using Baker-Bell's (2020) linguistic justice framework and Muhammad's (2020) historically responsive literacy framework. Utilizing case study (Merriam, 1998), the research focused on discovering

preservice teachers insights and understandings of their experience in reading rooms, their discussion of *New Kid* and race, language, and power within the novel, how such an experience informed ideologies about language and anti-Blackness, their knowledge of Black Language, and their position on whether or not African American literature has the potential to serve as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice. Recommendations for literary experiences and frameworks such as linguistic justice and historically responsive literacy in language teacher education are made.

Statement of the Problem

Black students and their linguistic resources are undervalued, disdained, disrespected, and disregarded in language arts classrooms. Black Language is stigmatized in schools, labeled as inappropriate, slang, relegated as language that should be saved for home or the playground. Consequently, speakers of Black Language are labeled as unintelligent, uneducated, and lazy and as such experience great harm, shame, and discomfort in and through teacher attitudes and curriculum design.

Yet for decades scholars have dispelled the myth of standard language (Lippi-Green, 2012; Smitherman, 1977, 2022; Baugh, 1995; Baker-Bell, 2020; Alim & Smitherman, 2012). And still, all languages and varieties of language are equal in theory, but in practice, they are not (Richardson, 2017). Not only is the artfulness of Black Language often ignored in English language arts instruction, but language more generally remains largely hidden within elementary ELA, buried within the larger aims of teaching students to read and write, yet still language remains a widespread means of sorting and tracking students via white linguistic norms and racist ideologies and policies (McClain et al., 2021).

Preservice teachers are unaware of how to cultivate instruction that supports, values, and affirms the language and literacies lives of their Black students, leaving their teacher education programs unaware how their own ideologies about language impact their curricular and pedagogical choices. Moreover, many preservice teachers leave their teach education program never having heard of Black Language as a rule-governed linguistic system, or even discussing it at all. Herein lies the problem that is at the center of this research. This unpreparedness, lack of awareness, and unaddressed attitudes towards Black Language, and in turn Black students, leaves speakers of Black Language vulnerable and directly in harm's way at the hands of their language education. Thus, I offer this research as a way forward. As an opportunity for the field of (literacy) teacher education to (re)frame how courses center Black students, explore Black literacy, especially historically, build and deepen their knowledge of Black Language, interrogate ideologies about language, and combat and challenge anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism towards an equitable and just language education that centers the linguistic, racial, and cultural needs of Black students.

II. ARTICLE ONE

“I PUT MY THING DOWN, FLIP IT, AND REVERSE IT:” (RE)STRUCTURING TEACHER EDUCATION FOR THE HUMANITY AND LIBERATION OF BLACK STUDENTS AND BLACK LANGUAGE

Introduction

Race matters. It matters in education just like it does in society in general. Race pervades teacher education and literacy teacher education specifically. Race is visible in the structure of teacher education and in the ways that whiteness is centered and normalized oftentimes without second thought or consideration. Whiteness is the standard to which difference is compared, measured, analyzed, and constructed thus maintaining dominance of white privilege and white cultural and linguistic hegemony. The literacies and language practices of Black students have long been treated as deficient, inadequate, and inferior in literacy teacher education. Further, literacy teacher educators have been guilty of sustaining linguistic injustice and enacting linguistic violence in and through overvaluing and positioning of White Mainstream English as currency (Souto-Manning, 2021).

I began as a doctoral student in August 2020. Starting a PhD at the height of a global pandemic made for an interesting transition from elementary school teacher to full-time doctoral student. As a full-time student, I accepted an assistantship, becoming a graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Teaching and Learning. As a graduate teaching assistant, you are given the opportunity to gain experience teaching courses at the undergraduate level. There isn't much choice in the courses you are assigned to teach, but efforts are made to assign you to courses that are relatively close to your previous professional or academic experiences and

interests. To date, I have taught an arts in early childhood and elementary education course, a sociocultural perspectives in education course, and a Pre-K-6 social studies methods course.

My university offers a Pre-K-6 language arts instructional strategies course for preservice teachers. As a novice language arts and literacy researcher and teacher educator this course was the one I had my eye on. It would allow me to support and engage with students in their development of teaching elementary language arts. I spent three years as a fourth-grade language arts teacher at a public school in North Carolina and it was my dream to share those experiences and my knowledge, in tandem with pedagogies and strategies that aligned with the current scope of language arts education and research. Finally, in the fall 2022 semester, I was assigned as the instructor for the language arts instructional strategies course. As a fourth-grade teacher in Durham, North Carolina teaching English language arts (ELA) to a classroom full of Black and Brown faces, I encouraged my students to love who they are, I gave them space to learn about themselves and one another, and to show up as their full selves daily. I never corrected their speech, however, I do vividly remember having a conversation with students about the ways I, as a Black woman and a speaker of Black Language, do not talk to them the same way that I talk to my friends, for example, and discussing code-switching, and what that meant. Even at their young age, students were keenly aware of the ways the world interpreted who they were. They talked about hearing their parents change their voices and even mentioned what it meant to “sound White.” In those conversations, I wasn’t sure how to address what they were saying or explain to them that there wasn’t anything wrong with the way they spoke, or even describe my own frustrations with what I understand now to be performing Whiteness. But as the saying goes, “When you know better, you do better.”

Although I didn't know it then, this was my introduction to the language wars (Smitherman, 2022) and the fight against the racial and linguistic injustices waged against Black students through their language and literacy education. I have become more aware of the ways I may have been complicit in the injustices Black students experience in their language education. I am extremely thankful for the support and training I received from my teacher education program, but I also acknowledge that I was not prepared with the disciplinary discourses, pedagogical practices, and theories of language required to ensure my students experienced a language education that affirmed, valued, and sustained their language and literacies practices.

It is from this space that I approach being a language arts and literacy teacher educator and researcher. And it is from this position that I sought to restructure the language arts methods course. In what follows, I will describe how Black epistemologies conceptually framed the redesign of an English Language Arts instructional methods course to decenter whiteness and white linguistic norms. The redesign is built on linguistic justice and centers Blackness and Black Language to engage preservice teachers in an interrogation of their own language ideologies, a study of Black Language, and discussions and actions towards cultivating antiracist language arts classrooms and challenging anti-Blackness in language arts education.

In what follows, I discuss my personal experience in (re)designing the course. First, in a review of the literature I demonstrate the ways teacher education has taken up the intersection of language, race, and power and how historically we've relied on race-neutral, unspecific, and anti-Black ways of addressing Black Language and Black students in teacher education programs. Next, I reflect on the work I put in to build the course through the conceptual framework which outlines the Black epistemologies I suggest could be used to take up this work in other programs: Afrocentricity, Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, and Black feminist

thought. Then, I detailed specific aspects of the course and how they were grounded in the epistemological beliefs. Lastly, I provide recommendations for moving forward in teacher education so that preservice teachers are aware of how to craft language arts classrooms for the survival, the liberation, and the humanity of Black students.

Background: Literacy Teacher Education ain't New to dis, they True to dis

Gupta (2010) conducted a survey with elementary school teachers who expressed the need to broaden their repertoire of instructional methods to meet the needs of all students. The survey demonstrated that teachers had a limited understanding of instructional methods for students who spoke Black Language, they demonstrated a need for more emphasis on literacy and language structure in teaching training coursework, they didn't believe that their teacher preparation program had prepared them to address the linguistic needs of Black Language speaking students, and that learning to address the challenges of linguistic issues needs to continue as in-service training one the teachers enter the field.

It is important to note that this study was conducted over 10 years ago but demonstrates that literacy teacher education is not new to this but true to this in terms of falling short in preparing teachers with knowledge of Black Language, instructional methods that value Black Language and Black students, and combating anti-Blackness in language education. In this study, Gupta (2010) and the teachers in the study associate Black students' use of Black Language as "challenges" in classrooms and "linguistic issues" for teachers to address. Gupta (2010) does conclude that learners and the communities they belong to must be respected and that practitioners need good understanding and knowledge of language variability to make effective instructional decisions. Now, the goal of this study was to begin to examine factors that contribute to teachers' ability to meet the educational and linguistic needs of students who speak

Black Language (Gupta, 2010). It examined their confidence, beliefs, and pedagogical knowledge, calling into attention that teachers feel empowered to provide skillful and quality instruction is essential. And rightfully so, if teachers don't feel they have the knowledge and understanding in how to provide effective instruction they will continue to do harm with the curriculum and their pedagogical decisions. However, Gupta (2010) concluded that schools must provide support for students to “master the language required for academic development and equip them with the language required for progress in society (p. 163),” which suggests that the linguistic resources they process (i.e. Black Language) are not adequate for success in school and instead in order to experience success both academically and in society, students who need to assimilate or adhere to respectability politics.

Leonard (2015) used Mills' racial contract theory to describe assimilationist ideologies of education. He contends that the racial contract makes cultural projects, such as education, possible to treat people of color as “clean slates” or empty receptacles to be filled with white intentions and civilized ways (Leonard, 2015). Further, assimilationist ideologies in schools operate for the ghettoization of Black youth. In other words, Black students need to reject their Blackness, their ways of knowing, speaking, being, and feeling, unless they serve the commodification of Blackness within White capitalism (Leonard, 2015). In this view, within language arts the acceptance of Blackness, especially ways of speaking, is measured through a white gaze. If assimilationist ideologies ain't anti-Black, then tell me, what is?

We've seen scholars, such as Wheeler & Swords (2004), argue that assimilationist and respectability pedagogies, like code-switching and contrastive analysis, have the potential to enhance student performance and positively transform language arts classrooms as tools for language and culture. Similarly, Delpit (2006) suggests that the language arts curriculum should

focus on teaching students the codes of power, such as ways of talking, writing, dressing, and interacting. She maintains that success in institutions, such as schools, is contingent upon obtaining the culture of those in power. Further, if you are not already a participant in the codes of power, being told explicitly the rules of the culture makes acquiring power easier (Delpit, 2006). If speakers of Black Language and other linguistically profiled students want to be successful and gain upward mobility, they must learn to use the language and literacy practices of those in power. Delpit (2006) recognizes the legitimacy of Black Language and views it in the affirmative, however, these approaches, additive rather than subtractive, strengthen, rather than challenge, the marginalization of linguistically profiled students (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

These approaches are representative of the ways that literacy teacher education silences Black Language speakers, by rendering the language as nonexistent or inadequate and how it is “cloaked in the veil of anti-Blackness (Souto-Manning, 2021, p. 590).” The needs of interrogating the intersection of language and power have gone unmet for long enough. Literacy teacher education is indebted to Black students and other communities of Color and thus is in need of an overhaul, a makeover, if you will, that combats the reigning white perspective on the linguistic and cultural practices of such communities (Flores & Rosa, 2015). This article presents my approach to such a transformation.

Literacy Teacher Education Debt

Souto-Manning (2021) forwards a rereading of the education debt to assess the harm inflicted and needs unmet while also emphasizing the relationship between race and power in and by literacy teacher education. What she calls the literacy teacher education debt focuses on the needs of Black and other communities of Color and redirects the literacy teacher education gaze on the responsibility of literacy teacher education to remedy its longstanding history of

linguistic injustice. The literacy teacher education debt is plagued by whiteness, Eurocentrism, and anti-Black racism serves as a compass for what counts as language and literacy (Souto-Manning, 2021). Although decades of research exist to demonstrate how social and cultural factor influence literacy learning and some literacy teacher education courses even position literacy as sociocultural, yet still,

literacy teacher education programs have not changed to honor racialized social and cultural variations in literacy practices and language repertoires, having excluded the languages and literacies of Black and other communities of Color [or when including Black students and their language and literacies the focus is remedatory] by design (Souto-Manning, 2021, p. 594).

In response researchers have urged for shifts in literacy teacher education that recognizes the full humanity of Black students and values and affirms their linguistic repertoires and honors their linguistic dexterity. In doing so, literacy teacher education programs then become spaces that work to prepare preservice and in-service teachers for an education and society that does not exist, but rather towards one that dismantles linguistic injustice, combats anti-Black linguistic racism, and demolishes structures of white supremacy that maintain white linguistic and cultural hegemony.

Milner (2017) conducted a survey with 386 teachers, the Teachers Race Talk Survey (TRTS) that inquired about their beliefs and feelings about whether race should be a central focus of the curriculum and how race should be interrogated in classrooms. He found that the majority of teachers believed that race plays a role in students' educational experiences, is an important topic of discussion in classrooms, and that teachers should discuss race and racism with students. However, they were less confident in their preparedness to have such

conversations and in the training they received from their teacher education program preparing them to have conversations about race. Milner (2017) suggests that teachers need specific tools to think about building classrooms and implementing instructional practices that cultivate effective opportunities for students to learn about and discuss race. With this in mind, Milner (2017) encourages teacher educators to do a better job supporting preservice teachers in developing tools to engage students in such discourses. Lastly, for many students “race, racism, and other forms of discrimination are *the curriculum* [emphasis in original] of their lives (Milner, 2017, p. 90)” so, it is imperative that when teachers engage students in discourses about race it must be done in ways that disrupt stereotypes, inequity, and racism, and not ways that reinforce the injustices.

Language and literacy scholars have theorized and implemented instructional strategies that center Blackness, challenge anti-Black linguistic racism, and engaged preservice teachers in building their knowledge and understanding of Black Language or linguistic diversity in general. However, much of this research has been conducted at the secondary level, in English education courses (i.e., Baker-Bell, 2020; Haddix, 2008; 2015; de los Ríos et al., 2019; Eddie, 2021). Because foundational language and literacy is built in the early years, elementary school language arts classrooms are unfortunately Black students' first experience with school as linguistic and cultural battlegrounds (Baker-Bell, 2020). This calls for elementary preservice teacher education to prepare teachers to be aware of white linguistic and cultural hegemony and provide models for how literacy curricula must move beyond tokens of diversity (Lee, 2022). This tokenism, as Lee (2022) argues, develops when certain aspects of Blackness are included, but the course continues to maintain white monolingual ideologies. Lee (2022) contends that it is necessary for preservice teachers to receive explicit instruction on how anti-Blackness and white

supremacist views of Black Language are interconnected. Her approach to disrupting required elementary literacy methods courses utilizes Black Language to show the linguistic, sociocultural, and cognitive dimensions of literacy. My work seeks to add to the mission of disrupting antiBlackness and white linguistic and cultural hegemony in required literacy methods courses for elementary teachers. To take up the call of the literacy teacher education debt (Souto-Manning, 2021), I aim to contribute to the literature that centers Blackness and Black Language as a way to address the need for disrupting anti-Blackness and white linguistic and cultural hegemony in required literacy methods courses for elementary teachers.

Conceptual Framework

Afrocentricity (Asante, 1991), Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020), and Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000) are the Black epistemologies used to conceptually build this language arts methods course. The language education that Black students receive has long been studied and theorized about. Further, the miseducation of Black folks and their language is no stranger to the white linguistic and cultural hegemony that plagues our education system. Black intellectuals have called into question the anti-Blackness that exists in schooling. Dr. Carter G. Woodson was one of the first to interrogate the ways anti-Blackness be haunting education. Woodson (1933) posited the aim of education was to transform Black people as opposed to develop them. Further, there was a lack of consideration for Black people, except for to condemn or pity, and a focus on social uplift as opposed to education. Woodson (1933) explained,

In the study of language in school pupils were made to scoff at the Negro dialect as some peculiar possession of the Negro which they should despise rather than directed to study the background of this language as a broken-down African tongue—in short to understand

their own linguistic history, which is certainly more important for them than the study of French Phonetics or Historical Spanish Grammar (p. 19).

Black Language is deeply connected to the identities and survival of enslaved Africans, is the linguistic resource that many Black students bring to their language education and reflects their ways of knowing and being in the world.

This disdain and disregard for Black Language doesn't only exist in language arts classrooms, in the school curriculum, or in the attitudes of in-service teachers. It is also perpetuated in the ways that teachers learn how to teach language arts. Many language arts teachers leave their teacher education programs without knowin' about, and fo' sho' without studyin', Black Language and are very unaware of the way their ideologies about language impact their teaching. If teacher education programs are responsible for preparing soon-to-be and practicing teachers, then the opportunity to learn about Black Language, Black joy, Black excellence, and curriculum and instruction that centers the linguistic, racial, and cultural needs of Black students should be required components of coursework, as well as ongoing coverage of pro-Black linguistic knowledge and pedagogies (Boutte et al., 2021). The responsibility of challenging linguistic injustices and anti-Black attitudes from "centuries of brainwashing anchored in colonial quests for power and wealth" (Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2020, p. 2) in language education lies with teacher education programs. Further, Smitherman (2020), like many other Black linguist, reminds us that,

Language is the foundationstone of education and the medium of instruction in all subjects and disciplines throughout schooling. It is critical that teachers have an understanding of and appreciation for the language students bring to school (p. 119).

Thus, drawing from the Black intellectual thought and experience and the rich history of Black Language, Black literacy, and Black liberation I offer Afrocentricity, Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, and Black feminism as the Black epistemological framings of this course. (Re)structuring language teacher education with Black epistemologies stands to refute the ignoring that teacher preparation programs often do of the existence of Black Language. This miseducation leaves preservice teachers with the undeveloped knowledge and unpreparedness to teach Black students and Black Language speakers in elementary classrooms- making them complicit in white supremacy. I propose instead to center Black Language within literacy education as a necessary way to repair the linguistic harm and curriculum violence done in our social conscience (Lee, 2022).

Afrocentricity

As a frame of reference, Afrocentricity is an approach in which phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. For such an approach to be possible in education would mean that the teacher, the curriculum, and the pedagogical approaches provide students the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African worldview (Asante, 1991). Centricity is a concept that can be applied to any culture. In education it is a perspective that requires locating students within the context of their own cultural references to provide them the opportunity to relate socially and psychologically to other cultural perspectives. However, our current education system does not connect all students within the context of their own culture, but rather is Eurocentric. This then doesn't allow for students to relate to other perspectives through their own cultural lens but instead through a lens that is systemically dominated by very white world views. This means that for white students curriculum and instruction and educational experiences are discussed from the white perspective

and non-white students are made to see themselves as acted upon rather than integral participants.

Asante (1991) explains that a truly centric education views all groups' contributions as significant and useful and even a white person educated in such a system does not assume superiority-based notions of race. So, an authentically centric education is different from an education built on Eurocentric, white supremacist, anti-Black values. Eurocentric values and white people, policies, and ideologies (Lee, 2022; Boutte et al., 2021), especially white linguistic norms and standard language ideologies (Lippi-Green, 1994), like in schooling, are overrepresented in literacy education and in (language) teacher education. However, some teacher education programs do critically examine linguistic injustices with special emphasis on Euro-dominant language (Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2020) and English language learners or bilingual education, rarely is Black Language or its rich history included in the conversation. So then no wonder classroom teachers ain't able to acknowledge the linguistic expertise and linguistic dexterity (Paris & Alim, 2017) of Black Language speakers. In response, I used an Afrocentric approach in restructuring this English Language Arts instructional methods course because all content areas are adaptable to such an approach. Thus, Black students, their language, their histories, and their excellence, was centered in the course because the current Eurocentric framework of schooling and teacher education continues to psychologically and culturally dislocate Black students (Asante, 1991).

Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy

Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy was born at the intersection of theory and praxis. It places the cultural, racial, linguistic, intellectual, and self-confidence needs of Black students as an integral part of their language education. Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, by way of

BlackCrit, expands critical race methodologies in educational research. It conscientizes Black students the historical, cultural, political, and racial underpinnings of Black Language (Baker-Bell, 2020). It provides an opportunity to learn Black Language, learn through Black Language, and learn about Black Language (Halliday, 1993; Baker-Bell, 2020) while also dismantling Anti-Black Linguistic Racism. Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy stands in direct opposition to the power and privilege of white linguistic and cultural hegemony and Anti-Black Linguistic Racism in language education and the oppression, dehumanization, and devaluing of Black students and Black Language in the language arts curriculum, pedagogical choices, and teacher attitudes of the educational system.

Critical Language Awareness and fields like Raciolinguistics that theorize language and race and language as race are critical and provide a general analysis of linguistic racism. There is still a need for a framework that details more explicit theorizations of the linguistic and racial marginalization communities of color experience, and specifically, those linguistic and racial conditions of racial oppression experienced by Black Language speakers. Thus, an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy draws on BlackCrit to fully interrogate anti-Blackness in and through language (Baker-Bell, 2020). An antiracist language and literacy education must dismantle racism and linguistic inequities. It must center Black joy and embody pedagogies that interrogate the purpose of language education in our current racial and political context, interrogate how language education speaks to and reflects our current times, interrogate how we move beyond traditional approaches to language education that fail to view students' racial and linguistic identities as interconnected, and interrogate the purpose of a language education that cannot be used for freedom or to save students' lives (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Baker-Bell (2020) foregrounds Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy as a transformative approach to Black Language education that challenges anti-Blackness in research theory, and practice. Baker-Bell's (2020) work is grounded in the scholarship of Black intellectuals who contend that linguistic and racial justice for Black students is not rooted in anti-Black language pedagogies that "cater to Whiteness, but in terms of the complete and total overthrow of racist, colonial practices" (p. 9).

The first tenet of an antiracist Black Language education and pedagogy is that it centers Blackness by placing the linguistic, cultural, racial, intellectual needs of Black students at the center of their language education, by acknowledging Black Language as connected to Black people's ways of knowing, by raising Black students' consciousness in the cultural, racial, political, and historical underpinnings of Black Language, and building Black students' linguistic flexibility by relying on Black Language oral and literary traditions. The second tenet of an Antiracist Black Language education and pedagogy is that it must confront white linguistic and cultural hegemony. To do this, it must provide students with critical literacies to interrogate, name, investigate, and dismantle White linguistic hegemony.

Lastly, an antiracist Black Language education and pedagogy must contest anti-Blackness. This happens as students critically interrogate anti-Black Linguistic Racism and reject the myth of standard English. An Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy moves language education and ELA teachers beyond reinforcing a language education focused on Black students acquiring White Mainstream English and instead centers the linguistic, cultural, racial, intellectual, and self-confidence needs of Black students (Baker-Bell, 2017). This offers students a critical awareness of language and the ability to examine and interrogate the intersections of language, identity, and power and challenge linguistic racism and linguistic hegemony.

Black Feminist Epistemology

Black feminist thought is just as much a part of my positionality as a Black woman as it is a part of conceptually framing this course. African American women have not only developed a distinctive Black women's standpoint but have needed to do so by using alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge (Collins, 2000). Black feminist thought embodies the themes of the African American woman's experiences: lived experience as a criterion for meaning, use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, the ethic of caring, and the ethic of personal accountability (Collins, 2000). The social institutions in the United States that legitimate knowledge, such as schools, uphold Eurocentric values. However, Black women have historically produced knowledge claims that counter the controlling images and rearticulate the Black women's standpoint by relying on alternative knowledge validation processes (Collins, 2000).

The first dimension of Black feminist epistemology says wisdom is a requirement for living life as a Black woman because knowledge of the inner workings of oppression is, and has been, necessary for the survival of Black women in the United States. Black women's objectification as the Other opposes the privilege and protection that whiteness and maleness provides. Thus, to deal with the intersected oppression "knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential for the survival of the subordinate" (Collins, 2000, p. 257). Collins (2000) says,

For most African American women those who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who merely read or thought about such experiences (p. 257).

Thus, lived experiences as a criterion for meaning has been foundational to the credibility of Black women's knowledge claims.

The next dimension of Black feminist epistemology includes using dialogue to assess knowledge claims. hooks (1989) reminds us that dialogue is between two subjects as "humanizing speech, one that challenges and resists domination" (p. 131). Further, dialogue is not between subject and object, but rather this distinction is important to focus on the bonds of care and commitment that emerge within spaces of non-domination, respect, and mutuality. Out of these bonds love is sustained and allows those involved in dialogue to grow fully and freely and nurture one another (hooks, 1989). For Black women, new and developing knowledge claims are seldom worked through in isolation, connectedness is an important component of the knowledge validation process. In building, testing, and validating the knowledge claims and ideas, especially those born of the lived experiences of Black women, group participation is essential and engagement from all those involved is equitable and required.

An ethic of care, the third dimension of Black feminist epistemology, is made up of three interrelated components and highlights personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy as central to the knowledge validation process. First, there is an emphasis on individual uniqueness. Although members of the same group, as Black women, each individual is thought to be a unique expression of individuality and seen not as detracting but enriching to the group as whole (Collins, 2000). The next component rests with emotions as an indication of the speaker's belief in the validity of an argument and concerns the appropriateness of those emotions in dialogue. Developing the capacity for empathy is the last component of an ethic of caring.

Individuals will not only use their lived experiences as a criterion for meaning but they must work to develop those knowledge claims through the use of dialogue. Then, package and

deliver those new ideas and developing knowledge claims in “it’s not what you say, but how you say it,” to demonstrate their concern for their ideas and the ideas of others, but they must also be accountable for their knowledge claims. This means that assessments of their knowledge claims evaluate their individual character, values, and beliefs. In line with this logic, Black people and Black women especially, reject the prevailing belief that probing into an individual's personal viewpoint is outside the boundaries of discussion (Collins, 2000) but rather it provides evidence of the credibility, or lack thereof, a person’s knowledge claims.

Methodology

Reed-Danahay (1997) describes autoethnography as a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. Personal experience narrative (Denzin, 1989) is a type of autoethnography where researchers focus on their own life circumstances to understand larger social or cultural phenomenon and use personal narrative writing as a strategy that incorporates affect and emotion into their analysis (Butz & Besio, 2009). Within personal experience narratives researchers use themselves as the primary research subjects to understand some aspect of the work that involves but exceeds themselves (Butz & Besio, 2009).

My experience as an elementary school teacher and my identity as a Black woman and a Black Language speaker shape my scholarly endeavors and specifically shaped how I initially viewed and critiqued my first iteration of the course. My academic and personal identities complete a full version of myself. With this understanding of this version of myself, in this research I focused on the actions I took to (re)frame a language arts methods course for elementary preservice teachers to understand what it may take or what it may look like for teacher education as a whole, and literacy teacher education at the elementary level specifically, to shift its pedagogies from Eurocentric, maintained through white linguistic and cultural

hegemony to one powered by centering Black students and Black Language through Black epistemological beliefs towards the full humanity of Black students and unravel anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism.

What we Buildin' ain't gone be Perfect, but it's Worth it: A (Re)construction

Armed with these epistemological powerhouses, I knew at their core there was something transformative brewing, but I had yet to realize its full potential. I understood the prowess of Afrocentricity, Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, and Black feminist thought separately. I knew they guided my scholarly endeavors. But it wasn't until I began teaching our department's ELA instructional methods course, until I was in the thick of it, that I would realize that collectively they had the potential to (re)frame my instructional practices. The power of doing is special in that way.

Now, "ready" doesn't quite describe what I was feeling once I knew that it was official, and I would be teaching a section of the language arts instructional methods course in the fall 2022 semester. In order to truly tap into my ELA scholar and literacy bag, I had to walk the walk and talk the talk. This meant I needed to be teachin' courses that were reflective of the scholarship, research, and pedagogy that I rooted my work in all the papers and presentations I was doing for my own classes, but also that was reminiscent of my experiences as a public school educator. But most importantly, that was preparing preservice teachers to support and engage with a diverse group of students.

So, first things first, I needed to see what this course was about, how it had been taught in the past, and understand what I was inheriting because I take every course assigned personally as a commitment to preparin' the future to teach our future. I developed my syllabus based on previous course syllabi, received the course textbook that had historically been used, and

supplemented articles from academic journals as well. As the semester began and I prepared to teach the course for the first time, I started to feel bad, wrong, somethin' wasn't right. But hey, you don't know what you don't know, so I pressed on. I had not reached candidacy yet, and sometimes as doctoral students we are inexperienced and lack the confidence to insert our professional thoughts and opinions into courses, imposter syndrome is real. But the reality is that we have professional knowledge and experience and informed insights to add. Thus as the preservice teachers in my class discussed readings, writing workshop, phonics, vocabulary development, comprehension strategies, children's literature, and other facets of elementary language arts, we also discussed equity and equity literacy (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015), I still felt like something was missing. Although I did try to integrate this, what was missing was specific discussion and focus on the lived realities and language arts experiences of Black students, antiracist pedagogy, and works that supported preservice teachers in their preparation for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse ELA classrooms.

So, I went to work. In the lab, aka my living room or my office on campus, I reflected on who I was as a practitioner and who I was becoming as a teacher educator-researcher-scholar and began my work to (re)frame this course. As I tapped into those identities and (re)imagined a language arts experience for preservice teachers and for Black students, I concentrated on the ideas of how language arts classrooms might serve as revolutionary sites that disrupts racial and linguistic injustice while striving to transform the world and humanize the lives of Black youth (Johnson et al., 2017), what components of language arts instruction are necessary for such spaces, and then, how might these spaces also benefit all students.

This meant centering Blackness, Black students, their language, their experiences, and their needs had to be a necessity and done authentically, and not arbitrarily mentioned and

discussed by me with students. Thus, building the course from an antiracist lens and framing it with Afrocentricity, Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, and Black feminist epistemologies I was able to restructure the course and its components, the course text and supplemental materials, assignments, and in-class experiences, with these Black epistemologies in response to my first experience teaching the course and to counter language education that was designed to center white linguistic and cultural hegemony.

“Okay, so, BOOM! Here’s what we gone do:” Course Design

Now let me reiterate, I work from the premise of “once you know better, you do better.” So I’m not sayin’ the course was no good from jump, but I am sayin’ there was room for improvement and more importantly there was a crucial need for critical conversations and actions towards linguistic justice and antiracist language and literacy education. Many teacher education programs say they are preparing teachers for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse contexts but fail to include the genius of Black students and Black Language, specifically, in their courses and neither is challenging anti-Blackness embedded in the fabric of said programs.

My sphere of influence, as a doctoral candidate, was this course. I started with the modules and topics that were covered the first time I taught the course and then used Baker-Bell’s (2020) Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy to support my redesign. The topics originally covered were: an introduction to culturally relevant pedagogy, word study, vocabulary, and grammar, guided reading, comprehension, and children’s and young adult literature, family literacies, the writing process and mentor text, expository writing and digital literacy, conferring with writers, and equity and literacy education. While these topics are foundationally important for preservice teachers to develop skills, strategies, methods, activities, and techniques to support

students literacy development, they were missing the criticality, praxis, and knowledge that work toward transformation and social change in addressing racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities in language and literacy education (Baker-Bell, 2020).

An Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy must center Blackness, confront white linguistic and cultural hegemony, and contest anti-Blackness (Baker-Bell, 2020). In (re)designing the course, it was essential that the course description reflected the tenets of an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy. We been knowin' what's necessary to move toward an antiracist language and literacy education and progress is often slow, but elementary teacher education can no longer be a place where we neglect to do the work or where we sprinkle antiracism when it's convenient. Starting with the course description it originally read as,

Following a theory into practice philosophy, students explore, develop, and use instructional strategies, materials, technologies, and activities to promote children's development of attitudes, behaviors, and concepts in language arts in grades PreK-6 in support of NCTE national instructional standards and the Virginia Standards of Learning.

The blueprint was there, by this description, the course was foundationally sound and clearly states its purpose and intent to guide preservice teachers to connect theory and praxis, it focuses on promoting children's literacy development, and even mentions how this works supports national and state standards. I do not suggest that I know more than the designers of this course or that they were ill-intentioned in building it or crafting the description. Nor do I suggest that simply from the description you know everything that will be covered over the course of a semester.

However, I do subscribe to a language and literacy education that strives toward racial and linguistic justice and equity with the understanding that literacy is not only about reading the word but also reading the world. The ways that white epistemologies and whiteness pervade teacher education programs requires a necessary change in the ways teachers are educated; and Wetzle's (2020) sentiments that "race is "on the table" in public discourse, and literacy teachers are called upon to transform spaces to be more equitable for racially diverse students" (p. 307). Lastly,

All teachers are teachers of literacy. Any goal to improve literacy education for all students must involve a close look at the educators charged with delivering literacy curriculum with equity-minded, culturally relevant, and antiracist pedagogies (Haddix, 2017, p. 142).

With these assertions in mind, the course description needed a level of specificity that highlights the existence and legitimacy of Black Language. This is necessary to address anti-Blackness and the ways anti-Black linguistic racism impacts literacy education. In addition to the above description, I added the following description to the course syllabus,

As we use an Afrocentric and antiracist lens, we'll study more specifically Black Language (BL) and address anti-Blackness in language education. You will be introduced to BL as a system of speaking and writing equally legitimate to White Mainstream English and the linguistic resource used by many African American students. In this class, each of you will have the opportunity to critically reflect on your own ideologies about language, explore antiracist language and literacy pedagogies, and interrogate what it means to center Blackness in language education to move us toward linguistic justice. While many of you may be unfamiliar with Black Language, it is my

hope that you will have a clearer grasp of the language usage of African Americans, and how this language fits in the elementary language arts classroom and beyond.

It was important to make this distinction in the description and to specifically state that students will be introduced to Black Language as a rule-governed linguistic system and to acknowledge that although they may be unfamiliar with BL being discussed as such, this will be a space for them explore their ideologies about language and explore instructional strategies, material, technologies, and activities to promote children's development of attitudes, behaviors, and concepts in language arts from an antiracist Afrocentric lens.

Black Epistemologies in Praxis

In the section that follows, I demonstrate how Afrocentricity and Black feminist epistemology support how I used Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy in the language arts instructional method course as a framework to affirm Black Language and interrogate ideologies about language with the elementary education preservice teachers enrolled in the course as we worked toward developing instructional strategies, materials, technologies, and activities with the potential to move us toward linguistic and racial justice in the elementary language arts classroom. Lastly, I will provide a brief description of the major and low-stakes assignments for the course and how their design was also shaped by the Black epistemologies at the center of our course.

Literature Elevation

The original course text used by previous instructors supported the original description of the course. However, that text would not support the revised direction of the course. In the spirit of Afrocentricity, it was necessary to find a text that would provide the students with an

opportunity to examine the perspective of Black students, emphasizing Black literacy in education and society, historical and present day. Oftentimes the story or knowledge of Black people and Black literacy begins from struggle and positions Black people as acted upon. The African-centered approach starts from the viewpoint of Black genius, it positions students as coming from somewhere with something and that something as valuable and fundamental to the educational process (Richardson, 2000). Richardson (2000) explains that their literacy education should invite students to explore their histories by connecting Black Language to the Black literary tradition and stimulating critical awareness.

Implementing *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* (Cultivating Genius) (Muhammad, 2020) as the course text provided opportunities for the preservice teachers to delve into the historical realities of Black literacy from the Black perspective and encouraged critical conversations of Black Language and a language and literacy education that centers the genius and joy of Black students.

In addition to selecting a new guiding course text, I was on the lookout for supplemental course text that could also support preservice teachers in engaging with centering Black students, Black Language, and Black literacy and that connected the Black epistemologies framing the (re)designed course. I sought to include scholars who were committed to being in these Black academic streets and scholars who were practitioners and were able to convey their classroom practices that centered Black students. Some works were a no-brainer. These were pieces that I wished someone had shared with me along my journey before entering the classroom. We can't talk Black Language and not read the Dr. Geneva Smitherman and Dr. April Baker-Bell. What is a course rooted in Black feminist thought that doesn't explore the likes of bell hooks? Equity, liberation, and literacy education being discussed without mention of Dr. Bettina Love and Dr.

Jamalia Lyiscott felt unjust. This is not an exhaustive list (see Appendix A) but centering these prominent Black scholars also further demonstrated for students Black excellence in education.

Module Remix

The readings I collected for the course needed to be organized and assigned intentionally for maximum impact. But they weren't the only aspect of the course that needed to be rethought. Weekly we explored modules that covered a range of language arts methods from vocabulary instruction to writing workshop and guided reading. In the fall 2022 semester when I taught the course for the first time, I followed the modules as designed. When I restructured the course I didn't completely abandon the initial design of the course because the course did cover the makings of foundationally sound language arts instruction. However, I did recenter language, Black Language specifically, in our ELA instructional methods course using the Antiracist Black Pedagogy (see Appendix B). It would be impossible for students to design elementary language arts classrooms that challenge and combat anti-Black linguistic racism, and anti-Blackness generally, with the opportunity for guidance to investigate and interrogate those constructs after they were introduced to them. The design of the modules provided those opportunities.

Lastly, the modules were designed to begin the course with a Zoomed out view of antiracist language arts pedagogies by starting with exploring Black Language as a language, identity, and family literacies. Then, the course zoomed in to specific instructional methods and strategies still rooted in Black epistemologies and identity by exploring topics like African American children's and young adult literature and digital literacies in African American communities, for example. To conclude the course we zoomed back out to focus on the goal and the "so what" of it all by shifting our attention to equity and liberation in literacy education.

For the Good of the Group: Dialogue and Community

Black women generate and validate knowledge in community with others (Collins, 2000). Community was imperative for preservice teachers to investigate Black Language and anti-Blackness in language education because our course was going to challenge their ideologies about language and what they knew to be “true” about language education. It was my goal for them to feel empowered and supported throughout the course, by me and by their classmates. This connectedness is essential to the knowledge validation process and their full participation was a requirement as their ideas, thoughts, and experiences would be tested.

The students in the course read new material weekly. They responded to their readings independently in writing through maintaining a reading and reflection journal. Then, our class discussions were shaped by questions, reflections, aha moments, challenges, assertions, and other comments or thoughts based on the readings, responses to readings, and weekly topics. I was there to facilitate discussion, support and guide students, but ultimately for the discussion and the course to move, students had to participate. They had opportunity to share in discussion both whole group and small group in breakout rooms. Agreeing or having all students think or feel the same about the content wasn't the goal but rather as they developed habits of using dialogue in assessing these knowledge claims they felt how the power of the word and dialogue supports them toward resisting the status quo, white cultural and linguistic domination in language arts education and how to cultivate language arts classrooms that respond to the linguistic, cultural, racial, and self confidence needs of Black students.

Course Assignments

Course assignments were both low-stakes and high-stakes assignments. Low-stakes assignments were based on reading responses, responses to literature and critical self-reflections done by the students. Students maintained a digital reading response and reflection journal and a

literature reflection journal, via Google Docs, and was only shared between the student and I. Students submitted four major assignments during the course of the semester. For each assignment, students were encouraged to employ whatever linguistic resources they deemed necessary to communicate their ideas.

Language, Literacy, Identity, and Culture Blueprint. The Language and Literacy Blueprint was the first major assignment and asked students to critical reflect their own sociocultural positionality, what it means to be literate, the language(s) they speak, the ways they use language, what factors influence their language, how might society view their language(s), and as a result view them, and the ways they encounter language in and out of school. As we set to explore the intersection of language, culture, and identity within the Black community, writing a linguistic memoir such as this gave students the opportunity to examine the intersection of language, identity, and culture through reflected on the language used within their own communities and their experiences, or lack thereof, with linguistic racism.

Historically Responsive Literacy Lesson Plan. Using the Historically Responsive Literacy (HRL) Framework developed by Muhammad (2020), students crafted one reading focused and one writing focused lesson plan. Additionally, students also submitted a 1-2 page reflection that asked them to reflect on their experiences crafting the lesson plans, how these lesson plans may inform their teaching, and the HRL Framework's ability to combat anti-Blackness.

Because "African American students' literacy education should involve their experiences and be experienced by them" (Richardson, 2000, p. 198) an important aspect of the lesson plans was using African American children's literature to support their instruction. Students we asked to select four text and discuss how it would impact their instruction, as well as connect to

students identities, their skill development, their intellectual development, and its potential to develop students criticality.

Reading Room Reflection. It is essential that you are intentional about the text you choose to support your language arts instruction. After students had the opportunity to participate in a Reading Room, they reflected on their experience reading *New Kid: A Graphic Novel*, its potential to advance the HRL Framework (identity, skills, intellect, and criticality), linguistic and racial justice, and its connection to the language and literacy of their future students. Additionally, they discussed ideas for implementing reading rooms or other specific literary experiences (i.e., literature circles, book clubs, or other similarly structured spaces) in their language arts classrooms.

Here again students found themselves engaged in community using dialogue, but this time centered around literature. In an Afrocentric education, we build on the understanding that Black students are members of the Black Language culture because of the collective and individual identity negotiation involved in the Black experience so that students are aware of their capabilities and take pride and build on the culture that nurtured them (Richardson, 2000). Thus the preservice teachers explored a young adult novel that provided them with an example of a very specific Black experience, one in which the main character negotiated his identities as one of few Black students at a prestigious private school and a kid who wanted to maintain his connection to his neighborhood friends from his old school. During their reading rooms they discussed the characters and events at the intersection of language, race, culture, and power, anti-Blackness, anti-Black linguistic racism, and the author use of Black Language, and characters' choices in language.

Final Reflection. This was students' opportunity to reflect on their journey exploring Black Language, centering Blackness, and Black students, their histories, culture, and language to reflect on their own ideologies about language, critically reading African American literature, and pursuing linguistic justice for Black Language speakers and other communities of Color in language education that was designed to center white linguistic and cultural hegemony throughout the semester. They were asked to look into where they've been as they looked forward to where they're going in their development as antiracist language arts teachers who value and affirm their students, their identities, and their language. Their reflection was guided by the following overarching questions: How might language arts classrooms serve as revolutionary sites that disrupts racial and linguistic injustice while striving to transform the world and humanize the lives of Black youth (Johnson et al., 2017)?; What components of language arts instruction are necessary for such spaces?; and How might such spaces benefit all students?

Conclusion

Teacher education can either work to reproduce the harm that Black students have experienced through their language and language education, or it can commit to the overthrow of the white linguistic and cultural hegemony that dominates literacy teacher education and elementary language arts methods courses. For this overthrow to be imagined it would mean that teacher educators view teacher education with a critical lens that helps them to uncover the underlying epistemological beliefs and challenges to move the field forward rejecting the embedded Eurocentric views.

In this paper, I offer a look into how I approached countering Eurocentric domination in an elementary language arts methods course. I've described my journey from entering the

language wars to the specific components of the course that were (re)framed to center language, Black Language, Blackness, and Black students. This type of work requires an intentional commitment to antiracist elementary language arts pedagogies that humanize and empower Black students in and through their language in ways that haven't been taken up before.

However, this approach will be met with pushback and protest because even with decades of research on Black Language and the wealth of Black educational theorists, there are still some who don't recognize Black Language as a rule-governed linguistic system. Further, with the current political and educational climate it would seem most important and more critical than ever to center the needs of Black students. Approaches like this aren't anti-white or anti-anything for that matter, but rather are pro-Black because Black students, their lives, literacies, and education matter too. Approaches like this are particularly critical for white preservice teachers, the vast majority, and white students. White students and white teachers' ignorance of linguistic diversity and language variation different from their own contributes to their enacting of anti-Black linguistic racism and anti-Blackness in language education in general. Coupling this with their lack of awareness of whiteness demonstrates why these critical capacities and solidarity are necessary and important for not just linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse students but for white students as well.

Disregarding Black Language in literacy teacher education is irresponsible of teacher educators. (Re)imagining a teacher education curriculum that honors and values Black Language and Black communities requires a shift in pedagogical approaches, like the one offered here. I offer these (re)framing ideas to move forward that work and encourage teacher educators to imagine what required language and literacy courses could look like through the centering of Black epistemologies:

1. Black Language is a rule-governed linguistic system and is the linguistic resource that many Black students bring to their language arts education. We must acknowledge the rich history and origins of Black Language. Dismissing Black Language as less than white Mainstream English, dehumanizes Black students and reinforces anti-Black linguistic racism;
2. Preparing teachers for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse contexts has to mean placing Black students and their linguistic, cultural, and racial needs at the center of their language education. Teacher education and the U.S. school curriculum must stop taunting white Mainstream English as the only way to communicate or demonstrate intelligence. Instead, we must recognize Black Language as a language of survival, of resistance, and one that demonstrates Black people's way of doing and being in the world. Their lives depend on it;
3. To interrogate white linguistic and cultural hegemony and anti-Blackness in language education, preservice teachers must interrogate their own ideologies about language. For teachers to fully understand, there must be ample and repeated opportunities to discuss and reflect on their beliefs about language. Doing this in community allows them exchange ideas with others as they're building their knowledge of ways they may have previously been complicit in anti-Black linguistic racism. This is necessary during their teacher preparation program, but should also be ongoing once they begin their teaching career;
4. To engage in Black linguistic consciousness raising preservice teachers must explore the historical, cultural, political, and racial underpinnings of Black literacy and Black Language. This is done through intention and guidance on the

part of teacher educators. Black Language and Black dispositions in research must ground this work; and

5. Relying on the Black literary tradition provides the potential to advance literacy development and challenge anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism in curricular choices, pedagogical practices, and teacher attitudes. It provides the opportunity for Black students to see themselves as an active part of the curriculum as knowledge seekers. It gives white students the opportunity to build those critical capacities to see into the lives of those who are different from and potentially opens their eyes to the detrimental effects of whiteness and anti-Blackness.

Discussing educational equity and claiming to prepare preservice teachers for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse contexts and not centering Black students, Black lives, and their language and literacies practices to paint a more complete picture of what literacy is will only continue to maintain that white Mainstream English is the only way to demonstrate intelligence and ensure academic and societal success for Black students and other communities of Color. Sprinkling in linguistic diversity has not and will not ever be enough. A shift in pedagogies, one that centers Black epistemologies, invites preservice teachers to critically reflect on their own ideologies about language and develop the knowledge and understanding necessary to make pedagogical decisions and cultivate instructional practices that honor, value, and affirm Black Language. For Black (literacy and language) lives, Black genius, and Black joy it is imperative that we reevaluate our approach to teacher education to cultivate transformative language and literacy education and educational equity in PK-12 schools.

III. ARTICLE TWO

DON'T STOP MOVIN': STUDYIN' BLACK LANGUAGE AND INTERROGATIN' ANTI-BLACKNESS IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN THE PURSUIT OF RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC JUSTICE

"It's a different way of looking at how real racism really is, and how you know, and how all this, even the curriculum, the education system politics, all of it, you know it's just kind of for me looking at it from this educational standpoint and just through the eyes of a child kind of made it easier for me to learn and relate to the things that I wasn't completely sure about. Yeah, you know, because I definitely don't know everything. I've definitely been misinformed on things." -

Ruby

Introduction

In pursuit of linguistic, racial, and educational justice for Black students, Baker-Bell (2019) forwards Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy that centers the linguistic, cultural, racial, intellectual, and self-confidence needs of Black students. Baker-Bell's (2019, 2020) early iterations of her framework were conducted with secondary students and preservice secondary English teachers. It is this work that inspired the course that is the context of the research in this article and what guided me in uncovering the need for similar work with preservice elementary teachers.

There were various aspects of the course that were directly modeled after her framework and concluding ideas. I questioned many aspects of literacy teacher education from the standpoint of all teachers being literacy teachers, whether they are teaching elementary language arts, math, science, or social studies. Thus, if all teachers are literacy teachers, then all teachers should be provided the opportunity to develop critical capacities regarding linguistic diversity, anti-Blackness in language attitudes, anti-Black linguistic racism, and to learn through and about language including the historical, cultural, political racial, grammatical, and rhetorical

underpinnings of Black Language. While these opportunities can be found in English education and secondary ELA classrooms (Baker-Bell, 2013, 2017; 2020; Charity Hudley & Mallison, 2014; Haddix, 2017, 2008; Johnson et al., 2017; Kinloch, 2010; Kirkland & Jackson, 2008; Godley & Minninc, 2008; Chisholm & Godley, 2011) they are scarcely found in the elementary teacher education research.

From this perspective, influenced by an Afrocentric approach, Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy and BlackCrit, I examined the way a language arts instructional strategies course, which is a required course of all elementary education students, marginalized and oppressed Black students, Black literacy, and Black Language. Hear me out, in previous semesters of the course there was inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy and discussion of equity and equity literacy in language and literacy education, however, to address the specificity of anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism, a critical linguistic awareness and investigations of the intersection of language and identity, language and power, language and history, linguistic racism, and white linguistic and cultural hegemony (Baker-Bell, 2019) had to be the focus of the course. Milner et al. (2021) reminds us,

As pre-service teachers in teacher education experience curriculum and learning opportunities that suggest the marginalization and inferiority of people of color, minoritized bodies (and Black people in particular), these teachers reproduce their practices in the PreK-12 classroom.

Therefore, to not center Black Language and addressing anti-Blackness to dismantle anti-Black linguistic racism in language education specifically, alludes to not fully understanding that what teachers learn and come to know manifest in what they teach and do in ELA classrooms. If we do not carefully consider and analyze the ways anti-Blackness, white linguistic and cultural

hegemony, and oppression exist in language and literacy teacher education preservice teachers stand the chance of reproducing the curriculum of violence that renders ideologies and discourses that imply Black and Brown youth are not and should not be valued, cared for, or respected (Cridlan-Hughes & King, 2015).

In what follows, I describe the experience of four preservice teachers who were students in a language arts methods course grounded in Black epistemologies that allowed them the space to view and explore language at the intersection of race and power as I implemented an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy to provide them the opportunity to interrogate their own ideologies about language and about Black Language, develop critical capacities to investigate linguistic oppression and combat anti-Black linguistic racism, explore and uncover language as the invisible aspect of the ELA curriculum (McCain et al. 2021), and (re)construct and a language education that affirms and values the racial and linguistic backgrounds and experiences of Black students (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Literature Review

Black Language has not been a mainstay in teacher education. That's not to say it hasn't been researched or discussed, but rather, it hasn't been researched and discussed, nor centered, in a way that resist anti-Blackness, develops preservice teachers' knowledge and understanding of Black Language, Black students, and linguistic diversity that honors, values, and affirms the language consistently. To take it one step further in elementary teacher education, and specifically in language arts methods courses, is in need of more scholarship that interrogates language ideologies of preservice teachers and how those attitudes may reproduce linguistic and racial injustices, then, engages preservice teachers in pedagogy that develops their practical knowledge of how to cultivate, foster, and maintain language arts classrooms built on antiracist

principles, instructional methods that honor linguistic diversity, pedagogical and curricular choices that combat anti-Blackness, and challenge white linguistic and cultural hegemony.

Anti-Blackness & Teacher Education

While few teacher education programs prepare preservice teachers to address anti-Blackness, they do prepare preservice teachers to operate within linguistic and cultural norms rooted in white supremacy and anti-Blackness (Morris et al., 2022; Bryan, 2022). It is pivotal that teacher education programs disrupt this type of preparation. It is important for scholars, researchers, and teacher educators to understand the impact of anti-Blackness in teacher education and to address the impacts of anti-Blackness in language and literacy (teacher) education.

Morris et al. (2021) posits that teacher education programs in the U.S. have not fully addressed the implicit and explicit anti-Black messages present in early childhood education and early childhood special education. To that effect, they suggest using BlackCrit as a lens to disrupt anti-Blackness in teacher education programs to identify biases in practices that serve to devalue Black families, provide clarity for early childhood teachers on how to better serve Black children and combat their view of them as devalued members of early childhood environment, and to (re)imagine the field for all children and especially for the children who have been historically marginalized.

Black Language hasn't mattered in English language arts classrooms (Baker-Bell, 2019). Much like Black lives and Black bodies are marginalized, disregarded, and disdained in society. Mayorga & Picower (2018), two non-Black scholars, argue that teacher education is currently operating under an "All Lives Matter" framework, even with its additive nature of multiculturalism and social justice orientation, it still works institutionally in ways that "answer

and uphold white supremacy and racial capitalism (p. 214).” The “anti” in anti-Blackness is denial of Black people’s right to life (Jefferies, 2014). In relation to Black Language, anti-Blackness informs the “linguistic violence, persecution, dehumanization, and marginalization that Black-Language speakers experience in schools and everyday life” (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 19). So, Mayorga & Picower (2018) suggest protecting public education, gatekeeping who becomes teachers, preparing educators to teach aligned with Black Lives Matter movement, and supporting and defending in-service teachers committed to #BLM as ways to be in active solidarity with the vision of #BLM and to combat anti-Blackness and anti-Black violence in teacher education. To teach in active solidarity with the demands and vision of the Black Lives Matter movement seeks to engage in centering Black life and Black liberation which must include a specific focus on Black literacy and Black Language.

Similarly, Coles & Stanley (2021) also discuss how educational institutions have recently put forth effort to be anti anti-Blackness, particularly in response to the Black Lives Matter movement the current makeup of teacher education is still insufficient in attracting and producing teachers prepared to teach through the persistence of anti-Blackness, and rather are relying on color-blind pedagogies and sustain the misrecognition of anti-Blackness. They offer Black Liberation in Teacher Education as a framework to aid teacher educators in understanding, knowing and being responsive to the ways Black liberation should and must inform the development of teachers in an anti-Black world.

What these frameworks demonstrate is that there is understanding and knowledge of the ways anti-Blackness is pervasive in teacher education. And although we’ve seen a recent uptick in multiculturalism and social justice oriented teacher education programs, we still ain’t addressin’ the elephant in the room, Like we can’t see what’s right in front of us. Yes, maybe

these frameworks do not specifically center the language and literate lives of Black students, we cannot discuss Black joy and Black liberation without an explicit focus on language because Black literacy is a focal point for the injustices waged against Black bodies historically and contemporarily, in schools and in society.

Ideologies, Linguistic Diversity, & Teacher Education

Despite decades of research on Black Language, deficit language ideologies often continue to persist in teacher education and English language arts (ELA). Even with increased coursework in linguistic diversity and language variation, these ideologies may be embedded in the core of the teacher education curriculum which results in practices remaining unchanged (McBee Orzulak, 2015). Preservice teachers may then be unexposed to the intersection of language, race, and deficit ideologies and when they are unaware of how their own ideologies about language impact their teaching, and ultimate student learning, they are unaware of the racialized nature of their language attitudes. This struggle then leads to the continued promotion of standard language ideologies in teacher education. Thus, preservice teachers are challenged with acting as gatekeepers for White Mainstream English and adopting a linguistically responsive position (McBee Orzulak, 2015).

To conceptualize some of the challenges preservice teachers face in understanding linguistic diversity and language variation, McBee Orzulak (2015) explored linguistic ideological dilemma (LID) ELA teachers experienced during attempts to operationalize course work focused on language variation during their student teacher experiences. LIDs are defined as contradicting values and language brought into conflict and managed by speakers located informed by educational context and ways of engaging with race and language (McBee Orzulak, 2015). The results of the study position code-meshing as an approach to language variation in

ELA classrooms to expose racialized deficit language ideologies, challenge inequities related to whose code-meshing is recognized or stigmatized, and may support teachers attempts to disinvite deficit ideologies in dilemmatic spaces (i.e., language arts classrooms) (McBee Orzulak, 2015). Additionally, McBee Orzulak (2015) found that preservice teachers need strategies for responding to internalized ideologies Black Language speakers experienced and strategies for implementing and connecting with their revised ideologies as they combated status quo practices in language education.

Another approach to studying linguistic diversity in teacher education was explored by Thibodeaux et al. (2020) as they explored preservice teachers' knowledge and awareness of code-switching in ELA classrooms. Thibodeaux et al. (2020) believed that if preservice teachers have an understanding of and can recognize the benefits of strategies to help learners code switch, then they may be able to assist those students with literacy skills necessary for their literacy development. Thus, it was necessary to examine the preservice teachers in their program readiness to help students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The results of the study revealed that the preservice teachers had a limited knowledge of resources and programs to help students code switching but were aware they could teach students to learn to code switch. Additionally, preservice teachers felt that strategies for code switching should be shared in classrooms and in teacher preparation programs. Further, they acknowledged that nurturing relationships with students, learning about their cultural backgrounds, and teaching in a variety of different ways will help students feel safe and empowered (Thibodeaux et al., 2015).

These studies describe two different approaches to linguistic diversity and language variation in teacher education. Though both studies examine preservice teachers understanding of instructional strategies as it relates to their future Black Language speaking students, examines

their beliefs about Black Language and their ability to provide instruction that supports Black students literacy development, they also highlight the need to interrogate internal struggles, struggles their students may face between the use of their language and messages that it is inadequate (i.e. linguistic push-pull), and address the entrenchment of anti-Blackness in teacher education.

McBee Orzulak (2015) posited code meshing as an approach toward achieving equity in language education, Thibodeaux et al. (2020), although an assimilationist approach, posited code switching as the strategy preservice teachers needed for engaging with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students, Godley et al. (2015) explored a more critical ideology for preservice teachers to develop critical perspectives on dialect diversity through a course focused on language variation. They found the preservice teachers had a strong appreciation and understanding for dialectal diversity and code switching, most wanted to teach more critical aspects of linguistic diversity, but many failed to acknowledge their own white privilege and were less skilled and comfortable with teaching about power structures than dialect diversity (Godley et al., 2015). Being critical of language and literacy education means that language pedagogy must teach preservice teachers to question their existing language ideologies and increase their awareness of how language maintains systems of power, privilege, and discrimination. Critical approaches to language instruction must also include praxis (Godley et al., 2015).

Similarly, Woodard & Rao (2020) encourage preservice teachers in their urban elementary education program through a critical language ideology to acknowledge relationships between language, race, and power. In examining their preservice teachers' growth toward developing critical language ideologies they also explored the tensions preservice teachers

experienced with the push-pull of standard language ideology, positioning languages as resources, and expanding positionings of multilingual students' reading abilities (Woodard & Rao, 2020).

Fogel & Ehri (2006) took a different approach to teaching their preservice teachers, who spoke White Mainstream English, about Black Language. The researchers exposed preservice teachers to three different levels of instruction. Some preservice teachers received exposure to Black Language by reading text, others received exposure plus explanation of dialect transformation strategies, while others received exposure, strategy explanation, and guided practice transforming sentences from White Mainstream English to Black Language. What they found was that all approaches improved knowledge and attitudes toward Black Language, but those who received exposure plus strategy explanation and guided practice were more effectively able to translate sentences into Black Language and use Black Language in story writing. The goal here was to find ways to effectively teach preservice teachers dialect features so that they can help Black Language speaking students learn White Mainstream English.

While we see an evolving body of research on language ideologies, linguistic diversity, and how to prepare preservice teachers to teach in culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse contexts, still there is a limited amount of research that centers this experience from the vantage point of a language education for Black students and their language. Scholars have explored varied approaches to how this should be taken up in teacher education. However, many of those approaches have been from the position of getting students to switch or change their language without interrogating why they're being asked to do so. On the other hand, some approaches have taken a more critical approach and have asked preservice teachers to interrogate the

intersection of language, race, and power and how systems, such as education, maintain that power through a standard language ideology.

What we must be able to agree on is that courses that aim to prepare preservice elementary teachers to teach language arts, that is courses that focus on literacy development across the PK-6 years and the instructional strategies, pedagogical and content knowledge, and curricular choices that shape those language and literacy experiences of Black students and other communities of Color must move beyond diversity, beyond just an appreciation of linguistic diversity or language variation, These courses must take on critical approaches to interrogate the status quo and provide preservice teachers with practical knowledge to implement in their future classrooms. But they must also explicitly address Black Language as a language, a rule-governed linguistic system, the historical, political, cultural, and racial underpinnings of the language, and the harm, violence, and discrimination Black students face in schools through the curriculum, teacher attitudes, and pedagogical decisions in and through their language. Specific and practical strategies must be explored and tools developed so that teachers can engage students in naming their language and describing and critiquing their literacy and language experiences and deficit language ideologies.

Theoretical Framework

The first foundational idea of BlackCrit informs this research. Dumas & ross (2016) state, “antiBlackness is endemic to, is central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life (p. 429).” In education this means that BlackCrit must then attend specifically to the importance of Blackness within the social construction of white supremacy and the ways in which anti-Blackness reinforces the miseducation and misrecognition of Black students and other communities of Color. Thus we

must interrogate the ways that BlackCrit intervenes at the intersections of policies and everyday practices reproduce Black suffering to imagine an education in which Black humanity is no longer threatened and disdained.

Thus, language education must exist at the intersection of language, race, and power, to interrogate the white supremacist values at the root of language and literacy instruction. However, this is only possible if this work is taken up in teacher education programs. Education is representative of the society it exists within, thus if anti-Blackness is endemic and permanent in society, it indeed pervades the institution whose purpose is to socialize the learner and support them in becoming productive members of society. If anti-Blackness is not examined, questioned, and explored in teacher education programs preservice teachers exit programs without the skills, instructional strategies, and pedagogical knowledge to combat the failure of schools to effectively educate Black children, and their success in reproducing dominant racial and linguistic ideologies and the repression of the Black body (Dumas & ross, 2016).

Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy

Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020) is an active embodiment of BlackCrit and was used in this course to guide students in an interrogation of anti-Blackness and white linguistic and cultural hegemony. Through an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, the preservice teachers in this study explored their own language ideologies, the persistence of anti-Blackness in language education, studied Black Language as a rule-governed linguistic system, focused on anti-Black linguistic racism, and their development as antiracist language and literacy educators.

This approach is necessary to explicitly name, investigate, and uncover the type of linguistic oppression uniquely endured by speakers of Black Language. Such an approach can

also work to dismantle anti-Black linguistic racism in teacher education, and consequently support preservice teachers in developing practices that combat anti-Black linguistic racism in their language arts classrooms. BlackCrit reminds us that only critical theorization of Blackness confront anti-Blackness (Dumas & ross, 2016) thus we cannot imagine a language education that does not take an African-centered approach and rejects that belief that White Mainstream English, the same language and language education used to oppress Black students can empower them (Baker-Bell, 2017). After all, the language of conquest, of domination, the master's tool, will never dismantle the master's house (Lorde, 2007). For literacy teacher education and in this ELA instructional strategies course this framework was used to forward a language pedagogy that centers Blackness, confronts race denial, and investigates to dismantle anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic and cultural hegemony in language arts education.

Methodology

To some extent, all qualitative research is trying to uncover participants' understanding of their experiences. Thus, researchers conducting qualitative research are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct knowledge, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative case studies search for meaning and understanding, sees the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and an end product that is richly descriptive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), just like other forms of qualitative research.

A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The unit of analysis characterizes the case study, not the topic of investigation. The units of analysis for this study are four preservice teachers at a mid-Atlantic university. It is this focus on the units of analysis and wanting to understand how this group of preservice

teachers interpret their experiences and construct knowledge as they study Black Language and investigate anti-Blackness in a course that centers Blackness and linguistic and racial justice, as they reflect on how it may impact their teaching, curricular and pedagogical choices, ideologies about language, and their conceptualizing of anti-Blackness in language education that makes case study the best suited research method for this study. This article describes my inquiry into the following research questions:

1. How do elementary preservice teachers describe their experience in a language arts methods course framed by Black epistemologies?
2. In what ways does the course support transformation toward racial and linguistic justice?
3. What challenges are evident for preservice teachers' transformation toward racial and linguistic justice?

Participants

All students enrolled in the course were invited to participate in the study. The course consisted of a total of 18 preservice teachers. 11 of the 18 students consented to participating in the study. Of those 11 students, four students signed up for a final interview. Those four students are the focus of this paper.

Lily's class standing was a junior during the spring 2023 semester. Racially, she identifies as white and characterized where she grew up as the deep south. Lily has elementary classroom experience as a math tutor and expressed that 2nd grade is her desired grade level to teach.

Marigold was also a junior during the time of this study. She identifies as Hispanic. Her family is from El Salvador and she speaks both English and Spanish. 4th grade is her desired grade level to teach.

Opal identifies as Black, white, and Native American. She was a senior at the time of our course in the spring 2023 semester. Kindergarten or first grade is her desired grade level. When asked what language or languages she speaks, she named English. Opal did also describe her language as slang and Ebonics.

Ruby is a senior. She identifies as white and Romani Gypsy. She speaks English. She currently serves as an instructional assistant in an early elementary grade and would like to teach within the K-2 grade range.

Data Sources

The initial inquiry for this study began as an exploration of elementary preservice teachers' experiences in a language arts methods course (re)framed by Black epistemologies, their investigation of anti-Blackness in language education, and the development of their own ideologies about language. I collected data from all candidates who chose to participate in the study, however, this paper focuses on the experiences of Marigold, Lily, Ruby, and Opal during our semester-long PreK-6 elementary language arts instructional methods course.

Over the course of the semester students completed four major assignments. For this study, two of those major assignments were collected and further analyzed. Students wrote a language and literacy blueprint as a critical reflection of their own sociocultural positionality, on what it means to be literate, the language(s) they speak, the ways they use language, the factors that influence their language, how they feel society views them and their language, and the ways they encounter and use language in and out school. The second assignment, which was also the

culminating assignment for the course, was a final reflection. In this reflection students addressed the following areas: ideologies and teacher attitudes, linguistic justice, and curriculum and instruction. They were asked to revisit previous assignments, course activities, journal entries, and any other work done over the course of the semester that informed their current position on their development as antiracist language arts teachers.

Written reflections were a staple for our course. Weekly students would make journal entries in response to the assigned course readings. Additionally, students were frequently asked to write in reflection of class discussions, course topics, and class activities. These written reflections were maintained in a journal that was kept digitally using Google Drive.

Lastly, after the semester ended, I interviewed Marigold, Lily, Ruby, and Opal via Zoom and asked them about their experiences in the course, what aspects of the course were the most useful, to reflect on their knowledge and understanding of Black Language before the course, how the course may have impacted that understanding, and their perceptions and confidence in cultivating an antiracist language arts classroom, valuing and affirming Black students and Black Language, and recognizing, challenging and combating anti-Blackness. They were also asked what challenges they experienced throughout the course, what they wanted to share with others about Black Language, what they felt might have been missing from the course, and what further support they felt they may need as they transition into their first year of teaching.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for inquiry was led by the research questions. It was deductive in nature in that coding was guided in providing insight into the research questions being asked. Thus, my first round of coding began with in vivo coding to place emphasis on the actual spoken words of the participants (Manning, 2017). Participant quotes, words, and phrases were color coded based

on their relation to the research questions. This required several readings and listening of the participant journals, final interviews, and course assignments.

After the first round of coding, I began to look for themes among the data following Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis requires searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In thematic analysis, analysis involves a constant moving back and forth between the data set, the coded extracts, and the analysis of the data you are producing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Writing is an important part of thematic analysis and needs to take place beginning in phase one and throughout the coding and analysis process.

During phase one of thematic analysis I revisited the data to familiarize myself with the data again. So I reread, watched, and listened to interviews and participant generated documents. Before focusing my attention specifically on the data that had initially been coded using in vivo coding.

During phase two of thematic analysis: generating initial codes, I began looking at all four participants in vivo coded data separately. I began to generate preliminary ideas of meaning and patterns from what I was noticing in the data. Some of the initial codes were "unconscious bias," "ideologies about language," "racial illiteracy," and "Black Linguistic Consciousness."

In phase three: searching for themes, I combined the data of all participants, organized by research question on one document for each question. Each page was organized as such: at the top of the page you could find the research question. Next, below that you would find the quotes, words, and phrases from the in vivo coding. Then, attached to those in vivo coded data extracts, I added comments, using the Google comment feature, which included the initial codes generated.

In this phase I also began grouping similar codes and coded extracts together, as I continued looking for patterns to finalize themes.

Phase four: reviewing themes, was the phase where I began to name larger sets of data for the final themes that I developed as a result of reviewing the data. Based on the data and the patterns found: I came up with the following themes: Views, Engage in Archaeology of Self, Connectedness, and Black Linguistic Consciousness. There were two themes that only accounted for one participant's data: Linguistic Double Consciousness and Linguistic Double Consciousness.

For phase five, I defined the themes. Views, like views from the top, detailed the preservice teachers overall experience in the course. Here I looked for data that related to their thoughts, feelings, and reactions to finding out what the course was going to be about and how the course may have increased their confidence in addressing anti-Blackness, cultivating antiracist language arts classrooms, and valuing, affirming language instruction for Black Language speakers and Black students.

Archaeology of Self as a theme centered around the ways the preservice teachers talked about themselves and their identities in relation to our course content and discussions. I was interested in how they described their ideologies about language in relation to their own language and how they discussed Black Language in relation to their own language. So the codes here, all related to the participants personal histories and racial and linguistic realities.

The theme of Connectedness related to specific aspects of the course that the preservice teachers felt supported their pursuit towards linguistic and racial justice. Thus the coded data here was representative of how the preservice teachers talked about dialogue and community in our course.

Black Linguistic Consciousness as a theme concerned how preservice teachers interrogated white linguistic and cultural norms in and resisted those norms as they discussed their ideologies about language and how they were (re)imagining elementary language arts for their future students at the conclusion of the course.

Linguistic Double Consciousness and Internalized Anti-Black Linguistic Racism involved how Opal, a Black woman and Black Language speaker, both demonstrated an understanding for the connectedness of language and race and even resisted white linguistic and cultural norms at times, while also reproducing the internalized negative messages about Black Language and Black Language in language education.

In the last phase of thematic analysis, I began writing this paper. I had to be intentional about how to interweave the participants' voices within my findings and be sure that I had the literature to support my analytic narrative as well.

Findings

The themes that emerged during data analysis relate directly to the research questions that guide this study. The findings of this study explain how the preservice teachers describe their experience in the course, the aspects of the course that supported their pursuit toward racial and linguistic justice, challenges they experienced- both internal and external, and the ways they are taking up challenging anti-Blackness in language education.

The theme Black Linguistic Consciousness was evident among all the preservice teachers. Baker-Bell (2020) describes Black Linguistic Consciousness as a critical interrogation and resistance of white linguistic and cultural hegemony and anti-Black linguistic racism. The challenges varied for Lily, Marigold, Opal, and Ruby. The themes for those challenges range

from linguistic double consciousness and internalized anti-Black linguistic racism to instructional and curricular challenges.

Other themes that were salient among the preservice teachers were engaging in archaeology of the self and connectedness. Sealey-Ruiz (2021) describes the Archaeology of Self as a process of excavating personal histories to activate racial consciousness as a precursor to theorizing toward what antiracist pedagogies means to each of us. If preservice teachers are going to critically interrogate racial and linguistic justice, they must investigate and pay close attention to their own linguistic and racial realities. This includes exploring their ideologies about Black Language, linguistic diversity, and anti-Blackness. Connectedness, a dimension of Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000), suggests that dialogue and community are necessary for new and developing knowledge and the knowledge validation process. Thus, the preservice teachers describe how working together, in community and conversation with their peers, supported their development and ideas in our Black epistemological centered course.

Views: Preservice Teachers' Experiences Centering Blackness, Black Students, and Black Language

The participants were asked to describe their experience in a language arts methods course that centered Blackness, Black students, and Black Language. Lily, Marigold, Opal, and Ruby all expressed some level of surprise about the structure, content, and topics discussed in the course. For Lily, as someone who has spent time in her personal life investigating and pursuing racial justice, she explained that she “never looked at [racial justice] from the perspective of language. So it was very nice to see that perspective of it, and how it affects everyday life.” Ruby, however, expressed that initially she was a little worried as she was unsure of how far we would go into controversial topics. But ultimately she feels she learned a lot and further explains

that “you think you know things...So it was nice to have that experience, because now I'm definitely more mindful of things like [Black Language, centering Black students, and anti-Blackness].” “So I was kind of surprised when, like I kind of got to class and then like that's what we were talking about. But I feel like the experience is good. It wasn't what I expected, but I'm glad that that's what came out of it, you know, because I feel like it's something that it's really like not talked about,” said Marigold who mentioned that she is someone who does read the syllabus before class, and although she had read the syllabus she was unclear of how language arts was going to be approached from a perspective that centered Black Language and Black students. Opal, the only self-identified Black Language-speaker in this study, recalled the course was refreshing. She says, “so this course actually opened a lot to different teachers, including myself. I will say it was like a refresher kind of, but it was a nice refresher, because it showed and reminded me that even though I'm about to be a teacher, I can still bring in culture and ethnicity into the school and actually help my students that way.”

In addition to this course being a new, surprising, and eye-opening experience for the participants, Lily and Marigold expressed that the content and structure of this course has not been a common experience for them in other required courses of the program. Specifically, Black Language, anti-Blackness, and anti-Black linguistic racism in language education haven't been mentioned in other classes. Lily expressed that there's never been any sort of avenue that she's found where she would have learned about Black Language or anti-Blackness in language education. Marigold echoes this sentiment as she shares that she's taken a sociocultural perspectives in education course, but otherwise hasn't experienced a course that centers race in such a way that our language arts course has and doesn't feel this is adequate to meet the needs of new teachers who embody antiracism. She says “they only make it take like one or 2 classes

of that, and I feel like that's really not enough because it's like you can make somebody take one class about [race]. I'm like, and yeah, you'll learn from it. I'm like, but what are you really taking away from that class? If you're just doing it once? How are you really applying that in your classroom? If you're just taking one course like that, you know, and I feel like it's just something that I didn't really think about.”

The course also offered a sense of openness and awareness for the preservice teachers as well. For Marigold, it offered an opportunity to be more aware of Black Language, anti-Blackness, and anti-Black linguistic racism. In reflection she offered these thoughts, “So I think taking this class is really just, it's opened me up more to [Black Language], and it's made me more aware about it. So that now, I can like actually see it more around me, and see like what my biases are. And I really like that in this class, because it's really not what you expect. It's one thing to learn the methods and stuff like that but learning what language actually is, is another.” For Opal, the openness and awareness she gained from the course was in the form of shared struggle in the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice. For her, the class gave her the chance to see others as co-conspirators in this struggle. It gave her hope to know that she wasn't the only one fighting and taking a stance against injustices done to Black students. She says “I liked it, just the class in general, knowing that there's other people in the world, even if they're not in Virginia, and they're like in Ohio. Whatever, just knowing that there are people out there that like change. I can work with that.”

Engaging in Archaeology of the Self

For some preservice teachers, they enter courses, such as ours, having done some exploration of their identities, biases, and ideologies. Some come in with a bit of racial literacy and a developing understanding of how their identities, cultural, racial, social, and linguistic

positionings offer them some form of privilege. Lily recalls her experiences growing up in the deep south, “there's a very distinct social class, and I grew up very, very poor, and you know considered poor white trash.” She acknowledges her sociocultural positioning and how that impacted her experiences and shapes her views of the world today. Then, she demonstrates her developing understanding of anti-Blackness as endemic to society by adding, “but yet still better than at least the black folks in town right? And I couldn't ever understand what that was about, you know, but [my language] didn't affect my life. and my life definitely was not easy, so I didn't have to think too much about it.”

Not only was this class a space for Lily and the other preservice teachers to reflect and explore their identities and realities, it was also a space to investigate their ideologies about language. During an early interaction in our course, many students were using the terms “proper” and “improper” to talk about language, and in particular to talk about Black Language in comparison to white Mainstream English. Lily was sharing her thoughts about language and I posed to the class “Well why is that proper English?” in which Lily responded “oh, I don't know why. Because some white dude told me that a long time ago.” I inquired further into her thoughts about my question and she admitted that it made her have to rethink her beliefs about language. This was the first time that Lily had her beliefs about language challenged, but for her, “it was nice because until somebody asked you that question. You just, that's what you've been told, you know.”

Marigold reflected a lot on her own language practices as she speaks both English and Spanish. This class challenged her to think about her own language experiences and how those experiences shaped her ideologies about language. It was a welcomed challenge for Marigold because in learning about herself and her ideologies about language she was also able to learn

about the areas she felt she needed to grow in in terms of developing language arts instruction that supported students and their linguistic repertoires.

It was important to emphasize for the preservice teachers in the course that Black Language is a rule-governed linguistic system and because it may not always be recognized as one, there is a widespread lack of knowledge of how Black Language and its roots have influenced a lot of the language we have today, despite Black Language being so widely researched. This held true for Marigold as she began to learn more about Black Language. She shared that until this class, she didn't realize that even some of the things that she says, vocabulary she uses, and even pronunciations are considered Black Language. Ultimately, she realized, "There are some aspects of it that even I like, I speak that way and I've grown up speaking that way. And I've never like thought like oh, like there's a term for it, you know, or like where it really comes from."

In continuing to explore her own language practices, Marigold shared that now as an adult she feels she's mastered code-switching because she felt that's what was expected of her and what was necessary in order to sound "smart." As a Spanish speaker she has received messages about appropriateness of her Spanish in certain spaces and the quality of her English in others and accepted that as just how things are. Though she has mastered code-switching out of necessity, she doesn't feel that's how it should have been and it isn't something she wants to reproduce for her students in her language arts classroom. Instead of constantly correcting them in unnecessary circumstances she wants to help them be more confident in class because "The idea of having standard English as the highest form of speaking English can and has put so many students and their language down, demeaning their background."

“Honestly, it’s kind of mind-blowing when you finally have this wake up moment that you never knew you needed,” Ruby shared as the course offered her an opportunity to explore her experiences with Black Language and her developing understanding of her ideologies about language. While Ruby identifies as white, she traces her heritage and self-identified as Romani Gypsy. This is a part of her identity she felt growing up that she needed to keep secret because of its stigmatized nature in society. Exploring this aspect of her identity helped her to take a deeper look at the marginalization of Black people and Black Language. She recalls that she grew up listening to Rap and Hip-Hop music, which may have been some of her initial exposure to Black Language, though the two aren’t mutually exclusive. Ruby admits that before the course she never really thought about Black Language as a language, but rather “just the way people talk.” Further she recognizes that “it’s easy to not think about things when you don’t have to deal with them. When I was growing up, this wasn’t a topic that was talked about in school and [anti-Black linguistic racism] wasn’t something that I remember witnessing happening to others.” Being given the space to explore her identities, her language, and her ideologies about language gave Ruby the opportunity to reckon with her blind spots when it comes to the linguistic and racial violence experienced by Black students and Black Language speakers.

Connectedness: Dialogue & Community

In addition to Afrocentric ideas in education and Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, Black feminist thought was also an epistemological framing for this course. Thus working in community together, in open dialogue sharing thoughts and opinions to build new ideas, and in validating knowledge based on interactions with classmates were essential functions to this course. Marigold contended that this was probably one of the classes where she put in the most input because of the conversational, exchange of ideas nature of the course. In her experience in

the course she acknowledges that everyone didn't agree all the time but "other students actively like responded, and like added, and you know, even if they didn't fully agree. But they like, gave their like their point of view, which I feel like is the most important thing."

In cultivating new understandings, those sharing of ideas during class discussions was pivotal to Marigold's developing understanding of interrogating how she viewed language but also how others viewed their language, an experience she may not have had otherwise, but one she can now take with her in her language arts classroom. The discussions and readings in our course really solidified that for her, "I really enjoyed [the discussions and the readings] just because I got to hear so many different opinions and I feel like you can like, have your opinions on certain things, and like you can believe certain things or whatever. But you're not really going to get exposed to like other biases and other people, and the way that they speak, and the way that they view their language and their background until you have those conversations. Like having a conversation with yourself, and yes, figuring out what it is you believe in is one thing. But being able to hear other people's opinions, and other people's thoughts, and like kind of dissect that to then understand it, I feel like it's something that has been really useful."

When asked what aspects of the course she found most useful, Opal confidently replied, groups. Because the class was held via Zoom students were often placed in breakout rooms to have smaller group, oftentimes guided, discussions. For Opal it was a spark of hope because addressing injustices and equity in education was already something she wanted to do but this class gave her the opportunity to see that there are others who are still learning but what to contribute to making education safe, valuing, and affirmed for all students. She says, "having classes like these, and seeing that there are more people, more open, and they're like, I want to learn, and this is incorrect, and this is an injustice, that gave me more hope, because I already

wanted to do something like that. So, it was actually really nice to hear the different things to be heard, to not be judged and everyone be on the same market of this world is messed up.”

Ruby’s experience interacting with her classmates during small group discussions was impacted by the lack of diversity in our course, which was representative of the lack of diversity in the teaching force. Most teachers are white, female, and monolingual. Our class had a similar make-up. For Ruby, that left her feeling like she was missing out on hearing the Black perspective. “When we’re doing this class, you know, focused on [Black students] and centered around [Black Language], I feel like it was like 3 white girls like just being like, yeah, like I like that or yeah, this was good either. There was no way to relate totally to it other than how we felt about it.” However, she also found the benefit in such an experience as well. Although she felt she missed out on hearing a perspective different from her own in terms of language experiences and anti-Black linguistic racism, she also found that in some of the different group arrangements throughout the semester, there were times when her classmates did push her to move past “I agree” or “I like that” and helped her to make connections.

Black Linguistic Consciousness

All the preservice teachers demonstrated, to some extent, anti-Black linguistic racism at the onset of the semester. Here, I specifically focus on how Marigold and Lily’s Black linguistic consciousness was raised during the course of the semester and specific pursuits of racial and linguistic they are imagining for their future elementary language arts classrooms. During a class activity, students were asked to analyze two language samples. Students were asked to respond to the following prompts for each language sample:

- What are your thoughts about each language sample?
- How would you describe each language sample?

- How might you describe a speaker of each language sample?

Language sample A represented features of Black Language and language sample B represented features of white Mainstream English. However, students were not made aware of this until after they spent time responding to the prompts for each language sample and then spent time discussing their thoughts with their classmates. After, we had a class discussion about each language sample and students shared their responses, thoughts, questions, and ideas.

Marigold's initial responses to language sample A was representative of her initial understanding of Black Language as "street talk" or "hood talk." She characterized the speaker of language sample B as more "proper" with the way they speak.

In her final response Marigold wrote, "My perspective on language has changed drastically since the beginning of this semester." At the end of the semester she was challenging notions of standard and proper/improper when it comes to language. She continues, "we had many discussions and readings that made me question, what even is proper English? Standard English is the standard when it comes down to language, and if your language is any different than that, then you are speaking "improper." In her writing she included quotations around the word improper and explained, "I put the quotations on improper and will continue to do so because improper is just a silly way of saying that you are wrong if you do not speak to the standard that many old, white men made many years ago."

She imagines her elementary language arts classroom as a space her students can use as an outlet to express their joy and how they feel, and that it is her job to be sure she cultivates such a space for them. She doubled down on this stance and expressed that she sees no harm in students using Black Language in the classroom because that is their language at the end of the day. For all language arts classrooms, they "should be an open space rather than a place where

they battle with linguistic and racial violence. They should be aware of their language but also appreciate it and use it to bring equality towards language.”

Marigold’s stance on language arts instruction focused on making language visible in the elementary language arts curriculum. This focus is shared by McClain et al. (2021). They believe language remains largely hidden in elementary language arts but remains as a means of sorting and tracking students. McClain et al. (2021) argue instead that explicit language instruction to enhance students’ metalinguistic understanding, or their knowledge about how language works, is necessary to support students’ literacy development and their critical awareness about the interconnectedness of language and race. Marigold explains that while the language arts standards are obviously what she is expected to follow and implement, incorporating all of her students’ languages matter just as much. She feels this type of language arts instruction shouldn’t be seen as an extension or extra work for teachers because pedagogies that value and affirm students should be the norm. She understands and takes accountability for the role she will play as an elementary school teacher responsible for students' literacy development, “I should be helping students embrace their language rather than putting them down for it.”

Lily demonstrated some unconscious bias as she used words such as informal, formal, with friends, school setting, authority/teacher, probably white, probably African American, and slang language to describe the language samples. But she also showed a developing understanding of the interconnectedness of language, race, and power and anti-Black linguistic racism. For example, for language sample A she included ideas such as “If language was voiced like this in school the young person would automatically be corrected” and “White people might assume the speaker was uneducated and even a trouble maker.” For language sample B, she

wrote, “If this person was to have a conversation with a stranger, the assumption would be made that the speaker was intelligent and educated.”

In her final interview and while reflecting in her journal, Lily demonstrated how this course supported her pursuit of racial and linguistic justice and shaped how she plans to uplift Black Language and Black students in her future language arts classroom. Lily felt our course offered her a different light in which to see Black students. In her experience as an elementary tutor she recalls there being so much focus on what students can’t do but says, but she wants to focus on the genius already inside them. Muhammad (2020) reminds us that power and genius is already inside of our students- it is the “brilliance, intellect, ability, cleverness, and artistry that have been flowing through their minds and spirits across generations” (p. 13). Similarly, Lily says, “there's never any focus on the genius that is already inside them, that they've learned from their families and their culture. That isn't being recognized because the school is structured around white culture and white knowledge, and what we think is important. And so now I feel I have that understanding where I could say, Wait, is this right? We shouldn't be using this. Why don't we use this something that is important to them, and they understand it, and they would get, you know.”

Additionally, she said now she has the terminology, understanding, and knowledge to call out anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism. Prior to our course she spent time exploring racial justice and had valuable opinions about equality and striving for a level playing field. But now, when she’s calling someone out, it isn’t just her opinion anymore but rather has the research to support her stance.

Lily was asked, as final thought, if there was something she felt was important for all preservice teachers to know as they began their journey to teach elementary language arts

centered on Black students and Black Language and she shared two things, first, “Black Language is an actual language with rules. It's not something they just made up and decided to speak like, you know, like it, it has rules. There's understandings for it all, and it's important” and “the importance of why we can't just add a couple of black books into our majority of white curriculum. Why, we really need to focus on having lots of Black and Brown literature in the classroom. And why that's important.”

When looking toward her future as a antiracist elementary language arts teacher, Lily feels it is her job as an educator to understand the way African Americans have used language and literacy to lament their struggles, fight for their freedom, and to cultivate intellect and how their efforts have been thwarted by linguistic and systematic racism.” She demonstrates that she understands some of the ways that the language arts curriculum has harmed Black Language speakers and how practices like overcorrection disregards the legitimacy of their language. A baseline understand for her students will be not to discount Black Language, but rather to stand up for it and lastly, she adds, I commit to continued learning and education from the Black community on the stories that matter most. This willingness to learn from Black students and Black Language places them as the expert of their language and shifts the dynamic of the student-teacher relationship to one that’s an exchange of ideas with students as active participants in their learning.

Opal’s Linguistic Double Consciousness and Internalized Anti-Black Linguistic Racism

Similarly, to the other preservice teachers, Opal exhibited, at least to some extent, anti-Black linguistic racism sentiments. However, because Opal is a Black Language speaker her sentiments were influenced by her personal experience as a racialized body and a Black Language speaker. As a result, she experienced internalized anti-Black linguistic racism and

exhibited a linguistic double consciousness, or the resistance and perpetuation of anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic and cultural hegemony (Baker-Bell, 2020).

Opal's initial during one of our earlier class activities, comments demonstrate her personal experience as a Black Language speaker but also show her conflicted positioning on Black Language and anti-Black linguistic racism. For example one of the comments she wrote from language sample A reads, "when I am comfortable around other black people and vice versa, this is the type of language that is used" and "this is the language type that us as black people stay away from because people not of color will not understand and we as people of color would spend more time explaining what we mean." For language sample B she commented, "when I want to sound educated, I would speak more like this," "this also would be the language style that we would as teachers teach our students to use in society as people," and "this language would be picked over language sample A on a resume because it seems more proper and grammatically correct."

Opal believed that acknowledging, valuing, and working toward understanding Black Language will help her as an antiracist ELA teacher because it shows students that they are heard and important. This type of stance, she continues, will benefit all students because it will show them that teachers care and give them the "opportunity to be themselves in a safe environment, knowing that they are guided and supported by their teacher in using their native/comfortable language." Opal also encourages code-meshing, "code-meshing is the way to go when it comes to allowing students the freedom to use "their English" in assignments, homework, etc." But then she continues, "we as teachers need to teach certain basics of English (grammar, punctuation, etc.); other than that, students should be able to freely use their *own English*."

We see Opal acknowledge that she uses Black Language to relate to other Black people, but we also see her demonstrate a belief of the unintelligence and inferiority of Black Language. She also wants to allow students to submit assignments in “any way they want it doesn't matter when it comes to stuff like that” but she finishes, unfortunately, since the [Standards of Learning] requires all this stuff, I still have to teach them to use their ‘own English’ for certain assignments that are not graded by the school/school board (SOLs, etc.) but graded by just the teachers. But anything that they turn into me and I grade. I will want them to have free range.”

For her own language, Opal described it as “Ebonics and slang put together. So sometimes it doesn't make sense.” During our final interview, she often used the term “Americanized” when she meant white. In her final reflection, she defined Black Language as “more of a slang type of speech with a mixture of Ebonics.” I wanted to dig further into her distinction between Black Language and Ebonics during our final interview, in which she explained to her, “It's the Caucasian nice version of Black Language. That's why I see slang as Ebonics. I see it as the Caucasians nice word to say Black Language, but they don't want to say Black Language, because they feel like that's racist, which I don't know. I don't get it. So they call it Ebonics, because any time I say Ebonics to anybody, everyone understands it as Black Language, but they won't say Black Language.”

In another instance she reflected on her experience with being a Black Language speaker in schools. She had an English teacher who told her if you write or speak in Black Language to your friend or someone you know, that's okay. “But when you write a paper for a teacher or for a class you have to write properly, and that's not properly.” She contested this, “Our friends, the people I hang out with, they're using slang and Ebonics Black Language. But anytime we went to

English class. We nearly all had to turn it off and talk proper. Well, that was the word she used, proper.”

What we see here is both Opal’s allegiance to Black Language as a part of her identity, but a disconnect between that identity and her becoming a teacher. Her own educational experience has been plagued by respectability politics and assimilationist ideologies and even after our course to some extent, she exhibits those behaviors. Kinloch (2010) examined two Black males' perspectives on using white Mainstream English for survival and success because they had internalized messages that using white Mainstream English was how you moved up in the world. Because of these internalized messages they struggled with how to achieve upward mobility while also maintaining their Blackness. This is such a common experience and is similar to the linguistic push-pull that Opal is experiencing. Opal’s experience demonstrates the importance of the intentionality of how courses are crafted, preservice teachers explore and reflect on their own experiences and ideologies, and are exposed to the harm of pedagogies that seek to erase or force Black students to assimilate.

Conclusion

In this paper, I described preservice teachers' experiences in a course shaped by Afrocentricity, Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, and Black feminist thought. Specifically, I explored, (1) How do elementary preservice teachers describe their experience in a language arts methods course framed by Black epistemologies?, (2) In what ways does the course support transformation toward racial and linguistic justice? (3) What challenges are evident for preservice teachers' transformation toward racial and linguistic justice?, and (4) How might an Antiracist Black Language pedagogy transform how preservice teachers interrogate anti-Blackness in language education?

What was extremely evident for Lily, Ruby, Opal, and Marigold was that this experience was new, necessary, and unexpected but appreciated. The course provided them an opportunity to view language differently and explore Black Language from a positive and affirmative lens. It also presented challenges such as reenforcing internalized anti-Black linguistic racism and linguistic double consciousness. But, most importantly it supported preservice teachers in interrogating anti-Blackness in language education in the pursuit of Black joy, liberation, and an antiracist language education.

These experiences don't happen by chance. They don't happen by employing race-evasive pedagogies and ideologies in teacher education. Dismissing Black Language and erasing Black students from their language education dehumanizes and disdains their existence. These experiences can't only happen once and they cannot be left up to "on the job training." Teacher educators have to center race and language in language arts methods courses, specifically, but in teacher education in general. Teacher educators have an obligation to Black students and other communities of Color to ensure that they are preparing teachers to enter linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse prepared not just to teach, but to recognize, call out, reflect, and then act, on anti-Blackness, anti-Black linguistic racism and all other forms of oppression, injustice, and inequity as to not reproduce the harm and the violence that Black students have pervasively and historically experience at the hands of U.S. schools and curriculum.

Literacy teacher educators and literacy teachers are overwhelmingly white (Souto-Manning, 2021). This is in direct contrast to racial shifts in student populations in schools today. Understanding this constant lean toward whiteness is imperative to combat the white linguistic and cultural hegemony that pervades literacy teacher education and elementary language arts classrooms. What has been, hasn't worked. Thus I offer and encourage other teacher educators to

explore Black epistemologies and antiracist language education pedagogical innovations such as Afrocentricity, Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, and Black feminist thought as ways to abolish Eurocentric domination in teacher education, but rather towards literacy teacher education that centers the genius, the joy, the artfulness, and excellence of Black communities. As well as address the anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism that currently guides the attitudes and epistemological orientations of literacy teacher education and teacher education programs.

IV. ARTICLE THREE

“WHAT’S BETTER THAN ONE MILLIONAIRE? TWO:” LINGUISTIC JUSTICE AND HISTORICALLY RESPONSIVE LITERACY AS PREREQUISITE FRAMEWORKS IN PURSUIT OF RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC JUSTICE IN ELEMENTARY LITERACY TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

As a result of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the tangled history of literacy and racial justice has become one of the most prominent battlegrounds as the Brown decision proposed the notion of education as the pathway to place all children on a level playing field. Literacy has been the site of struggle for racial justice since the civil rights movement because it has been the site of racial injustice in America for so many years (Prendergast, 2003). Throughout American history, literacy has been weaponized against Black people to ensure White cultural and linguistic hegemony. Enslaved Africans were not allowed to learn to read or be educated, literacy institutions were closed against freed African Americans (Prendergast, 2003), and as Black people sought to use the literacy they had acquired to exercise their rights as citizens, literacy test, for example, were used arbitrarily to defer and disenfranchise Black people. Amidst the civil rights movement, national literacy initiatives, such as standardized testing and school vouchers, were often pushed as routes to racial justice but their failure to provide such justice serve as a reminder of the insufficiency of such remedies to address literacy and racial injustice.

Black literacy has always been political. Enslaved Africans learned to manipulate the language as a means of survival, to free themselves. Learning to read and write meant Black

lives were at stake. So, literacy was not a selfish possession, but rather it was a way of freeing and uplifting the race (Richardson, 2000). Literacy has often served as a stand-in for skin color in the ongoing attempts to subordinate African Americans (Brandt, 2001; Prendergast, 2003). The power of education as liberation has been central to the fight of language and literacy education scholars, and the field of education generally, for the education of Black students. Ladson-Billings (1993) reminds us,

No challenge has been more daunting than that of improving the academic achievement of African American students. Burdened with a history that includes the denial of education, separate and unequal education, and relegation to unsafe, substandard inner-city schools, the quest for quality education remains an elusive dream for the African American community (p. ix).

In Asante's (1992) argument for Afrocentricity in education he explains that students of Color are made to see themselves as acted upon as opposed to active participants in history. For example, slavery is taught from the activities of white people rather than from the resistances of enslaved Africans. In agreement, I question how we position African American students as subjects and not the objects of education, so that they see themselves as not merely seekers of knowledge but as integral participants in it (Asante, 1992). Black students deserve an education that is representative of their lives, experiences, language and literacies. They deserve to be positioned within the context of their history and encouraged to define their futures (Richardson, 2000). Black students should know the ways literacy has been the site of the struggle of racial injustice in America, that Black literacy has been political, education as the fight for liberation, and that their language was developed out of resistance and survival.

I argue for this to hold true, schools must rethink the ways the curriculum, pedagogy, and

teacher attitudes marginalize, disdain, and disregard Black bodies (Dumas & ross, 2016).

Further, to combat anti-Blackness, in language arts classrooms, education must lean into the historical excellence of Black education (Muhammad, 2020). I echo Muhammad's (2020) stance, if we start with Blackness then we begin to understand ways to get literacy education right for all (p. 22). I believe the disconnect that lies between classroom practice and teacher education, is a barrier that stands in opposition to the rich literary history of Black Americans, and in turn, in opposition to literacy achievement for Black youth.

This paper then seeks to provide insight into a literary experience crafted for preservice teachers that builds on combating anti-Blackness in language arts education by leaning into the historical excellence of Black literacy. The following research questions guide this inquiry:

1. How do preservice teachers engage with African American young adult literature presented as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice?
2. In what ways do the historical framings of Black literacy support preservice teachers' pursuit toward linguistic and racial justice for elementary language arts?

First, I describe the frameworks that conceptually frame this work. In a review of the literature, I demonstrate how others have taken up the call of using young adult and children's literature in teacher education but have yet to explore in depth how African American children's and young adult literature could be used as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice. Then, I outline the methodology that shapes this research. Following that, I present the findings and offer implications and recommendations for teacher education preparation programs.

Literature Review

African American young adult and children's literature gives Black youth the opportunity to see their linguistic and racial realities reflected in literature. Lee (1995) posits that including

Black Language structures and students' cultural ways of knowing, such as signifyin' and proverbs, can improve literary analysis skills. Thus,

Culture provides a matrix through which meaning is created and negotiated. Natural language is among the most powerful mediators of knowledge, values, and thinking processes. Thus, attention to characteristics of the language capabilities of ethnically and linguistically diverse students may yield significant information on which to base instruction (Lee, 1995, p. 618).

African American young adult and children's literature provide rich opportunities for language learning. Although there is a thriving and growing body of literature that examines antiracist language instruction and diverse young adult and children's literature, there is still a need for scholarly literature that centers how African American young adult and children's literature, specifically, can be a vehicle toward linguistic and racial justice. Essentially, how can African American literature be used as a vehicle to heighten consciousness of language in the face of fixed, monotonous linguistic labels (Kinloch, 2005; Baker-Bell, 2019) for students, for teachers, and by teacher educators?

Teachers and teacher educators have examined their uses of African American young adult and children's literature, multicultural literature, and canonical text and the ways that influences and impacts antiracist pedagogies and practices and how examining race through literature impacts their understanding of Whiteness and racial and cultural diversity. Groenke et al. (2015) propose that a more critical view of adolescence and how race is tied to representations of adolescence in young adult literature might inform their use of YAL with beginning ELA teachers in hopes of re-imagining new and humanizing pedagogies in teacher education. Although the scholars consider representations of race and racial and cultural

positioning based on conceptions of adolescence in society in YAL and they problematize their use of YAL, an examination of racial, linguistic, and cultural realities for linguistic justice is absent.

While Groenke et al. (2015) examined their own uses of YAL, other scholars have discussed their incorporation of African American literature or multicultural literature in teacher education and examined specific implications for the field of education. For example, Glenn (2014) detailed literary studies in which preservice teachers examined literary aesthetics through ethnically unfamiliar text. This resulted in participants' new literary language for analysis and response, opportunity to apply analytical skills they already possess in new ways, cultural context to inform their analyses, and space to admit deficiencies of knowledge or explore their own struggles within their analysis of culturally unfamiliar texts. While the participants did study literary aesthetics from the African American literary tradition, there was no specific mention of the language and literacies practices of the characters and the ways that informed their racial and linguistic realities. There was specific focus on new terminology gained by the participants that highlights discourse features of the African American literary tradition and that demonstrate language as a tool for understanding, however there was no connection to Black Language or discussion that helped students understand the historical underpinnings of such discussion. Haddix & Price-Dennis (2013) present case studies of how teachers' critical encounters with urban and multicultural children and young adult literature can shape their learning to teach processes. Teachers' learning processes are sociocultural, sociohistorical, and sociopolitical acts (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013). One major finding of this study included student discussions of teaching text that included "nonstandard" forms of English. Although there was discussion of students' shock of the language use in the book *PUSH* by Sapphire, some students critiqued the

main character's language use and argued for that being the reason why they wouldn't use the text in their own teaching. The researchers don't include whether or not they had students explore further features of Black Language, debates about Black Language, or approaches to teaching the historical, cultural, and political underpinnings of Black Language while using a novel that includes Black Language or help teachers problematize their notions of "nonstandard" English and its place in the classroom the way an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy may have.

Westbrook (2020) discusses her experiences observing White teachers teach African American literature as an African American teacher, researcher, and "colonized standard American English speaker." Similarly, Dyches (2017) describes how Sam, a White teacher of British Literature, negotiates Whiteness within the curriculum and his own. While demonstrating an understanding of the way Whiteness and White supremacist values pervades education, Westbrook (2020) demonstrates how White teachers are unprepared to teach African American texts, how authoritative figures tell White lies about Black Language, and are unconcerned about addressing racial depictions and racio-socio hierarchy. Here, the White teachers demonstrate a need for a critical interrogation of their own beliefs about race and language. Dyches (2017) details the canonical counter curriculum used by Sam to cultivate students' sociopolitical consciousness and provided students with the opportunities to restory themselves with and against British Literature. In both settings, an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy may have enhanced the teachers' interconnectedness of language and race and in helping them provide the students with the sociocultural, historical, and political understandings of language through literature as a transformative approach to language arts.

Although the aforementioned research was conducted prior to Baker-Bell's (2020) theorization of Anti-Black Linguistic Racism and Linguistic Justice, the studies demonstrate the need for such work. It is clear that teachers and teacher educators are drawing on diverse literature to discuss race, Whiteness, antiracism, and literary analysis. What it seems is still needed to address the gap in theory and practice is a shift in pedagogical practices that emphasizes the language and literacies practices of Black students, Black Language, and the cultural, racial, linguistic, realities of Black students and that works to dismantle Anti-Black Linguistic Racism. I propose the use of an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy, a framework for linguistic justice, to challenge traditional notions of language education and teacher education.

For students, examining literature helps them develop an appreciation for diversity of language and exposes them to “a medium through which authors and readers grapple with critical social issues” (Charity Hudley & Mallison, 2014, p. 73). Additionally, including African American literature and examining the characters, their use of Black Language, and the Black Language structures and features present in the text provides an opportunity for students to interrogate the ways language and race are connected to identity and Black experiences. In accordance with Baker-Bell (2020) and other language scholars (e.g., Charity Hudley & Mallison, 2014; Sealey-Ruiz, 2016; Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019), there are no venues more prime for discussing, critiquing, and dismantling racial and linguistic injustices than literary studies in the language arts classroom and teacher education.

19th Century Black Literary Societies

Historically, African Americans developed literary societies as collaborative spaces used to construct knowledge and engage each other to become literate (Muhammad, 2012).

Muhammad (2012) explains,

These societies often had dual functions. Developing reading, writing, and speaking skills was at the core of experiences for members of the societies. These experiences led members to enjoy literature. Reading and writing were also viewed as a social practice... This type of *reading* allowed literary society members to make sense of their many and complex identities, including their [racialized, gendered, and classed] positions in the world (p. 7).

In this way, literacy was used as a tool for resiliency, self-determination, and self-empowerment. Concomitantly, it was linked to principles of security, protection, and liberation (Muhammad, 2012).

Literacy as hope has been historically infused with the narrative of Black literacies for Black people. The emancipatory and humanizing aspects of literacy gave way to mental freedom, political power, and agenda building (Muhammad, 2020). It also provided the space to navigate education, schools, and other racist and oppressive societal structures. To be literate was to be educated and literacy was tied to liberation and power, within literary societies, and among Black people literacy was not just tied to skills and proficiencies.

Reading Room is another name for literary societies and is the name used for the literary experience created for the preservice teachers described in this study. Muhammad (2022), explains that historically,

[Literary societies] were more than just “book clubs” or associations to engage in the study of literature. Instead, they had stronger aims of advancing the conditions of African

Americans and others in the wider society. Societies were large and small, and were both gender-specific and unisex, although they initially began solely for males in 1828...

Engaging in texts led to acts of reading, writing, debating, and speaking and gave them a means to meet the greater end of elevating their minds and social conditions (p. 25).

Reading Rooms during the semester were held in breakout rooms via Zoom during our weekly class meeting. Preservice teachers were organized into four Reading Rooms. My university utilizes Canvas as its central learning management tool. Canvas has a group set feature in which it will randomly put students into groups based on the number of students in the class and the number of students you want in each group. Reading rooms were composed of four to five students each. The preservice teachers participated in four Reading Room meetings over the span of 4 weeks during our semester-long language arts methods course. The text students engaged with is a graphic novel titled, *New Kid: A Graphic Novel*, written by Jerry Craft. It centers the experiences of Jordan Banks, a seventh grader and one of the few students of color at his new school Riverdale Academy Day School (RAD). *New Kid* details Jordan's experiences as he attempts to navigate his new school culture, maintaining friendships with his neighborhood friends, and staying true to himself.

Conceptual Framework

Linguistic Justice

Linguistic justice does not side-step fairness and freedom (Baker-Bell, 2020). White Mainstream English is not the gold standard, it isn't the be-all end-all for Black Language speakers. Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy places the cultural, racial, linguistic, intellectual, and self-confidence needs of Black students as an integral part of their language education. It conscientizes Black students and the historical, cultural, political, and racial underpinnings of

Black Language (Baker-Bell, 2020). This pedagogy provides an opportunity to learn about and through Black Language, while also dismantling Anti-Black Linguistic Racism.

Many teachers are unaware of how their language biases impact their students and they leave their teacher education programs never having discussed approaches to language education that don't harm Black students or other linguistically marginalized communities of Color.

Against this backdrop, an Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy was used as a framework for PTs to explore the intersection of language, race, and power in *New Kid*. Their exploration was guided by the question: *Can African American literature be used as a vehicle for linguistic justice?*

Historically Responsive Literacy

In Muhammad's (2020) study of 19th century Black literary societies, she identified three themes or historical framings of literacy learning: literary, presence, literary pursuits, and literary character. These themes provided the structure for Black peoples' identities and literacies to be valued and honored. Literacy presence is using your voice, or your pen, to make yourself visible within the intellectual community through acts of literacy. Literary presence gave Black people the platform to project their goals and use their voices to have rights granted in larger political, social, educational, and economic contexts (Muhammad, 2020). In reading rooms PTs developed preambles as statements of their goals, intentions, and objectives during each meeting. Additionally, each PTs maintained a literature reflection journal to be prepared to share their voices and visions with their reading room members.

Both collaborative and individual, literary pursuits are specific acts of literacy. Black literary society members did not view literary pursuits as simply activities, but rather they viewed them as pursuits that would lead them to liberation, self-determination, self-reliance, and

self-empowerment (Muhammad, 2020). PTs engaged in individual literary pursuits as they read and wrote about the text and then collaboratively as they met once a week to discuss the text and the intersections of race, language, and power.

Literary character is the personal and academic characteristics a person develops as a result of literary pursuits (Muhammad, 2020). As PTs engage with literary pursuits, they are also developing literacy skills and, hopefully, building literate lives as a part of their personalities as they grow an appreciation for literature.

Methodology

My inquiry utilizes qualitative case study and resides in the critical orientation of qualitative research. A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). PTs were organized into four reading rooms. My university utilizes Canvas as its central learning management tool. Canvas has a group set feature in which it will randomly put students into groups based on the number of students in the class and the number of students you want in each group. Reading rooms were composed of four to five students. Each Reading Room met once a week. The PTs participated in four Reading Room meetings over the span of 4 weeks during a semester-long language arts methods course. Merriam (1998) posits research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education. By probing into the PTs insights and understandings of their experience in reading rooms, their discussion of *New Kid* and race, language, and power, the goal was to discover how such an experience informs ideologies about language and anti-Blackness, their knowledge of Black Language, and position on whether or not African American literature has possibilities as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice.

Participants

Turner is a white preservice teacher who characterizes the area she grew up in as diverse, however, she explains that her neighborhood was predominantly white. When asked about her language use, Turner describes her language choices as influenced by her environment and she uses words such as formal and informal to describe differences in her language based on audience and setting.

Reu is a white female who currently serves as a tutor in a local elementary school. She describes the school as having a high population of Spanish speaking students. As expressed by Reu, she has always excelled in writing and language arts. She noted that growing up everyone spoke the same and that her teachers taught them how to speak this way. Reu characterizes this speech as polite and acceptable. Reu acknowledges that because her language was viewed as acceptable both in school and socially, she never experienced language barriers and language was never as much of a struggle as it could have been for others.

Data Sources

Students engaged in multiple literary pursuits during the reading of *New Kid*. Three of those literary pursuits serve as the data sources for this study. They include the preservice teachers' literature reflection journal that students maintained during their independent reading of *New Kid*, their individual reflections written after each reading room, and their Reading Room Reflection major assignment.

Literature Reflection Journal. Weekly students were assigned a specific amount of reading of *New Kid*. They were encouraged to write down their general reactions, notes, thoughts, wonderings, questions, and other general reactions to the events and characters in the book during or immediately after their independent reading. Additionally, they were guided to

consider characters' language use, how race and issues of race (i.e. racism, anti-Blackness) were taken up in the novel, how, or if, Black Language was discussed, and how, if at all, they see the intersection of language, race, and power at play in the novel.

Individual Reading Room Meeting Reflection. Reading Rooms were conducted four times during the semester. They occurred the day after students independently read a particular section of the book. Because not all students consented to participation in the study, I was interested in their individual experiences and not necessarily the groups' collective experience, and because groups were assigned randomly, Turner and Reu were not all in the same Reading Room. However, each group engaged in the same literary pursuits in that they responded to the same prompts and questions. So, to learn more about their individual experiences in Reading Rooms, each student wrote an individual reflection about their experience in that week's Reading Room. Specifically, they were asked to focus on their experience:

- How they were able to stake their claim and making themselves visible within the intellectual community through acts of literacy (literary presence);
- Their engagement in acts of literacy (reading, discussing writing, debating, etc.) that may lead to liberation, self-determination, self-reliance, and self-empowerment (literary pursuits); and
- How their personal and academic characteristics developed as a result of their engagement in literary pursuits and knowledge gained from *New Kid* that could create possibilities for literary advancement and improvement of mind (literacy character)

Additionally, the provided their preliminary thoughts on:

- Their recommendation for using this book for grades 3-6;

- possibilities/opportunities/mishaps of a Reading Room or literature circle as an instructional strategy to center Black literacy; and
- The books connection to linguistic justice (i.e. Do you see opportunities for this book to be used as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice? If not, what’s missing?)

Reading Room Reflection Major Assignment. As a culminating assignment (see Appendix A), students were asked to reflect on their experience reading *New Kid: A Graphic Novel*, its potential to advance the HRL Framework and linguistic and racial justice, and its connection to the language and literacy of their future students. Additionally, they were asked to discuss ideas for implementing Reading Rooms (i.e., literature circles, book clubs, or other similarly structured spaces) in their language arts classroom.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was led by the research questions that guide the study. I employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. In addition to the data being coded based on the research questions, my analysis of the data was driven by the conceptual framework and BlackCrit, the overarching theoretical framework.

Following Braun & Clarke (2006), I first familiarized myself with the data during repeated reading of the data during which I began to search for meaning and patterns within the data. To generate initial codes, I used in vivo coding “using terms and drawn from the words of the participants themselves” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 138). Next, I organized the codes based on which research they responded to, then I sorted the coded data into potential themes. I identified and defined each theme before I began writing to provide a “concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23).

Findings

The following themes were born out of my analysis of the data: Transformative, Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors (Bishop, 1990), Language & Racial Positioning, The Power of Doing, and Literacy Pursuits, Agency, and Action. These themes respond to the two research questions that frame this study, (1) How do preservice teachers engage with African American young adult literature presented as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice? and (2) In what ways do the historical framings of Black literacy development support preservice teachers' pursuit toward linguistic and racial justice for elementary language arts? Transformative, Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors, and Language & Racial Positioning reflect the way the Reu and Turner engaged, interacted, and responded to *New Kid*, an African American young adult novel framed in our course as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice. The Power of Doing and Literacy Pursuits, Agency, & Action respond to how historical framings of Black literacy- literary presence, literary pursuits, literary character and the highly collaborative nature of Black literary societies- shaped Reu's and Turner's developmental ideas of pursuing racial and linguistic justice in elementary English language arts through the use of African American young adult literature.

Transformative

Transformative speaks to the preservice teachers' beliefs in the book's ability to be used to support literacy development and its potential support the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice. The graphic novel genre was a new genre for Reu to explore and she admits that prior to reading *New Kid* she would not have been aware of the impact graphic novels could have on language arts instruction. In particular she feels graphic novels would really appeal to upper elementary grades because the combination of images and words make the genre enjoyable, fun,

and easy to read. In addition, it provides an opportunity for teachers to include different acts of literacy such as reading, writing, discussions, and debates.

An integral aspect of our course was for students to investigate, define, interrogate, and challenge linguistic racism. Reu defines linguistic racism as choosing to favor one type of language as acceptable, professional, or “correct” over other languages. She uses this definition to support her justification for using this young adult novel for pursuing linguistic and racial justice. Reu contends, “it is crucial that teachers are taking this linguistic racism into consideration when creating lessons and instruction. By using novels like this one, teachers can give students a place to share and acknowledge their own personal experiences with linguistic racism, through writing and discussion.” She cites language used in the novel by teachers and students like anti-Black comments, stereotypes, and microaggressions as a starting place for meaningful conversation towards pursuing linguistic and racial justice with students.

One of the reasons Turner valued her experience reading *New Kid* and believes it could be a valuable experience for students to read this novel and others like it, is because it is an African American young adult novel, about a Black student’s experience, written authentically by a Black author. *New Kid* deals with issues of race, such as anti-Blackness and microaggressions. Turner, and the other students in the class spent time investigating Jordan, the main character’s, experiences with such issues. Turner points out that for some elementary students microaggressions or other forms of anti-Blackness may be difficult to identify as such initially. So, as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice, classroom discourse around the book could support students in breaking down Jordan’s experiences and making connections to the experiences that Black people may have in society.

Another salient point that Turner makes points to the transformative nature of *New Kid*, not just for Black students as they may be able to relate to a character who looks like them and may even have similar experiences as them. But she suggests that for white students reading something like this could be eye-opening and necessary, as the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice in elementary language arts is about uplifting Black students, their Blackness, and their language, this experience is just as, if not more, imperative for white students to have as they develop their criticality and begin to think about the broader implications for marginalized groups.

Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors

Bishop (1990) brilliantly gave us the metaphor to describe how literature can transform the human experience, reflect it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives as part of the larger human experience. Reading then becomes affirmational and students seek their mirror in the literature chosen by their teachers and in the school curriculum. For Black students, it is imperative that they see their lives, their experiences, their language reflected as a part of the language arts curriculum. For white students it is imperative that they see views of the world that may be different from their own to make them aware of the realities of their classmates but also of others in society.

Reu and Turner both saw the value of using a book such as *New Kid* in the language arts curriculum. Reu recommends this book for elementary and middle school students “as it represents a character that is often not represented in language arts classrooms.” Turner believes that “for students who may not relate to this book, they can learn great things about their peers. They can learn some of the struggles that many of their Black peers’ face in the classroom.” She also sees the opportunity for valuable lessons for students to learn about themselves, about Black

Language, how to speak up for themselves even if it's against a teacher, and how to make true friends.

For Reu, literature of this caliber creates more impactful opportunities for students to connect to content than your standard lesson plan or instructional activity. She too feels, “students who identify with Jordan will feel heard and acknowledged. Students who do not identify with Jordan will be able to see the world from his perspective and take away something new.” Drew, another character from the book who Jordan is able to bond with because of their shared lived experiences and being two of the few Black students in the school, possesses a bravery and confidence that Jordan doesn't necessarily demonstrate initially. Reu acknowledges this and agrees that characters like Jordan and Drew represented in *New Kid* provide diversity in the classroom and more opportunity for students to feel acknowledged in their education. She sees Drew as a good leader in the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice as he represents the criticality, challenging the status quo, combating anti-Blackness, and Black linguistic consciousness that we hope to instill in students on our pursuit to racial and linguistic justice.

Language & Racial Positioning

As they read, students were encouraged to pay special attention to the language used in *New Kid*, by whom certain language was used, explore the authors use of Black Language, as well as investigate the relationship between language and anti-Blackness as one way to explore and develop some practical understanding of anti-Black linguistic racism. Reu and Turner were able to identify examples of Black linguistic appropriation, anti-Black linguistic racism, and connect the use of Black Language to the identities of characters such as Drew and Jordan.

While reflecting on the author's use of Black Language in the novel, Reu explained “The author also chose to use Black language throughout the story when it was Jordan and Drew

speaking, which helped showcase their identities.” Similarly, Turner added, “I feel that the author chose to use Black language in different ways with characters in the book to show how Black language can be used in different ways, and how some people may not understand Black language.” She also said that in her reading room her group often spent time discussing the different ways they could see Black Language being used throughout the novel.

Andy, a white student from the novel, constantly appropriated Black Language and made not just anti-Black remarks but other racist comments to other students of Color. Both Reu and Turner spent time discussing Andy’s behaviors and remarks. For example, Reu notes that Andy always makes stereotypical and racist comments to the other students. She also notes Andy’s reaction to how people respond to his behavior, “When they weren’t taken well, he asks why everyone is always so sensitive about everything.” She also notices that Andy’s racism isn’t reserved just for Black students as he talks differently to people based on their ethnicity/race, by saying things like: “Hola Ramon,” “Wassup lil G?” and “Hey Alex.” Turner recalls an event in the novel in which Drew had had enough of Andy, his racist “jokes,” and inappropriate comments which resulted in a shoving match between the two. This led to Drew being sent to the headmaster. Turner acknowledged the unfair consequence for Drew and notes, “All the other students in the lunchroom stood up for Drew telling Ms. R what really happened, including the other teachers, she agreed and they both lost a free period. Which is crazy that Andy didn't have to go see the headmaster.”

Reu and Turner also paid close attention to Jordan and the choices he made in language, but also how he behaved outside of school as they began to develop a deeper understanding of the linguistic and racial warfare often waged against Black Language and Black bodies. Turner explains that due to the fact that there are only a handful of Black students at RAD, Jordan was

constantly battling problems with anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism. As a result of the constant battles for Jordan, Reu acknowledges that this leads to Jordan struggling with his identit(ies). Jordan maintains a journal in which he uses as an outlet to sketch and write about his daily experiences, thoughts, and reactions. “In his journal, he talks about real things that are happening to him and other students. In one of his drawings, he talks about how it is upsetting that the teachers there don't even take the time to remember the students' names, and it's almost the end of the school year, but they can remember “double mocha cafe latte cappuccino espresso,” Turner points out, highlighting the raw emotions Jordan feels as he is reminded daily anti-Black, consciously and subconsciously, demonstrated by the teachers at RAD.

Further, as Jordan struggles with his own identity and his place both in RAD but also in his own neighborhood, Reu highlighted examples of such internal struggles for Jordan. Reu points out that Jordan normally changes his language depending on who he is around/talking to. She says, “he started talking more “proper” by correcting grammar while he was playing basketball with his neighborhood friends, which almost made him an outsider.” Reu also discusses an instance where Jordan was riding the city bus from his neighborhood to RAD, “when Jordan was taking the bus in chapter 4, he talked about what he does to “fit in” or “blend in” with each bus stop of people that comes on. This shows he is trying to fit in with different people from different areas.” Reu demonstrates her understanding of the intersection of language, race, and power, but also a developing understanding of the racialized experiences of Jordan outside of RAD. Even further, though she may not use these words, she points out Jordan’s struggle with his ideologies about his own language, the linguistic push-pull so many speakers of Black Language experience, as he corrects the speech of one of his friends while simultaneously being a Black Language speaker.

The Power of Doing

Just like our students in elementary ELA classrooms, preservice teachers need instruction tied to action, especially as they explore unfamiliar territory such as African American children's and young adult literature, Black Language, and investigating and challenging anti-Blackness in language arts education. Thus, our course served as a site for preservice teachers to put what they were learning into practice and action. The Power of Doing focuses on how preservice teachers experienced a literary experience and how the historical framing of Black literacy the reading rooms may have supported their pursuit of racial and linguistic justice.

Historically, Black literary societies were built around meaningful and diverse literature (Muhammad, 2020) and highly collaborative in nature. New ideas and information learned from texts could be shared and spread among one another and those in the community, so literacy was to be developed in a socially constructed environment (Muhammad, 2020). Our course and their reading rooms were those socially constructed spaces for Reu and Turner. The collaborative nature of reading rooms supported Reu's knowledge and understanding of the book. Specifically, it gave her the chance to speak up more and provided the opportunity to reflect on what she has read and notice things that she may have missed before. She felt this experience was much better than solely working independently because the collaboration that was required pushed each individual to expand their ability to make themselves visible within their reading room through acts of literacy such as reading, writing, and discussing. In particular, the collaboration in the reading rooms was a good opportunity for Reu to discuss the racial themes throughout the novel.

Collaborating in reading rooms was a space for Turner and her group members to work as a team, listen to one another, provide feedback, and share how they felt about the language used in the book. The welcoming atmosphere that was created in her reading room allowed

Turner to freely express her thoughts. In addition, Turner shared that previously she had a negative experience in a book club in high school. “We were not asked questions about the language, linguistic identity, or power throughout the book like we were in this class” so she felt that experience didn’t deepen her engagement with the text because the questions they were asked were vague and surface level which didn’t lead to a deeper understanding of the text.

Literary presence, literary pursuits, and literacy character are the historical framings that provided structure and support to build and nurture Black literacy development in the 1800s and beyond (Muhammad, 2020). Exerting literary presence, engaging in literary pursuits, and developing literary character were essential to the structure of the reading rooms if they were going to support Reu, Turner and their classmates in pursuing racial and linguistic justice. Reu felt her literary presence, pursuits, and character have grown and developed tremendously and critically while in her reading room. Reu wrote, “I do believe that these reading rooms have given me the opportunity to increase my literacy skills, and develop my literary presence, pursuits, and character. I felt that I was able to lead our group into discussion, which helped me sort all my thoughts from this reading and analyze the events further. Thinking critically about the readings and answering the posed questions pushed me to use literacy for knowledge and self-reliance.”

The reading rooms were one way from Turner to further her understanding of the graphic novel. Turner made two main points that highlight how reading rooms furthered her literacy development as she was pursuing racial and linguistic justice. First, she engaged in literacy pursuits in her reading rooms by sharing my thoughts not only in regards to the events of the book but also how she has observed racism, microaggressions and linguistic racism taking place around her. In being able to name those experiences and what she’s observed, she feels this has

improved her literary character, “I would say that my literacy character has improved after this class and engaging in our reading rooms because I feel that I have improved my self awareness on anti-Black linguistic racism and anti-Blackness and the importance of diverse language in the classroom.”

Literary Pursuits, Agency, & Action

Literary pursuits are specific acts of literacy such as reading, writing, discussing, debating. They can be individual and collaborative. Historically, these acts of literacy embodied greater goals that Black literary societies believed would lead to liberation, self-determination, self-reliance, and self-empowerment (Muhammad, 2020). These literary pursuits taken up in reading rooms supported Reu and Turner in developing agency, taking a critical stance, making choices that may support them in exploring Black Language as a part of the elementary ELA curriculum in the pursuit of dismantling anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism in language education through the use of African American literature.

Turner posits this graphic novel can engage students thinking of power, equity, and anti-oppression through its focus on real world problems that so many Black people face. She does feel it is necessary to keep the discussions age-appropriate for elementary students. For early elementary grades she suggests that it can be more introductory level questions on ways they may see racism and unjust treatment taking place within the book and relating it to a time where they may have seen this in real life, whether it be them or something they have seen, heard, or watched. For upper elementary grades, Turner thinks maybe the questions can be more in-depth and analytical to really question the students’ thoughts on the issues and why they may feel that way. For all students, she says she can support them in thinking about what they may do to help the issues or characters in the book. In addition, these pursuits, developing their agency, and

discussing specific actions may help students may gain a better understanding of how their peers may have been treated because they look differently than them and in acknowledging Black Language as their language if they're Black Language speakers but also in the book, in the classroom, and in other instances when they may encounter the language, even if they aren't speakers of the language. Lastly, she concludes, reading rooms help all students assume responsibility for how they process information. To her, this means that if done correctly, reading rooms will help open the eyes of students on how they see things differently than others, and it's good to share those ideas and differences, because that's how we learn as a society.

Similarly, Reu agreed that being sure to keep discussions, actions, and pursuits age-appropriate was important, but she too felt that reading rooms offered many possibilities for exploration and learning in her future language arts instruction. In our class we often discussed the ways the current language arts curriculum may fall short in terms of providing literature that is representative of the students in your class. Thus, you may need to make important and very intentional decisions about the literature you choose to support students' literacy development. One way to do that is to consider the ways a piece of literature will connect to skill, intellectual, identity, and criticality development. In line with this thinking, Reu considers this novel suitable to connect to a variety of skills and content learning standards but also suggests that the book provides the opportunity to move beyond skill and intellectual development. For her, *New Kid* is prime for connecting to students' identities and developing their criticality and agency as it focuses on race, oppression, and equity/power.

Lastly, to develop and engage in literary pursuits that inspire agency and action, selecting quality children's and young adult literature and in this case specifically, quality African American children's literature with rich depictions of Black culture, Black life, and Black

Language “is beneficial for Black children, their teachers, and their classmates because it opens up the possibility for children to see themselves and their peers in open-ended ways” (Garad, 2021, p. 192). For Turner, engaging in a reading room really solidified this sentiment, “before these reading rooms, I knew that it was important that we use diverse language and diverse books in our classroom, however I was uneducated as to why it is so important and how important it is that we allow and support our students in the classroom who use Black language.” This demonstrates foundational and powerful opportunities reading rooms can provide for students in the language arts curriculum that can center Black language in elementary ELA classrooms. They help students build literacy skills. When students engage in reading rooms to read and think critically, they are able to learn and readers of all ages can think deeply about the stories within stories and make meaning about the worlds within and beyond themselves (Garad, 2021).

Conclusion

The first question guiding this inquiry was, how do preservice teachers engage with African American young adult literature presented as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice? As such, this study aims at responding to Baker-Bell’s (2019) call for examining the possibilities for the use of literature in the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice in ELA education. Such a pedagogical innovation could transform Black students’ language and literacy education. Many scholars (i.e., Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Glenn, 2014; Groenke et al., 2015, Westbrook, 2020) have explored the impact of using diverse literature in teacher education, however, there is still a lack of scholarly literature that focuses on how can African American literature, specifically, can be used as a vehicle to heighten students’ consciousness of language in the face of fixed, monotonous linguistic labels (Kinloch, 2005; Baker-Bell, 2019). But, before teacher’s

can enter the classroom and enact such pedagogies that upend traditional language education pedagogies, they must explore, experience, and investigate similar pedagogies. Thus teacher education must be a place that cultivates such opportunities.

For Reu and Turner, this meant critically, thoughtfully, and openly engaging in the reading of a graphic novel, *New Kid*, framed as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice. Framing a novel in such a way set the stage for them to investigate the author's use of Black Language, the interconnectedness of language, race, and power, and the presence of anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism in the novel. This led Reu to see the potential for transformative experiences with African American young adult literature, the importance of Black Language and Black characters being reflected for Black Language speakers and Black students, and the realization of the intersection of language and race in the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice. For Turner, this led to her developing understanding of the potential for African American young adult literature to support elementary students in varied levels of understanding of anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism, the value of books such as *New Kid* for Black students and students of Color, but even more so for white students, and the emotional toll that anti-Blackness in education takes on Black students.

The second question guiding this research was, in what ways do the historical framings of Black literacy development support preservice teachers' pursuit toward linguistic and racial justice for elementary language arts? As a counterstory to the ways that language arts education disregards, disengages, and disadvantages Black Language and Black students, using the historical framings of Black literacy development challenges the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness to recognize the full humanity of Black students. Black literacy has always been steeped in freedom, liberation, and access. This is not the structure of elementary ELA teacher education

which makes it difficult for preservice teachers to (re)imagine their language arts classrooms as such spaces. Thus, in the literary experiences curated through these historical framings of Black literacy development, Reu and Turner, through the power of doing, engaged in literary pursuits that supported their pursuits of racial and linguistic justice toward agency and action.

Black characters in children's and young adult literature are underrepresented and their portrayals are limited. This reflects the marginalization of Black perspectives in the standardized curriculum in U.S. schools (Garad, 2021), similar to the nonexistence of Black Language in the language arts curriculum. What Reu and Turner learned from this experience was the importance of Black stories, Black voices, Black characters, and Black Language in the literature that they choose to use in their future language arts classrooms.

Black people are ever-present. Black stories are important. Black Language is infinitely rich. But this hasn't always been true in teacher education or in U.S. standardized curriculum. Change is needed and the time is now. To prepare preservice teachers to teach in the linguistically, culturally, and racially rich elementary language arts environments they must engage in transformative literary experiences that position African American children's and young adult literature, specifically, as mandatory for racial and linguistic justice. Black lives, Black students, and their educational experiences, especially in elementary language arts classrooms, depend on it. Language arts curriculum built on white linguistic and cultural norms have upheld anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism for far too long. As a way forward, I posit that we consider the ways that Black people have historically engaged in literacy and the powerfulness of African American literature in teacher education to prepare language arts teachers to cultivate language arts classrooms that rest on the historical excellence of Black

education to dismantle anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism in elementary language arts.

V. CONCLUSION

Black language is regarded as slang and the main perspective taught is that mainstream English is for schools and everyone who doesn't speak this way must code switch and learn it.

Curriculum is written with inherent racism in it and there is pushback to get that changed. Discipline is unequal. Assessments are not written with black language or black experiences in mind. Once again, minorities are expected to confirm and learn the white mainstream way. The institutions charged with educating future educators must learn to teach pro-black curriculum standards and make this the norm of teaching. - Lily

Introduction

Dumas & ross (2016) provide BlackCrit as a critical theorization of Blackness in education that addresses the specificity of anti-Blackness and how it matters in the ways that Black bodies are disdained, disregarded, dehumanized, and marginalized in educational spaces. In this dissertation, BlackCrit was used as the guiding theoretical framework to demonstrate the way that Black Language is disregarded and marginalized in language education, which is inherently anti-Black. It was also used in contrast to describe how literacy teacher education, specifically elementary literacy teacher education, centers whiteness.

This dissertation presents three separate articles as one complete work to propose the transformation of elementary literacy teacher education to center Black epistemologies. This transformation in literacy teacher education must be rooted in a commitment to preparing preservice teachers for teaching language arts for the full humanity of Black students, for their liberation, and to value, affirm, and center their racial, linguistic, and self-confidence needs. Afrocentricity (Asante, 1991), Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020), Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000), and Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy (Muhammad, 2020) are Black epistemologies that offer possibilities for how we might go about “suspending the violence and harm enacted in the name of literacy teacher education” (Souto-Manning, 2021, p. 566). This violence and harm doesn't stop at teacher education, it pervades

elementary language arts classrooms through anti-Black linguistic racism and anti-Blackness in the curriculum, in pedagogy, and in teacher attitudes. The literacy teacher education I am (re)imagining challenges anti-Blackness in language education and combats the erasure and dispossession of Black communities (Souto-Manning, 2021).

The first article of this dissertation describes how I employed Afrocentric ideas (Asante, 1991), Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020), and Black feminist epistemologies (Collins, 2000) in the course to explore Black Language, center Blackness and Black students, their histories, culture, and language to provide space for preservice teachers to reflect on their own ideologies about language, critically read African American literature, and pursue linguistic justice for Black Language speakers and other communities of Color in language education that was designed to center white linguistic and cultural hegemony.

The second article details how the course supported the transformation of four preservice teachers', Lily, Marigold, Ruby, and Opal, toward racial and linguistic justice, challenges that existed in their movement toward racial and linguistic justice, and how the Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy supported their interrogation of anti-Blackness in language education.

The third article zooms in on a specific literary experience within the course. It focuses on the experience of two preservice teachers, Reu and Turner, during the literary experience and describes preservice teachers insights and understandings of their experience in reading rooms, their discussion of *New Kid* and race, language, and power within the novel, how such an experience informed ideologies about language and anti-Blackness, their knowledge of Black Language, and their position on whether or not African American literature has the potential to serve as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice.

In this chapter, I will first report a summary of key findings from each article. Next, I will discuss key findings integrated across each study and larger implications for literacy teacher education. Lastly, I will discuss recommendations and implications for future research.

Summary of Key Findings

Article one was written as a personal experience narrative and as such no original data was collected. However, what was realized as a result of this inquiry was the possibilities to (re)construct required language arts methods courses and the transformative qualities of Black epistemologies in teacher education. The narrative was guided by personal experience as an elementary school teacher, a Black woman, a novice teacher educator, and a Black Language speaker. What I found as I detailed my experience was that redesigning a course of this nature takes an intentional commitment to antiracist language arts pedagogies to humanize and empower Black students. First, that requires a shift in beliefs and ideologies about the legitimacy of Black Language. Next, preparing teachers for culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse contexts requires placing Black students and their linguistic, cultural, and racial needs at the center of their language education. Then, preservice teachers must interrogate their own ideologies about language before they can interrogate white linguistic and cultural hegemony and anti-Blackness in language education, and this interrogation must be ongoing. After that, Black linguistic consciousness raising for preservice teachers must include exploring the historical, cultural, political, and racial underpinnings of Black literacy and Black Language. Lastly, relying on the Black literary tradition provides the potential to advance literacy development and challenge anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism in curricular choices, pedagogical practices, and teacher attitudes.

Article two was guided by the following research questions: (1) How do elementary preservice teachers describe their experience in a language arts methods course framed by Black epistemologies? and (2) In what ways does the course support transformation toward racial and linguistic justice? Overall, Lily, Ruby, Opal, and Marigold describe their experience as new, unexpected, necessary, and eye-opening. In terms of their movement toward racial and linguistic justice, the course offered the preservice teachers an opportunity to explore more about themselves as they continued to build their racial literacy. Open dialogue sharing thoughts and opinions to build new ideas, and in validating knowledge based on interactions with classmates were essential functions to this course. For the preservice teachers, working in community with others encourages honest, critical dialogues, and active participation in the course. It also cultivated new understandings about the content and about their own biases. Working in community also gave a sense of hope that there were other preservice teachers who were ready to do this antiracist work.

Two other major findings of this inquiry were the Black linguistic consciousness raising that took place for Lily and Marigold and the internal anti-Black linguistic racism and the linguistic double consciousness experienced for Opal. Marigold's Black linguistic consciousness was influenced by the re-centering and investigation of language in our course. For Lily, this was led by a commitment to uplift Black Language and Black voices in her language arts instruction. Opal self-identified as a Black Language speaker and demonstrated that she understood Black Language as her way of relating to other Black people. However, she would still characterize it as slang and as the language that students should strive to in schools.

Article three was led by the following research questions: (1) How do preservice teachers engage with African American young adult literature presented as a vehicle for linguistic and

racial justice? and (2) In what ways do the historical framings of Black literacy development support preservice teachers' pursuit toward linguistic and racial justice for elementary language arts? Simply put, Reu and Turner engaged with the young adult novel, *New Kid* critically. Reu and Turner both believed in the book's potential to support literacy development and its potential support the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice. Reu recommends this book for elementary and middle school students because it provides Black students to see themselves reflected in the literature. Turner highlighted the importance of the book's ability to teach something new to those who are different from them, including learning more about the experiences for their Black peers. Engaging with an African American young adult novel also provided space for Reu and Turner to investigate the interconnectedness of language and race, the author's use of Black Language in the novel, and the characters choices in language.

The preservice teachers engaged in a literary experience called a reading room. These reading rooms were shaped by historical framings of Black literacy development, collaboration, exerting literacy presence, engaging in literary pursuits, and developing literary character, as a site for putting what they were learning into practice and action. Additionally, it was important for preservice teachers to think about how such an experience may shape literacy development for elementary aged students.

The power of doing the collaborative nature of the reading room and our class helped Reu and Turner develop their knowledge and understanding of the book and discuss the language and racial themes of the book. The historical framings of the course grew because they had the opportunity to lead discussions in their reading rooms, think critically in community, and discuss issues of race during reading rooms. Turner specifically felt herself awareness on anti-Black linguistic racism and anti-Blackness and the importance of diverse language in the classroom

grew. For literary pursuits, agency and action in the pursuit of dismantling anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism in language education through the use of African American literature, Reu believes that *New Kid* is prime for connecting to students' identities and developing their criticality and agency as it focuses on race, oppression, and equity/power. Turner believes it can engage students thinking of power, equity, and anti-oppression through its focus on real world problems that so many Black people face. Both Reu and Turner agree to develop and engage in literary pursuits that inspire agency and action, selecting quality children's and young adult literature is beneficial to Black students, Black Language speakers, teachers, white students, and other students of Color.

Discussion

Being pro-Black does not mean being anti-white or any other ethnic or racial group, for that matter. However, it does mean declaring an “unapologetic, positive perspective regarding Blackness and Black people” (Boutte et al., 2021). This includes keeping that same energy for Black Language. Pro-Black literacy teacher education guides preservice and in-service teachers towards embracing and enacting antiracist approaches to elementary language education for a humanizing Black Language, Blackness centered education. Pro-Black language arts classrooms and curriculum centers Black lives, Black literacy, and the linguistic, racial, and cultural needs of Black students. A pro-Black approach to teacher education calls attention to the endemic anti-Blackness and anti-Black linguistic racism built into the fabric of teacher education programs.

This dissertation describes a pro-Black stance to literacy teacher education. In this section, I discuss key findings from across all three articles to paint a clearer picture of pro-Black literacy teacher education that challenges anti-Blackness and pursues racial and linguistic justice to combat the white linguistic and cultural norms upheld in teacher education.

First, this research worked from the premise of teaching language as a visible component in the literacy teacher education curriculum so that preservice teachers begin to think about how language is used negatively to discriminate against Black students but how they can use language to shape language education as critical, liberating, joyful, and relevant for Black students. This places students as active participants in their language education and “recognizes the full humanity of [Black students] students by affirming, celebrating, and advocating” for them. (Lee, Falter, Alston, 2021, p. 57). Assignments such as linguistic autobiographies, but also, guided discussions of books, interrogating the intersections of language, race, and power, exploring historical framings of Black literacy, and investigating the linguistic and racial realities of Black students and preservice teachers are ways to center Blackness, language, and identity to push for a pro-Black stance in literacy teacher education.

Understanding how Black literacy development has been shaped historically takes a pro-Black stance because it demonstrates,

Literacy as the hope for Black people was historically steeped into the common narrative of Black literacies. The emancipatory and humanizing aspects of literacy provide access to mental freedom, political power, and agenda building. Literacy also provided the access to navigate extremely racist and oppressive systems and structures of the United States- and school systems are one of these systems (Muhammad, 2020, p. 19).

Exploring how these framings of literacy can shape literary experiences for Black people, historically, could support the ways that literacy teacher education is constructed for preservice teachers. As opposed to monotonous assigned readings and teacher educator led discussions. What if we think about the possibilities for requiring elementary language arts courses to be facilitated by teacher educators but led by preservice teachers? What if we are intentional in the

literature we chose for preservice teachers to read that helps them stake their claim in the intellectual community of the classroom? What if preservice teachers were reading, discussing, sharing in lecture responsibilities, critiquing one another's work to lead to self-reliance and self-empowerment? How about if we seek to develop their literary character so they become better thinkers? Then, we engage them in critical discussion of how their experience participating in such a course shapes how they plan to cultivate a pro-Black elementary language arts classroom. Learning from how literacy was shaped then, may support the development of the criticality preservice teachers need to examine how previous ways have been anti-Black.

A change in epistemologies, ones that are culturally and historically sustaining, humanizing, and address the specificity of anti-Blackness are imperative for a pro-Black stance. We've continued to engage preservice teachers with the same white ways of knowing and being in language arts education and expect them to enter classrooms and not reproduce the same linguistic violence and harm that Black students have experienced for decades. The Black epistemologies that were used in this research to frame the language arts methods course gave the preservice teachers the opportunity to view education differently and to view language differently as is evident in the opening vignette.

I add that Muhammad's (2020) Culturally and Historically Responsive Framework also provides practical implications for how to design classroom material that seeks to develop students' skills, identity, intellect, and criticality. Afrocentricity (Asante, 1991) centered Black students in their language education. Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy (Baker-Bell, 2020) gave us the tools to explore Black Language in the pursuit of racial and linguistic justice. Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000) provided the foundation for the necessity of dialogue in community to process and validate new information so that students could then act on their new

developments. While I understand these are not all encompassing, they do provide a start for embracing a pro-Black stance in literacy teacher education.

Implications for Future Research

My developing research agenda is also shaped by this pro-Black stance. So, all of my future endeavors will continue to be shaped by my desire to uplift Black voices, Black literacies, Black Language, and Black students to strive to cultivate a language arts education that doesn't begin with linguistic and racial violence. In this dissertation I sought to begin that work as I continue to define my research and scholarly agenda.

The third article of this research centered the pedagogical innovation of employing African American young adult literature as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice. This was done alongside a literary experience created for the teachers by using Muhammad's (2020) historical framings of Black literacy and Baker-Bell's (2020) Antiracist Black Language Pedagogy to frame the experience. Another potential avenue to explore a specific pedagogical innovation is to center writing in the literary experience. Similarly, this literary experience could engage preservice teachers in writing instruction in which they exert their literary presence, engage in the literary pursuit of writing, and examine how this helps to develop their literary character. The writing could be structured to engage preservice teachers in investigation of the intersection of language, cultural, race, and power while spending time in community discussing their skill, identity, intellectual, and criticality development. The goal would be to think about how such an experience could be crafted in their own language arts classroom and its potential to support racial and linguistic justice.

During this current research the preservice teacher spent a lot of time in reflection both individually and in community. I often had them reflect on the experience they were having and

then think about what this may mean for the future teaching and students. So essentially, I engaged preservice teachers first as students as they were fully immersed in reading *New Kid* for example, then, I engaged them in reflection as teachers to think about what that literary or reading or class activity taught them about being a teacher. However, I did not specifically study this work from the standpoint of understanding preservice teachers' metacognitive processes during their engagement as a student and then as a teacher. Because this work does deal with race, language, and anti-Blackness, this could provide insight on the specific process of preservice teachers as they engage in this work.

One question that was extremely important for me to ask at the end of the final interviews to each participant pertained to what support they felt they would need to continue pursuing racial and linguistic justice and addressing anti-Blackness in language education, especially as they begin to transfer into their careers. Without question or hesitation, they all mentioned some form of continuing education as beneficial to their journey, additional resources, and being able to stay in community with professors and classmates as they build community inside their buildings.

One suggestion would be for teacher education programs to create easily accessible access points for resources of Black Language for preservice teachers. The *Black Language Syllabus*, is one place for teacher educators and preservice teachers to start. Created by Dr. April Baker-Bell, this website provides a wealth of resources on Black Language education and Black linguistic justice. Additionally, one aspect of my research agenda that has yet to be explored is continuing education for in-service teachers. Black Language and Black linguistic justice in elementary spaces is still longing for more literature, research, and action. Developing and facilitating African American children's and young adult literature book guides, classroom

resources and guidelines, and partnerships with school districts to support their teachers in pursuing linguistic justice for their students is a pivotal direction for this research to go.

Conclusion

To move forward, toward a pro-Black stance, one that denounces the specificity of anti-Blackness (Dumas & ross, 2016) literacy teacher education has to take a hard look at how it has been complicit in maintaining white linguistic supremacy. Not until then, will they be able to effectively prepare preservice teachers for linguistically, racially, and culturally diverse contexts that intentionally address anti-Blackness in language education.

For preservice teachers, it requires them to question their trouble with Black Language. Before language arts teachers can enact a critical language education, we have to rethink the ways that teacher preparation programs develop their critical consciousness about language, power, and society, heightens their awareness of the consequences involved in language attitude and policies of correctness, and teaches them about the social and linguistic rules, history, and cultural significance of Black Language, instead of just accepting language as a gate-keeping check on race and ethnicity (Smitherman, 2017).

When language arts teachers are knowledgeable about the historical and cultural underpinnings of Black Language, the linguistic flexibility of Black Language, and the harm imposed on students when the curriculum tells them their language and lives don't matter, their language arts classrooms become an antiracist space that honors Black Language speakers' linguistic resources and meets their racial, cultural, intellectual needs. It challenges the absence of Black Language from the language arts curriculum. Black Language is an artful language, a style of speaking with Black flava (Smitherman, 2006). It comes out of the experience of the enslaved peoples and has persisted in the face of domination and oppressive Whiteness. Perfectly

put, “we Black folks be knowin we got some unique patterns of language goin on up here in the U.S. of A” (Smitherman, 2006, p. 3). Language provides solidarity, community, and gives a sense of identity; it is the tie that binds. In their language and literacy education, Black students should always know their language has a name.

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APPENDIX A

COURSE READING LIST

| Topic | Supplemental Readings |
|---|--|
| Black Language & Identity and Family Literacies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We been Knowin: Toward an Antiracist Language & Literacy Education</i> by April Baker-Bell (2020) • <i>Word from the Mother: Language and African Americans</i> by Geneva Smitherman (2022) |
| Language, History, and Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom</i> by bell hooks (1994) |
| The Study of Black Language: Word Study, Grammar, and Vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Standard Language Myth</i> by Rosina Lippi-Green (2012) • <i>Is there really a 'Science of Reading' that tells us exactly how to Teach Kids to Read?</i> By Valerie Strauss (2021) • <i>Taking Stock of the Science of Reading: A conversation with Amanda Goodwin</i> by Rafael Heller (2022) |
| Guided Reading, Comprehension, and African American Children's and Young Adult Literature: Language & Power | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>#WeNeedWindowsandMirrors: Diverse Classroom Libraries for K-6 Students</i> by Jonda C. McNair (2016) • <i>Critical Book Clubs: Reimagining Literature Reading and Response</i> by Robin Jocius and Samantha Shealy (2018) • <i>Building Literacy Environments to Motivate African American Boys to Read</i> by Katina L. Thomas (2019) • <i>Using Literacy Approaches to begin the Conversation on Racial Illiteracy</i> by Annemarie Kaczmarczyk, Karen A. Allee-Herndon, and Sherron Killingsworth-Roberts (2019) • <i>Complicating Literature Circles: Enacting Literature Discussions in an Early Elementary Classroom with an Anti-Racist Lens</i> by Grace Yun Kang and Sandara Lucia Osorio (2020) • <i>Fugitive, Fantasy, Futurity, and Freedom: The Letter F for Critically Analyzing Children's Literature</i> by Brooke Harris Garad (2021) |
| Writing and Linguistic Justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Should Writers use they own English?</i> By Vershawn Ashanti Young (2010) |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Code-Meshing and Writing Instruction in Multilingual Classrooms</i> by Alice Y. Lee and Lara J. Handsfield (2018) • <i>Language, Race, and Critical Conversations in a Primary-Grade Writer’s Workshop</i> by Paul Hartman and Emily Machado (2019) • <i>Nadie más puede contar tu Historia: Rewriting whose Stories Matter through an Antiracist Bilingual Writer’s Workshop</i> by Rosalyn Harvey-Torres and Carmela Valdez (2021) • <i>The Berry is still Black and Sweet: Revisiting what works in Writing Instruction for African American Students</i> by Teaira McMurtry (2022) |
| Language & Racial Positioning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Undoing Appropriateness: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Language Diversity in Education</i> by Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) • <i>“I can Switch my Language, but I can’t Switch my Skin”</i>: What Teachers must Understand about Linguistic Racism by April Baker-Bell (2017) |
| Language, Agency, & Action + Digital Literacies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Counter-Storytelling vs Deficit Thinking around African American Children and Families Digital Literacies, Race, and the Digital Divide</i> by Tisha Lewis Ellison and Marva Solomon (2019) • <i>Linguistic Policies for African American Language Speakers: Moving from Anti-Blackness to Pro-Blackness</i> by Gloria Swindler Boutte, Mary E. Earick, and Tandra O. Jackson (2021) • <i>This Ain’t Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice</i> • <i>CCCC Statement on Ebonics</i> • <i>CCCC Statement on White Language Supremacy</i> |
| Developing a Language of Solidarity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“They’re in my Culture, They Speak the same way”</i>: African American Language in Multiethnic High Schools by Django Paris (2009) • <i>Imagining a Language of Solidarity for Black and Latinx Youth in English Language Arts Classrooms</i> by Danny C. Martinez (2017) • <i>Words that Matter: Black and Indigenous Solidarity and the Right to Language</i> by Kyle T. Mays (2019) |
| Equity, Liberation, & Literacy Education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Racial Identity and Liberation Literacies in the Classroom</i> by Jamila Lyiscott (2017) |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Antiracist Language Arts Pedagogy is Incomplete without Black Joy</i> by Damaris Dunn and Bettina L. Love (2020)• <i>Cultivating Genius and Joy in Education through Historically Responsive Literacy</i> Gholdy Muhammad (2022) |
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APPENDIX B

MODULE DESCRIPTIONS

| Module Title | Description |
|---|--|
| Black Language & Identity and Family Literacies | Through critical reflection, we will examine the intersection of language, culture, and identity in relation to their own social positioning in society and the intersection of language, culture, and identity within the Black community. This module will also discuss the literacies and language practices of families and the significance of including families in literacy learning. |
| Language, History, and Culture | In this module, we will engage in a language study that examines the historical, cultural, and political underpinnings of Black Language. |
| The Study of Black Language: Word Study, Grammar, and Vocabulary | In this module, we will engage in a language study that examines the structural and discourse features of Black Language. We will be looking at the relationship between word study, vocabulary, and grammar. We will think about how these three areas of instruction have shifted from rote memorization to authentic learning experiences and how we engage students in each of these areas of instruction. |
| Guided Reading, Comprehension, and African American Children's and Young Adult Literature: Language & Power | In this module, we will examine the intersection of language and power. We will look at some of the critical components of ensuring that all students have access to quality reading instruction and books that reflect who they are while engaging in critical questioning about representation, and consequences of exclusion and who has historically benefitted from inclusion, and how we move forward. We will also explore literary experiences as a critical component of elementary language arts. |
| Writing and Linguistic Justice | In the module, we will think about how we can encourage students to write abundantly and authentically. Often, teachers find that teaching writing can be challenging and resort to prompts and other "canned" methods of instruction. We will explore ways of making writing instruction fun and engaging for both you and your future students. We will interrogate the purpose of writing, explore ways to make space for Black Language in writing, and examine what it means to be an antiracist writing teacher. |

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| Language & Racial Positioning | In this module, students will examine the intersections between language and race and investigate the relationship between language and anti-Blackness in language education. We will examine how anti-Blackness is perpetuated through education and the language arts curriculum, Black linguistic appropriation, and critically interrogate the kind of language education 21 st century learners should receive. |
| Language, Agency, & Action + Digital Literacies | In this module, we will discuss agency and what it means to take a critical stance as an antiracist language arts educator as we continue to navigate our understanding of Black Language and dismantling Anti-Black Linguistic Racism. We will think about the importance of digital literacy in determining how to teach students to evaluate text for veracity, as well as how to use digital tools to create, rather than simply reproduce, knowledge and explore the ways Black Language has been used for various sorts of freedom and explore ways to promote linguistic justice through various mediums for elementary aged students. |
| Developing a Language of Solidarity | In this module, we will discuss what it means for our students to develop a critical linguistic awareness and interrogate how other linguistically and racially diverse communities experience racial and linguistic violence and are impacted by linguistic racism. We will think about the importance of a language of solidarity as antiracist language arts teachers and how that impacts our language arts classrooms and supports elementary aged students. |
| Equity, Liberation, & Literacy Education | In this module, we will reflect on what it means to teach ELA rooted in antiracist pedagogy to create and sustain equitable elementary language arts classroom spaces that cultivate Black genius and Black joy. |

APPENDIX C

MAJOR ASSIGNMENT 3: READING ROOM REFLECTION

It is essential that you are intentional about the text you choose to support your language arts instruction. Now that you have had the experience of participating in a Reading Room, you will reflect on your experience reading *New Kid: A Graphic Novel*, its potential to advance the HRL Framework (identity, skills, intellect, and criticality), linguistic and racial justice, and its connection to the language and literacy of your future students. Additionally, you will discuss ideas for implementing Reading Rooms (i.e., literature circles, book clubs, or other similarly structured spaces) in your language arts classroom.

You will submit via **Canvas**:

- *New Kid* Reflection Journal (Literature Reflection Journal)
- 3-5 Page Reflection

***New Kid* Reflection Journal** (Literature Reflection Journal)

- Notes, thoughts, wonderings, questions, learnings as you did your individual reading of *New Kid*
 - It should be clear that each week you engaged thoughtfully during your independent reading of the text.
- Independent Reflections from each Reading Room (4)
 - February 28th: [Reading Room Ch. 1-3](#) (Slide 10)
 - February 28th: [Reading Room Ch. 4-6](#) (Slide 15)
 - March 21st: [Reading Room Ch. 7-9](#) (Slide 5)
 - March 28th: [Reading Room Ch. 10-14](#) (Slide 8)
- Optional: Any annotations made during or after Reading Room meetings or class sessions

Written Reflection (*Please employ the linguistic resources you feel will best help you most effectively express your ideas*)

- 3-5 pages in length; double spaced
- Use course readings, slides, notes, discussions or other course materials to support your responses where appropriate.
- **Reaction to the novel:** Do you enjoy this novel? Why or why not? Would you read another graphic novel? Would you recommend teachers using graphic novels in their language arts classrooms/instruction? Defend or argue against this book or books like it.
 - I enjoyed reading this book and could see it and others alike as a great tool for students.

- **Potential to advance the Historically Responsive Literacy Framework:** How could this book help students learn something about themselves or others? What skills and content learning standards could you teach with this novel? What will your students become smarter about during and after reading this novel? How could this book engage their thinking about power, equity, and anti-oppression?

- Respond to the following question: **Can African American children’s and young adult literature be used as a vehicle for linguistic and racial justice? If so, how? If not, what’s missing?** Evaluate the book's connection to linguistic justice. Do you see opportunities for this book to be used as a vehicle for racial and linguistic justice? **It will be important to consider and interrogate issues of race, language and power, issues of race (racism, anti-Blackness, microaggressions, linguistic racism/linguistic identity of characters) and consider the author’s choice for using Black Language with various characters.** I expect you to use class readings, discussions, and/or materials from other classes (if you see fit) to support your answer.

- **Reflect on your experience in a reading room:** How, if at all, did this experience develop, support, encourage your literary presences and character? How did the literary pursuits impact your participation? How did the literary pursuits impact your literary presence and literary character development?
 - **Literary Presence** (staking claims and making oneself visible with the intellectual community through acts of literacy)
 - **Literary Pursuits** (acts of literacy that are both individual and collaborative that may lead to liberation, self-determination, self-reliance, and self-empowerment)
 - **Literary Character** (personal and academic characteristics developed as a result of engagement in literary pursuits as well as knowledge gained from literature that creates literary advancement and improvement of mind)

- Reflect on the possibilities/opportunities/mishaps of Reading Rooms/Literature Circles/Book Clubs as an instructional strategy in your own language arts instruction to center Black literacy (as Dr. Gholdy Muhammad has discussed) and engage all students. How could this instructional strategy create, support, and extend students' literary presence, pursuits, and character? I expect you to use class readings and materials to support your reflections.

- Did this experience differ from the ways you've engaged or observed literature circles/book clubs? How did the structure of the Reading Room support, deepen, impede, or otherwise impact your engagement with the text, with your peers?
- Other additional thoughts, questions, takeaways from this experience or from reading this text.
- Be sure to include a reference page.

VITA

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North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina
Master of Arts in Teaching, Elementary Education, 2018

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2017-2020 **Fourth Grade Language Arts Teacher**, Bethesda Elementary School,
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Summer 2019 **Wolfpack Readers Tutor**, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

2016-2017 **Instructional Assistant**, Cook Literacy Model School, Winston-Salem/Forsyth
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