

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Middle and Secondary Education Dissertations Department of Middle and Secondary Education

Spring 5-6-2024

Before good food pwile, mek belly buss [Better you are too full than to let good food go to waste]: Narratives of Twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Advanced Placement English Educators

Cheryll Thompson-Smith

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/mse_diss

Recommended Citation

Thompson-Smith, Cheryll, "Before good food pwile, mek belly buss [Better you are too full than to let good food go to waste]: Narratives of Twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Advanced Placement English Educators." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2024.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/36965959>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Middle and Secondary Education at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Middle and Secondary Education Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, *Before good food pwile, mek belly buss* [Better you are too full, than to let good food go to waste]: Narratives of Twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Advanced Placement English Educators, by **Cheryll M. Thompson-Smith**, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

Nadia Behizadeh, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

Janice Fournillier, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Joyce King, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Jacob Hackett, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Date

Gertrude Tinker Sachs, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of Middle and Secondary Education

Paul A. Alberto, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education & Human Development

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

By presenting this dissertation as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the advanced degree from Georgia State University, I agree that the library of Georgia State University shall make it available for inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to quote, to copy from, or to publish this dissertation may be granted by the professor under whose direction it was written, by the College of Education & Human Development's Director of Graduate Studies, or by me. Such quoting, copying, or publishing must be solely for scholarly purposes and will not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from or publication of this dissertation which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without my written permission.

Cheryll Marie Thompson-Smith

NOTICE TO BORROWERS

All dissertations deposited in the Georgia State University library must be used in accordance with the stipulations prescribed by the author in the preceding statement. The author of this dissertation is:

Cheryll Marie Thompson-Smith
Middle and Secondary Education Department
College of Education & Human Development
Georgia State University

The director of this dissertation is:

Dr. Nadia Behizadeh
Department of Middle and Secondary Education
College of Education & Human Development
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

CURRICULUM VITAE

Cheryll Marie Thompson-Smith

cthompsonsmith1@student.gsu.edu
cheryllts@gmail.com

(770) 864-8325 (cell)

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in Teaching and Learning, Concentration in Language and Literacy, *May 2024*. Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA. Cumulative GPA: 4.13

Educational Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction, *May 2012*. Georgia College and State University, Milledgeville, GA.

Add-on in Educational Leadership, *July 2008*. Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA.

Master of Arts in Secondary English Education, *December 2002*. State University of West Georgia, Carrollton, GA.

Bachelor of Arts in Language Arts Education, *May 1995*. Oakwood University, Huntsville, AL.

HONORS AND AWARDS

2024 College of Education and Human Development's Outstanding Language and Literacy Education Doctoral Student Award, Georgia State University

2024 Beverly J. Armento Endowed Doctoral Award, Georgia State University

2021-2022 English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE) Janet Emig Award, for best article in *English Education* in 2021, 2022

2022 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and NCTE Black Caucus Scholarship

PUBLICATIONS

Tinker Sachs, G., **Thompson-Smith, C. M.**, et al. (in preparation). Coming to consciousness in teacher education doctoral course through paired critical curriculum development.

Behizadeh, N., **Thompson-Smith, C. M.**, & Miller, P. J. (2021). Peeling off the mask:

Challenges and supports for enacting critical pedagogy in student teaching. *English Education*, 53(3), 179-203.

Behizadeh, N., Salter, B., & **Thompson-Smith, C. M.** (2021). Writing for impact: A Review of audience, purpose, and evidence. *Ubiquity: The Journal of Literature, Literacy, and the Arts*, 8(1), 38-63.

DeGeorge T., Salter, B., & **Thompson-Smith, C. M.** (2021). *Aspirational criticality in the time of Covid*. *Ubiquity: The Journal of Literature, Literacy, and the Arts*, Praxis Strand, 8(2), 14-34.

PRESENTATIONS

Behizadeh, N., **Thompson-Smith, C. M.**, & Miller, P. (November 2022). *Complexity and Tensions in Supporting New Teachers to Enact Critical Pedagogy*. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Annual Conference, Anaheim, California.

Tinker Sachs, G., Alsulami, R., Caldwell, S., DeGeorge, T., Salter, B., **Thompson-Smith, C. M.**, & Trinh, E. (October 2021). *Liberating our voices through curriculum development in a doctoral class*. Georgia Association of Teacher Educators (GATE) Annual Conference, Jekyll Island Club Resort, Georgia.

Salter, B., & **Thompson-Smith, C. M.** (October 2020). *Repositioning for equity*. Presentation facilitator for Dr. Noah Golden's virtual talk sponsored by the Center for Equity and Justice in Teacher Education (CEJTE).

Jackson, G., & **Thompson-Smith, C. M.** (March, 2014). Co-presenter of *A new teacher toolkit: A teacher's guide to the profession* at University of Wisconsin Student Development Conference Co-presenter, Lacrosse, Wisconsin.

Jackson, G., & **Thompson-Smith, C. M.** (May, 2014). Co-presenter of *Triage for the Comatose Classroom* at the Great Lakes Conference where she and a colleague shared innovative instructional practices to an audience of college professors at Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Michigan

Jackson, G., & **Thompson-Smith, C. M.** (November, 2007). *MLApprentice: Using research in the classroom*. Building Bridges: Cultures, Literacies, & Lives Georgia Council of Teachers of English Conference (GCTE), Jekyll Island, Georgia.

Henry County Schools (HCS) Professional Learning Presentations

Top Five Reasons to Use Turnitin. (Spring, 2019). Co-led with a colleague school-level professional development for faculty, Hampton, Georgia

Ga-Ga for Google and the Paperless Wave. (Summer, 2017). Led district-wide professional development for new teachers.

Best Practices for British Literature. (Preplanning, 2015). Presented research-based strategies and technology tools to an audience of teachers new to the school district.

Tech Turned Up Part 2. (Spring, 2015). Co-led HCS teachers in a follow-up session of best practices for implementing technology tools for high school English teachers.

Tech Turned Up. (Fall, 2014). Co- led HCS teachers in technology-enhanced professional development for high school English teachers.

RESEARCH and TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University Research

Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Nadia Behizadeh, *Fall 2019*

Graduate Teaching Assistant for Dr. Nadia Behizadeh, *Fall 2018*

Graduate Research Assistant for CREATE Residency Grant, *Summer 2021*

University Teaching

EDLA 4400: Concepts and Methods in Language Arts for Middle Childhood Education, Spring 2019

High School Teaching

English teacher, *August 2014 – present.* Dutchtown High School, Henry County Schools, Hampton, GA.

ELA Instructional Coach, *July 2011 - July 2014.* Lithia Springs High School, Douglas County Schools, Douglasville, GA.

English teacher, *August 2005 – June 2011.* Whitewater High School, Fayette County Schools, Fayetteville, GA.

English teacher, *May 1996 – July 2005.* Rome High School, Rome City Schools, Rome, GA.

High School Courses Taught

- Advanced Placement English Literature & Composition
- Advanced Placement English Language & Composition
- Ninth grade Literature & Composition (including technical prep., college prep. & college prep. advanced),
- World Literature & Composition, American Literature & Composition (including honors level)
- British Literature & Composition (including honors level & college prep.)

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)**, 2020 – *present*.
- **English Language Arts Teacher Educators (ELATE)**, 2022.
- **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Black Caucus**, 2022.
- **Alpha Upsilon Alpha Honor Society (AUA) member**, 2023.
- **International Literacy Association (ILA) member**, 2023.
- **National Education Association**, 1996 – *present*.
- **Georgia Association of Educators**, 1996 – *present*.
- **Department of Middle and Secondary Education Graduate Student Council**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTENDED

- 2019 - 2024 Monthly Research Salons with Dr. Behizadeh and other colleagues
- 2023 -2024 Weekly Zoom Doctoral Writing Group, Florida International University, Miami, FL
- 2020 ECE 9910 Developing Scholarly Writers course, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
- 2018 Georgia Educational Technology Conference (GaETC) in Atlanta, Georgia
- 2018 Mid-Atlantic Personalized Learning Conference in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania
- 2012 Data Analysis for continuous school improvement presented by Victoria Bernhardt Sponsored by North Georgia Highlands and University of West Georgia, Douglasville, GA
- 2013 Teacher Keys Effectiveness System
- 2012 Reading Endorsement through Griffin RESA, Griffin, Georgia
- 2012 Learning Forward Conference, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 2011 Learning Focused Schools: Train the Trainer, Douglasville, Georgia
- 2011 Instructional Coach Academy, Atlanta, Georgia
- 2010 Gifted Certification through Griffin RESA, Griffin, Georgia
- 2009 Advanced Placement English Language and Composition certification, Atlanta, Georgia
- 2007 Model Schools Conference, Atlanta, GA
- 2006 Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition certification, Atlanta, Georgia

***BEFORE GOOD FOOD PWILE, MEK BELLY BUS* [BETTER YOU ARE TOO FULL THAN TO
LET GOOD FOOD GO TO WASTE]: NARRATIVES OF TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY
CARIBBEAN BLACK ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH EDUCATORS**

by

CHERYLL MARIE THOMPSON-SMITH

Under the Direction of Dr. Nadia Behizadeh

ABSTRACT

As students' racial and cultural diversity increases and researchers emphasize the benefits of having Black teachers, the number of Black teachers remains relatively small compared to their White peers, especially in AP English courses. When considering other Black populations from the diaspora, such as Caribbeans, teacher numbers are even lower. Simultaneously, advanced English courses remain particularly entrenched in Eurocentric, canonical curricula. Yet, the idea of veracity in curricula has taken a backseat to White hegemony which is detrimental to all students. Furthermore, though historical depictions of Black teachers exist, research describing the teaching experiences of twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) high school advanced course English teachers remains relatively scarce. Drawing on theories of Afrocentricity and research documenting the mis-education of Black youth, this qualitative research study sought to understand CBI teachers' past experiences with Black and minoritized students in advanced English courses. The study employed heuristic and narrative inquiry paired with narrative analysis within a naturalistic research design. Specific tools included semi-structured interviewing, journaling, a Kitchen-Table-Talk, and document analysis. Understanding CBI twenty-first-century teachers' past experiences teaching Advanced Placement English courses – especially in a sociopolitical climate where discussing race and racism are under attack – offered the field a lesser-known and critical perspective that may have

implications for increasing teacher diversity, addressing cultural irrelevance, and curricula violence for Black students.

INDEX WORDS: Caribbean Black Immigrant teachers, Advanced Placement English, naturalistic research design, Afrocentricity, mis-education, heuristic inquiry, narrative inquiry, narrative analysis, high school, Kitchen-Table-Talk

Before good food pwile, mek belly buss [Better you are too full than to let good food go to waste]: Narratives of Twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Advanced Placement English

Educators

by

Cheryll Marie Thompson-Smith

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Teaching and Learning

in

The Department of Middle and Secondary Education

in

the College of Education & Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA

2024

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Travis Smith, my children Aja, James, and Alyse, my mother Ivis Felix, my grandmother Edith McLean, my great-grandmother Rosa Grant, my sister Shani Thompson, my niece Kennedy Galloway, my father Earl Thompson, and my best friends Greta Jackson and Tara Cleckley, all of whom supported me throughout this arduous journey. Their mental – and at times physical – support sustained me when I thought that I *literally* could not continue. I also, dedicate this dissertation to my close colleagues turned friends at LaFayette High School. Furthermore, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the contributions of my participants – two Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) English educators’ whose words, thoughts, time, and experiences were invaluable to this inquiry.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my doctoral colleagues at Georgia State University who were a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear, and an editor in times of needs. I would not have been able to sustain focus if it was not for Dr. Brooks Salter, Dr. Angel-Ann Stephens, and P. J. Miller along with many others. Additionally, my chair, Dr. Nadia Behizadeh, stood by me for the last six years reading drafts, patiently advising me, and listening to my rants. Nadia's tireless efforts and support have been integral to me reaching this goal. She read my massive dissertation repeatedly, met with me constantly, and listened to me without complaint. I also want to recognize my research participants without whom this study would not have been possible. They answered texts and emails many times, and they were a joy to know, learn from, and have become friends.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge Dr. McIntyre-McCullough whose scholarship I drew on during my inquiry and whose mentorship has been essential to my completion of this dissertation. She invited me to participate in her weekly doctoral Zoom meetings, and as result, I found support and accountability. Her doctoral students, candidates, and advisees welcomed me into their tightknit group, they listened to me doctoral defense presentation, and offered me much needed feedback. I so appreciate each and every member of the group.

Finally, I acknowledge my ancestors: my mother Ivis Felix, and grandmother Edith McLean. As Caribbean immigrants, their lives served as an example of all that is possible through prayer and perserverance. My mother served as my editor-in-chief, reading over my dissertation repeatedly, and my grandmother's recipes were the inspiration for my re-presentation of the data in chapter four. I am forever indebted to them, and I love them deeply.

Copyright by
Cheryll M. Thompson-Smith
2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
ABBREVIATIONS	ix
CHAPTER 1: <i>Before good food pwile, mek belly buss</i> [Better you are too full than to let good food go to waste]: Narratives of Twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Advanced Placement English Educators	
Placement English Educators	10
The Issues.....	14
Historical Dislocation of Black Teachers in the United States.....	15
Underrepresentation of Black Teachers: Dislocation	15
Eurocentric Hegemony in Curricula	19
Synthesis of the Issues	21
Purpose of the Study	22
Significance of the Study	23
Definitions of Key Terms	25
Overview of Theoretical Framework.....	31
Afrocentricity as the Foundation	32
Researcher’s Stirrings of Criticality.....	32
Conclusion	34
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
Summary of Reviewed Literature.....	38
Literature Review Method	40
Guiding Questions	43

AP English Course Content	44
Problem as Revealed in the Literature	46
Advanced ELA Courses: History and Current Trends	46
The literary canon in Advanced ELA courses and Origins of the Literary Canon.....	62
Critical Approaches to Canonical Literature	75
Black Pedagogical Excellence	93
Caribbean and Afro Caribbean Educators	104
Conclusion	110
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	112
Epistemology of Social Constructionism.....	113
Assumptions and Limitations of Constructionism.....	114
Theoretical Framework and Perspectives	119
Assumptions and Limitations of Afrocentricity	124
Research Design.....	131
Research Methods	133
Researcher’s Positionality in Relation to the Phenomenon	136
Research Methodologies of Narrative Inquiry and Heuristic Inquiry	138
Assumptions and Limitations of Narrative Analysis	145
Labov’s Narrative Analysis Model.....	146
Research context and participants.....	154
Sampling Procedures	158
Inclusion Criteria for Study Participants:	159
Procedures.....	162

Data Collection Procedures.....	162
Ethical considerations	165
Conclusion	167
CHAPTER 4: <i>Before good food pwile, mek belly buss [Better you are too full than to let good food go to waste]</i>.....	169
Researcher’s or Author’s Notes	169
The Kitchen: Perhaps the world begins here?.....	171
Prologue	171
1. Breakfast – Hominy Porridge	176
2. Lunch: Escovitch Fried Fish	207
3. Dinner: Oxtail and rice and peas.....	224
4. Alternative/Vegetarian option: Corn Casserole	236
Epilogue	245
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	248
Tension 1: Colorblindness and Asset-Based Beliefs	249
Tension 2: Canonical Texts and Implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	252
Tension 3: Feeling Supported and Facing Impediments.....	258
Tension 4: Celebrating Authenticity and Engaging in Gatekeeping	260
Limitations	264
Delimitations.....	265
Implications.....	268
Teacher Education	268
Teaching and Learning	270

Implications for Research 272

Perhaps the World Begins Here 274

REFERENCES..... 278

APPENDICES 305

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1, Overview of Relevant Scholarship.....	38
Table 2, Comparison of AP Scale Score Descriptors Past and Present	50
Table 3, Demographics of Devon County compared to MVHS.....	155
Table 4, Portrait of Participants and Researcher	158
Table 5, Timeline of Study	164

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Diagram Representing Structure of Research Design	120
Figure 2. Excerpt from Vanessa’s Interview #1.....	126
Figure 3. Afrocentric Framework and Narrative Inquiry	133
Figure 4. Numbering System for Narratives Coded in NVivo.....	151
Figure 5. Film Project Curriculum Document Notes Using Matrix.....	154
Figure 6. Email excerpt of Research Review Committee required revisions.....	156
Figure 7. Cheryll’s Ancestors.....	173

ABBREVIATIONS

AAEV	African American English Vernacular
AAPE	African American Pedagogical Excellence
AP	Advanced Placement
BPE	Black Pedagogical Excellence
BTP	Black Teacher Project
BWE	Black Women Educators
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBI	Caribbean Black Immigrant
<i>CCP</i>	<i>Critical Canon Pedagogy</i>
CCP	Critical Composition Pedagogy
CEE	Common Entrance Examination
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
ELA	English Language Arts
IBI	Independent Black Institution
KTT	Kitchen-Table-Talk
PLC	Professional Learning Community
MVHS	Meadow Valley High School
RRC	Research Review Committee
TC	Teacher Candidate
TTE	Teachers Turned Educators
YAL	Young Adult Literature

CHAPTER 1: *Before good food pwile, mek belly buss* [Better you are too full than to let good food go to waste]: Narratives of Twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Advanced Placement English Educators

One's basic identity is self-identity which is ultimately cultural identity. Without cultural identity, you are lost. You can no more divest yourself of your race or your culture than you can stop breathing oxygen and still live. ~ (Asante, 2007, p. 88)

In Asante's (2007) *An Afrocentric Manifesto*, he speaks about the necessity of "a pedagogy of veracity built upon the actual facts of history as far as we know them" (p. 87). For Black Americans, their history included the denial of basic literacy. This meant coerced adoption of European knowledge and involuntary disavowal of ancestral knowledge. Many Black/African American teachers fought to remedy this mis-education (Woodson, 1933). Their presence in the U.S. is connected to ancestors who arrived here by force not choice. Ogbu and Simons (1998) describe enslaved Black Africans' minority status as "involuntary (nonimmigrant)" (n.p.) as opposed to "voluntary (immigrant)" (n.p.) due to their choice in the matter of their arrival. Regardless of Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) teachers' somewhat different history, "[a]s people of the African diaspora, African Americans and persons from the Caribbean region (called West Indians) share a common heritage with Africans" (Jackson & Cothran, 2003, p. 576).

Frequently, people from the Caribbean hail from countries where they are the majority (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010). Therefore, their place of birth in the Caribbean has caused some residents, to adopt "Jamaica's motto, 'Out of Many, One People' . . . as a symbol of racial harmony" (Edmondson, 1994, p. 114). This is rather deceptive because historically other notable residents held a more radical position. Names that come to mind include Jamaican Marcus Garvey and Trinidadian Stokely Carmichael. Their dissatisfaction with the status quo is part of a rich

legacy of Caribbean leaders and activists. Perhaps the influence of their educational roots might explain why some Caribbean people maintained focus on their cultural integration and majority status. Nonetheless, Caribbeans as recipients of a British Colonial education system share with Black Americans an educational legacy of mis-education (Woodson, 1933).

Africa is recognized as the cradle of human civilization because it was in “Hadar, Ethiopia, [where] the 3.18-million-year-old remains of ‘Lucy’ were unearthed in 1974” (Agatucci, 2000). Such beginnings were and have continued to be frequently overlooked and concealed by the White episteme. For this reason, understanding the experiences of Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) teachers from the magnificence of our irrefutable foundations rightly places us as the centers of our experiences. It also speaks to the inextricably linked yet disparate struggles among Black people from the diaspora.

Thus, Afrocentricity (Asante, 2009; Mazama, 2003) as a social theory is a useful lens to understand the experiences and issues concerning Black people. Using qualitative research methods, this study sought to understand the life and teaching experiences of two CBI educators who previously taught Advanced Placement (AP). Employing a naturalistic design, the epistemology of social constructionism, and heuristic and narrative inquiry as methodologies, I aimed to understand the phenomenon of CBI AP English teachers’ experiences as they pertained to their curriculum and design of these advanced English courses. The two CBI teacher participants at the center of this study previously taught Black/African American and minoritized students advanced English curricula which often upholds European hegemony. Through the study of this phenomenon, my inquiry sought to address their underrepresentation in research and teaching and offer the field a lesser-known and critical perspective. The knowledge gained from this inquiry may

have implications for increasing teacher diversity, addressing cultural irrelevance, and curricula violence for Black students.

As Caribbean-born voluntary immigrants (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) to America and products of an education system that began with “European colonialism” (Waters, 1999, p. 19), the participants in this study were recipients of a specific set of principles regarding what was considered of value to learn and be taught. The two participants who are the focus of this inquiry who were in their 50s and 60s went to school in the Caribbean during the 1980s. For me, someone born into a similarly oriented British colonial educational system in Canada, I have sometimes found it difficult to be *my* true self and have worn a mask when teaching as Dunbar’s (1913) poem suggested. Afrocentricity calls for people of African descent to embrace our cultural identities and expose the truth of history aiming for liberation.

Because of the current constraints under which many Black educators teach (i.e. white supremacy and European hegemony) and demands of teaching (i.e., testing and curricula mandates, state standards, coupled with racial tension, etcetera), the place and voice we teachers may feel compelled to stand upon might be a Western stance in conflict with our *djed* (or place). My place and involvement in this inquiry were as a co-participant and novice researcher. In the tradition of heuristic inquiry, I adopted the “attitude of learner versus expert” (Sultan, 2019, p. 11) while exploring the phenomenon and connecting with my participants. I selected a study design that enabled me to start with a topic to which I was deeply connected, share my personal narratives, maintain close proximity, and intimately engage as I collected participants’ stories.

For Asante, education must be built on a solid foundation of truth, not the fabricated fairytales of history or fictional representations of film (Asante 2007). An Afrocentric critique of education and the discourse surrounding it, as Mazama (2003) observed, calls into question the

status quo of the canon. Doing so critiques systems of oppression such as education for “what is present and distorted in the discourse but also for what is absent and undiscussed, not only for codified ignorance but also for canonized illusion” (Mazama, 2003, p. 83). It rightly confronts the superiority of an often-Eurocentric focus in schools. This critique was a starting point in my inquiry and toward centering the experiences and perspectives of Black people and toward freedom.

In this study, the cultural identities of the CBI teacher participants informed teachers’ curriculum design and implementation. In turn, it likely was significant to shaping their Black/African American and minoritized students’ learning experiences (Gee, 2000; Vygotsky, 2012; Wynter, 2005) and reflective of the teachers’ *djed* or place. I have introspectively considered how true to myself I have been, what was and continues to be absent from my teaching, and how my at-times unchallenged support of the canon did not honor my Caribbean cultural heritage. My personal assessment finds me wanting because I have lacked the kind of criticality I desired. It may even be evidence of my dysconsciousness (King, 2015). It was difficult to admit as a Black educator my thinking may be impaired, but I acknowledged it was a necessary initial step towards freedom.

Consequently, my research endeavors began “with self-knowledge . . . an interaction between the examiner and the subject” (Mazama, 2003, p. 26) which was consistent with Afrocentricity. My personal struggles have been the impetus for my research interests and led me to consider what other CBI AP English teachers like me have experienced. Additionally, I embraced Afrocentricity nestled within heuristic and narrative research methodologies as it allowed for me to openly interact with the research phenomenon instead of attempting to remain objective and distant from it (Mazama, 2003). I pursued this investigation to shed light on CBI teachers’

unique position – their *djed* – to honor my immigrant family and Jamaican ancestors, and perhaps most importantly to gain a better understanding of self. Consequently, by listening to participants’ life experiences and stories, I engaged in both “self-exploration and self-reflection” (Sultan, 2019, p. 13) and sought illumination. This study was deeply tied to my past teaching experiences as an AP English educator.

In my use of methods and re-presentation of the data, I drew on concepts of “Red Pedagogy” because it “privileges indigenous knowledge” (Denzin, 2003, p. 245) and “Afrocentric feminist aesthetic” which is “based on a concept of storytelling and a notion of wisdom that is experiential and shared” (p. 249). Thus, to provide grounding and a sense of *djed* (place), I set the participants’ narratives in a fictionalized kitchen space. I wanted to figuratively feast on our shared experiences and not allow any of the nourishment and knowledge I garnered from our talks (interviews) to go to waste. As Jamaican’s say, *Before good food pwile, me belly buss* [Better you are too full than to let good food go to waste].

Before detailing the issues related to this inquiry, I note that I utilize the term Black when referring to people of African descent including Black/African Americans. I also use the terms Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean interchangeably – as was reflected in the literature – when referring to people from the region. When I am specifically referring to Caribbean immigrant teachers in the United States, I delineate this by the term Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI). Finally, when I reference specific studies, I defer to the researchers’ preferred terminology. I now present the issues which I view as linked to this study.

The Issues

Two issues concerning Black teachers that I address in this study are Black teachers’ underrepresentation in teaching and research as well as Eurocentric hegemony in the curricula. In

response to these issues, this study aimed to offer a twenty-first-century depiction of CBI advanced English course teachers and expand on existing but limited scholarship specifically portraying Afro-Caribbean educators (Alfred, 2003; Beck, 2010; Broutian, 2016; Campbell-Barton, 2023; Louis et al., 2020; Rhone, 2007; Smith et al., 2018; Williams Brown, 2017). I next elaborate on each of the two issues by aligning the underrepresentation of Black AP English teachers in schools with dislocation, underrepresentation in research with disorientation, and European hegemony in the curricula with mental enslavement (Asante, 2007). However, first I address the historical as well as sociohistorical factors that have led to the two issues. I begin with a broader lens by looking at Black American teachers. I then narrow in on the cultural identity of the participants in this study by centering Caribbean Black immigrants.

Historical Dislocation of Black Teachers in the United States

Taking a historical look at Black/African American teachers, helped to provide some context for the negative impact of sociohistorical forces which contributed to their dislocation. Through the dissolving of African American teachers' professional organizations in the United States (Acosta et al., 2018; Siddle-Walker, 2009), the formal support Black teacher colleagues received greatly diminished. Foster's (1997) work detailed the historical role such organizations played in promoting Black/African American teachers' employment, fighting unfair dismissals, and providing what today would amount to professional development workshops. Their collectivity and unity reflected Afrocentric principles and aided in their efforts on behalf of their students.

Underrepresentation of Black Teachers: Dislocation

In Schools. A long history of research exists touting the advantages of Black teachers. The scholarship of Acosta (2019) recognized the benefits of "why Black teachers matter for

Black students” (p. 30). Black/African American teachers’ positive perceptions of Black students was one benefit (Acosta, 2019; Morgan, 2019) as well as cultural connections to the students they taught (Acosta, 2018; Ford et al., 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Black/African American teachers served as good role models (Maylor, 2009). Notwithstanding the well-documented benefits of Black teachers for Black students, historical and sociohistorical forces have resulted in the displacement of Black/African American teachers in the United States which has led to their underrepresentation in teaching overall (Fultz, 2004; Carver-Thomas, 2018), and this difficulty has left a lasting imprint. Interestingly elsewhere, Acosta and colleagues (2018) make a case for the benefits of Black teachers for White students.

In light of today’s increasingly diverse student body (Apple, 2008; Au, 1993; Bransford, et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Graham et al., 2019; Zernokleyev, 2013) positioned against a predominantly white teaching force both historically and presently (Kafka, 2016; Picower, 2021; Ullucci & Battey, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2019), engaging students in culturally responsive ways that speak to their identities and backgrounds is vital to a successful teaching and learning experience (Gee, 2000; Vygotsky, 2012; Wynter, 2005). When students recognize themselves within curricula and have much culture in common with their teacher, it may provide a more welcoming and relatable educational environment (Ford et al., 2019; Richardson, 2003).

Additionally, for Black/African American teachers – of whom CBI teachers are a part – the historical issues of vanishing professional supports for Black teachers, the inherent inequities of desegregation, and the importance of Black teachers to Black students, might explain the current problems of Black teachers’ underrepresentation in schools. The power of a collective comprised of critical educators would have likely been significantly diminished with the dissolving

of Black teacher organizations. With their collective voices silenced, European hegemony possibly was permitted to grow unchecked. I ponder how CBI teachers as citizens of a majority country might have responded to such a sociopolitical atmosphere of historical dislocation.

Asante (2007) explains dislocation can occur on a psychological level with how one perceives oneself. As an example of this, he points to how a “person views the African as other than herself or himself” (p. 42). By engaging in such a mindset, a person is dislocated. In this sense, the importance of “place, *djed*” is connected to “the psychological, cultural, or personal place occupied by a person at a given time in history” (p. 42). Standing firmly in their *djed*, people of African descent living and teaching in the U.S. might feel comfortably centered in their own life story and the larger narrative of America’s story whether that is inside a classroom or within the fabric of the country. Afrocentricity is a position where African people exist not on the periphery of other’s history, but as “the center of his or her own historical context, reality, and time” and to consider us otherwise is to be “disoriented and decentered” (p. 24). Furthermore, Black history *is* truthful history because it envelopes the lives, stories, and experiences of more than White Europeans.

It is certainly troubling that the teaching force has not kept pace with the racial diversity in American schools (Apple, 2008; Au, 1993; Bransford et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Graham et al., 2019; Nasir et al., 2016; Zernokleyev, 2013). In my personal experience, at times I have often felt like an island unto myself as the only Black AP English teacher of minoritized students in my school. Considering the previously noted historical and sociohistorical concerns, the modern-day contextual factors of state standards, district policies, and isolation from other Black colleagues only further complicated teachers’ current circumstances. Thus, twenty-first-

century Black educators diminished presence in schools is related to historical and sociohistorical forces.

In Research. Although historical accounts of Black/African American teachers' experiences exist (Fairclough, 2007; Foster, 1997; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Wilson & Segall, 2001), "[i]n general, the experiences of Black teachers in the latter part of the twentieth century have not been as well researched as those from the pre-civil rights era" (Kafka, 2016, p. 85). This is in the context America. A wealth of existing scholarship about Black/African American teachers provides historical depictions of Black communities as centers of learning in the United States (Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992), modern portraits of Black teaching excellence (Acosta et al., 2018; Acosta, 2019), and the myriad of possibilities when Black teachers are well-supported (Mosely, 2018; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Siddle Walker, 2018), yet this scholarship does not take into account how twenty-first-century CBI teachers are potentially wrestling or succeeding with teaching hegemonic curricula. Scholars such as Smith and colleagues (2020) recognized this gap in the research. Accordingly, I aligned the limited modern-day portraits of Black teachers within the research with Asante's (2007) term: disorientation.

To further elaborate, my review of the literature unveiled many research articles about Afro Caribbean or CBI educators in the academy (Black-Chen, 2013; Fournillier & Lewis, 2010; Louis et al., 2017; Rhone, 2007; Smith et al., 2018), yet scholarship related to Caribbean teachers, particularly in high schools, appeared limited to a few dissertations (Beck, 2010; Broutian, 2016; Campbell-Barton, 2023; Williams Brown, 2017). One study straddled the fence between the academy and K-12 spaces as it focused on participants who "taught K-12 prior to migrating to the U.S." where they "functioned in the role of TTEs [Teachers Turned Educators]" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 255). Another "study examined the learning experiences of Anglophone Caribbean

immigrant women in postsecondary U.S. institutions” (Alfred, p. 2003, 247). As such, my study addresses the gap in the research by extending the existing scholarship pertaining to CBI teachers in high school classrooms. I sought to address the underrepresentation in research as well as teachers’ potential disorientation by centering CBI teachers of advanced classes.

Eurocentric Hegemony in Curricula

Keeping Asante’s previously noted definition of Afrocentricity in mind, the European hegemony of curricula frequently taught in advanced English Language Arts (ELA) courses certainly seems to stand at a distance from the cultural identities of CBI teachers, let alone their Black/African American and minoritized students. For teachers who are critically oriented, they may recognize how both advanced English curricula and the actual reality of expectations for classroom teachers reinforce the literary canon as an ideal -- typifying the standard of literature deemed valuable and supposedly representative of all universal human experiences (Asante, 2003; Asante, 2007; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Weedon, 1987). Frequently, at the root of this concept of universal knowledge was the power wielded by the dominant group which included politicians, monarchs, and academics whose purpose of marginalizing others and upholding social hierarchies (Ross, 1998) helped support the belief in a universal set of knowledge. It was the interests of these groups among others which shaped the English literary canon historically.

The idea of a universal viewpoint which the literary canon signaled continues to be problematic considering the rising racial diversity of U.S. schools (Apple, 2008; Au, 1993; Bransford et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Graham et al., 2019; Nasir et al., 2016; Zernokleyev, 2013). For those opposed to the idea of a universal body of knowledge, opponents of such beliefs “challenge false universal knowledge that privileged Whiteness, maleness, and wealth” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). The literary canon was comprised of authors who were overwhelmingly

White and male. The idea of universal knowledge failed to meet the needs and interests of a diverse teaching and student body (Gay, 2018). Furthermore, Asante (2003) implied that for people of African descent, accepting this concept of *universal* meant housing one's enemy within our minds which might be equated to a sort of mental enslavement (Asante, 2007). Universal was in fact code for European dominance which for some meant any author whose works were representative of the non-dominant group was automatically thought to be outside the standard.

To elaborate further, the concept of universal knowledge involved "seeing 'great' literature as the receptacle of fixed universal meanings" (Weedon, 1987) which were thought to lead to an understanding of truth. Mazama (2003) echoed this and asserted that there is a mental toll to accepting "the European cultural mode as universal" (pp. 3-4). Therefore, depictions of the literary canon as the universal archetype of great American literature ignored large swaths of people whose lives and experiences were vastly different from the narratives the canon falsely sells as the norm. Even so, Asante (2007) argued "[h]egemonic education can exist only as long as whites think that Africans have never contributed to civilization" (p. 88). Therefore, acting upon the best interests of African people – teachers and students included – involves a transformative mindset where "students from various cultures see themselves as participating in the flow of information and knowledge" (Asante, 2007, p. 79), with teachers at the helm, and such a standpoint is opposed to Eurocentrically focused curricula.

Whether it was through fewer Black authors or the outright absence of Black cultural perspectives (what might be tantamount to a kind of mental enslavement), the privileging of the White episteme occurred and continues to persist. Through my investigation, I wanted to understand the teaching experiences of CBI previous AP English teachers through their stories. Understanding if their approach to the teaching of advanced English course content embraced,

excluded, or struck a balance with the selection of hegemonic voices and texts was a secondary understanding I hoped to glean from my research. As a researcher who employed Afrocentricity, I turned to my participants as knowledgeable and valuable CBI teacher experts in the field and sought to learn from their wealth of experiences.

Coupled with the exclusionary nature of Eurocentric curricula are several other concerns. First, issues of equity and access persist in AP and gifted courses (Davis et al., 2015; Whiting & Ford, 2009). Included among these concerns are tracking (Miller, 2018), low course pass rates (Kolluri, 2018), and perceived course difficulty (Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017). Furthermore, the racist climate in which many Black/African American and CBI educators must teach provides an added stressor. For instance, states such as Florida have legislated how teachers can approach the teaching of the curricula through proposals such as Governor Ron DeSantis' Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (W.O.K.E.) Act (Migdon, 2021) which claimed to be an antidote against indoctrination. Modern-day teachers who dared to question the status quo were among those under attack.

Synthesis of the Issues

Emerging from the historical and sociohistorical influences that negatively impacted Black teachers and students, current challenges facing CBI advanced English teachers are their underrepresentation in teaching (dislocation) and research (disorientation) and the curricula's Eurocentric hegemony (mental enslavement). Recognizing each problem as noted above in relation to CBI teachers pointed to a need to understand the experiences of twenty-first-century CBI ELA educators. Doing so might shed light on the next steps for recruitment and the ways teachers could possibly contend with and mitigate structural impediments.

Through understanding their teaching experiences and the meaning they attached to those experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a), it may lead to actionable steps policymakers, districts, and schools could take to address CBI teachers' underrepresentation, improve representation in research, and diffuse the power of European curricular dominance. To do so may be liberating for CBI teachers who like me have struggled internally and externally with the problem of European curricular hegemony. For those who do not face such dilemmas, it might heighten their awareness. For instance, they could reflect and consider the need to address the Eurocentric dominance found in AP curricula. After all, such collective liberation is the goal of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2007). Using narrative inquiry, my participants were invited to reveal the meanings they ascribed to their own stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000a; Polkinghorne, 1988) and past experiences teaching AP English Language and AP English Literature courses by recalling their memories of teaching the courses. Drawing on heuristic inquiry, this study considered participants' social and cultural context while honoring our "*tacit* knowing" (Sultan, 2019, p. 6). Additionally, my selection of semi-structured interviews coupled with a Kitchen-Table-Talk (KTT) (Bell et al., 2022) allowed participants to hear from each other about their teaching experiences in a collaborative setting.

Purpose of the Study

This research study draws attention to the unique ways in which CBI English teachers represented their time teaching advanced literature courses especially considering the two previously noted problems of underrepresentation and Eurocentric curricular hegemony. Integral to this investigation were understandings about the extent to which the two CBI teacher participants disrupted the literary canon – an example of European hegemony – and exposed their ideologies which informed their practice. Also of significance was an understanding of the contextual

factors (e.g., district policy, the influence of colleagues, course descriptions, and state teaching standards) which appeared to play a role in their desire to continue teaching advanced ELA curricula.

The research questions which form the focus of this study are:

- 1. How are the ideologies and beliefs of twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Immigrant AP English teachers shaped by their cultural background and life experiences?**
- 2. What are the past teaching experiences of Caribbean Black Immigrant former AP English teachers with curriculum design and implementation of the prescribed curricula?**

Significance of the Study

Understanding the intricacies of CBI educators' thoughts and approaches to advanced English courses required a study of their teaching experiences. While some of the existing research privileged the voices and perspectives of White teachers (Borsheim-Black, 2015, 2018; Lilach, 2020; Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor, 2014; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Olan & Richmond, 2017; Sarigianides, 2019), and in other instances the teachers' racial or cultural identity was ambiguous (Gillenwater, 2014; Newell et al., 2009) or featured the views of non-White teachers (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Lilach, 2019; Kohli et al., 2019), there continues to be a need to focus more on Black advanced English teachers. Limited scholarship depicted CBI teachers (Beck, 2010; Broutian, 2016; Campbell-Barton, 2023; Williams Brown, 2017). Thus, my inquiry sought to extend the extant but limited scholarship.

Additionally, because of the displacement and dissolving of Black/African American teachers' professional organizations (Acosta et al., 2018) in the United States, these events

played a role in the current problems Black teachers face (i.e., underrepresentation and Eurocentric hegemony in curricula). Understanding how twenty-first-century CBI educators experienced teaching (and whether they found ways to push back against the canon) is important to the field of literacy teaching and learning. Though views differ on the extent to which Black teachers positively affect the academic performance of Black students, some laud the cultural connection between Black/African American educators and their Black students as overall invaluable (Maylor, 2009; Mosley, 2018). Teacher participants revealed how they viewed themselves and thought about their identities as CBI AP English teachers. Their experiences, the meaning they attributed to those experiences, and the potentially liberating reflexivity from involvement in the study are detailed and further explained in the data re-presented as a fictionalized narrative in chapter four.

Consistent with the principles of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2007) and *Maat* meaning “harmony, balance, order, justice, righteousness, truth, and reciprocity” (Asante, 2007, p. 102), my research questions arose out of a desire to expose the truth of participants’ teaching experiences. Afrocentricity coupled with heuristic inquiry allowed me to foreground my participants’ cultural background, acknowledge the role of racism historically and currently within the field of education, and underscore the centrality of their experiences as CBI educators. It was through my questions that I aimed to better understand their view of themselves as humans, as people of African descent, and as former AP English teachers. How they drew on their identities if at all was of interest to me too. I also wanted to understand what conflicts or tensions – if any – they experienced relative to curricula as Black Caribbean AP English teachers, especially regarding teaching canonical literature. My research questions were intentionally broader in nature and left room for the myriad of possibilities inherent in their individual experiences.

Next, I offer definitions of key terms and theories to provide context. From there, I provide a brief overview of the research design, and the theory of Afrocentricity, and consider my positionality as the researcher.

Definitions of Key Terms

Literacy. For a definition of literacy, I first consulted critical literacy theorist Brian Street (1995/2013) who posits that there are “multiple literacies” (p.77) falling under the umbrella of New Literacy Studies (NLS). The two literacy models he contrasts are autonomous and ideological models (Street, 2003). What many would likely categorize as traditional or Westernized views of literacy, Street identified as the autonomous model because of the presumption that “literacy in itself--autonomously--will have effects on other social and cognitive practices” (p. 77). However, other models exist.

By contrast, and in chorus with New Literacy Studies (NLS) research, the ideological model makes room for the idea that depending on the context, “literacy practices” (Street, 2003, p. 77) will vary. Moreover, the ideological model comes from the epistemological perspective that literacy is grounded in the knowledge and identity of individuals. Elsewhere, Street (1995/2013) highlighted the two camps of thought regarding literacy: the literate versus the illiterate. In the first group, characteristics of those who possess literacy would include modes of thought, “cognitive abilities, facility in logic, abstraction and higher order mental operations” (p. 21). Next, I explore definitions of literacy in Advanced Placement English courses and Westernized definitions of literacy. I conclude with the definition of literacy that I used in this study.

Literacy in Advanced English. In advanced courses such as AP English which frequently rely on canonical texts, instructors are asked to guide students in the more technical skills which are aligned with the autonomous model and typical of those individuals who are

thought to be literate. They do so through a variety of tasks which include literary analysis, examination of an author's choices, and taking note of a text's syntax to provide a sampling of skills. In-kind, teachers facilitate students' engagement and gauge their students' literacy acumen through a myriad of assignments from writing tasks to meaningful discussions. Additionally, teachers invite their students to consider an author's use of rhetorical devices with the hope that students draw connections or parallels between their own lives and those of the literary characters about whom they read. Such tasks can be especially difficult when Black students are reading about and from a white European perspective.

These high-level skills of literary analysis frequently represent the epitome of many English teachers' romanticized visions of the perfect literature classroom, and this is especially true for advanced ELA courses. Elsewhere I provided examples of studies where researchers and/or teachers applied these technical skills to diverse texts (Dallacqua & Sheahan, 2020), Black authors, and Black culture (Ball, 1995; Lee, 1995); thus, rejecting the view that Eurocentric texts are superior and the sole avenue to achieving mastery of such technical skills.

An ideological view of an AP classroom might include centering the culture and experiences of Black students (Gay, 2018) as well as Black teachers and building the curricula with this in mind. A narrow view of literacy and being literate might be more prevalent in ELA classrooms that vigorously and desperately embrace the canon's superiority.

Westernized Definitions. By default, those deemed illiterate lacked the specific technical characteristics detailed above. Furthermore, Street noted, “[a]t the social level, ‘great divide’ theory assumes that there is a difference of kind as well as degree between societies with mass literacy and those with only minority or elite literacy” (1995/2013, p. 21). AP English courses for some teachers may tend to support notions of social elitism as participation in these

courses is marked by overt and covert messages that reinforce a student's academic adeptness and distinctiveness. Whether it is the weighted grade point average (Kyburg, 2007) in some cases or smaller more intimate class sizes in others, some students and teachers might learn that there is an unmistakable difference socially for those who partake in advanced English courses.

Technical or Westernized (Street, 2003) definitions and understandings of literacy remain central to the reading and studying of literature across K-12 classrooms. Literature teachers frequently emphasize the many relationships readers build with texts and identify them as text-to-world, text-to-text, text-to-itself, and text-to-self. Undoubtedly, the connection between literacy, and the reading, analysis, and study of literature is significant. Others, such as Fisher (2009) posit what counts as literacy should include “a wide range of texts” (p. 17) as well as placing value on orality which is frequently discounted in many mainstream environments – classrooms included.

Certainly, many definitions of the term literacy exist. Some strip it down to its most fundamental sense: “the ability to decode and comprehend written language” (Kaestle, 1985). Others contend, “[l]iteracy is an outcome of cultural transmission” (Scribner, 1984. p. 7). Yet, others state that literacy is “being able to **read and comprehend** [emphasis in original] texts in all aspects . . . and getting students to apply their understanding to the things they read” (Muhammad, 2020a). Pinning down a single definition of the term is no easy feat. Perhaps this is the case because as Street (1995/2013) noted literacy is so much more than being labeled literate or not.

Operational Definition. Drawing on the above research, I defined literacy as the ability to navigate the spaces one occupies to achieve one's goals, which is consistent with sociocultural views of literacy (Perry, 2012). Conceivably it is because of my own classroom experiences and the multiple ways I have seen students who successfully embody this definition flourish and

achieve over many years that my definition has morphed away from a strictly technical interpretation.

As a teacher, seeing my students competently navigate the world is always my underlying goal: to help them comfortably and proficiently communicate in the many worlds they may encounter (Freire, 2017). Whether that space is a waiting room, conference room, or classroom does not matter; because a person who has mastered literacy can recognize both the covert and overt rules (written and unwritten), the language, and the necessary behavior warranted in each environment. Such a definition of literacy echoes Freire's (2017) concept of reading the world. Being literate in this manner is often vital to students' lives and ultimately their success. Street's (1995/2013) observation that a "lack of literacy skills is not so frequently a real barrier to employment as the public accounts suggests" (p. 18) makes evident that the Westernized values regarding the autonomous model of literacy are flawed. For many Black people, literacy historically did not look like mainstream descriptions of the term.

In fact, when tracing the birth of Independent Black Institutions (IBIs) in America, Fisher (2009) argued that they began with the enslavement of Africans who worked to recreate the three Rs to include reading, writing, and reciprocity . . . [thus] literacy, that is reading, writing, and speaking, were not a means to an end but driven by purpose and propelled by a desire for a people to become independent and self-sufficient. (p. 25)

Similarly, I view literacy as purpose-driven. With this knowledge in mind, my research study focused on the teachers who at the high school level are frequently considered the guardians of the gift of literacy: English teachers.

My inquiry was quite personal in that I sought to have a better understanding of self through my research and study of other similarly situated teachers. Because the focus of my

inquiry was CBI former AP English teachers, it was important to define what I meant by the designation Black/African American; therefore, I next explicate what I meant by the term Black.

Blackness. I must elucidate my use of the terms Black and African American here for several reasons. Although the designations of Black and African American can have different meanings for diverse individuals, I used the two terms interchangeably. First, I opted to do so because I consider and call myself Black. Second, because even though I am a Canadian of Jamaican descent who immigrated to the United States, I recognize others based on my appearance (i.e., how I present) may view me as African American. As a U.S. citizen, I accept this label, but prefer to identify myself as Black. I elaborate further elsewhere. As someone who identifies as Black, the name resonates with me and my life as a Black woman born to immigrants who identify as the same. Though unintentional, several similarities among and between participants and me came to light (Sultan, 2019). Simultaneously, there were points of distinction too which I expand upon in chapter four. Among these similarities were our Caribbean heritage, our ages, and our experiences as previous AP English Language and AP English Literature teachers.

The significance of what it means to be Black is best illustrated by Bettina Love. Love's foreword to Picower's (2021) book *Reading, Writing, and Racism* poignantly captured America's hate-hate relationship with and for Black lives. For Black teachers, it was not difficult to imagine that with all the struggles of teaching during a pandemic, they still had to endure racism. Whether it was the daily disdain exemplified in the murdering of Black lives, the words of politicians, or perhaps friends, colleagues, or even students, teachers of color were not exempt from ongoing racism. Racism did not take a break during virtual instruction. In fact, racist sentiments were ramped up as the highest offices of government and co-signed with their continued

disregard for and disrespect of Black people (Picower, 2021). CBI AP English educators taught during these turbulent times, and they continue to teach under these difficult circumstances.

As is the norm, CBI educators like our ancestors persevered -- achieving, striving, and surviving despite it all. Such fortitude and resilience continue to be our legacy – that is who we are (Asante, personal communication, February 16, 2021; Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992; Cherry-McDaniel; 2017). Yet, scholarship in this vein – specifically highlighting CBI teachers’ experiences with advanced English courses is limited. I recognized that scholars such as Haddix (2016) have conducted research that focused on preservice teachers and their identities; however, my work served to contribute to the field by examining the current classroom experiences of twenty-first-century CBI teachers and extending this underresearched segment of the teaching population. To do so, I asked teachers to recall their previous experiences as AP English educators.

Sankofa. Finally, I drew on the Akan word Sankofa in this study; therefore, I needed to define this term. According to the Encyclopedia of Black Studies (Asante & Mazama, 2005) Sankofa “literally means ‘go back to fetch it’” (p. 425). Represented by a bird “looking backward while holding an egg in its mouth” (p. 425), the term and philosophy it embraces is: that we can benefit from returning to the past for exemplars of what might work best. Hence, in my inquiry, I asked participants to return to their memories of teaching AP English, their childhood experiences, and curriculum choices to understand their present ideologies and beliefs. Additionally, I also literally and figuratively returned to my own past through my re-presentation of the data. By setting the real data from our KTT within the fictionalized kitchen setting of my grandmother’s kitchen, we (my participants and I) prepared enduring Caribbean recipes. We honored our Caribbeanness.

I sought to honor our shared heritage and re-present the data through the metaphor of communal learning that the kitchen and act of cooking often engenders. Food and music usually bind people to their cultural past and simultaneously introduce others to unfamiliar cultures. By imaginatively cooking the Caribbean recipes of our culture, the research participants and I honored our ancestral heritage, and reminisced about our personal and professional lives, and our conversations helped me as a researcher return to fond memories of my grandmother whose influence is evident on virtually every aspect of my life. I wanted to understand the current issues facing the two CBI previous AP English teachers (Karenga, 2010). To do so, we engaged in conversation.

In sum, providing a clear definition of literacy both from a Westernized standpoint and a personal one specified a common understanding. I also detailed how I defined being Black and what I meant by Black teachers. Finally, I discussed the relationship of the Akan word *Sankofa* and its meaning to my inquiry. Next, I delve into the theory of Afrocentricity which grounds my research, detail my research design, and clarify my positionality.

Overview of Theoretical Framework

In his 2021 Benjamin E. Mays lecture, Dr. Molefi K. Asante provided insight into the paradigm of Afrocentricity which is essentially about humanity at its core. Afrocentricity is a theory which aims to explain “the dislocation, disorientation, and mental enslavement of African people,” (Asante, 2007, p. 23). Hence, it is a direct response to the White supremacy which historically and presently dominates America; therefore, Afrocentricity has broad implications for my research inquiry. The issue of racial hegemony was and continues to be prevalent in Black lives and the education system. An antidote to the effects of a racist American educational system, Afrocentricity as a theoretical lens values agency. Black people’s ability to consciously act

in the best interests of people of African descent (Asante, 2007) and countering the European hegemony while offering balance are integral to Afrocentricity. It provided a way of thinking that places African people – of whom African Americans and people from the Caribbean are descendants – in the subject position as opposed to marginalizing them.

Afrocentricity as the Foundation

At the heart of Afrocentricity is humanism and a consciousness in how we view the world historically, politically, economically, and educatively. When students are inundated with Eurocentrically focused curricula, it may deny their value both historically and academically. Furthermore, the Eurocentric focus parades as universal when in fact it is a perspective of the world from the viewpoint of the colonizer (Mazama, 2003). What the denial of Black humanity translates to is students learning about ancient Greek monuments rather than African ones, learning about Bach as an example of great classical music instead of the syncopated rhythms of African music, or learning Latin as an ancient language instead of Yoruba (Asante, personal communication, February 16, 2021). Moreover, Afrocentricity which has roots in Black Studies (Mazama 2003) also welcomed the spiritual aspects of human beings as essential to life. Unlike predominate research theories which openly reject such facets as valid sources of knowledge, Afrocentricity invites it.

Researcher's Stirrings of Criticality

Admittedly, my research interests stem from two sources: my identity and internal turmoil with teaching advanced courses as a Black educator. Yet, it was recollections of my time in high school and reading books such as *Black Like Me* which led me in search of connection and understanding of my White peers. When one student bumped into my desk and knocked Griffin's book to the floor, I took it personally – feeling it was an affront to my identity and desire

for White classmates with European backgrounds to *know* what it meant to walk around in my Black skin. Then, I believed they needed to undergo a similar transformation mentally as John Howard Griffin – the author – transformed his appearance externally. In doing so, he aimed to empathize and understand what it meant to be a Black. As a young Black girl of Caribbean descent living and coming of age in 1980s Canada, I considered what my world would be like if all White people had a similar experience.

Now, as an adult Black teacher, I am continually searching to find power and purpose in understanding the role my own identity plays as a teacher of Black students (Williams-White et al., 2013). Nonetheless, what better way to understand and learn than to hold up the phenomenon to a mirror? My participants acted as one such mirror. Farrell (2020) concurs writing, “The ability to learn from the experiences of others presents one of the greatest opportunities available to us as human beings” (p. 7). With such a goal in mind, in my study, I attempted to move beyond my mere musings and insecurities to explore the inner-world of CBI teachers of advanced English courses in twenty-first-century high school classrooms. In other words, I took steps towards an understanding of self through my research and study of others.

The sense of connection which literary texts can engender between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1978; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Lopez, 2011; Olan & Richmond, 2017) has continued to draw me to the subject matter of AP English. Consistent with Moustakas (1994), my research questions arose out of “an intense interest in a particular problem or topic [and my] personal history brings the core of the problem into focus” (p. 104). To begin, I sought to understand, to unveil, to explore, and to learn.

Conclusion

I came to this research study as both an experienced teacher and doctoral candidate, expert and novice. My experience as a high school English teacher and more specifically as former Advanced Placement (AP) English Literature teacher of Black students provided me with insight and a level of expertise to a certain extent. Even so, conducting my first research inquiry simultaneously placed me in the position of novice. My past teaching experiences and readings as a doctoral student sparked in me a curiosity and criticality. When I read the literature concerning AP, missing from the existing body of research were the many voices of twenty-first-century CBI teachers in classrooms with Black and minoritized students. As a result, my preliminary review of the literature indicated a gap and more importantly an opportunity to contribute to and extend the existing body of scholarship.

Considering the power of teachers' choices concerning students' classroom experiences and the general lack of diversity amongst the teaching force, understanding the existing experiences of CBI teachers seemed prudent. Several theorists in education agree and cite the potentially transformational power of educators who are critically oriented (Freire, 2017; Gay, 2018; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Street, 1995/2013). The classroom environments of students begin with their teachers. In fact, the work of critical sociocultural theorists (Gee, 2000; Vygotsky, 2012; Wynter, 2005) noted the role one's identity plays in development and learning. Gee (2000) also recognized the connection between identity and discourse and supported the idea that these connections can prove beneficial. Vygotsky (2012) too observed how "sociocultural forces" (p. xiv) shape one's early development. Cultural theorist Sylvia Wynter in speaking of Fanon's *Revolution* and how the "modern world has actually been brought into being" (p. 362) acknowledged how from the time of our birth we are socialized under a specific culture.

The literary canon is one such culture that directly affects Black advanced English course educators. My experiences as a Black Canadian student speak to the power of this culture. Thus, with these beginnings as an impetus and as a previous AP English teacher, I felt understanding how CBI advanced course teachers experience the teaching of advanced courses a worthy endeavor. What they did to shape those experiences, what exactly their life experiences were comprised of, their ideologies, and the extent to which they drew on those ideologies were the foci of my inquiry.

What King (2018) identified as “heritage knowledge” (p. 216) and defined as “the information that black [sic] students need to know about their own cultural background and history” (p. 223) – I suggest is equally important for CBI teachers of Black and minoritized students. I speculated they might be better equipped to correct the mis-education (Woodson, 1933) that is prevalent in many schools’ curricula – and AP English/honors is no different. However, I was uncertain of exactly what those curriculum choices entailed. For this reason, I analyzed participants’ stories and listened to their experiences. Though I discuss my findings more later in chapters four and five; I saw some evidence of criticality in one instance and room for growth in the other.

Consequently, my research inquiry set out to address the above noted concerns of underrepresentation in teaching and research and the Eurocentrically focused curricula through an investigation of CBI former AP English teachers. This inquiry was significant to the field because it centered CBI teachers and their contributions, addressed a gap in the research literature, had the potential to provide significant insights, and offered possible implications for not only Black students but *all* students.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Schools in the twenty-first-century have become more racially and culturally diverse (Apple, 2008; Au, 1993, Bransford et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Graham et al, 2019; Zernokleyev, 2013) meaning there has been an increase in the number of students of color. Yet, despite the supposed progress that resulted from the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and its goals of desegregation among American students, the field of teaching continues to be predominantly White (Kafka, 2016; Nasir et al., 2016; Picower, 2021; Ullucci & Battey, 2011; U.S. Department of Education; 2019). Black and Brown students are positioned to see a significant uptick in enrollment by 2028 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020); yet this racial and cultural diversity poses an enigma of sorts as the underrepresentation of Black teachers endures. Within this population are Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) teachers. Both in the teaching field and within research, fewer depictions of twenty-first-century CBI teachers exist. Considering the potentially synergetic relationship that can occur for minoritized students who feel culturally connected with their teacher (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Hart, 2020; Joshi et al., 2018; Warikoo, 2004), it is concerning that the Black teaching force has not paralleled the racial diversity of America's schools.

My personal teaching experiences correspond with the data as I have felt a sense of isolation as the lone Black AP English teacher at the schools where I have taught. Experiences such as my own may be akin to what Black/African American teachers experienced with the disintegration of Black professional teacher organizations. In the history of teacher organizations created to serve the needs of Black/African American teachers and students such as “the American Teachers Association, also known as the National Association for Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS)” (Acosta et al., 2018, p. 345), desegregation brought about the dissolution of these

professional groups and likely diminished the power they wielded “through collective strategies” (Givens, 2021, p. 159) and hampered their efforts toward fugitive pedagogy.

Considering this history, many present-day Black teachers, may continue to be saddled with Eurocentric curricula parading as universal, might not have the formal support of other like-minded Black teacher colleagues let alone the informal professional learning communities that organically arise when Black teachers are surrounded by others who share their perspective. Instead, they might grapple with tensions of hegemonic curricula coupled with their underrepresentation in isolation. The supposed universal knowledge that comprises the literary canon is often the focus of AP English courses, and in these courses, CBI teachers’ numbers are even more limited. A White Eurocentric curricular focus stands at a distance from both Black and minoritized students along with their Black teachers. Moreover, for those Black teachers who are proponents of social justice and see a need for culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), there are a multitude of possible approaches they might employ. For instance, for educators with such a philosophy, teaching Eurocentric-focused curricula might include countermeasures intended to #disrupttexts (Ebarvia et al., 2020) and the canon’s overall dominance.

Separately, the above noted concerns of underrepresentation and hegemony were problematic enough, but when taken together and connected with CBI advanced course teachers who may be critically oriented or lack such awareness, these issues hold even more significance. Accordingly, it was vital to understand how CBI teachers have negotiated their classrooms. It is important considering problems they face which often stem from sociohistorical, racial, and political roots. To begin framing the topics related to the above noted issues and my research

phenomenon of Caribbean Black Immigrant teachers who previously taught advanced English courses, I examined several areas of literature.

Among the areas I examined were 1) the history and current trends of advanced ELA courses, 2) the literary canon in Advanced ELA courses, 3) critical approaches to canonical literature, 4) Black pedagogical excellence, and 5) Afro-Caribbean educators. The experiences of Black teachers did not comprise mainstay of the scholarship I reviewed. Repeatedly, studies about teachers' ideologies (Acosta et al., 2018; Borsheim-Black, 2018) or dilemmas (Lilach, 2020) appeared to focus on pre-service teachers or teachers early in their careers (Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016, Newell, et al., 2009) rather than in-service teachers. Furthermore, when I did find studies about CBI teachers, the focus was on educators in higher education or the academy (Black-Chen, 2013; Fournillier & Lewis, 2010; Louis et al., 2017; Rhone, 2007; Smith et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2020). Prior to delving into each area, I first provide a chart detailing my review of the literature and my subsequent synthesis of the existing scholarship. Then, I explain the research methodology for my literature review and the compelling contemplations which informed my survey of existing scholarship.

Table 1

Overview of Relevant Scholarship

Summary of Reviewed Literature

Focus	Researchers	Synthesis
Advanced ELA courses:	Anderson (2020) The College Board (2003; 2020) Davis et al. (2015)	Viewed as a response to Americans' concerns that the United States was falling behind Russia in academic achievement and to better prepare high school students for college, Advanced Placement (AP) emerged out of elite preparatory academies. The exclusive
History and Current Trends	Dyer & King (1955) Ford & Whiting (2007) Fund for the Advancement of Education (1953) The JBHE Foundation (2008)	

	<p>Jeffries & Silvernail (2017) Kolluri (2018) Kyburg et al. (2007) Rothschild (1999) Santoli (2002) Schneider (2009) Solorzano & Ornelas (2002) Valley (1959) Whiting & Ford (2009)</p>	<p>program was never intended to have the open-access touted today.</p>
<p>The literary canon in Advanced ELA courses</p>	<p>Anagnostopoulos (2003) Berchini (2016) Borsheim-Black (2018) Carrol (2017) Csicsila (2011) Lauter (1991) Lilach (2020) Mollison (2006) Newell et al. (2009) Ross (1998) Sheridan (2000) Watkins & Ostenson (2015)</p>	<p>ELA classrooms tended to focus on limited modes of expression, decontextualized skills, canonical texts, and teacher-centered approaches. To counterbalance the hegemony of canonical curricula, some researchers and teachers promoted alternative methods of instruction.</p>
<p>Critical approaches to canonical literature</p>	<p>Adkins-Coleman (2010) Alfred (2003) Alvermann et al., (2019) Ball (1995) Borsheim-Black. (2015, 2018) Carter (2007) Coffey & Farinde-Wu (2016) Dallacqua & Sheahan (2020) Dyches (2018a/2018b) Gillenwater (2014) Godley et al., (2015) Gonzalez et al. (2005) Kohli et al. (2019) Ladson-Billings (1995) Lee (1995) Lopez (2011) Macaluso & Macaluso (2019) McIntyre-McCullough (2020) Meier (2014) Mirra et al. (2015) Morrell (2004 & 2008) Olan & Richmond (2017)</p>	<p>Consistent in the research was evidence of ELA teachers' efforts to critically approach the teaching of English broadly and as it relates to canonical literature more specifically. In some instances, teachers' attempts placed them in a dilemma as they were faced with tensions between and within the canon, standardized tests, and their own criticality. Teachers approached the study and teaching of literature through different entry points, finding ways to creatively relay rigorous course content. Hence, these studies highlighted pedagogical practices in ELA and AP.</p>

	<p>Sarigianides (2019) Sulzer & Thein (2016) Thein (2019) Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor (2014)</p>	
<p>Black Pedagogical Excellence</p>	<p>Acosta et al.(2018) Acosta (2019) Fisher (2009) Givens (2021) Harris (1992) Mosely (2018) Toliver (2019)</p>	<p>A long history of fugitive pedagogy among Black/African American teachers recognized the need for Black Studies in K-12 classrooms and served as historical models of resilience, triumph, and liberation. Additionally, Black/African Americans’ historical legacy has resulted in new theories for teaching such as Black Pedagogical Excellence and the embracing of “ratchetness” (i.e., indecency) as an additional space for championing agency within classrooms. This could enable both teachers and students to feel comfortable in their own skin and identities within ELA classrooms and curricula.</p>
<p>Black Caribbean and Afro Caribbean educators</p>	<p>Alfred (2003) Beck (2010) Black-Chen (2013) Broutian (2016) Campbell-Barton (2023) Fournillier & Lewis (2010) Louis et al., (2017) Louis et al., (2020) Rhone, A. (2007) Smith et al., (2018) Smith et al., (2020) Williams Brown (2017)</p>	<p>To address the shared cultural identity of my study participants, a venture into existing literature about Afro-Caribbean educators shed light on this underrepresented and underresearched group. The experiences of teacher educators in the academy comprised the bulk of the scholarship with a limited number of studies (i.e. primarily dissertations) pertaining to CBI educators in K-12 contexts. Thus, indicating a gap in the literature.</p>

Literature Review Method

Because AP commonly represents the epitome of advanced course work in secondary educational circles, it proved as a suitable point to begin my literature review. My intent in researching AP was to understand the history of the program while also gaining a clearer picture of

the connected policy implications. From this point, I moved to research about secondary Black ELA teachers in AP English. It was through this trail of research literature; I discovered an imbalance amongst studies. Finding literature about English teachers in general or teachers of minoritized students – usually in urban environments – was more plentiful than my specific research interest of Black advanced course teachers outside these spaces. As my study evolved, the cultural identity of my participants shifted Black/African American teachers to CBI educators. With this new focus, I discovered even fewer studies highlighted Afro-Caribbean or Caribbean immigrant educators, and when they did, the focus was squarely on higher education institutions. I was unsuccessful in locating much in the research literature pertaining to CBI AP teachers which indicated a need for further investigation.

The primary databases I utilized were Galileo, ERIC, and ProQuest. I was most interested in qualitative empirical studies due to my interest in teacher experiences; however, in a couple of instances (Davis et al., 2015; Kolluri, 2018), I found quantitative studies provided beneficial insights. Initially, my search terms included “AP English Literature.” However, I discovered this was too restrictive. I had to further adjust my exploration to also include “AP English Language” (the second option of the two AP English courses offered at the secondary level). Thus, I opened my search parameters to include both “AP” and “Black students.” My adjustment led to over 4,000 search results; therefore, I added limiters which included peer reviewed scholarly journals from the last 25 years with the exception being the historical literature pertaining to Black/African American author-activists. Additionally, literature surrounding the topic of AP dated back more than fifty years.

I excluded articles that focused on programs labeled as early college, but instead considered some research articles which addressed “gifted” courses. My decision to do so was because

gifted courses – sometimes identified as honors courses – are an example of advanced curricula. Included within the gifted scholarship were studies that mentioned honors, advanced courses, and International Baccalaureate (IB), but I avoided research that discussed AP courses in general – such as AP math, science, or social studies and instead determined they would be a part of my exclusion criteria as the topics were too broad and outside the purview of my research interests.

Conversely, to better grasp the history of AP, I conducted a preliminary search using the terms “College Board” and “Advanced Placement.” Since my intent was to gain a clear picture of the overall program, I did not need the narrow focus of AP English. My search initially proved unfruitful, but by specifically looking at the years from 1940 to 1960 and omitting the words “Advanced Placement” from my search criteria, I learned about the beginnings of AP. Early on, the program was not known by its current designation of Advanced Placement. The results provided me with information regarding college admissions entrance examinations, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and – something deemed “[*t*]the hidden human factor [emphasis in original]” (Dyer and King, 1955, p. 49) which was connected to college entrance testing. The human element to which the research literature referred was high school teachers. It was these teachers’ subjective evaluations of students which determined students’ readiness for college level work; their influence was considered the hidden human factor. Essentially, the teachers’ judgement became the litmus test for what later would be the standards of rigor for AP.

With this understanding of teachers’ role in shaping AP in mind, I next searched the literature for studies regarding teachers’ perspectives and experiences teaching AP and English Language Arts (ELA) classes. My goal was to find studies of how teachers have taught literature especially when it involved minoritized students. I discovered when White teachers and/or students were the focus, terms such as *rural* were utilized in the literature. I then drilled down to locate

research from the perspectives of Black/African American AP English/honors teachers or secondary ELA teachers of minoritized students in non-urban schools. Though I did find a limited number of studies focused on the perspectives and approaches of Black teachers (Carrol, 2017; Coffey and Farinde-Wu; 2016; McIntyre-McCullough, 2020; Sarigianides, 2019) or more generally about Black teachers (Acosta et al., 2018; Acosta, 2019) which keenly fit my interests, largely the research did not meet these criteria.

While I viewed the experiences of Black teachers in general of value, I was specifically interested in the experiences of those Black educators who taught advanced courses in English. Furthermore, because the participants who were the focus of my inquiry were CBI teachers, discovering research directly related to their cultural identities ended up being my goal. My findings indicated a need for more research from twenty-first-century CBI teachers' point of view. Even Kyburg's (2016) work directly pointed to a dearth of research regarding twenty-first-century Black teachers. The study acknowledged more historical accounts of teachers' experiences existed in the research literature. Likewise, Afro-Caribbean educators were both underresearched and underrepresented in the literature I reviewed (Louis et al., 2017; Louis et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2020; Williams Brown, 2017). The lack of scholarship relaying the experiences of in-service CBI high school teachers of AP English courses underscored an absence of representation in the literature.

Guiding Questions

The guiding questions that provided the focus of my review of the literature were:

- 1. What is the content, history, current policies and practices of the Advanced Placement program, particularly AP English literature, and language?**

2. **What does the teaching and study of literature look like in ELA classrooms, particularly AP classrooms?**
3. **What are the experiences and teaching practices of Black teachers historically and currently, specifically teaching AP literature and other advanced English courses?**

It is with these foci I detail my review of the existing literature. However, before doing so, I briefly discuss the content of AP courses to provide some perspective.

AP English Course Content

On the College Board blog website for parents, a brief synopsis of AP entitled “Advanced Placement Basics” is offered. Included among the details on the site, was the following, “[t]here are 38 AP courses offered in multiple subject areas . . . Exams take place each May . . . Most colleges grant credit . . . for qualifying AP Exam scores” and though not all schools require it, “Taking the corresponding AP Exam is recommended” (College Board, 2023a). The blog goes on to tout the benefits of AP with a parent quote as a testimonial and visitors are offered free preparation materials. This general overview is in addition to a direct link to each of “38 AP courses” listed where the two AP English course offerings can be found. They include AP English Language and Composition (frequently taught at the eleventh-grade level) and AP English Literature and Composition (often taught at the twelfth-grade level). AP English teachers commonly refer to the courses by the abbreviations AP Lang. and AP Lit.

In AP Lang., the focus tends to be on the analysis of “nonfiction works from various periods,” “critical-reading and writing skills,” and “the elements of argument and composition” (College Board, 2023c). Although there were no prerequisites according to the site, the skills of close reading, synthesizing, and writing are among those identified along with “College Course

Equivalent: An introductory college-level literary analysis course” (College Board, 2023c). For AP Lit., the focus was having students “Learn how to understand and evaluate works of fiction, poetry, and drama from various periods and cultures” (College Board, 2023b). Links to nine units of study were provided for both courses, and upon expanding each unit a bulleted list of skills was provided. Only those teachers with access to AP Classroom – normally College Board certified teachers whose school districts have provided the College Board with verification of their teaching credentials and a CB approved syllabus – can see the specific texts students might read inside of each unit.

Through the AP Classroom secure link for example, in unit one of AP Lit., the sample instructional activities included references to such authors and texts as “Chopin’s ‘The Story of an Hour’ . . . ‘A Rose for Emily’ . . . ‘Girl’ by Jamaica Kincaid” (College Board, 2019). Unit two’s focus was poetry. It included authors such as Langston Hughes, Santiago Baca, Elizabeth Bishop, and John Donne while other units encompassed texts and authors ranging from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* to Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. The point is the content of AP Lit. and Lang. as presented through the secure AP Classroom link was not a list of requirements but suggestions of possible texts to teach the courses’ tested skills.

Consequently, experienced AP English teachers might be more prone to veer away from the College Board sample activities and texts towards those they love or enjoy due to their level of comfort and expertise, whereas a less experienced teacher might view the sample texts as required not recommended. Other factors that could influence the content of AP Lang. and AP Lit. courses are released AP English exams. By examining the frequency with which certain texts appear on prior year’s exams, teachers may design their course content around pieces of literature they know will likely appear among the lists. This is a list of suggested texts for the essay or

written portion of the exam. Finally, the AP Classroom site included progress checks which operated as a measure of students' skill development in the course. Administrators and the College Board monitor teachers' use of these multiple-choice style questions found on the progress checks but caution against using them to punitively assess students. Put differently, teachers were strongly discouraged from formally counting progress checks toward students' grades.

In sum, the content of AP English courses was not necessarily prescriptive; however, veteran AP English teachers may feel more at liberty to venture away from the suggested activities and texts to those they like or believe will appear on the exam. On the other hand, less experienced AP English teachers who are new to the courses might heavily rely on the course material out of sheer survival when faced with teaching unfamiliar course content. I now return to my review of the literature by framing the historical context of Advanced Placement.

Problem as Revealed in the Literature

In my review of extant research of AP, I discovered the history of AP courses were marred with a history of elitism, developed out of a desire to compete internationally, and somewhat shortsighted. The program developers certainly did not foresee the changing demographics of America, nor were they at the helm of anticipating a need for AP to attend to issues of social justice. Such concerns have more recently been the focus as the demographics of test-takers has shifted.

Advanced ELA Courses: History and Current Trends

My first category of research on advanced ELA courses examined its history and current trends. To better understand the genesis of the advanced curricula, I must first discuss the organization at the center of advanced coursework in high schools: the College Board (CB). The College Board (2003) offers the following brief history of its curricula, "In the early part of the

twentieth century, the gap between secondary and higher education widened. Following World War II, many Americans realized that this trend had to be reversed.” Through this descriptor, the CB lays out the argument for strengthening the academic abilities of Americans and called for a better educated populace. While this overview sounded a call to action within America’s educational system, as a critical literacy researcher (Freire, 2017; Mills, 2016; Street 1995/2013), I can see where such words are simultaneously prophetic and problematic. On one hand, the CB’s sentiments predicted an intensity in educational competition; however, for future Black and minoritized students who would soon diversify those classes, changes meant the elusive program was even further beyond their grasp.

To illustrate the problems for Black students’ participation in AP, Jeffries and Silvernail’s (2017) qualitative case study focused on three “Black high school students who” decided to forego participation in honors and AP. Their teachers viewed them as “exhibiting the academic ability to persist in advanced level coursework” (Jefferies & Silvernail, 2017, p. 56). However, these positive accolades could not overcome other contributing factors. These factors included students’ socioeconomic status, confusion about waivers, and overall fewer teacher or counselor recommendations for participation in AP.

While in Jeffries and Silvernail’s study each participant’s individual reasons for choosing not to take AP were different, the authors noted teachers and counselors played a pivotal role in students’ decision-making process, and though their teachers on the one hand acknowledged the students’ potential for AP, navigating the complexities of exam fee waivers and garnering support through counselors’ or teachers’ recommendations on the other, did not appear to outweigh students’ perceived hurdles to participation in AP. Among the researchers’ findings was Black students failed to understand how waivers operated in such advanced courses coupled with

teachers and guidance counselors functioning as gatekeepers which resulted in a lower Black student participation in advanced coursework. This led to higher participation rates in courses that tracked students. Thus, AP courses might be out of the reach of some Black students.

A further example may be found in the research of Whiting and Ford (2009). They focused on the underrepresentation of Black/African American students in AP and echoed Jeffries and Silvernail (2017) regarding the issue with teacher recommendations when it came to AP. In their work, they offered five recommendations for addressing Black students' underrepresentation in advanced courses which included "early intervention and talent development initiatives," "mentoring programs," "data collection," "improved family-school partnerships," and "increasing cultural competence among educators" (Whiting & Ford, 2009, pp. 25-26). Thus, their recommendations covered a wide array of issues and areas.

The scholars recognized "[g]ifted education often has come under much scrutiny, criticism, and attack with some concerns that it is elitist and discriminatory against Black and low-income students" and the issues persisted "despite national, local and legal efforts to address underrepresentation" (Whiting & Ford, 2009, p. 26). Additionally, the work of Solorzano and Ornelas (2002) which further substantiated the policy implications of AP classes is related to the research of Jefferies and Silvernail (2017) and Whiting and Ford (2009). The former also examined "[i]ssues of access and inequality" (Solorzano and Ornelas, 2002, p. 216), but focused on "Chicana/Latina students" (p. 216). The point being, the beginnings of AP were both elitist and rooted in a neoliberal narrative of competition for American students; however, as I will explain later, it was never intended to meet the needs of today's culturally diverse study body. It is with

this historical backdrop and understanding of the exclusionary nature of AP that courses first began.

The lens with which I approached my review of literature regarding the history of AP is grounded in sociohistorical perspective (Vygotsky, 2012). By attending to the past of AP and the original intentions of the program's developers about students' performance, we can better understand the present state of advanced ELA courses in high schools. One of the factors in determining a candidate's suitability for college admissions early on was related to his or her test scores. In Dyer and King's (1955) work, the authors provided one such example of the type of questions that were pertinent to the college admissions process: "Is this the kind of student we want in college?" (p. 24). The preoccupation with finding the *right* candidate for admission was not only code for the supposed exclusiveness of AP, but also speaks to the intentional marginalization of those for whom a college education was out of reach. When fewer Black teachers are in positions to advocate for Black and minoritized students, it could perceivably shape the landscape of AP classrooms.

Beginnings of AP. At first, the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) asked schools – high schools – to gauge a student's likelihood of success through a five-point scale. The scale bears a striking similarity to the present-day AP five-point scale used to calculate AP course credit. The purpose of the initial scale was used as an indication of a candidate's potential to be successful in the completion of college level work. As it currently stands, after their coursework, AP students take a test that is a combination of multiple choice as well as essay free response items. Each year in May, hundreds of thousands of high school students both nationally and internationally sit for AP exams and have their scores translated into a number on a scale of one to five (College Board, 2022). For these students, the exam determines whether they will

receive college credit for the course. In the table below I summarize and compare the CB’s AP Score Table to the original five-point scale high school teachers once used to determine a student’s fitness to receive college credit. I made this comparison to demonstrate that the program today has not veered far away from its origins.

Table 2

Comparison of AP Scale Score Descriptors Past and Present

Past (Dyer and King, 1955)	Present (College Board, 2020)
5— Probably will make an outstanding record	5— Extremely well qualified A+ or A
4 – Probably will make a superior record	4 – Very well qualified A-, B+, or B
3 – Probably will make an average record	3 – Qualified B-, C+, or C
2— Probably will have some academic difficulty	2 – Possibly qualified
1 – Probably will flunk out if admitted	1 – No recommendation

Hence, with a desire to improve “articulation between school and college” (Fund for the Advancement of Education, 1953, p. 6), the Ford Foundation (Kolluri, 2018; The JBHE Foundation, 2008) which initially funded the research that led to the development of AP, described their intent as “[a] private foundation dedicated to the advancement of education acts as a magnet for good ideas” (Fund for the Advancement of Education, 1953, p. 5). The organization sought to meet a perceived educational need. The foundation sponsored four projects related to the goal of improving high school students’ experiences during their final two years of matriculation as well as meeting their needs academically through challenging coursework. As a result of a partnership

between three elite preparatory schools, “Andover, Exeter, and Lawrenceville” (Rothschild, 1999, p. 175) and ivy-league universities such as Harvard, the Ford Foundation began the project that would later become AP. It was spearheaded by “administrators, professors and Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Andover, Exeter, and Lawrenceville” (Rothschild, 1999, p. 177; Schneider, 2009). A year later, the College Board “assumed leadership” (Rothschild, 1999, p. 179) of the program; whereas the board had previously focused on college entrance exams (Kolluri, 2018), its newfound focus was on creating the select academic curricula known today as AP.

With the college admissions entrance exams as the historical foundation of current AP courses, the advanced curricula gradually gained popularity with an aim to leverage students’ chances of gaining admission into the school of his or her choice. While not all students who sit for the exam receive the coveted three (the score most colleges designate as worthy of a student receiving college credit) or higher, the sheer experience of taking AP courses is lauded on the CB website as preparing a student for the rigors of college (College Board, 2021). Thus, standards of rigor and suitability to handle college-level work were selling points of the program.

Lay of the Land for AP Teachers. I next provide some context to explain the current trends in AP before discussing Black students and the advanced curricula. Despite the history of AP, presently the landscape of AP classrooms is changing as are the faces of student participants. Unfortunately, the courses still lack racial and cultural diversity amongst its teachers. In fact, “[a]n examination of teacher background revealed . . . ethnic minority teachers were heavily underrepresented” (Milewski & Gillie, 2002, p. 1). Even more concerning in the research literature, the perspectives of Black AP English teachers in non-urban schools with minoritized populations was lacking. Furthermore, in my review of the scholarship, Black/African American students’ participation in AP courses was linked to monetary incentives.

For example, Davis and colleagues' (2015) research addressed the troubles that come with incentivizing student participation in AP. As findings from their three-state study revealed "the individuals who benefitted from AP incentive programs . . . were not the Black students who took the AP exams" (p. 150). To explain, the study's purpose "was to determine the cost effectiveness of covering AP exam fees by comparing the success value provided by overall AP exam outcomes to test expenditures for Black students in three researcher-selected states (i.e., Texas, New York, and Florida)" (Davis et. al, 2015, p. 140). The researchers concluded despite the monetization of AP participation; the achievement gap widened as participation in AP grew. The discord which was prevalent in Davis and colleagues' (2015) study of "AP test-takers, clearly indicated that the access and equity policy statements purported by the College Board do not mirror the lived experiences of Black and Hispanic student groups" (p. 149). I argue that to address the cultural diversity of AP classrooms, educators and schools will need to find solutions beyond those that involve throwing money at the problem. One such remedy might include CBI teachers who teach AP curricula drawing on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018). Thus, they would likely be more in tune with Black and minoritized students.

I contend when those seeking to diversify AP elect to focus on purely financial obstacles to Black/African American student participation instead of a more comprehensive approach – such as Whiting and Ford's (2009) five recommendations -- those who are aiming to help may do further harm. Black AP students who may already be locked out of AP due to the course's original Eurocentric content focus face one level of "curricular violence" (Givens, 2021, p. 96) and marginalization while the monetary hurdles operate at another level. For students of lower socioeconomic status, the incentivization of AP might remove the complications of

understanding fee waivers (Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017) and payment for these tests, but AP English courses may still likely marginalize Black/African American students in other ways.

An increase in the number of Black AP teachers, an Afrocentric curricular focus, and the overall centering of Black history and knowledge is a fitting start to address some of the concerns related to AP course taking. Asante (2007) would likely concur as he argues that American schools have “a whites-only orientation in education” (p. 83), and it is for this reason that I criticized the incentivization of AP courses. These studies demonstrated a reliance on monetary stimulus and played a numbers game with little thought to how the AP curricula marginalized Black students nor individual the faces and life experiences of students. Additionally, teachers – CBI teachers included -- who are critically oriented might act as teacher-activists to address concerns of “curricular violence” (Givens, 2021, p. 96) and marginalization but being Black is inadequate. Because depending on a teacher’s ideology, he or she may uphold rather than challenge curricula which appears largely uncritical in nature. I saw evidence of this in my study as I later explain.

Questions about the relevancy of advanced ELA courses to Black teachers’ and students’ worldviews drove my thinking around the subject and inspired my review of the historical beginnings of AP. Perhaps if minoritized students had a clearer understanding of the legacy of their ancestors and partook in curricula that reflected their interests (Asante, 2007; Mazama, 2003), the need for AP as a leg up might be eliminated. Conceivably, if Black students had Black teachers’ whose sense of place or *djed* was reaffirmed through the curricula, recruiting more Black teachers to teach AP and students to take it might also be easier. Yet, the challenges of AP for these students was not unfamiliar because, historically, many Black/African Americans have struggled towards their goals of academic attainment. Advanced Placement ELA courses were merely yet another arena where we might be marginalized by curricula.

AP and African American Students. To view the Black experience in America with slavery as the starting point is to portray inaccurately and disingenuously who we are, where we come from, what we are capable of, and what we know. It dishonors and disrespects our ancestors. Yes, the historical struggles African Americans had to endure are a part of our history; however, we are so much more. We have a heritage of learning that predates the atrocities of slavery exacted upon us. For instance, this history includes “the Isonghee of Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo) [who] introduced the mathematical abacus” (Agatucci, 2000, n.p.), and “Africa, in ages past, was the nursery of science and literature” (Horton, 1996, p. 255); furthermore, Egypt saw the inception of such industries as “[. . .] papermaking, sugar refining, porcelain, and the distillation of gasoline” (Rodney, 1996, p. 717). Together these examples provide a mere sampling of the many ways African people created and contributed to various fields of education. Furthermore, even in America, our thirst for learning continued despite our enslavers’ efforts.

Here in the United States Black people likely recalled their ancestral knowledge and studied their enslavers. Through their observations, they probably learned early on that literacy in their new home was a door to their eventual freedom. Through their collaborative efforts, they understood the spirit of the African proverb which says, “If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together” (COPH Staff, 2016). Muhammad (2020b) along with other scholars (Mazama, 2003; Asante, 2007) spoke to this concept because they understood that historically Africans and people of African descent knew they “had a social responsibility to one another” (Muhammad, 2020b, p. 34). For example, through their literacy collaboratives, Black/African Americans learned and taught one another, and as a result, furthered their efforts towards learning, literacy, and liberation. For this reason, I next focus on the many ways in which African

Americans have worked to be educated in America and then pivot to the experiences of African American students in AP courses.

Admittedly, despite Black/African American students' best efforts, solid transcript records, and extracurricular involvements, one vital component may continue to stand in their path toward realizing their college dreams: AP courses. Standardized tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing (ACT) exam can act as one set of obstacles for some, while their teachers can present another barrier. Frequently, teachers' recommendations acted as gatekeepers (Anderson, 2020; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Whiting & Ford, 2009) for many Black/African American students. To stand out among those for whom a college education has always been within reach – their White peers – many Black/African American students elect to take Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or honors courses all of which are considered advanced.

The College Board (CB) governs AP, and it represents the apex of scholarship in the minds of many— teachers, students, and parents included. By opting to take advanced coursework in high school, students might hope to have their college applications placed on top of the pile, to have the supposed academic edge. Since the Advanced Placement program's inception, it has seen both growth and expansion. Simultaneously though, the elite schools for which the AP curricula was originally designed have more recently continued to drop AP course offerings in lieu of their own course designs (Kolluri, 2018). Once again, the *elite* have found a way to separate themselves from those they may treat as *commoners* – leaving them to flounder.

The propaganda campaign of AP has drilled home the narrative that transcripts reflecting a student's decision to take AP courses will level the playing field. The mischaracterization of AP as one of the sole vehicles to Black students' college dreams appears to have penetrated their

decision to enroll in these courses. Regardless, contradictions exist between the intentions of the AP program and the increasingly diverse student body who now partake in the specialized course offerings (Kolluri, 2018). With so much more involved in gaining college admission, the AP course and exam are only part of the formula. College campuses have their cultural norms, higher education is filled with ivory towers, and some minoritized students who attend underfunded urban schools are often academically ill-prepared for this unfamiliar world. Whittling down college admissions to a student's decision to take AP fails to address the mental fortitude it takes for students unfamiliar with how to navigate the halls of academia to thrive in what amounts to a foreign land for some. Nonetheless, some students have continued to flock in droves to their guidance counselors so they can sign up for AP classes.

Historical Models of Black Literacy. Perhaps the message of advanced courses as the primary method to academic achievement has affected many Black families because of a lack of awareness of their heritage of Black excellence. The tradition of literary excellence from within the Black diaspora is substantial, but the history of such instances remains little known to many students (King, 2018) or their teachers. The hegemony of a Eurocentric view of education would have most believe that as descendants of Africa our literacy began with Europeans' intervention (King, 2020) when in fact, our legacy of literary prowess and literacy should not be derided. Specifically, African American writers often served dual roles through both their literary contributions and their activism (Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992; McNair & Sims Bishop, 2018). Such names as Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, Henry Highland Garnet, and Gwendolyn Brooks are just a few that come to mind. A prominent figure on this list is Mr. W. E. B. DuBois.

As co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), W.E.B. DuBois' history as an activist-author included "his influence on the development of African American children's literature – through the publication of *The Brownies' Book*" (McNair & Sims Bishop, 2018, p. 28). Among the objectives of the publication was the desire to bolster the achievements of members of the African American race – something children were unlikely to see in the common textbooks of their day. Notably, DuBois along with his peers recognized the need to expose children to "literature that would inform, affirm, and empower black children" (p. 34). His life and legacy were a vital part of history and Black excellence. Likewise, Gwendolyn Brooks' contributions to the Black diaspora (Asante, 1998; Mazama, 2001; Rabaka, 2020) included both her literary works and activism. She focused on bringing poetry back to the people. Hence, like Sojourner Truth, Brooks wrote poetry that inspired, and her activism was not limited to school settings (Fisher, 2009). More importantly, literacy was not limited to school settings.

These African American activist-authors provided an example of how literacy furnished both an intellectual and social need within the communities where they lived. By looking to the past, Black teachers in classrooms today can study historical models of Black excellence. Other examples include Givens' (2021) book which demonstrated the multitude of ways "Black educators continued to be imaginative in their practices and strategic in their efforts to circumvent oppressive educational structures that served as impediments for the work" (p. 191). Recognizing the need for and benefits of communal learning, these teachers did more than was asked of them. Similar efforts and awareness for twenty-first-century CBI teachers have the potential to undergird their classroom literacy and begin to sow the seeds of activism. We need to look no further than ourselves for models of literacy and literary excellence; our history speaks volumes.

Current Trends: Reasons Students Take AP. As noted earlier, the scholarship of Jeffries and Silvernail (2017) served as an example of one qualitative case study that elected to focus on obstacles to African American students' participation in AP courses. To provide some clarity regarding existing research about AP and elaborate further, I read Kolluri's (2018) literature review on "whether the AP program has achieved its dual goals of equal access and effectiveness" (p. 671). It echoed the problems that come with incentivizing of AP programs like Davis et al. (2015), but I felt it served as a solid grounding for issues in AP. The researcher noted that expanded access to AP has come with "smaller percentages of students [who] have passed tests" (p. 704). In Kolluri's (2018) review regarding the challenges of AP, the author also did not make mention of a disconnect between students' interests and their AP course readings, nor did it consider how students would benefit from having critically inclined Black AP English teachers. Instead, among the potential reasons attributed to low pass rates offered was the idea of some cryptic "social forces beyond the reach of the College Board" (p. 704). Perhaps insights from Jeffries and Silvernail's (2017) emergent themes offer answers. The researchers noted that "Teachers who use inclusive, equity based instructional strategies advantage marginalized students' ability to achieve success in academically demanding courses" (p. 73), and I concur.

To expound further, when discussing the advantages of "equity based instructional strategies," Jefferies and Silvernail (2017) appeared to be referring to "pedagogical techniques aimed at creating a classroom culture that embraced diverse student talents and experiences" (p. 73) rather than the content of AP courses. This wording seemed to avoid any direct mention of AP course curriculum in a specific sense. Instead, it addressed student diversity more broadly. I would guess equity here could be interpreted as diversity and including Black/African American students in opportunities to participate in AP courses. Though it could be interpreted that through

the selection of literary texts that align with Black/African American students' lives and experiences, teachers' pedagogical strategies might include the content of AP English courses, this did not appear to be the authors' intent. Instead, their focus was not specific to AP English courses, and they did not explicitly mention course content. I would say this connection to literary texts would be a significant stretch. Still, drawing on the lives of Black/African American students when crafting AP course content, could potentially provide one avenue to meeting minoritized students' needs.

Santoli's (2002) article also touched on some of the reasons why students decided to take AP courses which included prospective advantages to both students and schools with such course offerings. Among those reasons were students' perceptions that AP course teachers were better, the rigors of the curricula better prepared students for college and earning college credit, as well as taking and receiving an adequate score on the exam meant less tuition fees. Yet, scheduling conflicts, course availability, and the difference between the standards in one AP course versus another have presented obstacles – particularly to minoritized students. Accordingly, steps towards rectifying “the inequalities that exist because of funding” (p. 31) were taken. Even so, money was not the only way to aid students who take AP. With the uptick in cultural and racial diversity in schools, preconceived understandings about Blackness and Black students overall likely require educators to reframe and re-imagine their perceptions and approach to teaching students of color – especially when those views are problematic. Seeing them in this new light resonated with my readings and research of those who reject a deficit lens.

Current Trends: Underrepresentation of Black Students in Advanced ELA. The scholarship of Ford and Whiting (2007) which focused on the underrepresentation of Black students in gifted education argued “that educators' deficit orientation about African American

students has a direct and profound impact on these students being able to gain admission to gifted programs” (p. 28). Since educators’ referrals were often the catalyst for initial screening (p. 32), teachers had a direct effect on Black/African American students’ eventual participation and presence in the program. Ford and Whiting (2007) argued despite the time and distance from segregation, Black gifted students remained under-identified. The researchers claimed the issue extended beyond faulty “identification instruments and assessment procedures” (p. 29) and could be attributed to the deficit lens many educators held regarding Black/African American students. They called out this issue as a hindrance to recognizing the “potential and promise” (p. 29) Black students possess.

Framing their work, they drew on three historical and “landmark legal cases . . . *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1856) . . . *Homer Adolph Plessy v. The State of Louisiana* (1896) . . . [and] *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)” (Ford & Whiting, 2007, p. 30). The question that formed the basis of their research was: “Why do gifted African Americans persist in being underrepresented?” (p. 31). While the authors noted five key ways in which a deficit lens negatively affected Black/African American gifted education, the two that stood out to me were “traditional IQ-based definitions, philosophies, and theories of giftedness are not grounded in culture” and “inadequate training of educators in multicultural education hinders educators from understanding cultural diversity and becoming culturally competent” (p. 32). Both points were tied to my research which aimed to understand the ideologies and experiences of CBI teachers. Additionally, I wanted to learn more about CBI teachers’ views regarding cultural alignment or misalignment with the Black and minoritized students they taught. In response to the issue of underrepresentation, Ford and Whiting (2007) made several recommendations. They included better

recruitment to retain Black/African American students, culturally relevant teaching, and multicultural preparation for teachers which should be matched with multicultural education for students.

Current Trends: Winds of Change. Despite Black students' underrepresentation in gifted curricula, other scholarship indicated a potential shift. Kyburg and colleagues' (2007) qualitative study of AP and IB courses used a grounded theory methodology to answer research questions regarding whether teachers and the general classroom environments provided gifted urban students with adequate learning opportunities. The designation of urban in this case entailed schools "composed of minority students, and each school had a percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch that was higher than the state's average" (Kyburg et al., 2007, p. 188). In the study, students' grade point averages were "weighted favorably" (p. 200) simply for participating in the advanced ELA courses. An additional research question sought to understand what curricular and instructional supports would lead to the success of these students.

Findings showed students' school and class experiences arose "from a complex web of interdependent relationships and factors" which "occurred at four general levels" (Kyburg et al., 2007, p. 192). The levels ranged from the district down to the classroom teacher-student level. Changes in student demographics influenced the superintendent's initiatives for instance. On the coordinator/administrator level, the achievement policies established for minorities reflected the superintendent's initiatives. Following suit, at the school building level, district plans became school policy, and finally, on the teacher level, "a strong, veteran core of teachers provided the necessary leadership to support initiatives . . . to help students" (p. 197). Consistent with the concept of incentivizing advanced courses discussed in the work of Davis et al. (2015), incentives for participation in advanced ELA courses were also a part of school practice. Nonetheless, the

benefits students seemed to gain from course participation did not stem from their grades being boosted, but from the support systems they encountered.

The communal efforts in Kyburg and colleagues' (2007) study worked much like those detailed earlier regarding the success of Black/African American author-activists and Black communities (Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992). Thus, this study provided one portrait "regarding the nature of the environment in AP and IB classrooms in high poverty urban schools" (Kyburg et al., 2007, p. 192). Normally, when AP teachers think of the course, they might imagine students who come to their classes well-prepared and ready to quickly dive into many of the technical aspects (Street, 2003) of literacy. However, with the trend towards a more culturally diverse AP classroom, teachers across the board have had to adjust these preconceived notions.

If teaching is to be considered a sociocultural experience and increased engagement and test performance are desired outcomes, scholarship needs to explore the circumstances of Black teachers who teach Black/African American students in addition to curricula content more closely. Kyburg and colleagues' research showed an example of teachers of advanced courses providing economically disadvantaged students with the necessary support targeted at their success; however, the study neglected to elaborate on the cultural identity of those teachers. Consequently, it is unknown what influence this may have had or not had on students' in the study success. In response, my study aimed to center the cultural identities of CBI teachers because they are underrepresented both in teaching and research.

The literary canon in Advanced ELA courses and Origins of the Literary Canon

To understand the significance of the literary canon, I must first place its hegemony in context as I discuss the research in my second category of scholarship. Because of the historical circumstances surrounding the literary canon, it meant culture and identity were not urgent

concerns to the founding fathers. Specifically, the founding fathers' definition of who could be categorized as a citizen was limited in scope (Busch & White, 2013). At the time, it excluded large segments of the population including people of color, poor White males who did not own property, and lastly women.

Literature considered representative of America was essentially borrowed from others, largely from Great Britain and European countries. The American literary anthology was borne out of a desire for a literary identity, and much like the founding fathers' entreaty to provide civic education, the literary traditions of America privileged voices that were representative of those in control, namely White men. Furthermore, in the advanced courses of today, the existing views of teachers toward canonical texts might be traced back to their own educational experiences (Olan & Richmond, 2017; Lortie, 1975). Stated differently, if reading and studying the canon was the norm for a teacher when he or she was a student, nothing would seem awry to continue with such traditions. This might be especially true for a teacher who is uncritical. My study – in part – supported scholarship that purports the influence of teachers' own educational experiences on their teaching and teacher identity.

Trevor Ross' (1998) book delved into the beginnings of the literary canon –particularly the English literary canon. The foundations of the literary canon in America were coupled with American literature gaining respect as a subject of study (Csicsila, 2011). Lauter (1991) noted prior to “1920 [American literature] really did not exist as an academic discipline” (p. 257). As its study gained respect and traction amongst universities, its progression was reflected in higher education courses and anthologies. In the late 1800s, the deaths of authors such as Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Holmes, and Stowe marked a period of self-reflection in recognizing the merit of those authors' literary contributions (Csicsila, 2011). Bearing in mind how the

beginnings of America's literary identity were connected to Great Britain is to acknowledge our reproduction of Great Britain's ideals. Ross' (1998) apt observation that "canonical texts are treated as a sort of code which can be fully deciphered only by those who are recognized to possess the necessary disposition, learning, and skill" (p. 11) further supports the notion of exclusion which the canon represented. It also echoes Asante's (2007) observation that the American educational system is one grounded in White supremacy. With this historical context in mind, I move on to the literary canon's connection with advanced courses.

Development of AP Courses and "Canon Wars." The creation of AP English/honors courses and the use of the literary canon can be traced back to 1952 when "the Ford Foundation noticed that the very brightest high school students were studying the same material as students in many entry-level college courses" (Applebee, 1974; There is Both, 2005, 97), and in response, they created the Advanced Placement curricula. At its inception, AP was designed for an elite student population that had privilege and access (Mollison, 2006); thus, it was geared toward White students. As with many educational policies that inevitably translate into practice, a disparity in the participation of minoritized students in courses such as AP plagued the arena from the outset. Over time, the demographics of students who participate have changed (Mollison, 2006) and have become much more diverse.

Continuing to teach works of literature from the literary canon and sanctioning their value is central to the debate over which texts should be taught. It has been referred to as "the canon wars" (Sheridan, 2000, p. 84). Because ". . . the canon of American literature is the result of American history and represents a kind of political statement, a version of American culture – from someone's point of view" (p. 84), it can be alienating to anyone outside that perspective. Additionally, acceptance of predominate texts required Black and minoritized students to

embrace and recognize the canon as the epitome of English literature while relegating Afrocentric and multicultural texts to the margins. Such a view might be considered a form of mental enslavement – housing one’s enemy within our minds (Asante, 2007). Previously, I too bought into the ideas of educational experts such as E.D. Hirsh whose viewpoint supported the idea of a common body of knowledge. My study sought to understand the ideologies of CBI former AP English teachers. I wanted to know what informed their curriculum decisions and the role the canon played in those choices. I further desired to understand the place of White hegemony in their implementation of the AP English curricula.

Champions of the canon found merit in the ideals it embraced. The canon has dominated classroom instruction, but an indication that a more welcoming perspective might be on the horizon was demonstrated historically in the efforts of those advocating for minority rights. By raising questions regarding the credibility of the male-dominated White European perspective, activists’ efforts towards equality in literary representation marked a turning point historically (Csic-sila, 2011). The shift toward recognition of the diversity of voices that comprised America was an indication of their importance to the fabric of America and society at large.

Content of AP English. For many teachers, what drives their instruction in Advanced Placement courses is the culminating exam. The classroom discussions and reading of literary selections along with the skills of timed writing provide students with practice and experience analyzing, reading, and writing about texts before exam day. Writing and other skills targeted at preparing students for the test are some of the many factors that “shape teachers’ implementation of critical pedagogy in ELA, including beliefs, knowledge, experiences, identity, teacher preparation and development, and contextual factors such as colleagues, curricula, and testing” (Behizadeh et al., 2021). More recently, in the Fall of 2019 (Changes), the creators of the AP English

exam made modifications to one of the free response questions. Previously, it was known as the open question, and this later became the literary argument. In its original form, the question asked students to select a text of literary merit from a provided list or students' reading and discuss in writing the meaning of the work as a whole. This changed when the exam underwent revisions.

Although AP exam designers provided test takers with a suggested list of texts for question three (the literary argument question); the keyword here is *suggested*, and while several multicultural texts were intermingled among the predominate selections, the predominate texts were still present. In my view, the subliminal message it may send to both teachers and students is that students should be exposed to the texts that have frequently appeared on the AP English exam. Online, a simple Google search for "most frequently cited books in AP Lit exam" presents teachers with pages of results. The search provides a list of those selections that have consistently showed up among the suggested texts. These online resources contrast with College Board's course description which is meant to provide teachers with guidance rather than be considered a prescriptive curriculum (College Board, 2020).

In response to knowledge about the appearance of text frequency on the exam, many AP teachers may feel pressure to ensure their students' success. Potentially, some AP teachers are led to view such online lists as a supplement to the CB sanctioned course guidance. Even so, the 2020 College Board course guidance officially states:

Students should have studied a variety of texts by diverse authors from a variety of time periods . . . Issues that might, from a specific cultural viewpoint, be considered controversial, including depictions of nationalities, religions, ethnicities, dialects, gender, or class, are often represented artistically in works of literature. AP students . . . are expected to

have the maturity to analyze perspectives different from their own and to question the meaning, purpose, or effect of such content within the literary work as a whole. (College Board, 2020, p. 117)

Such advice could conceivably be interpreted as inviting one of the key tenets of critical literacy: questioning privilege and power (Alvermann et al., 2019; Freire, 2017; Mills, 2016; Mirra et.al, 2015; Morrell, 2008; Street, 1995/2013) because the CB's statement appeared to support analysis and questioning. However, the message may become lost in a teacher's desire to have his or her students well-read when it comes to the literary canon and ultimately well-prepared for the end-of-year AP English literature or English language exam. Furthermore, the CB's words do not consider the training or type of teacher who is most willing to guide students through a critical examination of problematic texts. Who this might be, I argue is a teacher who is supportive of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and a proponent of critical literacy.

An earlier College Board (2010) publication recognized the importance of issues surrounding the literary canon and how teachers might grapple with these difficulties by stating:

students need teachers to guide them through challenging, difficult, and canonical texts that they might not approach on their own; while on the other hand, the very act of assigning those texts may seem to invalidate the reading choices that students make on their own. (p. 6)

The struggle a Black teacher might encounter may pit his or her own heritage – or Black/African American students' heritage for that matter – against the canon. It in many ways is an impossible choice. Who decides which texts have merit is not much different from the question of who determines what it means to be literate (Street, 1995/2013). The more recent shift in the redesigned AP English examinations has meant that language regarding literary merit has been virtually

erased from AP English CB publications. Perhaps, this move is an indication that the CB recognized their *consumer* is not who they used to be. Nonetheless, spoken, and unspoken messages in addition to real and imagined pressures drive the course content for most AP English teachers.

Predominate or Culturally Irrelevant ELA Curricula. Similarly, for ELA courses, the curricula drive instruction. In the literature, I found examples of ELA courses where teachers maintained a predominate (Carrol, 2017; Anagnostopoulos, 2003) or culturally irrelevant approach (Borsheim-Black, 2018). Also, in a couple of studies, researchers revealed new teachers faced tensions and dilemmas as they entered the profession (Lilach, 2020; Newell et al.). I now provide an overview of these studies beginning with those that took a predominate approach, followed by the culturally irrelevant method, and finishing this section with tensions and dilemmas of teachers.

Utilizing Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a lens along with focus groups and a writing workshop format, Carrol (2017) investigated the impact of Black English “teachers’ perceptions . . . on Black student achievement” (p. 115). The researcher found teachers believed their impact on Black students’ achievement extended beyond the subject matter; however, an alarming discovery included the deficit views of some Black/African American teacher participants. Interestingly, the researcher left the definition of achievement up to participants which they measured through such qualities as growth and independent thinking, yet the participants appeared to rely on predominate indicators such as student assessments and homework. Black teachers in the study faced “institutional, pedagogical, relational, positional, and cultural frustrations” (Carrol, 2017, p. 124). Unfortunately, such issues are not uncommon.

The significance of Carrol’s work was that it complicated existing scholarship in which Black teachers are viewed as connected to Black students’ success because of their shared

cultural identities. I suppose that because participants relied on predominate markers of success, their views of Black students were possibly skewed, and potential ties severed. Significantly, Carrol (2017) posited that “contemporary Black teachers’ pedagogy is centered less on racial uplift today than it was pre-*Brown* and in *Brown’s* immediate aftermath [emphasis in the original]” (p. 132). Considering my research focus on the phenomenon of twenty-first-century CBI advanced course ELA teachers, I argue that my work might add to the existing depictions of Black teachers and extend the limited scholarship on CBI educators.

As another example of a predominate approach to ELA instruction, I turned to Anagnostopoulos’ (2003) work which used critical discourse analysis coupled with socio-cultural literacy studies “to examine the relationship between testing texts and the classroom tasks and talk through which teachers and students interact with literature” (p. 181). The district Chicago Academic Standards Exam (CASE) and the text at the center of the study – *To Kill a Mockingbird* – indicated a test-driven focus and dependence on a canonical text. Study participants a White male experienced teacher and an Asian female beginning teacher comprised the two-case study in which the researcher interviewed the teachers and conducted classroom observations. Findings indicated despite opportunities to engage critically with the text, such opportunities were missed because curricula that drove instruction simultaneously “position[ed] students as active readers engaged in ‘evaluating’ and ‘critiquing’ texts and their social worlds, but also neutralize[d] the political and ideological content of the texts” (Anagnostopoulos, 2003, p. 190). In other words, through both a superficial treatment of substantive topics and time constraints, the opportunity for criticality within the curriculum was curtailed.

Anagnostopoulos (2003) observed the power the test held over these teachers which is much the same as how canonical texts or a Eurocentric focus has grabbed hold of my own

teaching and thinking about disrupting this structure. Additionally, it was like the influence the AP English exam appeared to have in the classrooms of the participants in my study. To explain, the end-of-year exam drove their instructional design which I illustrate in chapter four. Hence, although I am somewhat comforted to confirm that I am in good company regarding the problems and power of curricula and mandated testing, I was equally interested to learn whether the two African American teachers who were not a part of Anagnostopoulos' (2003) case study had any insights to offer. Consistent with my review of the literature, their experiences were absent.

Since “of the 19 English teachers . . . only . . . two were African American” (Anagnostopoulos, 2003, p. 183) and they were not included as study participants, their experiences remain unknown and their voices unheard. Furthermore, their absence as participants reiterated the need for my inquiry which specifically highlighted the experiences of CBI teachers. A weakness of this research study was it did not go far enough to center the ideologies of teachers who share their students' cultural background (namely, the African American teachers' perspectives along with their students). In the end, the teachers' approach to the readings was superficial instead of tapping into a potentially critical examination of the predominate literary texts.

I categorized Borsheim-Black's (2018) qualitative study as culturally irrelevant because the researcher's findings indicated the research participant (Ms. Kinney a White rural teacher) displayed contradictory pedagogy. Although in her unit on *A Raisin in the Sun*, she opened with a cartoon meant to stimulate “a discussion of contemporary racism to make the point that racism is not a thing of the past” (Borsheim-Black, 2018, p. 228), the researcher's findings pointed to contradictions in Ms. Kinney's practice compared to her expressed purpose for the unit. For instance, she began discussions of race only to abandon them. The researcher's methods of interviews, observations, and teaching artifacts generated data in which Ms. Kinney described her

students as both racist and not racist, and the teacher research participant expressed a strong affinity for predominate modes of instruction along with pride in her identification as an AP teacher. The participant's ambivalence and ineffective treatment of the topic of race missed the mark; therefore, her efforts in my view were of little relevance to her intended purpose.

Teachers of literature face several predicaments as do teacher candidates (TCs). For instance, Lilach (2020) conducted a study to “unpack the characteristics of the teaching practicum as a dilemmatic space, and subsequently to examine whether this space supported the enactment of TCs’ agency or hinders it” (p. 2). The methods included journaling and semi-structured interviews. The research setting was described as occurring at a university in British Columbia, Canada with teacher candidates who self-identified as White, East Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and mixed race. Through a grounded theory methodology, Lilach’s (2020) findings demonstrated subthemes of “power relations” (p. 4) as the source of TCs predicaments. One of the two CBI teacher participants in my inquiry did face similar issues related to “power relations” with a parent and administration. Thus, understanding comparable concerns for experienced CBI AP English teachers as opposed to Lilach’s (2020) focus on TCs lends validity to my study. In my view, the dynamics of power do not magically disappear for teachers once they become more experienced.

Utilizing case study methodology, a sociocultural perspective, and activity theory, Newell and colleagues (2009) drew on their data sources of interviews, classroom observations, a card sort task, and student-teacher debriefings for analysis of teachers’ tensions. The goal of this inquiry was to provide a longitudinal portrait of teachers. The researchers’ findings suggested the participant felt confident in her reading ability, but she worried about how to transfer those skills to her students. Thus, I categorized this study as one demonstrating teacher’s tensions. For Beth,

the research participant, the AP curricula provided her the opportunity for more autonomy and reflexivity. Beth sought to incorporate more diversity in her classroom, but her pedagogical choices remained surface-level and lacked the criticality necessary for an authentic engagement of racial issues.

The study was significant because the research participant's self-described insecurities in teaching reading to her students did not inhibit her from finding another path toward successfully meeting her students' needs. Beth's view of her students demonstrated faith in their abilities rather than frustration with students' deficiencies. By taking an asset approach to her students, Beth's experiences were an indication of her personal and professional growth while frankly shedding light on the tensions she experienced. However, I critiqued this longitudinal case study which followed a teacher from graduate school into the first few years of her teaching career because it omitted a key piece of information: her cultural and/or racial identity making the portrait incomplete in my view. In this last portion of studies within this category, I discuss a factor integral to most ELA teachers' instruction: the texts they teach.

Texts in ELA. Examining the role texts play in the content of ELA and AP educators' courses, I reviewed an inquiry related to text selections. To comprehend teachers' text choices, Watkins and Ostenson (2015) examined the results of a survey given at the beginning of the implementation of Common Core in ELA classrooms but did not specify whether teachers taught AP; therefore, I am assuming they did not. The authors suggested that not enough research existed about how teachers decide what texts to teach. In this sense, my inquiry is somewhat related to the study because text selection is a part of teachers' curricula design and implementation. Nonetheless, the goal of Watkins and Ostenson's work was to analyze these decisions to better inform future decisions that ultimately affect classrooms. The survey questions were comprised

“of multiple-choice items, rank-order and sliding-scale response, and open-ended response items” (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015, p. 251) along with free response items.

The research findings indicated “teachers perceived levels of autonomy regarding text selection and the levels at which they feel most text decisions are made” (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015, p. 254), they felt pressure to succumb to the canon, but also felt they had more freedom when it came to choosing short selections because they avoided needing the district’s approval. Among the factors that influenced their decisions were the purpose, applicability, quality of writing, and ease of access. Other factors they considered were the potential level of their students’ engagement and interest, reading lists required in AP or at the district level, and cross-curricular appeal. The limitations of the school’s budget most significantly influenced the texts they opted to use in their classrooms. Since the responsibility for teaching nonfiction texts – according to the Common Core documents – is not supposed to fall solely on the shoulders of English teachers, I contend other content areas should share the responsibility.

Another study that examined texts in the ELA classroom was Berchini’s (2016) research. By scrutinizing a literary selection within an ELA textbook, researchers performed a critical analysis of a multicultural short story in an eighth-grade ELA Common Core textbook. Essentially, Berchini (2016) argued more than simply providing or even mandating literary selections from culturally diverse authors is needed because it is an inauthentic method “of curricular inclusion” (p. 55). Moreover, without appropriately aligning textbooks to critically engage teachers toward substantive analysis of such topics of “race, culture, stereotypes, and the ‘American’ experience” (p. 61), the textbook publishers dissuade teachers from delving into such topics. The research sheds light on how textbook publishers play an integral role in the way texts are taught and encouraged “a diluted engagement with an otherwise critical contribution to a diverse

canon” (p. 58). To conduct this critical analysis, Berchini (2016) took on Toni Morrison’s literary perspective to make race visible. Elaborating further, Morrison’s perspective is revealed in her speech “Unspeakable things Unspoken” (1994). In it, she offers a critique of the American literary canon which has tended to silence African Americans’ literary presence and contributions. Berchini’s (2016) research noted that the types of questions the textbook publishers posed were lightweight and did little to challenge student readers on social justice issues. The researcher maintained the silencing and discounting of multicultural motifs “despite the inclusion of a narrative that seems to demand a multicultural reading” (p. 60) was “inclusion for inclusion’s sake” (p. 61). Such a stance is problematic because it superficially incorporates diversity.

Through this position, the publishers implicitly suggested students and teachers were incapable of tackling such topics. The author of the article encouraged teachers to delve further for what might be concealed “beneath a corporatized treatment of important contributions to children’s literacy engagements made by authors of color” (Berchini, 2016, p. 61). Perhaps most importantly, Berchini’s (2016) scholarship provided an example of how course content was and continues to be driven by textbook publishers. I applauded Berchini’s (2016) critical examination of the role textbook publishers stealthily play in potentially shaping teachers’ treatment of multicultural texts. Even though the textbook was geared towards eighth-grade, I felt that since textbook adoptions are often district-wide and middle and secondary grades are frequently lumped together (or might be prone to adopt from the same publisher), Berchini’s revelations were significant to my work and interests as secondary level educators

In the third grouping of studies that follows, I considered critical approaches to canonical literature to juxtapose the inadequacies revealed in the studies from the second category of scholarship with the efficacy of those in the third grouping of studies.

Critical Approaches to Canonical Literature

To frame the studies within this third category of critical approaches to canonical literature, I begin with an understanding of critical literacy (Alvermann et al., 2019; Mills, 2016; Mirra et al., 2015; Morrell, 2008; Street, 1995/2013). I use this starting point because the teachers in this section of scholarship employed certain elements of critical literacy in their unconventional delivery of the curricula.

Before I elaborate on the studies in this third category of scholarship, I make an important observation that later in this section is important. Frequently, the research literature describes teaching contexts as urban. Use of the term is often directly correlated with groups of minoritized students. Since language was of importance to my study, I felt it was important to trouble researchers' use of the term *urban*. It is not unusual for many to use the word urban as code for Black, or poor, or low socioeconomic status. As an inexperienced researcher, what first comes to mind when I hear the word is children living in poverty, underserved communities, or predominantly Black environments. My first thoughts paint a stereotypical picture. It includes a Joe Clark-megaphone-wielding principal and halls filled with Black and Brown student faces.

However, after I took the time to reflect on my initial assumptions versus my personal experiences, my reflections prompted questions about what precisely was meant by the term. My personal history in a virtually all-black teaching environment has been suburban, so I thought it was vital that before I easily accepted researchers' description of studies as occurring in urban contexts or with urban students, I should consider how they arrived at this classification. Moreover, I grew up and lived near an urban metropolitan environment and went to high school in the city, but that environment was extremely culturally and racially diverse within a densely populated area -- not predominantly Black or impoverished. My high school was filled with Black and

White European second-generation immigrant students. Therefore, although I do not view urban as analogous to minoritized students, I understand many researchers and research articles may appear to gravitate to such a description.

Milner (2012) provided some insight into the use of the word urban to describe certain groups of students. He posited that different parties “Researchers, theoreticians, policymakers, and practitioners in higher education do not necessarily possess a shared definition of what is meant by urban education” (p. 557). He also argued the denotation of the term was frequently associated with attributes related to the people within schools and not “the larger social context where the schools and districts are located” (p. 557). Thus, with this understanding in mind, I attributed the term urban to the scholarship as researchers themselves have made the designations.

To counter the tendency of some to stereotype and label others requires a different perspective. As such, critical literacy, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally relevant pedagogy provide lenses with which to critically approach pedagogies of domination and privilege, counter oppression, and enact agency (Mills, 2016). It is based on the ideals of the Frankfurt School and serves to disrupt dominant discourses and recognizes “social inequities, societal structures, and power relations” (p. 41) are integral to it. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) discussed at length the factors tied to literacy and language that set students up for failure because they do not communicate or operate in the dominant group’s episteme. She coined the phrase “*culturally relevant pedagogy* [emphasis in original]” (p. 469) to place the onus for student failure beyond simply blaming students. Ladson-Billings posited the education system, schools, and more specifically teachers shoulder much of the responsibility. Culturally relevant pedagogy like critical literacy calls on teachers to lead students in understanding and critiquing power and “current social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476). Like Ladson-Billings’ work, Gay’s (2018)

culturally responsive teaching provided suggestions to address the needs of Black and minoritized students; however, Gay (2018) warns against an assumption that culturally responsive teaching is a panacea to all the ills of education. Coupled with her approach she noted must be a more comprehensive tactic which included policy implications, funding, and management.

Several different examples of critical approaches to teaching canonical literature demonstrated the many ways ELA teachers were attempting to engage in countermeasures (Adkins-Coleman, 2010; Alfred, 2003; Ball, 1995; Borsheim-Black, 2015; Carter, 2007; Coffey and Farinde-Wu, 2016; Dallacqua & Sheahan, 2020; Dyches, 2018a; Dyches, 2018b; Gillenwater, 2014; Godley et al., 2015; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Kohli et al., 2019; Lee, 1995; Lopez, 2011; Macaluso and Macaluso, 2019; Olan & Richmond, 2017; Sulzer and Thein, 2016; Vetter and Hungerford-Kressor, 2014) and #disrupttexts (Ebarvia et al., 2020) normally found in the ELA curricula. Even within this realm, specific scholarship providing examples of what twenty-first-century CBI advanced ELA course teachers have done was scant.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy. I began my examination of critical approaches with researchers Lopez (2011) and Adkins-Coleman (2010) because they were concerned with cultural responsiveness but in different ways. In Lopez's (2011) work the focus was on one teacher (Meriah) and her student participants (largely of Caribbean and Asian background) and extracting elements of "culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy" (p. 76) in a twelfth-grade English class through performance poetry; whereas Adkins-Coleman's (2010) research centered around "the beliefs and practices of two urban high school teachers who successfully facilitated engagement in rigorous academic learning communities" (p. 41) utilizing a culturally relevant pedagogical framework. For the latter, the research setting was described as two urban schools where more than half of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch.

Through community nomination, the two participants – both Black women (Ms. Morrison and Ms. Lomax) —were interviewed and observed in their classrooms. Conversely, the site of Lopez’s (2011) work took place outside the United States in “Southern Ontario, Canada” where its intended purpose was “to critically reconceptualise [the research participant’s] grade 12 Writer’s Craft class” (p. 76). Although the study occurred in a different country, the work of Lopez and Adkins-Coleman were linked in their attention to twelfth grade ELA students.

The participant in the research of Lopez (2011), Meriah, “used performance poetry to talk about culture and ways of understanding the ‘other’” (p. 89). The resulting findings suggested that through culturally relevant pedagogy, the teacher was able to successfully engage her students and enact her agency. Similarly, the findings of Adkins-Coleman’s (2010) inquiry indicated that the study participants “created environments that taught students the value of participating in demanding instructional activities and motivated them to learn” (p. 51). Across both inquiries, the researchers used qualitative research methods of interviews and classroom observations. The important takeaway from these studies was when the teacher participants encountered issues whether within their classrooms (Adkins-Coleman, 2010) or tensions within themselves (Lopez, 2011), they persevered to the benefit of their students.

In keeping with scholarship focused on culturally relevant teaching, I looked at a nine-month case study that Coffey and Farinde-Wu (2016) conducted. The researchers’ findings described a cycle of personal growth for their teacher participant, Tracie – a Black ELA and AP teacher – who taught Black students. It examined her abandonment and then reapplication of culturally relevant teaching to her AP English Language class as well as her “power struggles” (p. 27) with students.

I can relate to the tug-of-war with students because in the past (when I taught in a predominantly White school), I was faced with a similar scenario where my attempts at a more culturally relevant approach were met with resistance. Thus, it appeared that my White students did not trust in my authority or expertise as a Black teacher. I interpreted their resistance as a refusal to accept my expert knowledge as a professional. It made me consider the differences in the level of respect for my expertise when my students were Black as opposed to White. Coffey and Farinde-Wu (2016) outlined the study's purpose as to "explore the ways in which membership in a racial and ethnic group similar to that of one's students may influence one first-year teacher's experience with those students" (p. 25). This key element – a study focused on a beginning teacher – reinforced my desire to study CBI educators. Their experiences were missing from the literature.

An element of Coffey and Farinde-Wu's (2016) research that resonated with my circumstances was how the participant struggled against forces within herself and her identity. These tensions inhibited her ability to deliver the type of teacher she wanted to be and the type of teaching she wanted to enact. Because many teachers – regardless of their racial identity -- are recipients of the canon in their own school experiences, it is relatively easy to continue in a similar vein. The predicament I have sometimes felt about my attempts at disrupting the canon underscored the power a multitude of outside forces over my decisions. Both critical literacy and culturally relevant teaching provided one means of disrupting predominate ELA instruction; however, some scholars enacted countermeasures without such labels; I detail them next.

Countermeasures in ELA. Consistent with critical literacy, I located a second study by Borsheim-Black (2015) that fit the in this group. The qualitative case study provided an example in the research literature of countermeasures. Focused on one White teacher's use of a canonical

text: *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the opportunities along with the challenges she encountered while utilizing “an antiracist approach to literature instruction in a predominantly White context” (p. 409), the findings revealed despite the research participant’s (Ms. Allen’s) efforts to provide her students with a safe environment in which to discuss issues of race “Discourses of Whiteness operated at the individual, institutional, societal, and epistemological levels throughout [the] unit” (p. 424). Thus, the pervasiveness of European hegemony in ELA curricula was evident.

In the analysis of data, the researcher examined the participant’s “literature instruction” for both overt and covert evidence of “Discourses of Whiteness” (p. 414) and found some were subtle while others remained a deep-rooted part of the ELA curricula and teaching. I critique the researcher’s recommendation for future research as safe because it does not go far enough. The advice steers clear of what some might deem a radical attitude: an outright Afrocentric (Asante, 2007) focus on literature instruction, and prudently proposes “English teachers develop their own unique antiracist approaches in response to the racial dynamics of their own schools and communities” (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 426). It failed to acknowledge the danger in such a shallow tactic for such a profound topic. A further failure was in recognizing many teachers may need much more explicit and structured guidance as they embark on a more critically grounded teaching journey.

Concerned with minoritized teachers – though not Black teachers specifically – was Kohli and colleagues’ (2019) work. The researchers’ purpose was centered on “justice-oriented women of Color educators” and their continuous engagement and “development of critical literacies and practices” (p. 24). I was drawn to this study for the multiple ways it aligned to my research interests and intended design: the study utilized semi-structured interviews, it considered both the personal and professional elements of participants’ lives, and it was a twenty-first-

century depiction of teaching. Where the inquiry departed from my interests was the inclusion of a diverse group of participants as opposed to being focused solely on CBI educators, and only one of the participants taught English. Still, the critically oriented nature of the teachers and their desire to share struggles with like-minded colleagues pointed to the benefits of such a support system. It also underscored the lasting effects and detriment of the dissolution of Black teacher professional organizations (Acosta et al., 2019) noted earlier. The study findings “revealed critical consciousness – an awareness and challenge of power and inequity – as part of their epistemology . . . and their ontology, embedded across all domains of their life” (Kohli et al., 2019, p. 25). I agreed with their assertion that critically oriented educators need larger support structures including the current programs in teacher education and schools. Also, one of the noted conclusions for the participants was “their historical, familial, and cultural experiences were foundational to their belief systems and activist pedagogies” (p. 31). Likewise, through my theoretical framework of Afrocentricity (1998), I viewed the cultural and historical experiences of CBI teachers as inseparable from teachers’ personal or professional life experiences. Thus, the scholarship of Kohli and colleagues (2019) substantiated my desire to understand my participants’ experiences in their entirety.

Similarly, Vetter and Hungerford-Kressor’s (2014) inquiry focused on the students’ reading and writing in a White teacher’s English classroom by examining the ways teachers and students steered classroom discussions around race. The findings indicated for students to enter a classroom space where racial literacy is welcomed, they needed practice, opportunities for “student-centered groups” (Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor, 2014, p. 96), and teachers who were willing to support and foster such an environment. Related to this was the work of Carter (2007) whose study examined the voices leveraged in the teaching of ELA and provided an example of

a supportive classroom environment. At the center of the study was an exploration of how Whiteness functioned in the British literature curriculum. Researchers relayed the experiences of the two Black female participants through interviews which revealed how their discomfort provided them with the opportunity to face the effects of one's curriculum decisions rather than continue to uphold the hegemony of the canon. Carter (2007) was not alone in providing examples in the literature of teachers critically engaging with curricular hegemony. Specifically, it is fitting for me to make mention of Dyches' (2018a) work here for its critical analysis of the teaching of the canon.

I positioned the work of Dyches' (2018a) as a countermeasure because she argued for instructional models where inquiry was at the core and offered a model entitled "*critical canon pedagogy (CCP)* [emphasis in original]" (p. 538). Her study involved the co-creation of a unit in a British Literature course (normally taught as an upper-level ELA class). She worked collaboratively with two high school ELA teachers who shared in the researcher's commitment to critical literacy and social justice. Findings revealed "that the CCP unit helped students develop a new-found critical consciousness" providing a space for students to consciously critique and restructure "their required canonical curriculum" (Dyches, 2018a, p. 539). Thus, the studies of both Carter (2007) and Dyches (2018a) took place in upper-level ELA courses and confronted how teaching the canon was often fraught with difficulties, but offered either lessons (Carter, 2007) or alternative approaches (Dyches, 2018a) in response to such challenges.

Consistent with the theme of countermeasures to counterbalance the hegemony of canonical curricula, Macaluso and Macaluso's (2019) book, through a critical literacy framework, offered four ways that educators could shrewdly approach the teaching of canonical literature. They delineated this approach as decentering of the literary canon, showing correspondence

between the realities of the past and present, made use of “critical lenses” (p. xiii), and took into consideration the content (how and what) as well as the context under which we teach. For example, in one chapter Thein (2019) authored, it focused on new approaches to teaching the canon which emphasized “the role of emotion in students’ responses to canonical literature and in the events of the text” (p. 167). Thein’s (2019) realization that in the past she discounted her students’ emotional responses to canonical texts was somewhat like Carter’s (2007) findings of her research participants’ discomfort reading the canon.

For Thein (2019), she came to understand that selection of the novel *Of Mice and Men* not only “marginalized students’ emotion,” (p. 168) but also failed to recognize the connections students were making to their own experiences with “gun violence in their community and the nature of the American Dream itself” (p. 168). This type of thoughtlessness in pedagogy is directly connected to critical literacy (Alvermann et al., 2019; Freire, 2017; Mills, 2016; Mirra et al., 2015; Morrell, 2008; Street, 1995/2013). The reason I made this correlation was critical literacy theorists might likely support Thein’s attentiveness to her students’ emotional vulnerabilities. It demonstrated her awareness of issues related to teaching canonical texts to students who come might come from trauma-filled environments.

A further example of countermeasures was Godley and colleagues’ (2015) work which focused on the de-tracking of an AP program within an urban school. The article highlighted how one teacher met the needs of his students through his revised approach. He employed six strategies to do so. An example of one strategy he used was engaging content. The teacher, Terry, connected students’ learning to the news story of Michael Brown and his murder at the hands of police. Thus, scaffolding engaging content in addition to normalizing the challenges of an AP course were two ways – among others – Terry met his students’ needs. Absent from this

article was a description of the teacher's cultural or racial background which I think is important to know.

In a similar vein, Gillenwater's (2014) "phenomenological case study attempt[ed] to understand the phenomenon of intertextuality of predominate novels and graphic novels, and how it may or may not contribute to transference of one mode of literacy to another" (p. 251). This strategy was a departure from predominate approaches to AP and the findings – much like Lee's (1995) work which I detail later. Gillenwater (2014) instead pointed to students' ability to transfer classical skills of literacy to "image-based texts [and] while predominate literacy aids in reading, understanding, and interpreting graphic novels, formal instruction in the arts may increase and refine students' visual literacy" (p. 253). Though for Lee (1995) it was students' application of language in the form of signifying, the insights were similar. Both Godley and colleagues (2015) and Gillenwater (2014) demonstrated how teachers who apply innovative practices and thinking reach Black students and reshape predominate approaches to literature instruction.

Likewise, the research of Dallacqua and Sheahan (2020) provided a further example of countermeasures as the researchers offered evidence of instances in the research literature where English teachers challenged the literary canon. They framed their study with the lens of "critical literacy theory, which advanced the exploration of both predominate and contemporary texts as a way for teachers and students to investigate power, identity, and difference in their reading" (p. 68). Citing Freire among other critical theorists with students' "reading the world," the study occurred in a tenth-grade class where they paired a graphic novel entitled *Yummy* with the archetype of canonical authors: William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The researchers involved were a former teacher and a current researcher who employed a teacher-action research methodological approach along with participant observation, extended fieldwork, and interviews among other

methods within a small group. The findings suggested that “learning served as a larger link across themes” (Dallacqua & Sheahan, 2020, p. 71) and from multiple perspectives. The learning that occurred was emotional, educational, and critical. While I love the idea of taking a contemporary text such as a graphic novel and pairing it with a canonical text, as was the case in this tenth grade ELA course, teachers of tested subjects have much less autonomy and more time constraints which frequently restrict their teaching and curricular selections.

Comparably, in Morrell’s (2004/2008) work, he failed to address similar concerns of how teachers whose courses are tied to testing might deal with tensions between curricula and text selection. I liken his body of scholarship to countermeasures as he worked around and outside of conventional ELA classroom curricula. His research studies offered fitting examples of how a Black teacher-researcher might approach the investigation of topics related to teaching in the secondary English classroom. Furthermore, his work read like a practical how-to guide rather than a research study. He offered realistic suggestions for teaching the literary canon by pairing canonical texts with more culturally relevant ones. Morrell (2004/2008) believed in the real-world application of learning and that knowledge stems from experience. His methodological approach to his research like Kyburg et al. (2007) and Lilach (2020) was grounded theory. Further informing his work were theories of critical literacy and poststructuralism.

Morrell’s (2004/2008) descriptions of his twelve years plus study provided me with the hope that I do not have to altogether abandon all canonical texts to invoke my cultural identity as I teach my students with whom I share many facets of my identity. After all, those canonical texts are as much a part of my persona as are Alex Haley’s *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Nella Larsen’s *Passing*, and Laura Esquivel’s *Like Water for Chocolate* – three novels I adore. Classics such as *Julius Caesar* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* are no less a part of me than any other

“woke” texts; because, in each, I find points of connection to which I can relate. The same may hold true for other Black educators. Perhaps the same is true of the students they teach. In fact, one participant in my study spoke of her love for Shakespeare.

Under the paradigm of “New Criticism [and] critical emotional studies” (Thein, 2019, pp. 168-169), the researcher’s aim in writing a chapter of *Teaching the canon in 21st century Classrooms: Challenging Genres* was to provide teachers with a different and innovative approach to teaching canonical texts through a focus on how students emotionally responded to it. Her work too served as an example of countermeasures to the canon. In the second phase of Thein’s investigation/reflection, by looking at the plot of land narrative in Steinbeck’s text, she attempted to leverage students’ emotions. Through a teacher’s thoughtful guidance and by providing students with the necessary tools to unpack the emotions of the text; Thein’s (2019) new understandings about the taken-for-granted interpretations of such an iconic canonical text challenged “themes and interpretations often understood as universal” (Thein, 2019, p. 179).

In a separate research study by Sulzer and Thein (2016), they examined preservice teachers’ responses to familiar questions used to frame discussions of Young Adult Literature (YAL) to neutralize stereotypes regarding adolescents and to “examine our [the researchers] own pedagogical practice of asking pre-service teachers to read and evaluate YAL by” (Sulzer & Thein, 2016, p. 164) taking on the persona of such readers. The method used for the study was an online discussion board for pre-service teachers. The theoretical stances employed in the study were sociocultural theory, dialogism, and critical literary lenses. Transcripts of the discussion boards were the source of the data analyzed through an initial reading where researchers identified “rhetorical strategies that this group of pre-service teachers used to construct evaluations of YAL as they considered their future students” (p. 165), a second reading to flesh out the moments in a

recursive process, and finally descriptive coding of the data. The researchers argued for disruption of the hypothetical adolescent reader as a tool to evaluate YAL. Sulzer and Thein (2016) suggested a shift in the questions readers should ask, and instead of making assumptions look at relevant experiences.

Like the work of Dyches' (2018a), Carter (2007), and Berchini (2016), the scholarship of Thein (2019) and Sulzer and Thein (2016) pointed to the dangers in teachers anticipating how students will respond to texts especially those which are a part of the literary canon. The experiences a teacher brings to the classroom are rooted in their identities, worldviews, ideologies, and personal as well as professional lives. Students also come to the reading of texts with their own experiences. Rosenblatt (1978) discusses at length about the connections between the text and the reader. For these reasons, decisions about what to teach and choices teachers make regarding texts students will read should not be taken lightly. Additionally, although Black teachers may share some similarities with their own minoritized students, they should not assume that those shared cultural markers translate to a "fictive kinship" (Mosely, 2018, p. 269) or automatic understanding between both parties (Cherry-McDaniel, 2017/2019; Kohli, 2019; Mosely, 2018). In my research, the data provided evidence of an initial cultural clash rather than an immediate connection between the CBI teachers and their Black and minoritized students.

I commended the countermeasures outlined above which some researchers and educators have enacted. Using these critical approaches to literature instruction rooted in the literary canon, it resulted in teachers and students being actively engaged in critical literacy practices. At the same time, I critiqued their efforts as a continuation of the status quo to a certain extent. What this means is that the educators' attempts while admirable, still operated within the White episteme (Asante personal communication, February 16, 2021). As a researcher who strives to view

the world through an Afrocentric lens, I am reminded of Asante's observation of the dangers that come with being enamored "by the Eurocentric viewpoint; [because] such a viewpoint is contradictory to [our] own ultimate reality" (Asante, 2003, p. 54). In other words, none of the scholarship I reviewed in this third category appeared to go far enough in rejecting the canon to center the history, literature, and experiences of people of African descent.

Asset Views of Literacy. To obtain a picture of existing practices in classrooms, I examined studies that shed light on an additive approach toward Black students' learning in ELA (Ball, 1995; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Lee, 1995; Meier, 2014). With the understanding that non-standard forms of expression in English classrooms continue to be viewed as less valuable, a similar sentiment rings true for the writing and text design patterns of urban African American students (Ball, 1995). Because historically definitions of literacy placed less importance on orality (Street, 2003), failed to acknowledge different "conception[s] of literacy than that which drives formal schooling" (Heath, 1989 p. 372), and traditionally ELA classrooms tended to only recognize students' use of Standard American English (SAE) as acceptable, Ball's (1995) case study provided meaningful insights. The tendency is for expressions of "African American English vernacular (AAEV) speakers" (p. 256) to be viewed as less worthy whether through their written or oral expressions. However, in Ball's one-year study, research findings indicated that the participants were able to manipulate their language use (specifically AAEV) in skillful ways, such skills were intentional, and when students had the opportunity to choose "their own topic and audience" it appeared to free up students' ability to utilize a "broader range of discourse patterns" (p. 279). Thus, the research indicated students' adeptness at using language patterns as well as various styles of expression should be welcomed into classroom instead of shunned. Although I appreciated Ball's work, the very real demands of state testing and the slow wheels of

change in curricula design made Ball's research appear out of step with the reality most teachers face.

Lee (1995) too detailed participants' use of language – in this case drawing on signifying – as beneficial rather than detrimental to learning. Before I elaborate on Lee's scholarship, I first provide clarity regarding the term signifying. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. offers the following definition of signifying which he intentionally capitalizes and opts to place the letter "g" inside of parentheses. He states, "[t]he black term of *Signifyin(g)* [emphasis in original] . . . is to engage in certain rhetorical games" (p. 54) and can be traced back to the "the trickster figure that recurs with startling frequency in black mythology" (Gates, 2014, p. 4). Gates viewed the many forms of the trickster collectively as "mediators, and their mediations are tricks" (p. 5) which came in the form of the clever play on multiple meanings of words and phrases. With this mutual understanding in mind, I return to the scholarship of Lee (1995).

By studying sample texts of signifying, students engaged in "a kind of metalinguistic activity . . . [and] through questioning begin to articulate the strategies they used to come to interpretations of turns of talk . . . and then apply those same strategies to the interpretation of a set of rich literary texts" (Lee, 1995, p. 612). With the goal being to assist the students in obtaining a sense of proficiency in interpreting literature, Lee's (1995) research aimed to draw on students' existing knowledge and skills to manipulate language. Through a term referred to as "Cognitive apprenticeship" (p. 613), students would come to intimately know and understand the meanings of literary texts through familiarity with the language they use.

The analysis of signifying served as scaffolding to other literary texts. Viewing these students' abilities positively or perhaps even as bidialectal skills as analogous to children who are labeled bilingual (Ball, 1995; Lee, 1995) was a much more additive perspective. It is also a far

cry from common deficit views of Black students' language use which permeate the views of some. Furthermore, both Ball's and Lee's scholarship are in line with Heath's (1989) observation of "the potentially positive interactive and adaptive verbal and interpretive habits learned by Black American children . . . within their families" (p. 370). It was examples such as the scholarship of Lee (1995) and Ball (1995) that demonstrated how Black teachers can draw on the shared understandings, cultural norms, and personal experiences of Black students and effectively teach advanced courses rigorously.

Likewise, and under the premise of understanding minority students from an asset as opposed to a deficit lens, Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti's (2005) work unveiled an anthropological empirical study in which teachers in chorus with researchers conducted interviews, questionnaires, and in-home visits to discern what existing sources of knowledge the participants possessed. In this longitudinal ethnographic study, the teachers-researchers' tactics were quite different: they were there to listen and learn from the families and communities in which they were privileged to enter. The effect of their participation on the lives of their students resulted in a transformation of their curricular practices and relationships with their students inside and outside of the classroom. By drawing on students' home knowledge, the research gave legitimacy to the students' out-of-school experiences which is like Ball's (1995) work.

Continuing with the positive approach to teaching literature, Meire's (2014) study aimed to encourage educators to see the potentially transformative nature of "African American children's literature to make a difference for children in their own classrooms" (p. 337). The author found a common thread among biographies with positive autobiographical depictions of the Black male protagonists. In this way, the African American boys in the study could view the protagonists as more than mere "victims of racism, but as empowered individuals who refused to

allow the racist actions of others to destroy their senses of self-worth and agency” (p. 341). By doing so, the students in Meire’s work read texts which positively reinforced their self-perceptions.

Ball’s (1995) goal in her research was two-fold: 1) “to expand the notion of available resources that can be used in classroom learning” (p. 280) and 2) to have “teachers embrace an additive model for language learning and language use” (p. 281), Lee’s (1995) goal “was to organize a learning environment in which an academically underachieving set of African American adolescents would study samples of extended signifying dialogue as a kind of metalinguistic activity” (p. 612). Lee aimed to assist students in their thinking about the interpretation of literature, developing a desire for “tackling the language of literary texts” and supporting “their responses to complex problems of interpretation with close textual analysis” (p. 625). Whereas Meire’s (2014) study was targeted at encouraging teachers in their selection of children’s literature. The above noted researchers and author could conceivably be considered radical to the current approach, attitude, and atmosphere of ELA classrooms. However, I argue it is more than radical, it should be required. As I begin to close this third category, I make note of two studies that seriously resonated with me and my cultural and racial identity.

Black Teachers’ Like Me. The scholarship of McIntyre-McCullough (2020) and Sarigianides (2019) immediately caught my attention because of the identity of the author in the first study and the research participant in the second. I was most excited about Sarigianides’ (2019) research which took place over ten weeks and “examined what happened when a Black Jamaican English teacher instructed Black and Latino seniors in AP English” (p. 376). I felt this excitement because it served as an example of research for and about someone like me. I was drawn to the literature because the cultural descriptions felt like home. Unlike my experiences in high

school with teachers and texts that never seemed to fit, these texts were relatable. I connected with McIntyre-McCullough's work as she identified "as a Black, Jamaican American female" (p. 82). My sense of connection to these scholars stemmed from my cultural correlation to their heritage and teaching.

Additionally, McIntyre-McCullough's (2020) article read like a self-reflective essay in which she wrestled with her approach to teaching AP and its effect on her students – something I intimately understood. Sarigianides' (2019) study which focused on a Black participant undertook the phenomenon of the idea of adolescence as a construct. To better understand this phenomenon, the researcher used interviews and observations – traditional qualitative research methods. Also, among these methods, the researcher collected data in the form of student work, the teacher created curriculum for the unit, and "a visit to [the researcher's] university where students presented their initial and culminating views of adolescence to an audience of mostly White, pre-service English teachers" (Sarigianides, 2019, p. 386). The researcher contended that by framing literacy within a sociocultural theoretical perspective it might assist researchers in exposing "assumptions in policies and teaching practices that take problematic views of youth for granted" (p. 376). Considering that the teacher was a Black woman, I wondered how her own identity led to her fascination with having her students study adolescence as a construct. I took issue with the lack of attention to her positionality as a Black woman whose experiences may be integral to understanding not only this decision but more importantly her experiences.

Yet, finding scholarship in this vein specific to my research interests of CBI in-service or previous teachers of AP was limited. Therefore, their work served to underscore the underrepresentation of CBI researchers (McIntyre-McCullough, 2020) and included a study about twenty-first-century Black advanced ELA course teachers (Sarigianides, 2019). Considering the cultural

identities of the two participants in my study, this gap in the literature pointed to a need for my inquiry.

To review, at the beginning of this third group of studies, much of the scholarship while of value demonstrated a prevalence of White teacher perspectives. This imbalance is similarly reflected through White teachers' current dominance in the teaching force (Kafka, 2016; Nasir et al., 2016; Picower, 2021; Ullucci & Battey, 2011; U.S. Department of Education; 2019). Undoubtedly, having allies in the field who want to be antiracist, who turn to culturally relevant pedagogy, employ culturally responsive teaching, or invite critical literacy is a positive direction, but as a Black woman who is approaching my research with the theory of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2003) as a basis, it is important to call out the need for more research which centers Black teachers' experiences and our concerns as a people.

Black Pedagogical Excellence

Transitioning to the fourth category of literature, I present the incongruity of AP courses designed for White students with the current cultural and racial diversity of modern classrooms to demonstrate the need for historically derived theories such as Black Pedagogical Excellence (BPE) and the like. Through theories of BPE and others such as ratchetness (Toliver, 2019), all educators might re-envision the teaching of advanced ELA curricula and disrupt the Eurocentric hegemony of the canon. However, I first begin by reaching back to historical examples of Black excellence which honors *Sankofa* (Temple, 2010). I begin with fugitive pedagogy which I argue is an essential part of this tradition of excellence.

Black Teachers' Fugitive Pedagogy. From the very beginning of Black/African Americans' educational pursuits, a spirit of resistance coupled with resilience existed, but more importantly, fugitivity. Later, within Black/African Americans' schools, the need to infuse their

cultural identity and experiences into their educational quests was apparent as they became literate. They stole moments of learning where and when they could since “the literate slave was akin to a fugitive slave” (Givens, 2021, p. 11). Jarvis Givens attributes much of the progress and countless acts of defiance that Black teachers exhibited to the life’s work of Carter G. Woodson. He argued that at his core, Woodson was first and foremost an educator though renowned for the creation of Negro History Week and the founding of the “Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH)” (Givens, 2021, p. 63). Even so, Woodson did not see the celebration of Black history as limited to the week’s festivities but saw it as an opportunity for Black students to engage in activities yearlong. Givens (2021) noted, “Negro history in schools was a necessary epistemic shift to challenge the violent misrecognitions of black humanity” (p. 171). Hence, Black people’s quest for education was a part and parcel of their quest for freedom.

Additionally, the reach of Woodson occurred across the country as he acted as an “Abroad Mentor” and “developed an intimate relationship with educators . . . by providing curricular alternatives that invited new pedagogical practices for teaching black students to assume their role within a larger plot for black freedom” (p. 160). According to Givens (2021), Woodson’s influence was so significant that when he was unable to be present, others acted as surrogates who willingly stepped in to assist. He inspired many Black/African American educators and students alike. The analogy of the fugitive slave to fugitive pedagogy was apt because “Acquiring knowledge was a criminal act” (Givens, 2021, p. 27) and to subvert these legal impediments, Black/African Americans acquired “literacy through fugitive tactics” (p. 27). Hence, I have included Givens’ book in this fourth group of literature I reviewed because it marked an early example of Black excellence. Additionally, it served as a model of what the incorporation of Black Studies looked like in K-12 classrooms – long before desegregation.

As a Black teacher living and teaching in the twenty-first-century ELA classroom, I have felt somewhat ashamed and disappointed in myself. When I consider what those who came before me risked and endured, I question my fears and trepidations concerning infusing a more critical and African/student-centered approach to teaching AP. I am someone who has personally struggled with enacting such fugitivity, yet Givens' (2021) book detailed the risks teachers took and the covert methods they used to subvert legal and real roadblocks. By shoring up Black/African American students' curricular foundations, teachers were reaffirming students' cultural identities. Importantly, my critique of the predominance of the canon in AP English concomitantly occurs as I in a sense seek validation of advanced curricula's status as the epitome of rigor. Givens' (2021) detailed account of Woodson's methods unequivocally confirmed the ways of knowing people of African descent possess existed long before AP. They also demonstrated rigorous instruction. I found inspiration in the tactics the educators employed while at the same time, I pondered how I too could take up similar methods in my own classroom. I also considered how other teachers might attempt to do the same.

Historical Examples of Black Excellence. An example of research that outlined methods Black/African Americans used to obtain literacy was Harris (1992). Harris' historical examination of textual documents confirmed the continual struggle for African Americans' acquisition of literacy and maintained that the fight was marked by nominal efforts on the part of Whites. Because White-only supported education in the form of basic literacy skills reinforced the dominant group's worldview, the efforts of American Whites must be considered suspect. Hence, the endeavors and work of Black authors to reclaim their voices has a long and well-documented history (Harris, 1992) and deserves recognition.

Among the prevalent themes in the documents Harris (1992) traced were views of “literacy as a valuable commodity,” literacy as having the potential to “serve both emancipatory and oppressive functions,” that Europeans did not fully support the education of African Americans, and a desire that “curricula materials . . . provide authentic portraits of African-American culture and history” (p. 277). Through an emphasis on the importance of knowing one’s history, Harris responded to those who might be looking for answers to the current situation concerning Black students’ literacy. She acknowledged that the issues of literacy within the Black/African American community were complex in nature, but her tone of hopefulness and positivity was reminiscent of scholars such as Acosta et al. (2018), Fisher (2009), Muhammad and Haddix (2016), King (2018), and Asante (2003). Moreover, through Harris’ (1992) work, I can gain a sense of the arc of Black literacy as she chronicled it. Her work further demonstrated how our history is rooted in themes of triumph despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Understanding our past struggles is important in framing our current circumstances.

Like Harris (1992), another researcher whose work acknowledged how the historical past of African Americans and people of African descent informed their future is Maisha T. Fisher (2009). The purpose of her research as detailed in her book *Black Literate Lives* was to scrutinize how Black people utilized literacy to sustain themselves. In her study, she employed the methods of ethnohistory and historical ethnography. Fisher (2009) provided a roadmap of sorts detailing the multiple settings in which Black literacy could potentially occur in the twenty-first-century. By doing so, she blurred the usual distinctions of what constituted a classroom and who could or should be viewed as a teacher. Describing the climate of 1960s and 1970s America, she mentioned the community contributions of bookstores, Independent Black Institutions (IBIs), and spoken word or open mic nights as a means for the acquisition of literacy within the African

American community. As presented, each forum held equal importance as a venue for learning. Through a White epistemic view of learning, such community venues today might easily be disregarded (Asante, personal communication, February 16, 2021) because the dominant group does not sanction nor respect these spaces. Furthermore, the disruption of binaries such as teacher-student, classroom-community, or education-entertainment are consistent with poststructuralist principles because they disrupt a singular and linear view of where and how learning should occur (Foucault, 1977; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1997).

Also, this sense of community as a source of learning which in turn was a rejection of the classroom as the sole site of knowledge was infused among enslaved Africans with their sense of obligation to reciprocate the knowledge and the literacy skills they acquired. Asante (personal communication, February 16, 2021) and Muhammad (2020b) would likely agree that the sheer idea of cooperative learning and the customary practice of shared knowledge is quite foreign to a White epistemic view. Notions of what counts as learning such as this are consistent with reasons why many theorists' (Alvermann et al., 2019; Freire, 2017; Mills, 2016; Mirra et al., 2015; Morrell, 2008; Street, 1995/2013) see a need for critical literacy in today's classrooms. While modern sentiments of Black/African American teachers' responsibility towards each other or their Black students appears significantly handicapped by our distance from the center of the curricula, it may also be attributed to our lack of knowledge about our history which King (2018) identified as "heritage knowledge." Moreover, such knowledge implies an understanding of our ancestors and their significant contributions to a wide variety of fields.

To remedy the outsider view of shared knowledge and learning, perhaps an African historically grounded approach is justified. Through the active support of conscious Black teachers in classrooms with minoritized students, the instances of misunderstanding about the needs of

those teachers and their students might be avoided. An example of research conducted in this vein was the work of Mosely (2018) who recognized the value of a “well-supported Black teaching force that reflects the diversity and excellence of Black people in this country” (p. 268). In fact, from Mosely’s (2018) pilot study of supports for Black educators, an important finding suggested that professional development based on a sense of community among Black teachers aided in a decrease in feelings of isolation. I have experienced this sense of professional exile, and it was difficult to navigate. Through what she named as the Black Teacher Project (BTP), Mosely’s use of participatory action research methodology sought to support Black teachers and transform their working environments.

The findings from her year-long research substantiated the benefits of positive spaces for Black teachers where their identities were invited rather than ignored. Arguably, Mosely conveyed, “[t]here is less literature about and even fewer supports for sustaining Black teachers” (2018, p. 270) which confirmed the necessity for further research about Black teachers and supported my contention about the underrepresentation of Black teachers in the research. What better way to understand the needs, challenges, and successes of Black teachers than to study their experiences? Hence, Mosely’s (2018) research about sustaining Black/African American teachers provided relevant insights like other the historical research of Harris (1992) and Fisher (2009). Conceivably, looking to the past provided a roadmap and unveiled how Black educators navigated education and literacy in ways which allowed them to thrive not merely survive racism.

History of Black Teachers: A Blueprint. To address the growing racial and cultural diversity of present-day classrooms, an understanding of past successful teaching experiences of Black/African American teachers might serve as a blueprint. Albeit the literature does provide

such depictions as noted earlier (Harris, 1992; Fisher, 2009). Yet, modern illustrations of Black teachers are limited – especially when it comes to the advanced English curricula. Furthermore, when focused on Caribbean Black Immigrant AP teachers, I found even fewer examples in the literature. By taking a historical view of a time when author-activists utilized their platforms to inspire African Americans embracing literacy and their identities, Harris (1992) and Fisher (2009) both offered a blueprint for teachers from which modern-day classrooms could learn.

As an example, positive representations can be found in literary texts teachers select and through curricula that schools provide, but such moves and decisions must be both intentional and authentic. Researcher hooks (1992) contended education “is never politically neutral” (p. 30), and AP is certainly an example of the political forces at play in the field. Schools with more AP courses are often recognized as better quality (Jefferies and Silvernail, 2017). Yet, the reasons students take AP courses are more nuanced. Simply offering a litany of AP courses without considering the changing face of schools (i.e., cultural, and racial diversity) and AP course participation fails to address the challenges Black students and teachers face with the existing curricula. However, an examination of the past could offer insights to navigate the present and beyond. It is a necessary part of education as an act of freedom (Freire, 2017) that the efforts of critically inclined teachers (who are charged with delivering the curricula) are matched by policymakers, school administrators, and colleagues in reimagining what education for Black students can and should be in AP courses and beyond.

Ideologies and Theories Shaping Black Teacher Excellence. Researchers such as Acosta, Foster, and Houchen (2018) through a conceptual framework they coined as African American pedagogical excellence (AAPE) sought to shift the existing conversations around Black/African American teachers’ approaches to teaching and learning. Ideology, beliefs, and

instructional practices were components of the AAPE framework all which place value in the inherent experiences of Black/African American educators.

In “‘Why seek the living among the dead?’ African American pedagogical excellence: Exemplar practice for teacher education” (Acosta et al., 2018) the researchers posited the AAPE theory as a potential remedy to the problems plaguing the American educational system and teacher education too. Attempting to shift the existing discourse around “disparate achievement” (Acosta et al., 2018, p. 341), the authors offered AAPE as a possible solution. Using historically and culturally affirming content, teachers who employed qualities of AAPE brought the lives and experiences of children into the classroom. The research outlined the ideology, beliefs, and practices of those who demonstrated AAPE. Among them were the ideologies of an ethic of caring, oppositional consciousness, the belief in the immense academic potential of students, and a positive disposition towards communities and families along with the practice of “[c]ollective success” (p. 342). Many of these beliefs couple well with Afrocentricity – particularly the idea of collectivity.

Thus, once again a theme in the literature was the concept of community fortified supports for success (Asante, 2007; Mazama, 2003; Muhammad, 2020b). Acosta and colleagues (2018) argued that in opposition to deficit perspectives towards the achievement of African American students, more recent studies have focused on the importance of “effective teaching” (p. 343), but studies in this tradition the researchers argued were insufficient. Like the historical literature I reviewed (Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992), Acosta and colleagues (2018) pointed to the past pedagogical practices of African Americans as a potential model for future practitioners. Despite the obvious benefits of the historical practices of African Americans, I questioned whether the field of education was ready to fully accept African ways of knowing as legitimate

considering the multitude of racial issues currently blighting the field. For example, the debates about the teaching of Critical Race Theory (Migdon, 2022) and banning works of literature come to mind (Ujiyediin, 2021) connected with racially motivated violence which continues to fill the news (Johnson, 2016). It appears Black people today continue to fight many of the same battles of their past ancestors. Unfortunately, it simply is a newer iteration of the problem.

In another smaller study stemming from a larger research inquiry, Acosta (2019) drew on both the perspectives of intersectionality and positionality along with applying the principles of AAPE to argue for greater cultural awareness toward Black Women Educators (BWEs). The central research question of this smaller study was “How do a group of effective Black women educators make sense of their professional positionality?” (Acosta, 2019, p. 26). The researcher employed focus groups as a research method where participants first crafted a definition of “teacher effectiveness” and later “recommend[ed] teachers who met these criteria” (p. 28). Since the researcher ultimately became a part of the research collective, the methodology of “collaborative inquiry” (p. 29) which Acosta (2019) attributed to Bridges and McGee, 2012, Heron and Reason, 1997 was quite apropos. Likewise, I felt in many ways I was brought into my of my research along with my participants as we shared many points of interest.

In a two-phase multi-step process, the data were analyzed independently and utilizing tools of discourse analysis. The resulting findings demonstrated a differentiation between the participants’ self-perceptions versus “how they perceived to be identified and positioned as professionals” (p. 30). A critique I had of Acosta’s (2019) study is while the researcher placed some of the onus on restoring the disconnect between interpretations of an effective teacher and research of BWEs on both teacher educators and teacher education policymakers, she failed to

address school-level remedies such as professional development, and counseling or therapy (which might include mental health supports).

For BWEs of excellence, they need their veteran colleagues who are no longer in teacher education programs to act as allies. Therefore, professional development might provide the necessary reframing of the ways in which veteran in-service teachers both view the issue and interact and react to their overworked BWE colleagues. Generally underappreciated and frequently misunderstood, BWEs need safe and supportive spaces in which to work and thrive. Furthermore, a shift in mindset on the part of other Black/African American educators who may not have bought-in to the idea that students who look like them are capable of being successful would be transformational in schools. As I begin to close out this fourth category of scholarship, it is important to emphasize that such changes amount to the retraining – or reprogramming of Black/African American teachers who have lost faith in Black students’ ability to learn (Carrol, 2017) and their own capacity to teach those students. Finally, through counseling supports, BWEs may have an outlet in which to safely air their frustrations with the inevitable mental burdens they shoulder as their school’s resident heroines.

Toliver’s (2019) work served as an example of the shift in mindset that is warranted. The study argued that in the field of literacy a tension exists between decency versus indecency (referred to as ratchetness) and that this strain needs to be further investigated. Ultimately, “the author called for all literacy stakeholders to dissolve preconceived binaries and conceptualize ratchetness as another celebratory space of agency and Black Girl Magic” (Toliver, 2019, p. 1). The framework that undergirded the inquiry was an amalgamation of “ratchetness with imagination and Afrofuturism” (p. 3). Toliver referred to “Black radical imagination” or BRI (Kelley, 2002 as cited in Toliver, 2019, p. 4) as a way for stakeholders to create a new perspective of the wide

array of ways Black girls can be defined and posited that "[a]s a space for activism, imagination, and liberation, the BRI aligns well with the main goals of Afrofuturism" (p. 5) and could serve as a disruption to the hegemony of modern racism. I contend what Toliver identified as "ratchetness" might simply be authenticity – Black girls being themselves unapologetically.

In Toliver's (2019) work, critical content analysis was the method utilized to analyze the Afrofuturist novels of Dr. Nnedi Okorafor because of her work's "ability to subvert traditionally-focused, Western-thinking conceptions of narrative storytelling" (p. 7). With the understanding that BRI played a vital role in the author's interpretation of the texts, she found evidence of decency (respectability) and indecency (ratchetness) within the protagonists, and the protagonists called on either extreme as needed. Thus – just as in real life, in the world of Okorafor's narratives – Black women cannot be pigeonholed into societal expectations for them. The best remedy to counter those who seek to compartmentalize Black girls' identity in Toliver's view was "to ensure that questions about which Black girls can and cannot celebrate their Black girl magic cease to exist" (p. 22). I viewed this as an invitation to the vast array of student identities that are likely to be reflected in advanced courses as these classes and schools increase in diversity.

Societal Influences for Black Educators. While in advanced English curricula and more generally in ELA courses, educators have responded to efforts to muzzle and control the narrative and curricula with movements such as #disrupttexts (Ebarvia et al., 2020) as well as through countermeasures – noted earlier in my review, these instances demonstrated twenty-first-century classrooms are not without racial tensions. My central critique of Acosta's (2018) viewpoint was that structural and policy-level changes are essential to any meaningful and lasting change. Although some schools and principals may be open to the idea, others may be less welcoming, and

the political climate of the country often trickles down to local school board and community decisions.

Beyond the classroom examples of Black teacher excellence, Black teachers live in a modern world that they enter daily as they leave their homes and classrooms. It is a world rife with vitriol spewed from people they may have once considered friends or neighbors even. It is a sentiment echoed in online platforms where they may go escape. It is prevalent in the media, and it can wear down one's soul. The solace Black teachers may feel within their classrooms might serve as a safe harbor against the American sickness known as racism. However, it might seem inescapable. For these reasons, my proposed study sought to understand the experiences of CBI teachers who straddle the worlds of teaching and live in a twenty-first-century America.

Caribbean and Afro Caribbean Educators

Culminating my review of the literature was a fifth category of scholarship. Though unplanned, with the change to CBI educators as my study participants, the need to research this area arose out of the shift in the direction my inquiry took. When I wrote my proposal, I could not have known the numerous connections that would emerge between my Caribbean-born participants and myself – a person of Caribbean descent. Consistent with heuristic inquiry, I “surrender[ed] to the research process” (Sultan, 2019, p. 12) and went where my study took me; in this instance, the shift occurred with the study's participants.

Even so, included within this category of literature and teaching, were examples of research about CBIs both in the roles of teacher educators within the academy and K-12 teachers. I found limited examples of scholarship about Afro-Caribbean teachers in secondary education though in a couple of instances, dissertations appeared to concentrate on these teachers (Beck, 2010; Williams Brown, 2017). Afrocentricity directly addressed this issue of underrepresentation

and imbalance; because as a social theory, it calls for a balance in perspectives. Thus, I close my review of scholarship with studies that highlighted a gap in the perspectives of CBI educators.

Colonialism and the Caribbean Connection. In Colin Brock's (1982) chapter: "The legacy of colonialism in West Indian Education," he laid out the history of Afro-Caribbeans' inherited method of schooling. Of importance to understanding CBI teachers as educators in the United States is the context of their own learning experiences, and because my study participants were recipients of remnants of colonial education, I found his work quite relevant and significant. As such, Brock (1982) delineated several phases in the chronicle of these teachers' education. He began by defining various terms including "legacy, education, and West Indian . . . colonialism" (p. 121). His work provides some historical context related to education in the Caribbean.

Making the harsh observation that Caribbeans' colonization occurred first within their minds which he attributed to Beckford, Brock (1982) clarified his definition of education in that it was not confined to formal schooling; because in his view, "West Indian societies . . . have been fundamentally molded by contextual factors which include[d] non-formal educational influences" (pp. 119-120). Before he explained the role class and the church played in Caribbean people's education, Brock (1982) suggested colonialism be divided into "two phases: (i) pre-emancipation colonialism and (ii) post-emancipation colonialism" (p. 124). He discussed "three forms of colonialism as identified by Altbach and Kelly . . . (i) new colonialism, (ii) regional metropolitanism and (iii) decolonization" (pp. 124-125) as overlapping rather than distinct time periods one following another. Finally, he described how after emancipation different religious organizations began the foundations of what would later be the Caribbean educational system. Interestingly, he stated denominations such as "Methodists and Baptists with their spirit-filled

enthusiasm – fit beautifully the exuberant religion of the slaves” (p. 128). Though these groups virtually wiped out any connections between Africans and Afro-Caribbeans original religions and spiritual practices, traces of this remained in covert ways. Brock (1982) explained, initially, education in the West Indies was only available to the elites. What this meant in terms of the availability of schooling was a

tripartite structure comprising [sic] a small white upper class, the plantocracy, who sent their children to school in English; a small creole class (10) – of mixed race and resulting from liaison between planter and slave – who were favoured by the plantocracy in terms of status and some educational support; a large lower class, mostly black and with no access to education. (p. 127)

When the education systems were finally established in the West Indies (Caribbean), it essentially mirrored the British colonial system. More recently efforts toward the improvement and expansion of a curriculum more closely aligned with the interests of Caribbean people have begun to be implemented.

To briefly elaborate, in recent years universal access to basic and secondary education has improved in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) with an emphasis on relevance for the twenty-first century. According to Brissett (2021). CARICOM is a grouping of 20 countries: 15 member states and five associate members, with a population of about 16 million citizens” (n.p.). Because early on education in the Caribbean was essentially a version of British colonial education, only intended for the benefit of the White population who could not afford to go to England” (Brissett, 2021, n.p.), and later expanded to mulatto population, its development for the Black population was riddled with issues. The high stakes testing of “the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) was introduced . . . to assess [students’] suitability to enter high school,” but

in 2012 it was largely replaced at the CARICOM level by the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA), which is distributed by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). The CPEA, or some other reform of the CEE, has since been adopted by most countries in the region. (n.p.)

In essence, CARICOM states created the CXC to offer “regionally and internationally recognized secondary-school leaving examinations, replacing the UK-based Cambridge systems” (Brissett, 2021, n.p.). This information is important and relevant to my inquiry since both my participants grew up and attended high school in the Caribbean in the 1980s, they were likely not recipients of these shifts in the Caribbean education system.

Brock claimed difficulties in breaking away from its colonial roots despite “nations of the ‘British West Indies’ . . . collectively institut[ing] the Caribbean Examinations Council” (Brock, 1982, p. 136). Problems such as these Caribbean countries’ sense of individual identity and parental fears with the changes resulted. In the end, the curriculum still largely resembled its colonial predecessor. With a better understanding of this legacy in mind, I now focus on Afro-Caribbean teachers in the U.S. concentrating on the academy specifically.

Islands to Ivory Towers. My initial search for research highlighting twenty-first-century K-12 CBI high school teachers proved challenging, yet a trend I discovered in the literature was studies which focused on the academy and higher education more generally. These studies highlighted Afro-Caribbean educators’ connection to home as it related to their experiences in the academy (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010), their sense of invisibility as learners who were Anglo-phone Caribbean women immigrants studying in American “postsecondary institutions” (Alfred, 2003), the lived experiences of Afro-Caribbean faculty members at predominantly white institutions (Louis et al., 2017), the perceptions of four Afro-Caribbean members of academy (Louis et

al., 2020), along with the “experiences of six Afro-Caribbean multilingual educators with Englishes across Caribbean and United States contexts and classrooms” (Smith et al., 2018). I use the term “Afro-Caribbean” here as it was used in the literature. Next, I briefly discuss two of these studies.

Commonalities among the works of Fournillier and Lewis (2010) alongside Louis and colleagues (2017) were their positionality as Caribbean-born members of the academy, sense of being or existence in and out of the academy, and the impact of their newfound U.S. minority status on their views of self and by others. Each noted how their non-minority status in their birth countries presented obstacles either as they interacted with their African American peers within the academy or when they bristled against others’ expectations to quash their Afro-Caribbean identities. By emphasizing the importance of remembering the fact that Afro-Caribbeans are not a monolith, Louis and colleagues (2020) reiterated the complexity which exists within Afro-Caribbean people.

Additionally, challenges to their very presence or existence while matriculating, teaching, researching, and working in their respective institutions of higher education were evident. Under-scoring the effects of “misperception[s] based on racial phenotypes” Louis and colleagues (2017) noted “oftentimes [it] leads to the further marginalization, and ultimately, invisibility of Afro-Caribbean individuals” (p. 673) in these spaces. Consequently, their study aimed to illuminate the voices of Afro-Caribbean faculty at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) because they were “an overlooked, misunderstood, and under-researched population” (Louis et al., 2017, p. 669). On the other hand, for Fournillier and Lewis (2010), the researchers’ sense of self and centeredness became critical to their being (i.e. existence) and “Caribbean identity” (p. 157). Grounded in full awareness of their identities, the scholars drew on their heritage to enlighten,

fortify, and empower themselves as they journeyed through the halls of academia. Moreover, the invisibility which Afro-Caribbean faculty must contend with (Louis et al., 2017) and the voice they sought to find (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010) demonstrated the challenges to their existence. Therefore, both groups of researchers as members of the academy faced trials whether internal or external while traversing the ivory towers of higher learning institutions.

Caribbean Black Immigrant teachers in K-12 classrooms. For studies that were more closely aligned with my research interests, I noticed a trend. The scholarship was primarily comprised of dissertations. For example, Beck's (2010) work explored "the experiences of Afro-Caribbean women international teachers who have been recruited to teach in American urban schools" (p. 163). A similarity between her scholarship and my own was her use of narrative analysis and the qualitative research method of interviewing. Drawing on womanist theory, the research findings showed teachers' "growth and a willingness to learn and adapt to the school culture" (p. 129) and the existence of similarities in the participants' philosophies in comparison to their Black/African American colleagues.

For Campbell-Barton (2023), the researcher's approach was a phenomenological study of "the lived experiences of a group of Jamaican-educated teachers . . . in northeastern North Carolina K-12 public schools" (p. 12) utilizing theories of assimilation and acculturation to inform the inquiry. The study methods included face-to-face interviews during which six themes arose. Among them were "cultural collision" (p. 98), "systematic and cultural diversity" (p. 106), and "Support for Success" (p. 121). Through the study of the ten Jamaican participants, the research sought to provide a deeper understanding of their experiences in one school district in the American south. While both the above noted dissertations along with the work of Broutian (2016) centered the experiences of immigrant teachers in K-12 settings, these limited examples

demonstrated the lack of stories specifically related to the secondary education sphere. My scholarship serves as an entrance into the field and an extension of the literature.

Conclusion

The historical research highlighting the ingenuity and adaptability of African Americans established how we have continued to forge ahead in the face of many obstacles. Offering tales of hope and triumph that emphasize twenty-first-century CBI teachers' experiences as my inquiry did provides the field of research with an additional perspective. Furthermore, we have continued to strive forward in the face of the unthinkable -- even excelling to become educators defying all odds. Black people have achieved despite the hegemony that exists within curricula. Such dominance has continued to reinforce the legitimacy of the literary canon and de-legitimacy of our many ways of expression (oral or otherwise) and ways of knowing. The scholarship reviewed here revealed a multiplicity of ways that teachers and students could and have countered the deficit views of Black students and challenged or even engaged in critical readings of the literary canon.

Nonetheless, the scholarship failed to sufficiently detail the experiences of twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Immigrant teachers in secondary classrooms. In the literature, the experiences of White educators of minoritized students and a limited number of studies specifically about Black teachers and by Black researchers underscored a gap in the scholarship and persistence of the issues I detailed in chapter one. Specifically, these issues concerned their underrepresentation in teaching and research along with the European hegemony prevalent in curricula.

Without additional investigation into the experiences of CBI teachers, we cannot know with certainty the many ways they are currently encountering teaching. Are they potentially

heeding their agency? Do they draw on a particular ideology when teaching? How have they experienced the teaching of AP English? These questions have yet to be fully answered. My research was an attempt to shed further light on the experiences of Caribbean Black Immigrant AP English teachers who previously taught the advanced courses.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As a starting point for my research inquiry and the subsequent selection of my methodology and methods, I first considered my personal views on knowledge. These perspectives spoke to my beliefs regarding “*how we know what we know* [emphasis in original]” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8) which in qualitative research is more commonly referred to as one’s epistemology. Hence, to begin the contextualization of my research design, I discuss my epistemology of social constructionism. Next, I discuss Afrocentricity, the theory which frames the inquiry, and briefly revisit my positionality. Following this, I address my chosen research methodologies of heuristic and narrative inquiry. Then, I discuss how I utilized narrative analysis to analyze my data through an Afrocentric lens which I re-presented as a fictionalized story. Finally, I provide details about my research participants, instruments, procedures, and expectations. Before I delve into the specifics of my research design, I revisit my research questions

which are:

- 1. How are the ideologies and beliefs of twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Immigrant AP English teachers shaped by their cultural background and life experiences?**
- 2. What are the past teaching experiences of Caribbean Black Immigrant former AP English teachers with curriculum design and implementation of prescribed curricula?**

Consistent with Cohen and colleagues (2018), I was not only open to the possibility that my research questions might change or evolve, and they did, but I also found myself refining my questions (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). Even so, the research questions I eventually settled upon served as a preliminary guide for my inquiry into the life and teaching experiences of

twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) former teachers of advanced English courses were intended to shed light on their experiences.

Epistemology of Social Constructionism

According to Crotty (1998) “[t]he term ‘constructionism’, particularly ‘social constructionism’, derives largely from the work of Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) and Berger and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967)” (p. 60). He explained it as “*all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context* [emphasis in original]” (p. 42). When I considered this view of knowledge, it resonated with me because my understandings of most topics are first developed in a social environment. As I teacher, I feed off discussions with colleagues and frequently draw inspiration from them for implementation into classroom lessons.

This holds true for me whether those understandings occurred in a classroom with me as the student or among my peers and colleagues during professional development or even during casual conversation. In these settings, I have come to understand new concepts and thresh out any areas of uncertainty. The conversations in which I participate and have overheard in these environments feed my thoughts and tend to expand my knowledge. I have learned based on my previous interactions and have arrived at certain beliefs related to my learning. Vital to my learning and growth though have always been the social aspect. For me, it is synergetic and inspiring.

When necessary or faced with new information, I have adjusted my beliefs and learning. By taking and adapting those aspects of my learning which served me and dispensing those elements which seemed irrelevant (Schwandt, 1998), I have arrived at my truths. Truths core to my pedagogical and ideological approach include my belief that Black students deserve quality

instruction from teachers who share their cultural identity (i.e. look like them). Secondly, I believe students are poised and capable of meeting a teacher's expectations of excellence. Through my interactions and conversations with others, I have adjusted my understandings and incorporated my newly formed knowledge into my teaching and life.

Hence, my views of knowledge square well with social constructionism because I value collaboration and communities of learning as well as an individual's autonomy to interpret his or her understandings (Crotty, 1998) and then adapt it as necessary. Social constructionism entails the generation of knowledge through relationships. Yet, this relationship still leaves room for critique or challenging our thoughts. The collaborative nature that occurs while teaching and planning stems from the collaborative environment of working or planning with other ELA teachers. For me, it makes for an easy flow of ideas.

High school ELA teachers are our own breed, and frequently in ELA spaces, we share a presumed knowledge of content, best practices, acronyms, and texts in our discussions. Our understandings as English teachers – generated over time and years of experience – and our social interactions do not require the same depth of explanation as they might among outsiders. Yet, I am always open to socially creating new stores of knowledge like many others. This is the sort of camaraderie I experienced with my research participants. Moreover, through an Afrocentric theoretical frame, collectivity is one of the core principles of the theory, and social constructionism is aligned with this attitude. With this understanding in mind, I next elaborate on the assumptions and limitations of the epistemology.

Assumptions and Limitations of Constructionism

Social constructionism views all knowledge as constructed socially (Burr, 2003). Among the key assumptions of this epistemology is “a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways

of understanding the world” (p. 2). The epistemology views understanding of the world as dependent upon one’s social context. For instance, where a person lives, the cultural environment in which a person was raised, and even one’s historical situation are part of our social context. This study of CBI is deeply connected to the concept of presumed knowledge based on our shared cultural and AP English teacher identities. Just as we knowingly understood our Caribbean parents’ expectations of us educationally speaking, through my fictionalized re-presentation of the data we had unspoken understandings about the rules of cooking. The kitchen became our laboratory to learn from each other and fellowship with one another.

Another assumption of social constructionism is its emphasis on the influence of language in shaping our beliefs and understandings of the world. Language is a crucial element in the construction of reality. Thus, the learner’s prior experiences as well as the language (i.e. words) used to describe their world or experiences contribute to their learning as do their social interactions. Further related to this idea of the social nature of knowledge construction were Dewey’s principles of the theory of experience. For Dewey (1938), the two components included continuity of experience and interaction which are equal parts objective and internal conditions. However, it is through engaged interaction with others and new information that learners make meaning of the knowledge they acquire.

Burr (2003) explained, “There is no one feature, which could be said to identify a social constructionist position” (p. 2). Several “early exponents of American pragmatism – Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey – were constructionist and critical” (Crotty, 1998, p. 61). I place my views on the epistemology with Dewey for his belief in the knower’s active engagement in learning and interpretation of experiences in acquiring knowledge (Dewey, 1938). As a theorist, Dewey’s philosophy supports the interactions and continuousness which

occurred “between the learner and what is learned (p. 10). Additionally, Dewey (1938) also viewed learning as a “social process” (p. 58). Considering my theoretical grounding of Afrocentricity and its communal nature, Dewey’s remarks correlate with Afrocentricity.

Some might argue that the social nature of social constructionism leaves little room for individual agency. In this sense, the perceived lack of agency might be viewed as a limitation of the epistemology. Burr (2003) explained further stating a “social constructionism that fails to address individual differences in and subjective experience of such things as desires, choices, embodiment, sense of self and personal change is . . . inadequate” (p. 199). I touched on this earlier as I begin this chapter by explaining how I might adjust my ideas based on discussions with others. An additional limitation or problem with social constructionism is its connection with relativism (Burr, 2015). The issue here stems from the fact that since all viewpoints are equally acceptable and determining the “truth” of any given account is dependent upon its context of social construction, it makes defining reality outside of words problematic. Burr (2015) explained, “Relativism appears to undercut political efforts to challenge oppressive practices” (p. 225) because describing reality “beyond language” is impossible.

Constructionism is associated with both quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, although discourse analysis is a popular method often coupled with the epistemology, it leaves room for other research methods such as “the analysis of interview transcripts and written texts of other kinds” (Burr, 2003, p. 24). In my study, I examined participants’ curriculum documents and their interview transcripts as one example of “texts of other kinds.” I also referred to my memos as a text along with participants’ emails and text messages. Thus, even though “there are various brands of qualitative research, all share to some degree this goal of understanding the informants from participant perspectives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 26).

Admittedly, in my inquiry I aimed to interpret my participants' past experiences using language, but I also consulted them and sought their input.

Because I was unsettled by CBI teachers' underrepresentation in teaching and research, I intended to understand my participants' views on their past teaching of advanced English courses. More specifically, the two study participants were among the already small group of Black AP English teachers and the limited depictions of their experiences in the literature were concerning. Fortuitously, they both happened to be of Caribbean descent like me which meant telling their stories was like telling my own to some extent. I understood their experiences were not necessarily representative of the broader and less culturally diverse field of teaching in general or advanced English courses; however, I viewed their stories as valuable. Finally, because their teaching experiences were naturally occurring, I opted to utilize a naturalistic research design. Nonetheless, considering issues of their underrepresentation in teaching and researcher and the Eurocentric curricular hegemony, making known their experiences was worthy of investigation.

To continue discussing limitations, I note here areas which as a qualitative researcher employing social constructionism I must take care. Understanding the power dynamics that existed between the researched and the researcher, I was careful to adhere to Bogdan and Biklen's (2007) words regarding participants' voice. In doing so, I embraced and understood that I was "providing a space for particular narratives, not necessarily enabling authentic unmediated voices to end up on the printed page" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 215). It is a misconception on the part of some researchers to misuse the phrase *giving voice*. Researchers do not give their participants a voice, but instead, unveil their participants' existing thoughts (their voices) by making them more widely known. Separate and apart from any inquiry, participants have a voice, and it --

known and familiar to those around them –may not have the same reach and exposure that a qualitative inquiry is likely to provide. Therefore, researchers should not confuse their research, interpretations, and findings as equivalent to the researcher having some semblance of omnipotence that he or she bestows upon participants.

Furthermore, my selection of both heuristic inquiry and narrative inquiry methodologies valued the relational aspect of research in this tradition (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a; Moustakas, 1990; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Sultan, 2019); thus, my approach did not assume as the researcher I had authority over my participants or their narratives about their past teaching experiences. Instead, I entered the field to learn, and my role was participatory. The inspiration for this study began with me. From the outset, the study’s process and focus, my reflexivity and embodiment, along with the “culturally embedded” (Sultan, 2019, p. 3) re-presentation of the data enabled me to join my study participants. I did so by meshing my story with their shared stories of previous AP English teaching experiences. While I can see how a researcher may potentially become so entangled and invested in his or her participants’ accounts that the researcher fails to authentically interpret the data, here again, a researcher’s commitment to ethics (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012) is essential to avoiding such pitfalls. I elaborate in more detail about issues of ethics later.

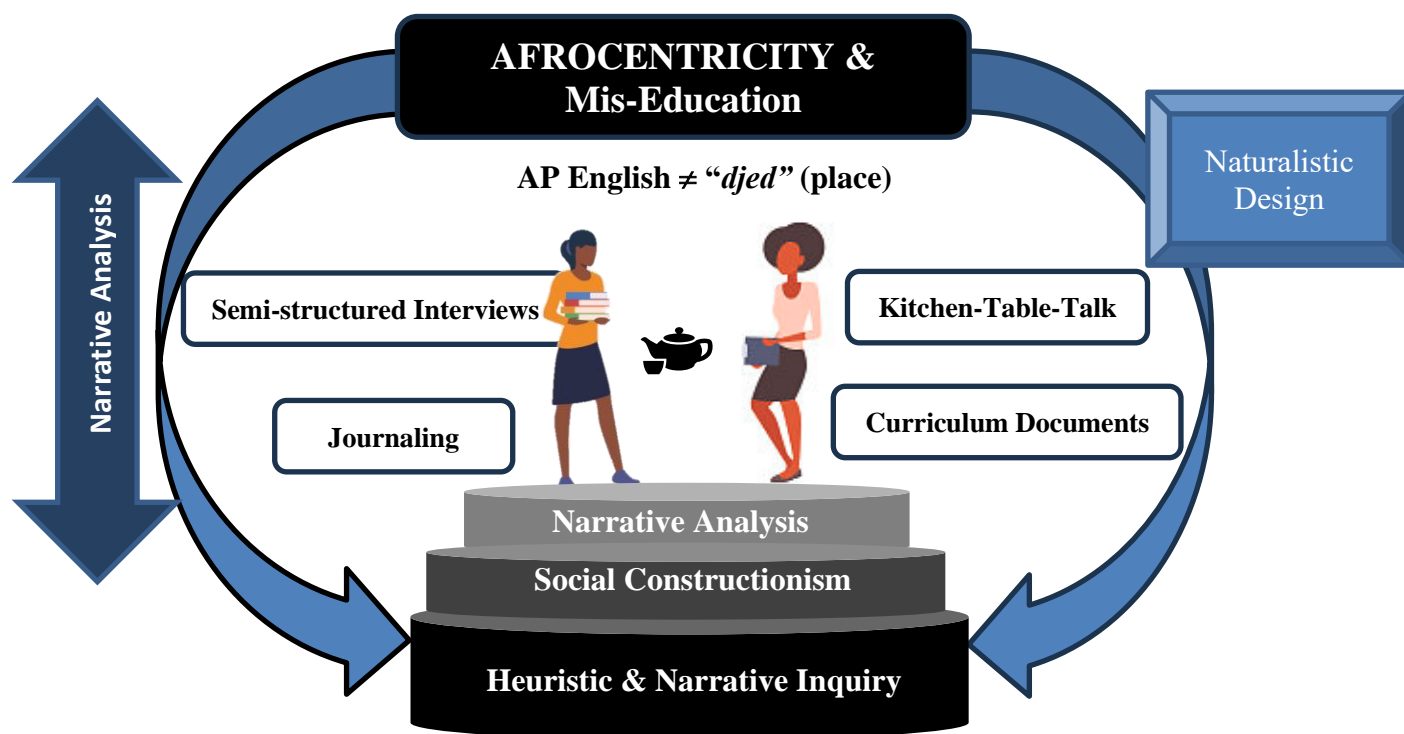
Another way a researcher can invite reflexivity and criticality is through his or her selection of theoretical lenses. I now explain how my theoretical grounding of Afrocentricity, concepts from Woodson’s (1933) *mis-education*, and my selected epistemology connect to narrative inquiry.

Theoretical Framework and Perspectives

Framing my study was the primary social theory of Afrocentricity and a secondary idea of mis-education. To provide a picture of how each of my chosen theories worked in concert leading to my understanding of the phenomenon, I provide a diagram illustrative of their interconnectivity to show how Afrocentricity helped me highlight the *djed* (i.e. place) of the CBI former AP teachers. Considering the issues of Eurocentric hegemony and “curricular violence” (Givens, 2021, p. 96) which may at times occur in advanced English curricula, their stories broadened my understanding of their experiences. The selected research methods – particularly my use of KTT (Bell, 2022) – provided opportunity for participants and me to honor communal learning as they relayed stories about their personal and professional teaching experiences. Finally, the diagram shows how sitting on the foundation of heuristic and narrative inquiry, my selected epistemology of social constructionism informed my interpretations and analysis. All these elements form my research design (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Diagram Representing Structure of Research Design



I envisioned my theoretical framework as a multi-layered cylinder. Nestled within the heuristic (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019) and narrative inquiry design which Clandinin and Connelly (2000b) referred to in terms of a three-dimensional space, were my qualitative research methods of semi-structured interviewing, analyzing documents, journaling, and a Kitchen-Table-Talk (KTT). I hoped to gain somewhat of an insider's perspective through the journal prompts I provided (see Appendix F); however, since the way the participants responded was quite different, it meant I had to ask several follow-up questions through text and email. Furthermore, Afrocentricity was essential to my work because it began with centering my phenomenon of my

Caribbean Black/African American AP English teacher participants and sought to understand how they viewed their place within the AP English classroom.

I presupposed their presence as CBI teachers in the AP English classroom – a space in which Black teachers are underrepresented (Milewski & Gillie, 2002) – would provide fertile soil in which to harvest opportunities to invoke their cultural identities. I believed this would be the case because of my desires and struggles to do this as an AP English teacher. The data and my findings told a different story from what I anticipated which I explain in chapters four and five. Complementary to the social theory of Afrocentricity was the mis-education (Woodson, 1933) of Black students. The philosophy of mis-education could possibly have applied to both the Black and minoritized students the two participants previously taught and the participants themselves. After all, these CBI were recipients of a colonial educational system (Brock, 1982; Waters, 1999) because their educational experiences in the Caribbean pre-date the CARICOM initiated changes to the curriculum (Brissett, 2021). In this manner, Woodson’s work helped to partially illuminate ways in which my participants participated in, resisted, and were reproducers of mis-education.

Therefore, the second layer considered the teachers’ social construction of knowledge regarding teaching advanced ELA curricula; we discussed their personal beliefs and professional experiences with AP English. To comprehend these experiences, I listened to their narratives about their upbringing, education, and early careers which shed light on their unique perspectives. Finally, through narrative, content, and thematic analysis, I gained a clearer understanding of their location or *djed* in time as it related to their past, present, and future; this comprised the final layer.

Asante (2007) argued the importance of time by noting “It goes without saying that the Afrocentrist cannot function properly as a scientist or humanist if he or she does not adequately locate the phenom in time and space” (p. 27). To explain, this means the importance of chronology is on equal footing with location or *djed*. For this reason, my investigation did not rely solely on interview data but took into consideration the participants’ private thoughts as revealed through journaling and the more public evidence of their teaching in practice: the curriculum documents they used and created. For instance, the writing assignments, reading assignments, and projects they created revealed what they valued and viewed as important to their teaching and for students to learn. These methods together demonstrated continuity of the practice in the past, present, and indicated what the future might hold.

Thus, Afrocentricity as the theoretical framework of my study 1) centered Africans, 2) acknowledged their agency, 3) took for granted Africans’ rich heritage and knowledge, and as a theoretical lens had the potential to 4) act as an antidote to the hegemony of a Eurocentric worldview. Through my four-pronged approach of research methods, I obtained a more robust and comprehensive portrait of my participants’ experiences. Furthermore, through employing the multiple methods of semi-structured interviewing, journaling, KTT, and document analysis, I crystalized the data (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). This meant that combined, these methods had “symmetry and substance” were “multidimensionalities, and angles of approach” (p. 963). My analysis of the resulting data occurred was eclectic in nature. Initially, it occurred primarily through narrative analysis (Cortazzi, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988); however, as I began to reconceptualize my re-presentation of the data into a virtual kitchen space, I also relied on aspects of content (Ezzy, 2002; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), thematic, and narrative analysis. Now, I provide more detail regarding the theoretical lens that was central to my study.

Afrocentricity as Foundational to My Inquiry. The relevance of Afrocentricity to my work stemmed from my epistemology which valued the social aspect of knowledge construction. As a theory, Afrocentricity values communal learning and heritage knowledge (King, 2018), so in this sense my theoretical framework paired nicely with my chosen epistemology. The examination of CBI teachers not only addressed their underrepresentation in research but also in teaching while simultaneously centering African people. This disturbance began first with my decision to understand the phenomenon of Black former AP English teachers. It continued with highlighting their stories by presenting modern depictions of their past experiences in AP English classrooms. To add to this disruption, my re-presentation of the data through the fictionalized narrative “nurture[d] [my] writing voice” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960) and solidified the ideas of “writing *is* thinking, writing is analysis . . . tangled method of discovery” (p. 967). The re-presentation of their narratives allowed me to concurrently write and analyze the data. Afrocentricity was fitting as it attended to issues related to African people; thus, it was my starting point for understanding their experiences.

Asante (1991) described his theory thus, “*Afrocentricity*, which means literally, placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (p. 2). Considering the cultural identities of the participants in this study, my selected theory was appropriate. Writing about the theory of Afrocentricity, Mazama (2001) states, “Afrocentricity contends that our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the Western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks” (p. 387). With this understanding as a basis, the theory rejected the Eurocentric focus and opted for an African-informed perspective. Of importance to the theory of Afrocentricity is “cultivating a consciousness

of victory as opposed to dwelling on oppression” (Mazama, 2003, p. 6). I hoped to hear stories of triumph. I was somewhat surprised at what I found.

Assumptions and Limitations of Afrocentricity

Among the assumptions of Afrocentricity is agency as a path toward positive mental health, the “centrality of the African,” and “that all relationships are based on centers and margins and the distances from either the center or the margin” (Asante, 2009; Asante, 2003; Neter, 1995). The advanced curricula of AP English frequently normalizes a Eurocentric focus distinctly placing the dominant group at its center. Such curricula do not assume Afrocentricity and African works as the starting point. Instead, these curricula may privilege European works and authors. When multicultural texts are offered, there might be a sense of tokenism in that the few names teachers may encounter in literary textbooks are not equally balanced with the litany of European authors. Teachers of AP courses who identify as Black may comprise one part of the equation to a more balanced and representative approach to teaching advanced English courses, yet I do not automatically assume having Black teachers is equated to criticality or more balance. Through my selected methodology of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a; Polkinghorne, 1988) paired with heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), I hoped it would demonstrate the inherent value I see in my participants whom I viewed as experts. I also became a part of the inquiry.

In addition, the primary assumptions of Afrocentricity include a) viewing humanity as “an interconnected web of people both living and deceased” (Lateef, 2015, p. 27), b) “the soul of human beings is not based in time or space but plays an important role in the lives of people” (p. 27), and c) placing value in “affective knowledge” (p. 26). For instance, I honored and (re)membered the wisdom my grandmother conveyed during our time spent in her kitchen. She taught me

lessons about cooking traditional Caribbean dishes; however, under the surface, I learned about the value of education, a strong work ethic, and the importance of literacy. Accordingly, my mother's recollections of her mother's recipes was passed down to me. The data that I re-present through my memories of my grandmother's kitchen occurred in a fictionalized kitchen to demonstrate her importance and influence in my life. Our imagined cooking (between the research participants and I) acted as a bond of our shared cultural heritage. To elaborate further, I next discuss each of the three theoretical assumptions of Afrocentricity individually.

Collective Identity, Spirituality, and Affective Knowledge. Beginning with the assumption of "collective identity" (Schiele, 1996, p. 286), Afrocentricity viewed individuals as part of a larger body of interconnected beings. What this means is there was a shared sense of ideology and mentality among Africans and African Americans. Based on my study, I would also argue a similar sense of interconnectivity among people from the Caribbean or of Caribbean descent. The effect is a sense of obligation to one another and a spirit of collaboration. For instance, in coming together and discussing our lives, we each had an immediate understanding of our Caribbean parents' expectations regarding the value of education. Likewise, we all felt obligated to pass along those high expectations to our own students as the data revealed. Additionally, our conversations and shared understandings were "intuitive, introspective, and reflexive" (Sultan, 2019, p. 3) a hallmark of heuristic inquiry.

Further evidence of a spirit obligation was provided when one of the teacher-participants discussed *paying-it-forward* when leaving her previous AP teaching position (see Figure 2). Vanessa conveyed a similar sense of responsibility to the teacher who replaced her when she resigned from her AP English teaching position at her previous school. This was like examples from the research literature I previously discussed in chapter two. In that chapter, I detailed

historical examples demonstrating the many methods Black/African Americans used as they acted in community with one another to attain literacy and become educated (Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992). The efforts of Black/African American author-activists were an example of how African Americans fulfilled their sense of duty to one another. It enabled us to survive and achieve despite those who actively worked to thwart our efforts. For this reason, I saw an alignment between one research participant's (Vanessa's) sense of obligation to her teaching replacement and Afrocentricity (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Excerpt from Vanessa's Interview #1

208 trial and error, you know? But it became so much easier as the years went by, but
209 being aware of that when I left, I made sure that the person that was coming in for me
210 had my support, and I went through you know beforehand we knew I was leaving. I
211 got her as they say *hooked up!* With all the things (Laughs) that she would need. I
212 told her what she might need to do. We went through most things together. As a
213 matter of a fact, she still gets in touch now and again. You know, if she has a
214 challenge, so yeah at first, it was a great big challenge, but it got easier with time.¶

The second assumption of the theory of Afrocentricity was about spirituality. Asante sounds a caution however and warned against confusing spirituality with religiosity. He further asserts the goal of obtaining a position as a religion has certainly not been a focus of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2007). Asante (2003) discussed the spirituality inherent in Afrocentricity remarking “it is impossible to see how anything from outside ourselves can compare with what is in our history . . . replete with the voice of God, the ancestors, and prophets” (p. 10). Schiele (1996) elaborated on the connectivity of the human soul too from one human being to another and its connection to a greater force. This metaphysical entity which – from an Afrocentric theoretical

standpoint -- is intrinsic to humankind “transcends time and space and considered just as much a legitimate source of study as the mind and the body” (p. 287). Likewise, the connectivity I feel to my grandmother who has passed is evident in my desire to keep her rich cultural knowledge alive through Caribbean cuisine.

The validity of emotions as a knowledge source (Schiele, 1996) was the final assumption of the paradigm. As it related to Afrocentricity and the affective, Asante (1998) also held similar views in that he perceived human beings’ actions and their emotions as inseparable. Afrocentrists, according to Schiele (1996) “contend that the application and imposition of Eurocentric theories of human behavior, especially to explain the behavior and ethos of African Americans, are implicitly oppressive” (p. 286). As a result, European perspectives and theories do not account for the affective in the same way the Afrocentric paradigm does.

Theoretical Limitations of Afrocentricity. A limitation of the theory occurred in how some people view Afrocentricity. The mindset on the part of some is to blur the distinctions between other similar terms that are frequently associated with Afrocentricity. Specifically, it can be confusing –

Afrocentrism [emphasis in original] is a term frequently employed by those who see Afrocentricity in religious terms, that is, a belief system, rather than an analytical paradigm. Of course, it has nothing to do with any form of religion. The term *Africa-centered* [emphasis in original] has geographical implications that are not necessarily definitive for Afrocentricity . . .” (Asante, 2020, p. 148)

Thus, for anyone who wants to employ the framework, transparency regarding the exact theorists from which he or she draws and clarity concerning how the theory differs from similar terms is warranted. I too made a shift in my psyche away from a viewpoint of European dominance as the

de facto archetype. This involved me tackling the mental subjugation to which Assante (2007) referred and from which many present-day people of African descent suffer. It was important for me to constantly self-check for evidence that I was not thinking from the object position, so I could recognize when I was relying on how I have learned to view things and not how they are.

Secondly, some intentionally misconstrue the goals of Afrocentricity. Specifically, critics assert “that Afrocentricity is anti-White” (Asante, 1991, p. 179) when in fact that could not be further from the truth. Misrepresentations of the theory stem from the belief that the theory does not fall within mainstream Eurocentric approaches to research (Asante, 2007). In other words, because “Afrocentricity traces its theoretical heritage to African ideas and African authors” (p. 3), some would falsely claim that to be an Afrocentrist, one places African people above rather than alongside other cultures. Asante (2007) expands his objections to this argument by calling out European’s desire to maintain their dominance through their belief that “all theories and philosophies not rooted in European historical consciousness are unreal” (pp. 138-139). He further posited that Afrocentricity pursues pluralism absent of the hierarchy’s characteristic of Eurocentric theories. In a similar vein Wynter offered some insights regarding consciousness and Western thinking from the of Black Studies. In an interview she remarked, “The Anglo world is not the origin of the modern world, although they present themselves as if they are . . . BLACK STUDIES CAME UP, THIS WAS THE FIRST PROFOUND CHALLENGE TO THE WESTERN INTELLECTUALS’ CONTROL [emphasis in original]” (Thomas, 2006, p. 11). In essence, Afrocentricity rejects the idea of knowledge beginning from a Westernized or Europeanized position.

A final criticism of Afrocentricity comes from Williams (2005) who argued the social theory’s rejection of materialism and in turn capitalism as well as its perspective of culture as

autonomous are two significant limitations. To explain, Williams critiqued these ontological views about materialism and culture as failures because first, it did not address the significant role capitalism played in the lives of African American people, and second, it failed to recognize the materialistic foundation of culture. Instead, since Afrocentrists hold that one's consciousness determines being, this belief logically then means "degradation of consciousness rather than, say, the intensification of structural dis-advantage" (Williams, 2005, p. 38) was the reason for the economic decline and circumstances of African Americans today. Secondly, "The Afrocentric failure to grant due recognition to the material bases of culture has an interesting political consequence: it buttresses the neo-conservative claim that the problems facing African-Americans are fundamentally internal" (p. 43). I can hardly believe that Afrocentric scholars intended to co-sign on the beliefs of conservatives; however, by divorcing culture from its materialistic connections, Williams (2005) argued: scholars have done so.

Williams' (2005) observations have merit as no amount of conscious thought can overcome systemic systems of racism such as environmental discrimination, poorly run schools with inadequately trained teachers, as well as fewer job opportunities for Black people. I acknowledge the power of one's thoughts and how they can affect the direction life may take, but I have yet to see how mindfulness alone can regulate a person's existence – especially when that existence must subsist within hegemonic structures. As it relates to my inquiry, the neoliberal agenda which Brown (2011) argued was grounded in the financial domination of political interests, better explains federal policies related to AP which affect African American students. On the policy side, funding "to offset the cost . . . for low-income students under a Title I program called the Advanced Placement Test Fee Program" failed to tackle the problem of ill-prepared Black

students or dysconscious (King, 2015) teachers. Instead, such policies seek to throw more money at the issue which scholarship about incentivizing participation (Davis et al., 2015) supports.

A second critique of Afrocentricity according to Williams (2005) is it reinforced the neo-conservative assertion that the difficulties Blacks faced are imbedded within themselves – neglected factors external to African Americans. As previously noted, these factors are often structural and systemic; hence, they are beyond the control of Blacks. Williams (2005) discussed the difficulty in situating Afrocentrists along the political field of “the radical-liberal-conservative” (p. 43) because Blacks are considered to blame for their failures. The superficial treatment of culture as a change in African American’s behavior will somehow remedy “how dominant structural arrangements undermine the quality of African-American life” (Williams, 2005, p. 44) highlighting yet another shortcoming of the social theory.

Rationale for selecting Afrocentricity. The relevance of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2003) to my study was applied both broadly and specifically. The theory was useful in understanding my research participants, examining the curricula they teach, and considering the educational and historical context of their experiences and course content. Moreover, through my reliance of the oral tradition of storytelling – commonplace in Black and Caribbean cultures – (Asante, 1998; Heath, 1989; Mazama, 2001) veneration of my ancestors, and my re-presentation of the data, my research methods, analysis, and methodologies were consistent with several features of Afrocentricity. Hence, Afrocentricity was essential to my examination of the research phenomenon because, it offered an Afrocentric perspective as the starting point not as an afterthought, centered CBI teachers’ agency, and considered the heritage knowledge (King, 2018) of African Americans – in this case, CBI teachers.

Woodson's Thoughts on Mis-education. I used Woodson's (1933) mis-education to conceptualize the existing curricula and its historical roots. It enabled me to recognize the CBI teacher participants were both recipients of and co-creators of mis-education. I did not see strong evidence of these teachers as resisters or destroyers of hegemonic curricula; however, Woodson argued that because Black' education "has been largely imitation;" it has amounted to mental enslavement for Black people. Woodson (1933) implied the curricula had the power to direct a student's thinking in such a way that "you do not have to worry about his action[s]" (p. 31) because one can be rendered powerless as the oppressor sits back and reaps the fruits of his intentional mis-education. Since teachers are the ones who determine not only how curricula are delivered, but also to some extent the content itself, Woodson's (1933) thoughts offered a means of understanding the depths of mis-education present in or absent from participants' experiences.

Furthermore, his ideas on mis-education explained the Europeans' hegemony which often devalued the past cultural experiences of people of African descent. In essence, he sounded the alarm for Blacks to consciously take charge of their education lest they remain ignorant unconscious victims of the United States educational system. To do so meant acknowledging the cultural, philosophical, and historical contributions of Black people. Woodson looked to teachers as one source to revolutionize the education system. As a result, my research study allowed me to listen to the experiences of twenty-first-century CBI teachers and learn how they may be enacting such ideologies or not in their teaching lives.

Research Design

Accordingly, with a social constructionism epistemology, the conversations I had with participants revealed our common Caribbean heritage and provided us with some shared understandings as revealed in more detail later in chapters four and five of my study. Consistent

with heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019), my study was relational as it provided me with an emic perspective of the participants. We had a common understanding of what exactly high expectations of ourselves entailed and what a strong work ethic as teachers of Caribbean descent meant for us. Coincidentally, these two beliefs which we seemed to inherit from our parents and the Caribbean communities in which we were raised also emerged as themes in the data. Employing Afrocentricity allowed me to center my participants' cultural background and in turn, garnered a level of comfort and openness between us. Our Caribbean heritage was central to these understandings.

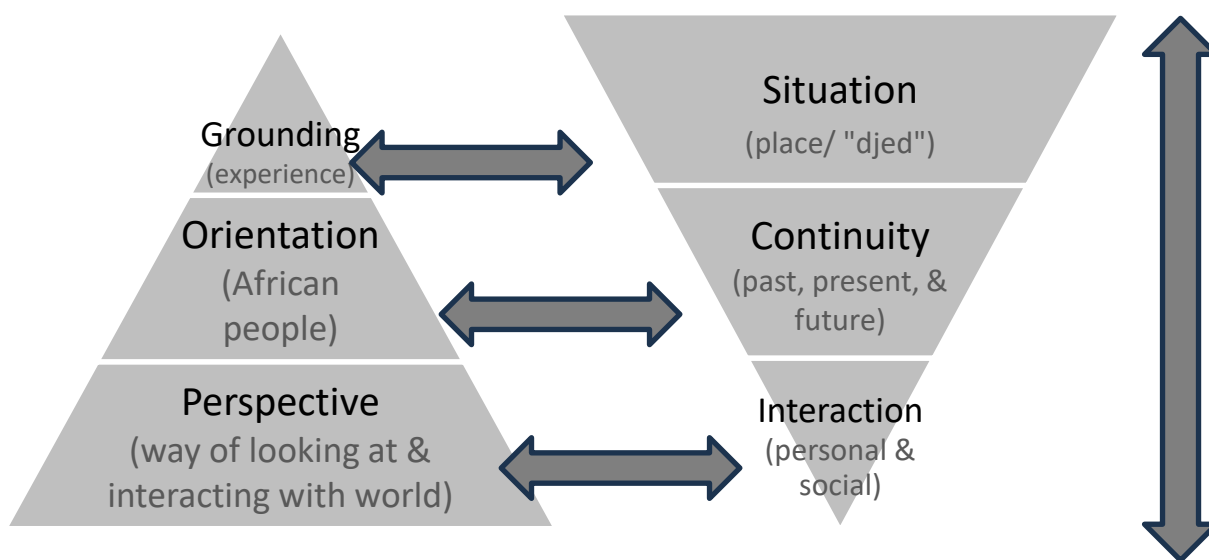
Mazama (2003) discussed the “three pyramidal elements [of Afrocentric theory]: *grounding . . . orientation [and] perspective*” [emphasis in original] (pp. 6-7) which comprise an Afrocentric theoretical framework and dovetail nicely with my narrative inquiry research methodology (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a). Narrative inquiry includes a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (see Figure 3). My research is rooted in the personal narratives and teaching stories of people of African descent and concerned with African people of which Caribbeans are a part (i.e. aligned to Afrocentricity).

Therefore, my study used Afrocentricity by “grounding” my research “in the African historical and cultural experiences (i.e., epistemology)” (Mazama, 2003, pp. 6-7) of participants which connected to their situation (i.e. place or *djed*). It centered them and their cultural backgrounds by connecting to their Caribbean roots. Secondly, my study is interested in “Africa and her people” (Mazama, 2003, p. 7). Consequently, their narratives' continuity (past, present, and future) were also linked to African people. Their past begins with the Caribbean, but it is also part of the African diaspora; presently, they are Caribbean Black Immigrant former AP English teachers, and their future is yet undetermined. Lastly, the final component of the

framework is perspective which connected to narrative inquiry on the level of their interaction (personal and social) as revealed through their narratives (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Afrocentric framework and Narrative inquiry



Research Methods

The primary research methods I employed were semi-structured interviews (deMarris, 2004), participant journaling, document analysis (Prior, 2003), and a Kitchen-Table-Talk (KTT) (Bell et al., 2022). My selection of qualitative research methods stemmed from my review of the literature and various course readings. I consistently saw interviews were the primary research method of choice in numerous studies as I reviewed the literature (Anagnostopoulos; 2003; Borsheim-Black, 2015; Borsheim-Black, 2018; Carrol, 2017; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Kohli, 2019; Kyburg et al., 2007; Newell et al., 2009). Therefore, because interviews allowed me to answer my research questions regarding participants' teaching experiences, how they shaped the curricula, and whether they drew on their ideologies in teaching, it was an apt selection. I must

note here that any identifying information about research participants or others inadvertently collected during interviews was not transcribed, nor analyzed.

Due to district limitations on the amount of participants' time I could occupy, I emailed all journal prompts at the same time (see Appendix F). Though I had initially intended to stagger their distribution, I was unable to do so which meant, I had to adjust my timeline for the study. Additionally, Oliver (1998) confirmed my decision to include journaling. She explained, "The researcher seeks students' or teachers' stories through interpretation of multiple forms of representation (e.g., individual or group interviews, journals, letters, personal stories, observations, field notes, images, drawings) that will be used to construct a narrative that displays the connection of elements as an unfolding temporal development whose end provides some explanation" (p. 250). Consequently, I have broadened my views on the many ways participants could journal to include multimodal methods such as creating a FlipGrid or responding in verse as was the case with one participant.

Moreover, in my review of the literature, I found only in a very limited number of cases did researchers rely on journal writing (Lilach, 2020; Carrol, 2017) or writing more generally (McIntyre-McCullough, 2020), but as an English teacher, I felt offering participants the opportunity to reflect in writing would be beneficial. Since many teachers of English are also writers, I thought journaling might appeal to my participants. However, I did worry that teachers' limited time might make it difficult to collect journal prompt responses. I found that despite the flexibility with the types of responses I requested, my suspicions were confirmed. Participants needed several reminders and some prompting to return their responses. Even so, I was pleased to see that one participant took advantage of my openness to creativity and responded with a haiku while the other participant's response was written in prose. Fewer studies in my literature review

utilized journaling or writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005), but I have found reflective writing to be cathartic, so I wanted to offer my participants the opportunity to respond in a wide variety of modes.

Furthermore, even though some of the studies I examined during my review of the literature employed observations (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Carter, 2007; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Gillenwater, 2014; Lopez, 2011; Newell et al., 2009), I decided to not go in this direction. My decision was based on two primary factors. First, though we all teach and work in the same district, my research participants were in a different school; therefore, logistically, observations would be a challenge. Furthermore, because I teach a tested subject, my administration was not keen on me missing class time.

Second, my focus was more on their experiences which were comprised of their recollections and reflections, and not necessarily on their instructional delivery. I felt by obtaining curricula documents the teachers have used or created and examining their verbal and written interpretations of their personal and professional lives, my chosen methods would be sufficient. Examples of curricula documents included projects and summer reading assignments. However, only one of the two teacher participants was able to provide me with such artifacts.

For the other participant, it had been too long since she taught AP English for her to locate any curriculum documents. Additionally, as an added measure, I researched the curriculum documents available on the College Board's website of resources. I did run into the problem of limited access due to my status as a previous AP English teacher; this meant some "secure" AP documents were off-limits. I explain these limitations in chapters five. I would equate the curriculum documents to what researchers called artifacts (Borsheim-Black, 2015; Borsheim-Black, 2018; Harris, 1992) or field texts (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000a). The curriculum documents

provided me with an alternate view of my participants' experiences – one that may be less visible.

Next, the sheer fact that I even investigated Black teachers of advanced courses, disrupted the normal perceptions of who AP English teachers are or can be. Demographically, Black AP teachers continue to be underrepresented (Milewski & Gillie, 2002). Moreover, I approached my work by recognizing the teachers' agency (Asante, 2007), expertise, and knowledge. They were in control of their narratives and reviewed my interpretations of their experiences several times offering feedback. Consequently, they influenced how their experiences were portrayed.

While I did not utilize case study as a research methodology; I chose to employ case study methods such as interviewing and analyzing primary and secondary documents or sources. My review of the literature confirmed this decision as several of the studies demonstrated to me how I could still use case study methods without using case study methodology. For instance, Borsheim-Black (2015) conducted interviews and collected artifacts, and I used similar qualitative research methods. Thus, through each of my research methods (i.e., semi-structured interviews, journaling, document analysis, and KTT), I was able to view the research phenomenon from multiple angles crystalizing the data (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). I invited my participants to relay their experiences using their own language and multimodal modes of expression. Next, I discuss my positionality.

Researcher's Positionality in Relation to the Phenomenon

My proximity to the research phenomenon of twenty-first-century CBI previous advanced course English teachers was quite close. Although my study was not autoethnographic in nature, I was a part of the research phenomenon in question, and in telling participants' stories, I

was also telling my own. Interwoven in their narratives are my stories of my grandmother's immigration to Canada, her influence in my life, and my affinity for my Jamaican ancestry. For this reason, my theoretical grounding of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2009; Mazama, 2003) and research methodologies of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 2009; Sultan, 2019) along with narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000b; Polkinghorne, 1988) were appropriate selections. Both the social theory of Afrocentricity and the methodologies welcomed and recognized the researcher's potential closeness to the phenomenon.

Furthermore, my social constructionist epistemology permitted me to thresh out my interpretations of participants' narratives because they were a vital part of my socially constructed understanding of their experiences and stories. I constantly considered my positionality in relation to the phenomenon. I made use of a critical perspective as it applies to both my positionality with the understanding that it added a layer of self-accountability and demonstrated my initial steps towards challenging the often-canonical curricula. I found the sentiments of critical literacy theorist Ernest Morrell (2004) apt in describing both my growth and researcher identity. He argued that the purpose of critical literacy is

to challenge the dominant discourse, uncover the inherent bias . . . challenge the existing theoretical paradigms, make explicit the correlation between existing sanctioned knowledge and existing power relations, commit intellectual activity to social transformation, and build in a system of self-reflection and critique. (p.17)

I hoped to gain an understanding of my participants' experiences and better interpret those experiences as I investigated the phenomenon of CBI past teachers of advanced English courses. Taking into consideration Morrell's thoughtful approach, it allowed me to face my own subjectivities which I continually checked, acknowledged, and tackled.

Research Methodologies of Narrative Inquiry and Heuristic Inquiry

Clandinin (2018) argued, “The stories we live are always lived in, shaped by, intentions, within time, environment, context, larger narratives” (p. 20), and for these reasons narrative inquiry was a suitable choice for the study of Black advanced course ELA teachers whose experiences were steeped in cultural, racial, political, and social contexts. Bruner (1986) concurred with the concept of narratives being dependent upon cultural context, acknowledged the importance of language to narratives, and its significance to social constructionism. Because “the nature of language as constantly changing and varied in its meanings that is the keystone of social constructionism” (Burr, 2003, p. 46), and whether it be written or oral, people convey their experiences through language. Hence, I paid special attention to participants’ words. Furthermore, narrative inquiry as a methodology reflected a transformation away from a “positivistic, realist perspective toward a research perspective focused on interpretation and the understanding of meaning” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 9). I listened to their stories and considered the meaning participants ascribed to them as a part of this process.

When considering the historical beginnings of narrative, many scholars look to the work of Bruner. In his own words, Bruner (1986) asserted, we “have no other way of describing ‘lived time’ save in the form of a narrative” (p. 12) and “that the mimesis between life so-called and narrative is a two-way affair” (pp. 12-13). In other words, narrative allows people to relay their life experiences, and the mutual quality between life and art holds for narratives. This means that “Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative” (p.13). In a similar manner, my re-presentation of the data through the memories of my grandmother’s kitchen imitated the participants’ narratives KTT which occurred over Zoom.

With respect to heuristic inquiry, as a methodology closely aligns with my inquiry because “[t]he self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Throughout my study, I came alongside my participants and felt alive and in-tune with them as they relayed professional and personal stories of their experiences. My sense of symbiosis stemmed from our shared designations as previous AP English teachers and cultural ties to our Caribbean upbringing. Heuristic inquiry investigates human experience and borrows conceptions from Polanyi, Buber, and Maslow (Moustakas, 1990). It welcomes intuitiveness, inspiration, and introspection. Next, I detail the characteristics of each methodology, assumptions, and limitations individually. I begin with narrative inquiry.

Key features of Narrative Inquiry. Since “Narrative inquiry begins in experience as expressed in lived and told stories,” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5) and is attentiveness “to context” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 366), I selected it as one of my two research methodologies. The key features of a narrative inquiry approach include an assumption that people create their reality through their stories (Marshal & Rossman, 2006). Additionally, temporality, -“people at any point in time are in process,” action as a narrative sign, certainty in flux, and context are features of narrative thinking (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a, p. 30). I recognized this through participants’ stories of their past experiences as they told them. The context of their tales were memories of their roles as previous AP English teachers, but their recollections of these experiences occurred in the present looking back.

To elaborate further, temporality refers to identifying events in time whether the event has occurred in the past or present. Much like temporality, people in process moving from what they were, to what they currently are, and what they eventually will be is a central feature of

“narrative educational thinking” (p. 30). Along the path to meaning, there is a pathway between action and meaning regarding a person’s narrative history. Certainty cannot be guaranteed as other alternative possibilities for explaining things is a feature of narrative thinking. Finally, context is continual and integral to “making sense of any person, event, or thing” (p. 32). Because my research participants and I shared much in common, I was drawn to narrative inquiry for its relational features. Especially since “narrative inquirers . . . are never [in the field] as disembodied reorders of someone else’s experience” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000a, p. 81), they, like their participants are also living stories. I most certainly felt a symbiosis between me and my research participants.

Assumptions and Limitations of Narrative Inquiry. Assumptions of narrative inquiry are through story, people make sense of their experiences, story provides insight “into people’s beliefs and experiences” (Bell, 2002, p. 209), and there exists a level of complexity yet richness in participants’ experiences. Participants voiced understandings innate to their practice which they revealed through of our semi-structured interviews. For example, I have found in my conversations with administration, the focus is normally on data, discipline, supports, lessons, and planning. They rarely ask about my ideologies. It is normally my teacher colleagues with whom I feel safe enough to express such thoughts that such conversations occur. The point being the conversations we had were not the type of conversations teachers normally engage in during formal meetings such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

Furthermore, though I initially thought the participants in my study might express feelings about how they were balancing their cultural and racial identities with often-hegemonic curricula, the reality was such issues were not a primary concern of either participant. Instead, while a sense of pride in their Caribbean heritage was obvious, they did not appear to lead with their

cultural lineage when it came to their teaching practices. The dichotomy of their circumstances was more nuanced than I had anticipated. While they were both immigrants to the United States, they seemed more focused on conveying high expectations when it came to the delivery of AP content rather than being focused on their cultural identities. This might have been because of the time and distance since they first immigrated.

Although, I employed both the research methods of interviewing and journaling, I elected to layer my methods with the understanding that educators' teaching experiences are complex and as such require a method of data analysis that can attend to this complexity; hence, I selected narrative analysis for this task. Riessman (2008) claims "narratives are strategic, functional, and purposeful" (p. 8), and I hoped through establishing camaraderie with and compassion towards my participants, I would make them feel comfortable enough to relay their personal stories of teaching AP to Black and minoritized students. Even so, narratives have limitations which I delineate next.

Limitations of Narrative Inquiry. Due to the depth and complexity of narratives, they require a significant commitment of time on the part of the researcher. Thus, selecting narrative inquiry for all types of research investigation is not warranted. If a researcher has a large group of participants, collecting, interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing the wealth of resulting data would not be feasible – especially if the inquirer is concerned with the quality of his or her interpretations. Accordingly, as a limitation, narrative inquiry is the "number of participants" (Bell, 2002, p. 210). My group of research participants was limited to two which still generated a significant amount of data; however, it was more manageable than a larger group of participants might have been.

Another limitation was the fact that the line between the researcher's and the participants' stories can become blurred. Because narrative inquirers are relaying participants' stories, ownership of the narrative can be called into question. Instead of trying to remain distant or objective from the phenomenon, narrative inquiry allowed me to immerse myself in my participants' narratives. I did so by fictionalizing the KTT within the re-imagined setting of my grandmother's kitchen. It was enjoyable to merge our cultural lives as we discussed the topic of our experiences as AP English teachers and imaginatively cooked Caribbean cuisine.

Yet another limitation was the interview structure does not necessarily and automatically prompt narratives which might more naturally occur in less formal conversations (Wolfson, 1976). For this reason, I selected semi-structured interviews which allowed me to follow topics my participants raised instead of adhering to a strict list of interview probes. Finally, the re-telling of traumatic experiences can be upsetting for participants and emotionally taxing; however, during the data collection process, I did not encounter such issues. As an added measure though, I reminded my participants before beginning each interview session that they could stop at any time and their participation was completely voluntary. Despite these limitations, the ability to collaborate and illuminate the meanings participants ascribed to their storied lives was why I selected narrative inquiry.

Key features of Heuristic Inquiry. Sultan (2019) identifies one of the essential features of the methodology as emerging “from the researcher’s **initial engagement** [emphasis in the original], or first encounter, with a topic of extreme interest” (p. 11). A second feature is immersion where “heuristic researchers adopt the attitude of *learner* versus *expert* [emphasis in original]” (p. 11); next is incubation to support understanding. Additionally, the methodology stresses “the unraveling of the essential nature and meaning of a unique phenomenon through

engagement in a number of internal processes . . . and self-reflection toward **illumination** [emphasis in original]” (p. 13). A tension between heuristic inquiry and narrative inquiry is the concept of story as a linear process with a distinct beginning and end.

Heuristic inquiry values the nonlinear. I would argue I addressed this tension through my re-presentation of the data by playing with time and re-presenting the participants various forms of data (i.e. semi-structured interviews, journaling, KTT, and curriculum documents) in a new fictionalized format. In doing so, I meshed the various sources of data in nonlinear ways. By “re-convening” my study participants in my grandmother’s fictionalized kitchen, I attended to and the fostered “the possibility of community and communion” (Sultan, 2019, p. 13) – also features of Afrocentricity (Asante, 1998). Our shared teaching and cultural experiences brought to light our “implicit knowing, or knowing that lies beyond what may be readily observed or articulated” (Sultan, 2019, p. 14) which Moustakas (2009) identified as “tacit knowing” (p. 20). For instance we shared aphorisms in patois and immediately understood their significance without explanation.

Limitations of Heuristic Inquiry. Several limitations tied to heuristic inquiry exist. These include difficulties related to objectivity, illumination, ambiguity, and perplexity. First, the approach is not for those who view themselves as objective of lack creativity. Because “heuristic inquiry invites both nearness and distance . . . intimacy and detachment” (Sultan, 2019, p. 19), if a researcher can only see themselves as distant from the phenomenon it would become problematic. Another limitation is potential obstacles which are certain to arise due to the intensity of the researcher’s “personal engagement . . . with the phenomenon being explored” (p. 20). Because of the researcher’s immersion, it can become overwhelming. Instead of achieving illumination from the researcher’s deep engagement with the data, he or she may “feel lost” (p. 20). Thus, this is

another limitation. Finally and consistent with my study, the findings of a heuristic inquiry may not be definitive; this is another inadequacy of the methodology. Now that I have addressed both narrative inquiry and heuristic inquiry as my research methodologies, I discuss my approach to analysis of the data.

Narrative Analysis Explained. While Labov (1972) defined “narrative as one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of classes to the sequence of events” (pp. 359-360), others explained it differently. Riessman (2008) described narrative analysis as questioning intention as well as language for the “*how* and *why* incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers [emphasis in original]” (p. 11). On the other hand, Polkinghorne (1995) asserted “[n]arrative analysis is the procedure through which the researcher organizes the data elements into a coherent developmental account . . . synthesizing of the data rather than a separation of it into its constituent parts” (p. 15). Discussing narrative analysis Cor-tazzi (1994) mentioned the widespread use of narrative analysis and its adaptation to disparate fields. For my inquiry, I primarily relied on Polkinghorne’s (1995) definition with the understanding that my analysis would depend to some extent on the richness of the data and responses I elicited from my participants. To elaborate, I expected that some participants would effortlessly relay stories as exemplars in response to some of the interview probes, but others might not flow as freely. Thus, my plan was to synthesize the segments of data into a “coherent whole” (p. 15). To do so, I began with Labov’s narrative analysis.

Based on Polkinghorne’s (1995) description of Dollard and his criteria “for judging a life history,” I paid attention to “cultural context”, considered “historical continuity,” thought about the “temporal period” (pp. 16-17) and aimed to coalesce the data into a series of coherent narratives. Cultural context was particularly important because it spoke to the shared identities of my

participants. My selection of narrative analysis meant that as the researcher, my role as the narrator of their stories had to be made explicit because although I transcribed their words, as the interviewer, I acted as a filter of their experiences. I had limited experience with narrative analysis but consulted Cortazzi's (2001) work as he offered several models from which to draw. His thoughts regarding narrative as it related to teachers provided insight as to why I have selected this method of analysis. He stated, "Teachers' thoughts, perceptions, beliefs and experience are all aspects of teachers' culture which we need to know about and be aware of as a key factor in education, especially in times of change" (p. 1). He further explained, the inner thoughts of educators are both undervalued and underresearched. Since my research phenomenon of CBI advanced ELA teachers was already an underrepresented faction, and we certainly have not heard their stories to the same extent as others, I viewed my choice of narrative analysis as timely and appropriate.

Assumptions and Limitations of Narrative Analysis

Assumptions related to narrative analysis deal with a type of analysis called biography whereby "the nature of reality, attitudes and evaluations towards the self, time, nature and society" is valued differently (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 21). For example, Cortazzi mentioned that for some people, the emphasis may be on the collective rather than the individual which is true from an Afrocentric lens (Asante, 2007; Mazama, 2003; Muhammad, 2020b). I am interested in the stories of Black teachers as a group, and though their individual experiences certainly differed, their shared cultural and racial identities I thought might make them a part of a collective experience.

A second assumption of narrative analysis included a Westernized viewpoint (Cortazzi, 1993). Admittedly, as someone raised within a Westernized educational system, I possess much of this perspective. Conversely, I have been indoctrinated with the ideals of Caribbean immigrant

parents as a Black woman. Likewise, my participants were raised in the Caribbean, but they have taught in the American educational system though they were educated in a colonial system (Brock 1982; Waters, 1999). Still, they also came from Black homes with families, neighborhoods, and churches that were reflective of their cultural identities. In this respect, conceivably both my participants and I have two different forces housed within our cultural identities. Accordingly, narrative analysis as a tool in educational research is “inadequately characterized” (p. 23), and my study would make a small contribution to the field.

The limitations of language itself were one further limitation of narrative analysis. To explain further, Cortazzi (1993) noted “the limited vocabulary of forms of narrative; its literary conventions, even in oral stories; the social norms in which narratives are born and grow; the psychological context of narration; narrative as discourse and narrative as memory” all act as constraints (p. 23). I imagined that because my study’s research participants previously taught AP English and currently are classroom teachers, they might oscillate between taciturn and talkative moments as they conveyed their experiences to me, and my prediction was correct. At times, participants appeared to be policing their words or searching for just the *right* phrasing or being selective with their words. In either case, their diction was an important element as they conveyed their past experiences and stories of teaching AP English.

Labov’s Narrative Analysis Model

Based on my reading of Cortazzi’s (1993) work and others, I employed “Labov’s evaluation model of narrative” (p. 25) in the analysis of my participants’ narratives. Subsequently, this entailed viewing narratives as chronological events which happened (Labov, 1972). I first transcribed their interviews before uploading them to NVivo which I explain in more detail later. According to Labov and Waletzky (1967) a complete narrative encompasses six components which

include abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, result, and CODA, though the abstract is considered optional. Tied to each section of the six-part structure is a series of questions. Beginning with the abstract (which is again optional), the question is *What was this about?* Then for the orientation, the questions are like the 5-Ws of journalism: *Who? When? What? Where?*—with the exception being, there is not a *how* question. For the complication, the question asks *What happened?* The evaluation asks *So what?* The CODA ends the narrative through a return to the present moment, but it too is not always required or present.

By utilizing Labov's structure, I aimed to take my interview transcriptions and pull out the narratives that were the most complete and relative to my research questions. It also helped me to sort through the data and identify which stories were the most significant. My justification for selecting narrative analysis was connected to the nature of narrative inquiry. Namely, Cortazzi (1993) notes:

tellers provide both the context and the interpretation. The Orientation sections presents necessary and sufficient information for an audience to understand the point . . . This is important methodologically since many teachers could be interviewed to elicit narratives without the necessity of observing classrooms or of gathering additional background information. (pp. 54-55).

I found this particularly important since I did not observe my participants. To explain further, in Cortazzi's (1993) assessment, because narratives allow for researchers to obtain insightful information, the methodology can illuminate what might be otherwise hidden from the investigator's view. Hence, narrative analysis was a fitting choice for my data analysis. While the evaluation model is one among many methods of narrative analysis, Cortazzi (1993) affirms "the Evaluation

model does not exclude other approaches” (p. 55). This allows for some flexibility with the method.

Coupled with my utilization of Labov’s Model were elements of McCormack’s (2004) process of “storying stories [which] draws its principles from the broad areas of feminism, post-modernism and qualitative research . . . within a narrative inquiry framework” (p. 220). My analysis of the data occurred throughout the transcription process, then again as I open coded the data through NVivo, another time as I looked to Labov for the narrative structure, and finally as I reconstructed participants’ stories into an imaginary kitchen space. McCormack (2004) explained it thus,

The initial reconstruction is by the participant as she/he recalls an experience and then describes that experience for the researcher. The researcher then reconstructs this experience as she/he transcribes, analyses and interprets the experience. A further level of reconstruction occurs as the reader reads and reacts to the experience. Knowledge constructed through this process is recognized as being situated, transient, partial and provisional; characterized by multiple voices, perspectives, truths and meanings. It values transformation at a personal level, individual subjectivity and the researcher’s voice. (p. 220)

My researcher voice is deeply flavored throughout my re-presentation of the data; however, I was careful to delineate when I used participants words verbatim as opposed to my interpretations of their words. I understood “[e]ach interpretive story re-presented a participant’s experience as they reconstructed that experience at a particular point in time . . . across multiple points in time” (McCormack, 2004, p. 230). Hence, I drew on both Labov and facets of McCormack in my use of narrative inquiry.

Furthermore, my use of narrative inquiry addressed Stone-Mediatore's (1998) critique regarding the "consensus among feminists that stories of 'experience' are problematic" (p. 116) because they "reinscribe the assumptions about identities, differences, and autonomous subjects that underlie available discourses" (p. 116). By making known the meanings participants ascribed to their experiences teaching AP English classes, I addressed Stone-Mediatore's concerns by bringing forth issues normally omitted from "dominant ideologies" (p. 126). Black advanced ELA course teachers encompassed a fraction of teachers of these courses; therefore, understanding their experiences and stories from an Afrocentric lens and a Black researcher's perspective offered the field a valuable viewpoint.

NVivo to Organize Data. I now explain how I utilized qualitative data analysis software to understand the data. I utilized NVivo software to aid in my qualitative analysis of data. By drawing on Labov's (1972) narrative structure, the software assisted in my classification of data into complete narratives. I utilized NVivo's sorting features to arrange the data into themes (see Appendix G). First, I transcribed the interviews and KTT in Microsoft Word. I then removed all participant identifying information and uploaded the data to NVivo. Next, I coded the data for all the narratives which stood out as significant based on my research questions.

Initially upon uploading the transcripts to NVivo, I found I needed a method of differentiating the narratives as more than one narrative could be categorized under the codes I created which were tied to themes. To do this, I used a numbering system. I began with the number one to indicate the first narrative and then added a decimal with a number after it as an indication of which participant the narrative pertained to as things became somewhat blurred with the identifying information removed. For instance, to indicate the narrative was the third narrative from the first participant (IEB1), it would be numbered 3.1 and so on. When it came to the KTT

transcripts, I used a similar numbering system, but this time, I used a number three after the decimal point to indicate whether it was participant one (IEB1) speaking and decimal point with a four after it for participant two (IEB2). To further assist me in this stage of the coding process, I labeled the segments of the numbered narratives as abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, result, and CODA (Labov, 1972) to delineate what part of the narrative structure it was. Though I was excited to see patterns and emergent themes from the transcription data, I needed to do this because I started to misremember and mesh the stories of my participants and needed a way to help me keep track as I was now coding all their narratives together using NVivo (see Figure 4). Additionally, my re-presentation of the data often was not in the original linear telling of the stories from my interview probes. I put narratives that were similarly related together in my fictionalized re-presentation of the data, but this resulted in a nonlinear re-presentation of their original stories (Sultan, 2019). Additionally, because I began with the same interview probes for each interviewee in their individual semi-structured interviews, sometimes their responses aligned, but at other times it did not. It was only in their KTT that they both were together.

Figure 4*Numbering system for narratives coded in NVivo*

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface with a list of codes and their associated data. The interface includes a menu bar (Home, Edit, Import, Create, Explore, Share, Modules) and a toolbar (Clipboard, Item, Organize, Visualize, Code, Autocode, Uncode, Code In). The main area displays a table of codes with columns for Name, Files, References, Created on, and Created... The codes are organized into a hierarchy, with parent codes and child codes. The child codes are numbered according to the system described in the text.

Name	Files	References	Created on	Created...
> ○ Incongruity	2	15	7/19/23, 8:14 PM	CTS
> ○ Connections to researcher	3	11	7/24/23, 8:11 PM	CTS
> ○ (RQ2) Life Experiences of AP Teachers	3	105	7/14/23, 2:25 PM	CTS
> ○ Teaching Life (Professional)	2	70	7/15/23, 8:54 AM	CTS
> ○ Life (Personal)	3	35	7/15/23, 2:36 PM	CTS
> ○ UPBRINGING	2	12	7/18/23, 7:52 PM	CTS
> ○ MOTHER KNOWS BEST	1	11	7/14/23, 5:58 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Result - She did it!	1	1	7/14/23, 6:09 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Orientation 3 - High School	1	1	7/14/23, 6:13 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Orientation 2 - I remember when	1	1	7/14/23, 6:11 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Orientation 1 - Playing teacher	1	1	7/14/23, 6:02 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Evaluation 2 - Principal's guidance	1	1	7/14/23, 6:23 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Evaluation 1 - Unbeknownst future	1	1	7/14/23, 6:18 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Complication 3 - Future PT plans dashed	1	1	7/14/23, 6:21 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Complication 2 - Principal query	1	1	7/14/23, 6:19 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Complication 1 - Little Miss Organizer	1	1	7/14/23, 6:04 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 CODA - No looking back	1	1	7/14/23, 6:10 PM	CTS
○ N1.2 Abstract start in teaching	1	1	7/14/23, 6:00 PM	CTS
> ○ ISLAND GIRL	1	6	7/14/23, 3:21 PM	CTS
○ N1.1 Result - In U.S. obtained degrees	1	1	7/14/23, 3:49 PM	CTS
○ N1.1 Orientation - attended teacher's college	1	1	7/14/23, 3:48 PM	CTS
○ N1.1 Evaluation - Not full degree in Caribbean	1	1	7/14/23, 3:48 PM	CTS
○ N1.1 Complication - Migrated to U.S.	1	1	7/14/23, 3:48 PM	CTS
○ N1.1 CODA Teaching since then	1	1	7/14/23, 3:49 PM	CTS
○ N1.1 Abstract - start in teaching	1	1	7/14/23, 3:47 PM	CTS
> ○ DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL	1	6	7/19/23, 8:19 PM	CTS

Afterward, I read through all the narratives and grouped them according to distinctive themes which aligned to each of my research questions with the assistance of NVivo's software. I merged similar codes and renamed them. I sorted the narratives into the newly formed themes as parent codes, and this is where the numbering system I created assisted me in keeping track of participants' individual semi-structured interviews as distinct from their KTT interview transcript or their journals, emails, and text responses. I felt this was necessary because to write my data up, I sometimes had to provide context before directly quoting or referencing participants' words. This meant I needed to return to the transcripts, and since, I was creating a fictionalized story where all the data: their narratives (i.e. interview transcripts), journals, emails, texts, and

curriculum documents were meshed, it became a little overwhelming. The numbering system helped me recall the original source of the data.

Admittedly, there was somewhat of a learning curve using NVivo as a first-time qualitative researcher. I recalled being enamored with the wonderful visuals I had seen in other doctoral candidate's presentations and falsely believed by uploading my transcribed interviews to the software I too would be able to easily generate such diagrams. I soon learned and came to fully understand why Ezzy (2002) states "Qualitative data analysis is an *interpretive* [emphasis in original] task" (p. 73) and what he meant by "Interpretations are not found – rather they are made, actively constructed through social processes" (p. 73). Generating a visual representation of my data was not as easy as I had previously believed.

The amount and type of data I had did not easily yield itself to a series of comparisons between participants. First, I only had two participants. Second, we engaged in three total interviews due to the school district's time limitations. Third, only one of the two participants was able to provide me with examples of curriculum documents. In total, Vanessa furnished four examples of curriculum documents she created and used while teaching AP. Diane was too far removed (i.e. six years had passed) since she last taught an AP English course; thus, she was unable to access her course documents. Additionally, the way the two participants decided to respond to the journal prompts was markedly different – Diane responded prosaically while Vanessa responded in the form of a short poem. Finally, both participants shared several similar attributes across the areas of gender, age, education, and race as well as cultural background. Therefore, there were not large variances in their demographics. While I did believe that data was useful, it was not so extensive that I had to keep track of many participants and data, nor did

I find it necessary to use classifications. In sum, my data was manageable, and NVivo was a useful tool for coding the data despite me only having two participants.

For the curriculum documents, I hand assessed them based on the matrix I created (see Appendix A). I initially did a cold read of the documents just to peruse their content. For the second read, I applied the matrix and went back to the interview transcripts to see where the participant mentioned the document if they had in fact referenced it. For this part of the curriculum document data analysis process, I did not use NVivo except to cross-reference artifacts the participant provided. In other words, all analysis or coding with respect to the curriculum documents was conducted by hand. I looked for evidence of critical literacy, Eurocentric versus an Afrocentric focus, and other elements (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Film project curriculum document notes using matrix

Film Project

	Afrocentric	Neutral or Balanced	Eurocentric	Additional (LGBTQA, etc.)
Artists/creators affiliated last				
Visual Representations		SS XXXX		
Use of Grammar & Spelling			ASB	
Organization & Chronology			Prose, chronological and alphabetical	
Authors &/or Literary Works	SS create in groups collective knowledge → collab. write script, film music			
Evidence of Culturally Ref. Ed.	SS select topic themselves empowers SS → value their voice		evidence in form of script:	
Elements of Crit. Lit.		student, decide on topic, how to divide up responsibility. multiple s. pos. = voices		

Research context and participants

The study took place in the southeastern United States in Devon County (pseudonym) with participants who taught at Meadow Valley High School (MVHS). To paint a picture of the county in which I conducted my study, I consulted the United States Census (2022) website. The population of the county as of “July 1, 2022” was “248,364,” and the percentage of Black/African American residents exceeded white residents by 15.6 percent. MVHS is in Meadow Valley, USA, and it has a population of “10,734” people (United States Census, 2022).

Additionally, more than 90 percent of the population of the county’s residents are high school graduates and more than 25 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher. According to the Devon County school district website, the county has 28 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, ten high schools, and three specialty schools which include the alternative school (Devon County, 2023). The participants in my study taught at MVHS which is in the southernmost part of Devon county with a total of “1,642 students” enrolled in grades nine through twelve, five administrators, four counselors, and 94 certified staff (Devon County, 2023). Below is a table comparing the City of Meadow Valley to Devon County (see Table 3). I have replaced all names with pseudonyms to protect the privacy of participants and the school district.

Table 3

Demographics of Devon County compared to MVHS

		Meadow Valley (City)	Devon County (County)
Population		10,734	248,364
Race	White	52.8%	38.8%
	Black/African American	40.4%	54.4%
	American Indian	0.6%	0.5%
	Asian	0.6%	3.5%
	Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.1%
	Two or More Races	4.9%	2.8%
	Hispanic or Latino	8.9%	8.2%
Education	High School graduate or higher, age 25 years+	94.3%	92.4%
	Bachelor’s degree or higher, age 25 years+	22.6%	28.2%

Note. Adapted from United States Census Bureau QuickFacts

Since I am the sole AP English literature teacher at my school, and district restrictions meant I could not work with teachers at my own school, LaFayette High School, I followed the Devon County School System’s protocol for conducting research. The steps were, I had to

submit my research application through the district website. Once submitted, the district's Research Review Committee (RRC) reviewed my application and requested several changes before they would approve it. I re-submitted the application with the required edits (see Figure 6) via email in response to a letter with a list of six concerns (see Appendix L).

Figure 6

Email Excerpt of Research Review Committee Required Revisions

# on list of concerns	Item Title/Name	Pages reflecting revisions or changes made
1.	All data collection instruments and protocols	Appendix F revised to <i>now include two sets of journal prompts</i>
2.	Letter(s) of Informed Consent	Participation total time 90 minutes - see "I. Purpose" (interview now no more than 60 minutes total time for both interviews) and "II. Procedures" (journals and curricula document collection time now 30 minutes)
3.	Chapters 1-3 (introduction, review of lit., & methodology)	p. 104 first paragraph last sentence p. 114 first full paragraph sentences 6-7
4.	All data collection instruments and protocols	Appendix D <i>now segmented into two sets of interview probes</i> (protocol)
5.	Chapter 3 (methodology)	pp.127-128 see items 1-2"Sampling Procedures" - "how will [I] solicit participants?" and paragraph 3 at end of p. 128 continuing on to the top of p. 129 p. 133 "Table 3" - see chart for "How and when will [I] conduct the interviews?" and asterisk indicating "Outside school/contract hours" p. 125 first full paragraph second to last sentence, second paragraph first sentence, p. 126 first full paragraph third to last sentence, p. 126 first full paragraph first sentence (three participants)
6.	N/A	No longer utilizing participants from my school

Next, I received a request to contact the (RRC) by phone. Once I called them, the district RRC told me over the phone they had approved my study. I was then asked to create a flyer for recruitment (see Appendix M) which I emailed to the district leader with whom I had spoken, and she distributed the flyer to the schools which had approved my study. As a part of my application, I had to provide the names of the schools where I planned to conduct my study. I listed all ten of the high schools within Devon County and one of the specialty schools. Having satisfied all the RRC's requests and previously obtained IRB approval (see Appendix E), I was now

permitted to directly email principals at the three high schools which had approved my study. Of the three schools, two principals responded, and only one principal had teachers who met my inclusion criteria. Via email and a virtual introduction, I was put in contact with three teachers and exchanged phone numbers with the women. I also provided them with my university student email address. I was ready to recruit participants.

Participants. This inquiry occurred in the Devon County School district in the southeastern United States. The principal of Meadow Valley High School (MVHS), Mr. Thomas Benson, put me in contact with three of his teachers. Of the three teachers, only two ended up being willing to fully commit to the study. Both participants – Diane Jones and Vanessa Adams Spears – were veteran English teachers who currently teach at MVHS; however, before their present teaching assignment, they both taught AP English in other areas of the country. Diane and Vanessa each had experience teaching both AP English Language and Composition and AP English Literature and Composition. Diane had taught in the southwestern part of the country while Vanessa had taught AP in the northeastern part of the country and the mid-Atlantic.

They held advanced degrees, were middle-aged, identified as Black and Caribbean women, and were born outside of the U.S. (see Table 4). It was through our initial phone conversations and introductions that I learned about the many similarities between the participants and me. We all were previous AP English teachers. We also all had direct cultural connections to the Caribbean. Diane and Vanessa were born in the Caribbean, went to high school there, and then immigrated to the United States. I was born in Canada to Caribbean-born parents. In the Caribbean and Canada, the educational systems are both grounded in a colonial context. Thus, we were alike in this regard too. I came to the U.S. as a college student, and once I met and married

my husband, I became an American citizen. Therefore, my role in the study was I came alongside my participants. I had an emic perspective in many ways.

Table 4

Portrait of Participants and Researcher

^a Participants & Researcher	Age	Place of Birth	Total Teaching Experience	Academic Degrees	Courses Taught	Academic Levels Taught
Diane (participant)	52	Caribbean	18	Bachelor of Arts (English), Master of Arts (Educational Administration and Curriculum and Instruction)	English, Exceptional Student Education	High school
Vanessa (participant)	61	Caribbean	39	Bachelor of Science & Master of Science (Education), Master of Science (School Building Leadership)	Spanish English Journalism, Speech Forensics	High school, Primary school
Cheryll (researcher)	51	Canada (of Caribbean descent)	27	Bachelor of Arts (English Language Arts), Master of Arts (Secondary English), Educational Specialists (Curriculum and Instruction)	English	High School, Elementary

^aAll participants have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Sampling Procedures

Per Devon County research protocol, I was not permitted to directly contact the teachers at those schools as I had initially planned and outlined in my research prospectus; therefore, I reached out to the schools' secretaries and was then connected with the principals of the schools which had approved my study. Although I had initially intended to strictly use snowball

sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Vogt et al., 2012) to find participants, the parameters of the district changed my plans. Therefore, my method of sampling is best described as a “[c]onvenience sampling” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 98) method. At the time of my inquiry, the spring of 2022, the COVID-19 restrictions which had occurred over the nearly two years of the global pandemic were beginning to ease significantly. However, we still limited face-to-face district-wide professional development meetings. Consequently after speaking with both women by phone, I set up times to meet with them separately over Zoom. I came to the decision after checking with my participants; they both expressed a desire to meet virtually.

Furthermore, I maintained a code sheet with pseudonyms for each of my research participants. This document was kept on my personal laptop which was in my home office. I am the only person with the password to this device. As an added security measure, I also password protected the document with participant names and pseudonyms. The code sheet was kept separate from the rest of the study data, and it will be kept for one year after the completion of the study. One year after the study’s completion, the document will be deleted from my computer and any printed data will be destroyed through shredding. If any identifying information about research participants or others was inadvertently collected during interviews, that data was not transcribed or analyzed.

Inclusion Criteria for Study Participants:

- Black/African American teacher of AP English teachers with ideally 3+ years of teaching experience in AP English/honors
- AP English certified (College Board designated) or gifted certified (district approved)
- Current or past teacher of the AP English curricula or taught within the past 2 years (preferable)

- Teaches/taught Black and/or minoritized students in a non-urban setting
- Participants who were open to sharing their experiences as a Black English teacher and willing to participate

The timeline for my study was determined in large part by how soon the Devon County school district approved my study and the length of time it took for me to finalize the teacher participants. There were some delays due to the district's request for revisions, playing phone tag with the approved school site's principals, and scheduling interviews with the participants. Once I spoke with each participant, provided them with a description of the study, and secured a time for us to have our first interview via Zoom, I emailed them the informed consent documentation (see Appendix C) which they returned to me signed via email. I recognized that at any time a participant could have opted to drop out of the study (Vogt et al., 2012). Since I had previously obtained IRB approval (see Appendix E), I did not need to wait on this step before contacting any potential participants.

As forms were received, I kept them in a locked file cabinet in my classroom to which I am the only one who has a key. This key was kept on my school lanyard which was around my neck during the school day and work week and at my home office desk when I was not at school. To keep electronic information safe, I password-protected these documents and saved an additional copy on my external hard drive which I use as my backup. For safekeeping, I recorded the passwords in my encrypted Password Keeper application stored on my cellular phone and to which I am the only one with access via face recognition or the master password to my cellular phone.

Instruments. My data collection instruments involved a four-pronged system. I used qualitative semi-interviews (deMarris, 2004), participant journaling, document analysis (Prior,

2003), and a Kitchen-Table-Talk (Bell et al., 2022) to gain an understanding of the phenomenon from a variety of angles. As a result, I hoped the rigor and trustworthiness of my findings would be stronger through this crystallization of data (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). This meant that as I noticed a salient theme in my qualitative interviews, I sought to substantiate the theme's importance by cross-checking the data with the participants' journals or teacher created curricula documents.

By scheduling time for me to generate initial interpretations after the collection of each data set, I hoped to see the parts of the whole. Since the interviews were loosely structured, it allowed the participants to lead the direction of any further probes (Vogt et al., 2012). I designed the journal prompts to enable my participants to respond in a variety of modes (see Appendix E). For instance, I encouraged them to use multi-media modes of expression such as FlipGrid, TikTok, or other such media for short video responses. I was also open to other modes of expression such as a word cloud, a picture collage, drawing, or even a poetry response which one participant chose. The point was I wanted their journals to be as unique as their experiences.

Finally, I created a checklist or matrix to analyze the participants' and College Board's (CB) curricula documents (see Appendix A) along with applying Prior's (2003) concepts for document analysis (see Appendix B). This included taking into consideration the environment and purposes for use of the documents along with the construction of the documents. Additionally, the analysis of the documents entailed counting "the frequency with which certain . . . items . . . appear[ed] in a text" or enumerating (Prior, 2003, p. 21). Conjointly, all four instruments: the qualitative interview, KTT, journal prompts, and curricula document analysis served to provide me with a more complete picture of the participants' experiences. It fortified the

validity of my findings (Vogt et al., 2012). In sum, I wanted to ensure the rigor and quality of my data.

Procedures

What follows is a narrative explaining the overview of my data collection procedures. I then provide a chart indicating the timeline for my study and address my epistemology, ontology, axiology, and my expectations. Before ending my, I note ethical considerations connected to my research design. I first discuss the procedures I used for my study.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures for each data source were specific to that source. For the interviews, I videotaped and audiotaped each interview as they occurred via Zoom. In my review of the literature, researchers' use of interviews dominated the studies (Anagnostopoulos; 2003; Borsheim-Black, 2015; Newell et al., 2009). Due to the limitations of COVID, I wanted to be mindful of the level of comfort my participants felt when it came to face-to-face interviews. Even so, upon reflection, I realized an in-person interview would have permitted me to read my participants' body language, better discern their tone, and gain a clearer overall sense of the interviewee. Although I was vaccinated at the time of the interview, out of respect for my participants' wishes, we only met virtually. Since they were both teachers in the Devon County school system, time constraints and school or district health and safety protocols at the time of the study to some extent dictated the setting of the interviews.

I conducted all interviews within a two-month period. I had initially planned to have two interviews each with both participants; however, the district placed a strict time limit of no more than 30 minutes per session and 60 minutes total maximum time for my study. Consequently, I did not want to breach this agreement. I hoped to have two interviews to provide the opportunity

for my participants to articulate the meanings they attributed to their journal prompts (see Appendix F) and to ask clarifying questions about their journals if needed. However, I had to limit the number of individual participant interviews to one each to enable me to include the KTT as an additional data point and still adhere to the county's 60-minute maximum time.

I held the interviews on the weekend over Zoom. I had my camera on, so I was visible to my participants. Seeing participants on camera was the first time we had ever done so. One participant, Diane, had her camera on for her interview, but because she was not feeling well for the KTT, she did not have her camera on at that time. The second interviewee, Vanessa, had her camera on during her first individual interview, but due to technical difficulties, she was unable to have her camera on during the KTT and instead joined with her cellular phone by calling. These issues and restrictions were beyond my immediate control.

The journal prompts (see Appendix F) were emailed twice to each participant. I sent a reminder email to the participants about returning their responses to me; however, they both seemed quite busy and stressed with work. For ease and convenience, I told participants they could email me or text me their responses. Thus, I was flexible with when and how they returned their responses to me. Just as in the work of Olan and Richmond (2017) where participants corresponded with university mentors through email, I believed the convenience of email allowed my participants an easy way to respond and later relay their prompts to me.

Finally, for the document analysis, I used the work of Prior (2003) as a starting point. I developed a matrix for assessing and analyzing curricula documents (see Appendix A) from participants. Based on the work of Patton (2002), I examined the characteristics of the documents as falling into one of three primary categories: Afrocentric, neutral, and Eurocentric. A fourth category attended to possible additional characteristics such as LGBTQIA, feminist, or other

unaccounted for qualities. Although I requested the participants' CB approved AP course audit syllabi, I gladly accepted whatever documents they chose to provide since they were both no longer teaching AP English. For another layer of curriculum documents, I visited the CB website to find relevant AP English literature curricula documents. Because the publicly available documents differed from those who have secured access, I was only able to closely exam the AP English Literature secure documents and did not have access to AP English Language secure documents. Below is a timeline of this study (see Table 5).

Table 5

Timeline of Study

Participants	Timeline	Data tool/method/document	Place/setting
Director of Policy & Systems Design	November 29, 2022	Research study documents	Email
Director of Policy & Systems Design	January 23, 2023	Research study document revisions	n/a
Principals at approved high school sites	March 9, 2023	Email/letter regarding re-search study	Email
AP English teachers - Participant #1 & 2	2 weeks before study launch (March 20, 2023)	Text message reaching out about study	Online
Interviewer/researcher	1 week before study launch (March 22, 2023)	Interview protocol & Informed Consent sent to participants	Email
AP teacher English teacher – Participant #1	12 weeks into semester (March 25, 2023)	Interview #1 (up to 30 mins. max)	Location - Zoom
AP English teacher – Participant #2	12 weeks into semester (March 27, 2023)	Interview #1 (up to 30 mins. max)	Location - Zoom
AP English teacher – Participant #2	12 weeks into semester (March 27, 2023)	Journal prompts	Email
AP English teacher – Participant #1	12 weeks into semester (April 27, 2023)	Journal prompts	Email

AP English teachers – Participant #1 & Participant #2	16 weeks into semester (April 30, 2023)	Kitchen-Table-Talk (no more than 30 mins. max)	Location - Zoom
Interviewer/researcher	16 weeks into semester (ongoing)	Curriculum document analysis	n/a
Researcher	12-32 weeks into semester	Interview transcript analysis	Home

Expectations. I expected to find that some of the teachers were cognizant of their personal ideologies and the role those ideologies played in their professional lives. I was unsure of whether this consciousness would rise to the level of Afrocentricity, but I was open to whatever I might find. How the participants viewed themselves was somewhat of a surprise for me. I had expected they would have a strong sense of Afrocentricity and perhaps view the world with such a lens (Asante, 2007; Mazama, 2003). At the same time, I also expected that some of my participants might fully support of the Eurocentric-focused curricula and have a clear demarcation between their personal and professional ideologies. Finally, I deeply wondered whether participants experienced the same kinds of tensions and struggles I previously expressed as the impetus for my research study. In each instance, I hoped the insights I obtained would add to the existing scholarship, extend limited portraits of CBI teachers, and inspire continued conversations about Black teachers of advanced ELA courses.

Ethical considerations

A vital element of my research design which I mentioned earlier was ethical considerations. Here I take a moment to explain in more detail. Since interviews were the mainstay of my naturalistic research design, it followed suit that I needed to consider consent, harm, and privacy in my study. My interviews were seeking “internal/subjective responses” (Vogt et al., 2012)

because I attempted to highlight the hidden: my participants' recollections of their experiences (van Manen, 1990), their thoughts about teaching advanced curricula, and the meaning they ascribed to those experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988). I was attempting to obtain an insider's view of their experiences as both a member of the phenomenon and a researcher.

In addition, my methodologies of narrative and heuristic inquiry allowed for a less structured set of interview probes. What this meant was that I did not know all the questions I would end up asking. I planned to follow the lead of my participants' conversation and let that guide follow-up questions. As a result, I did not necessarily know in advance whether any of my questions would stir up feelings or emotions within my participants, but the general topic of my questions was not intentionally inclined toward any particularly sensitive topics. I used language in my IRB application about the likelihood of my design to veer in such a direction. As for my sampling of participants, I made sure to make participants aware that their involvement in the study was completely voluntary. I recognized that this was not a *one and done* statement, and I would need to continue to revisit the subject of their voluntary participation throughout the study. With each interview, journal prompt, and solicitation of curricula documents, I began by reminding participants of this fact (Vogt et al., 2012) and adhered to the principles and rules of IRB.

Finally, I concealed identities using pseudonyms but recognized that as a researcher I was not privy to the same protections as clergy, an attorney, or a therapist. I kept the data under lock and key at my home during the study until after I have written up my findings. After that, I will destroy all data through shredding it. As a step towards avoiding harm during the process of data analysis, I had my participants review my interpretations of the data for their feedback and consideration. Hence, by taking the above noted precautions, I maintained the privacy of my

participants by omitting some details that might overtly identify them, secured the interview audio and videotapes, and worked with a population that is not considered vulnerable.

Conclusion

Selecting a research design was a decision fraught with difficulties. Thus, the journey to my current research design was peppered with moments of certainty and uncertainty. Six years ago, when I began this doctoral journey and took my first qualitative research course, I was confident I wanted to conduct an autoethnographic study. Then, after taking more classes and further reading, I felt a case study offered me the best methods to study the kinds of problems in which I was most interested. My review of the literature was replete with examples of other researchers whose chosen methodology was case study (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Ball, 1995; Borsheim-Black, 2015; Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Dyches, 2018a; Gillenwater, 2014; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Newell et al., 2009; Sarigianides, 2019), but as a social constructionist, my many discussions with and feedback from my chair have shaped my understandings. As a result of my readings and discussions with scholars, I learned that I could utilize case study methods without necessarily conducting a case study.

Thus, it was after much reading and consultation, I arrived at the decision to use both narrative and heuristic inquiry coupled with narrative analysis to analyze my data. More importantly, through my methodological choice of narrative inquiry, I felt I would be best positioned to illuminate and understand the hidden meanings of CBI AP English teachers' prior experiences (van Manen, 1990). Heuristic inquiry also supported my closeness to the phenomenon and re-presentation of the data in nonlinear ways (Sultan, 2018). My naturalistic design made the most sense as the phenomenon is naturally occurring. In turn, my research methods helped me to

partially answer my research questions about the life experiences, pedagogy, and ideologies of CBI AP English teachers of Black students and minoritized students.

**CHAPTER 4: *Before good food pwile, mek belly buss* [Better you are too full than to let
good food go to waste]**

Researcher's or Author's Notes

What follows is a narrative re-telling the story of two CBI former AP English teachers using their words, philosophies, beliefs (i.e. journal prompts), and curriculum documents. Included in this fictionalized account were the data (i.e. words from my virtual semi-structured interviews and KTT with both participants). I indicated this using **boldface** and utilized quotation marks when I used their words verbatim. Other forms of data such as their text messages and emails to me, and journal prompt responses were placed in **boldface** too because they were written and not orally expressed. Since the re-presentation of their stories meshed the various forms of data I collected, and I play with time and space (Asante, 2007) by oscillating between the fictionalized re-presentation of our real-virtual KTT (Bell et al., 2022) and semi-structured interviews, I denote these shifts by introducing them with the words *Now*, *Then*, and *The In-between* or *In my Mind's Eye* to represent my imagination. The *Now* sets the story in the present of our cooking and conversations about their experiences. The *Then* revisits memories of my grandmother, and the *In-between Then and Now* indicates a liminal space. By engaging in these shifts in time and space (Asante, 2007; Schiele, 1996), I reorient the reader and play with time.

Inspiration for my distinctive re-presentation of the data is linked to my attempts to: a) honor African and Caribbean derived traditions of storytelling (Asante, 1998) and orality (Heath, 1989), b) display veneration for the Caribbean heritage of my grandmother (i.e. Mumma), and c) draw on Black/African American scholarship (Uzomba, 2022) as well as literary texts (Esquivel, 1993) which privilege narratives. Dr. Uzomba's (2022) dissertation acted as a mentor text. I saw how she integrated data in her historical ethnography. She sought to "expand our understanding

of the legacies and traditions” (Uzomba, 2022, p. 5) of Black women teachers. She did so through “storytelling traditions . . . [her] methodological use of this analytical approach embrace[d] tools of endarkened storywork” which she attributed to Toliver (Uzomba, 2022, p. 66).

Though I did not employ endarkened narrative inquiry, I joined the theory of Afrocentricity with narrative inquiry and heuristic inquiry to re-present the story of participants’ experiences, shared my stories with participants, and asked them to go back and fetch – which embraced Sankofa an Akan philosophy – tales of their time as AP English teachers. I next begin the re-telling of two CBI educators’ stories.

Perhaps the World Ends Here

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.
 The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So, it has been since creation, and it will go on.
 We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.
 It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.
 At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.
 Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.
 This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.
 Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.
 We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.
 At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks. Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

--Joy Harjo

Characters:

Diane – Former AP English teacher, current Devon County ESE teacher, and Caribbean-born

Vanessa – Former AP English teacher, current Devon County World Literature & British Litera-

ture teacher and Caribbean-born

Narrator – Cheryll (current Devon County teacher, doctoral candidate, researcher, wife, mother, (granddaughter), and descendant of Caribbean-born parents)

Mumma – Cheryll’s Caribbean-born grandmother

Mom/Nana – Cheryll’s Caribbean-born mother (Nana to the narrator’s children)

The Kitchen: Perhaps the world begins here?

Prologue

Upon entering the kitchen where I would soon be joined by Diane and Vanessa, I couldn’t help but remember past conversations with my grandmother in *her* kitchen. In my mind, I imagined present-day conversations I might have with my grandmother if she was still alive. Her kitchen space felt comforting, safe, familiar, and like home. Remembering her, I place a small pot of hot water on the stove to make myself some “chocolate tea.” While the balls of cocoa dissolve and fill the room with the rich fragrance, I let it simmer and my thoughts settle on Mumma.

~ *Then* ~

For Mumma, the kitchen was the center of her world in many ways, with the only exception being church – a place where she found solace, comfort, and hope. In it, she created countless dishes. Sitting at the table, she studied her *Bible*, budgeted her tithes and offerings, paid bills, and planned menus. Using didactic devices, the kitchen was home to a wealth of ancestral culinary techniques and methods she happily passed along to anyone who wished to partake. She also relayed many a Caribbean proverb to teach me life lessons. Most importantly, it was where she shared her love of food.

She was a force to be reckoned with: staunchly religious, unflinchingly strict, and tremendously hardworking. Simultaneously though, she was generous, loving, and smart. If she was still here today, Mumma would've been proud of me. Considering the many obstacles she overcame; my PhD journey would've been something she could easily foresee – likely offering me assistance and encouragement in any way possible.

It was the early 1960s when Mumma left her three young children in the Caribbean to pursue a nursing career “abroad” – England to be exact (see Figure 7). My mother and her two siblings were in good hands in the care of Granny (Mumma's mother and their grandmother). Being adventurous, she later immigrated to Canada where they all soon joined her. Traveling abroad to a country sight unseen, being the sole financial support for her family, and pursuing her nursing career concomitantly demonstrate a few of the hurdles she overcame.

~ The in-between ~

Now, in her place, my mother (Mom) has become a “Nana” to my children and continued Mumma's legacy in many similar ways. She's an amazing cook, exceptionally intelligent, deeply faithful, and always supportive. My mother's support has come in many forms: being there for me after the birth of each of my children – which meant cooking, cleaning, and caring for us all, proofreading my prospectus, sharing her inherited culinary expertise, and speaking life into me through many words of reassurance and wisdom.

Figure 7*Cheryll's Ancestors*

Note. Jamaica circa 1963 Granny (center), Nana (left), and siblings (right and bottom center)

I carry Mumma's legacy with me in virtually every aspect of my present-day life. As a Caribbean single mother, Mumma certainly understood not only how to stretch a dollar, but even more so how advancing her career through education could open doors of opportunity to a better life. Her adventurous spirit is evidenced in my journey and immigration to the U.S. Her pursuit of education to advance her career is revealed in my quest for my Ph.D. Her life served as an example of perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. Cooking was her passion, and teaching others to do the same was her beloved pastime. Therefore, it only made sense that I should want to follow suit by pursuing my education, becoming a teacher, and cooking for pleasure just like her.

Because of my family's Caribbean lineage, I am who I am today. Simultaneously, because of my family's beginnings in the Caribbean, my experiences, and perspectives as a Black former Advanced Placement (AP) English teacher teaching in the United States are unique. This is why the serendipitous (Sultan, 2019) opportunity to speak with two Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) former AP English teachers was exciting. They shared many similarities with my cultural background. I have always sought to embrace rather than escape from my Caribbean roots, and this occasion offered me yet another opportunity to steep in my ancestral and cultural roots. Moreover, I believe my cultural heritage should be evident in who I am both inside and outside of the classroom. Thus, through my conversations with Diane and Vanessa, I aimed to learn the role their own cultural identities played in their teaching and simultaneously reflect on how my cultural identity impacted my teaching.

My family has taught me to be proud of my Blackness and honored to be of Caribbean descent. Frequently, my mother relayed stories of Granny (my great-grandmother) who I knew as I was growing up until she passed at the age of 102. Yes, she lived more than a century! Granny told the tale of her childhood where she remembered people leaving their tools in the field when slavery was over in the Caribbean. She was a natural storyteller frequently recalling her memories of the storm of 1912. Granny too enjoyed cooking and making sweet treats such as coconut drops. Coupled with these memories of culinary delicacies and family stories are my recollections of childhood filled with the sweet sounds of Bob Marley's anthems of freedom and rebellion as its soundtrack, my mother cooking Caribbean favorites while the aromas filled me with warmth and pleasure, and a sense of pride in my Caribbean roots.

Marley's songs "Get Up, Stand Up" and "Redemption Song" for instance, spoke to the spirit of resistance and resilience my family taught me. It is a spirit that seems innate in many

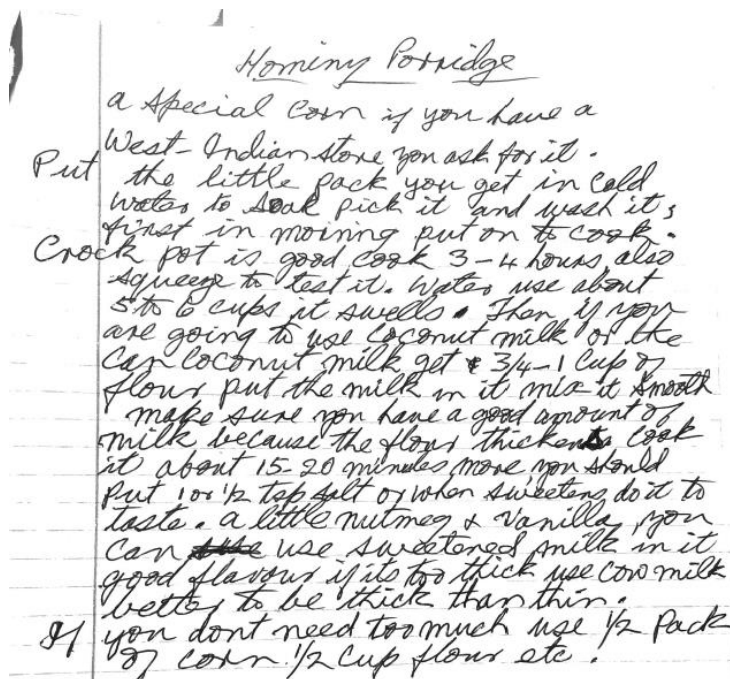
Caribbean people I know. I remember how my mother with a sense of pride told me that the Caribbean people from which we descended were thought to come from Ghana, Africa, and because we were among the most rebellious, they dropped us off first on the island of our ancestors. Stories such as this along with the many maxims and culinary lessons my ancestors relayed are part of a heritage of knowledge to which I am forever indebted (King, 2018). The messages Marley's lyrics convey play in my head just like the words of my mother and grandmother.

~ *Now* ~

Likewise, the two women who joined me in the *kitchen* – a space that symbolically and tangibly epitomizes communal learning, inclusivity, sustenance, and warmth – intimated at the influence their Caribbean cultural heritage had in their lives. Similar to my own experiences, their Caribbean roots, and identities as CBI former AP English teachers mostly unified us both personally and professionally. While we prepared dishes together and tasted from the pot of one another's minds, I became filled with a better understanding of their life and experiences, ideologies, and beliefs as Black former AP English teachers.

With an appetite for deeper understanding, the questions at the core of my mind, as we spoke were: How are the ideologies and beliefs of twenty-first-century Caribbean Black Immigrant AP English teachers shaped by their cultural background and life experiences? What are the past teaching experiences of Caribbean Black Immigrant former AP English teachers with curriculum design and implementation of prescribed curricula? Themes of a strong work ethic, asset-based beliefs, high expectations, and authenticity peppered our conversations throughout the day. Additionally, points of departure from my personal beliefs and incongruities in their stories arose as we collectively created and tasted Caribbean dishes. I invite you to join us and taste as well.

1. Breakfast – Hominy Porridge



Penye mafundi, hapakosi wanafunzi. – Where there are experts there will be no lack of learners. ~ Swahili Proverb

Memories of Mumma. I understood when I walked into Mumma's small apartment kitchen, it was *her* domain, but nevertheless, you were welcome -- especially if you wanted to learn. Attempting to somehow garner a lifetime's worth of knowledge in the short period before my return to college, I asked her if she would teach me how to make one of my favorites: hominy porridge. It was 1990-ish and early on a Sunday morning in late July; she willingly obliged.

~ Now ~

Thus, with memories of Mumma's instructions ringing in my head and her recipes close at hand, the night before Diane and Vanessa joined me for our Kitchen-Table-Talk (Bell et al., 2022), I prepared. This involved the arduous and time-consuming task of picking out debris and soaking the dry hominy corn kernels in cold water. They had to soak overnight before cooking

the sweet, sumptuous dessert-style meal the next day. To be fully cooked, hominy porridge needs to simmer for three to four hours.

~ *Then* ~

Considering that Mumma had immigrated to the U.K. and then Canada from the Caribbean just two generations before my journey to college, it seems surreal that I had come this far. I felt as if I was the physical embodiment of my family's belief in the power of education – a notion many people from the Caribbean, in my experience, carry including Diane and Vanessa. After all, beginning with Granny, continuing with Mumma, and then my own Mom, I have achieved what they may have merely imagined, dreamed, and prayed for. I am my ancestors' wildest dreams! In Mumma's tiny kitchen, her heavy Caribbean dialect always called to mind the saying, *She still has the sand between her toes*. When she spoke, it was as if I was in the Caribbean, not Canada. When she cooked, it was as if her food embraced me as it filled my belly. You always *nyamed good* (ate well) whenever Mumma cooked. I wanted to take in her expert knowledge and the filling nourishment of her tasty food. It would be difficult to soak it all in during my brief stay. This fact didn't stop me from trying though.

For me, Mumma meant sustenance. Mumma meant being berated for “Yuh gettin' too faat!” while instantaneously being chastised for not eating enough. Mumma meant never going hungry. Mumma also meant love – an unspoken yet actively demonstrated love. She was a woman full of paradoxes spewing admonishments and accolades within the same breath. I recalled these memories as I entered another kitchen of knowledge to cook and commune with Diane and Vanessa. We have gathered here to share. To learn. To ingest. To digest. Like my time spent in Mumma's kitchen so very long ago, we too are conferring as we prepare dishes from her store of culinary knowledge. It is a shared cultural trove because many Caribbean recipes have

roots linked to Africa. In fact, “[t]he Africans introduced okra, callaloo, pigeon peas, plantains, fish cakes, ackee, taro, breadfruit, pudding, and mangos to the Caribbean menu. African foods were combined with staple foods found on the islands to develop some of our Caribbean favorites” (The diaspora collective, 2023).

Afrocentricity and Me. Being from Canada and raised in a predominantly White environment made having a strong sense of self extremely important while growing up. What I lacked in self-confidence and cultural reassurance at school, I sought elsewhere. I centered my Blackness by ingesting and digesting books which fortified my soul. Books such as Alex Haley’s *Roots* and Griffin’s *Black Like Me* and learning of author-activists (Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992) such as Sojourner Truth allowed me to withstand the sometimes-cold environment in which I lived. Afrocentricity was present in my home through my Caribbean cultural heritage. At family gatherings, while the men played dominoes, they discussed racial injustice, and the women did the same as they prepared Mannish water: a hearty soup, sorrel: a gingery sweet wine-colored beverage made from the hibiscus flower, and cooked Blue Draws: a coconut-based treat. These Caribbean dishes represented home and a reaffirmation and centering of my cultural identity. In the background, reggae played as Bob Marley crooned anthems of pride and rebellion. The adults spoke in patois, and all felt right within my world.

Growing up, my mother – also concerned about centering my identity and instilling a sense of self-pride – bought children’s books by Black/African American authors such as Ezra Jack Keats, so I could see myself as the hero and protagonist in the stories I read. Perhaps this is why as an adult and AP English Literature and AP English Language teacher, I wanted my students to feel that same sense of connection, recognition, manifestation, and most importantly liberation which are the result of curricula built on veracity and accuracy (Asante, 2007; Johnson,

1995). My attendance at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) was pivotal to developing my cultural identity, and Johnson and Winfield (2022) posit such an education can shore up those parts of us that may need strengthening; thus, fostering success. An Afrocentric education connotes culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), and benefits all children.

~ *Now* ~

For me, the ancestral connections between Caribbean and African foods make me think about many Afrocentric-focused educators' aspirations to expand our students' understanding of course content beyond the walls of our classrooms -- kitchens where the experiences, methods, and understandings have the potential to tap into their far-reaching ancestral wisdom. Afrocentricity is a perspective where "[t]he cultural experience informs much of what is most worth knowing for/by peoples of African descent" (Berry, 2017, p. 58). Similarly, I wanted to learn what Diane and Vanessa deemed "worth knowing" for their previous AP English students. Though they did not indicate they were Afrocentric-focused educators, because we shared many similarities and concurrently had many differences, I wanted to know how their cultural backgrounds influenced their teaching, especially their curricular choices.

The recipes Diane, Vanessa, and I are preparing are an integral part of our shared Caribbean heritage. Being from the same island in the Caribbean as my mother, Mumma, and Granny, both Diane and Vanessa are quite familiar with all these recipes' complexities – the painstakingly specific cooking steps, carefully chosen ingredients, and cultural significance to our shared heritage. A synergy exists between me and them, and they have chosen to impart their personal experiences during our joint cooking venture. We talk. We taste. We break bread. All the while, I listen as they share a slice of their life histories, stories, and experiences hoping to satisfy my


appetite for knowledge and gain insight into their identities beyond what I already know. I too open up and tell them about my own life, and our conversations feel both mystical and surreal.


In the tradition of heuristic inquiry, I am “open, receptive, and attuned to all facets of” (Moustakas, 1990) my participants’ stories of their previous experiences. My approach to understanding their stories is consistent with the principles of Afrocentricity because I am not claiming neutrality nor am I attempting to “remain distant” from my participants or the issues (Mazama, 2001, p. 402). Clandinin (2007) agrees and in discussing the narrative turn posits for researchers, “the implausibility of being able to truly distance themselves from what they come to know and understand” (p. 15) is a part of narrative inquiry. Consequently, I too am deeply immersed and invested in their stories of which I am a part.

Cooking Collective. Like my time spent in Mumma’s kitchen many years ago, Diane, Vanessa, and I are talking, laughing, and cooking as we prepare dishes from her trove of collective culinary knowledge. It is with memories of Mumma, her handwritten instructions as our guide, and our inherited ancestral knowledge we begin cooking. The women readily accepted my invitation, and my excitement is palpable. In preparation for today’s culinary marathon, I carefully curated the menu by choosing recipes I loved and with which the women would be familiar. My mother – busying herself in a nearby room – slips in momentarily to provide me with a handwritten copy of just one more recipe and then returns to her chores. The rarity of Mumma’s handwritten recipes written specifically for me is significant because she primarily housed them in her mind and memory. Diane and Vanessa are likewise rare in the field of AP English teachers as Black women. Underrepresentation of Black women in teaching overall (Fultz, 2004; Carver-Thomas, 2018) is even further enlarged in advanced English classrooms (Milewski & Gillie, 2002) such as AP, and the difficulty of my search to find such women to participate in this

venture is evidence of this. We are *all* a rarity in this manner, and this is why our gathering is important.

It is time to make a Caribbean breakfast favorite of mine: hominy porridge. And just like Mumma’s desire to nourish my body while simultaneously filling my mind, these two women do the same. To open the conversation, I express interest in discovering how each woman came to teaching. I aim to understand their beginnings as teachers before becoming AP English teachers in the U.S. and how it might inform their teaching and beliefs. So, our Kitchen-Table-Talk commences.

 *There’s a natural mystic blowin’ through the air*

If you listen carefully now you will hear 

~ Bob Marley and the Wailers “Natural Mystic”

Island Girl. Preparing to rinse the corn, Diane, a middle-aged Caribbean Black woman, picks the tiny stones from the hominy corn harvesting any debris that may be present. She begins with **“Well, I became a teacher in the Caribbean.”** She is fifty-two, but her smooth brown skin gives no sign of her age; she is straightforward and confident in her responses. Only through the timeline of her many personal and teaching anecdotes am I offered a hint of her eighteen years as an educator. Her teaching experience coupled with stories of her childhood provide me with insight into her identity. In Diane’s response, her unmistakable Caribbean accent is familiar though we are meeting face-to-face for the first time. It sounds like home to me and brings a smile to my face. She explains that she attended teacher’s college there (in the Caribbean) too.

“I migrated to a southeastern U.S. metropolitan city to get a full degree because back home that’s not a degree. It’s a teacher’s diploma.” I know and understand the significance of her use of the phrase “back home.” I recognize it as something familiar because it is

what I've heard Mumma and so many other people from the Caribbean say time and again. Her words are spoken with affection; there's no disdain for her current home just a fondness for her place of birth. I also acknowledge Diane's words as what Asante (2002) refers to as one of those "[s]entinel statements – *those statements that signal a text's location during the earliest parts of an analysis* –" (p. 98). Likewise, I am coming to understand her roots, her grounding, or her location as it relates to her start in the profession. Asante (2007) says "To locate a phenom as peripheral or central to the African experience allows the researcher to begin from an orientation that will have meaning for the ultimate analysis of a situation or condition" (p. 27), and Diane is situated at the center of her life's story as she relays its details to me. Her Caribbean-ness is coming through as foundational to her identity. It is where she was first educated; it is her beginning.

Additionally, in this instance the text is Diane's personal story of becoming a teacher. Asante (2007) emphasizes the importance of location saying, "We are profoundly in our own time and space and if we view ourselves outside of this reality, we are disoriented and decentered" (p. 24). This applies to Diane's story because the country in which she was raised has colonial beginnings and has a distinct identity from America. Her worldview as an educator begins with her educational training in the Caribbean (Clandinin, 2007). Though she is now living and working as a teacher in the U.S., the preparation she obtained in her home country became the foundation for the additional requirements she needed to be certified in America. Therefore, my analysis and thinking about this narrative leads me to understand that although Diane does not view her past teacher training in the Caribbean as insufficient or subpar in any way, she acknowledges that becoming a fully certified teacher in the U.S. required a teaching degree. This is what Clandinin and Connelly (2000a) refer to as part of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: "personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined

with the notion of place (situation)” (p. 50). To explain further, the interaction is comprised of Diane’s personal educational experiences in the Caribbean together with the social expectations she encountered in her pursuit to become a teacher in the U.S. Another element of the social is the fact that the country in which Diane was raised, lived, and initially educated is predominantly Black. In other words, as she was matriculating through school, her social environment was comprised of people who looked like her – they had the same cultural background too. This is not always the case in American schools where the teaching force is predominately white (Kafka, 2016; Nasir et al., 2016; Picower, 2021; Ullucci & Battey, 2011; U.S. Department of Education; 2019). The predominance of Whiteness within the field of education is the norm.

Furthermore, though her Caribbean educational training permitted her to teach in her country of birth, this personal experience did not meet the professional requirements here in the U.S., but Diane is not deterred by this. She merely does what she must do to become a teacher in America. This is one dimension of her story; while the narrative’s continuity is shown through her past training in the Caribbean – a training based upon her American education which leads to her present position as a special education teacher in America. Finally, her current situation (a former AP English teacher) with unknown future possibilities for her as a veteran educator brings her to the present and moves toward her future.

What is known, based on our conversations, is **Diane stopped teaching AP courses in 2016**. She was previously **trained and certified to teach both AP English Language and Composition and AP English Literature and Composition**. Presently, her *djed* (i.e., situation or place) has found her here with Vanessa and me partaking in this culinary experience to share knowledge and understandings of our lives inside and outside of this classroom-kitchen space both literally and figuratively. We do this in chorus with our meal preparation as it binds us

culturally. The third dimension which is temporal along with the other two dimensions (interaction and continuity) enables us to better understand who Diane is now relative to her past.

Her teacher training begins in the Caribbean: a place where she grew up, a place that differs from my Westernized upbringing though I too was raised outside of the U.S. and in a Caribbean household. I – unlike Diane and Vanessa – was not raised in a Caribbean country surrounded by people who looked like me or people who identified as Caribbean rather than some hyphenated identity (i.e. Black-Canadian, Caribbean-Canadian, Irish-Canadian, etcetera). Moreover, Diane’s own educational experiences are situated within a British Colonial context which likely contributes to both her educational training, and who she is now as a CBI former AP English teacher. Yet to fully contextualize both Diane and Vanessa’s educational background, it is important to note the Caribbean’s legacy “of European colonialism” (Waters, 1999, p. 19) as a distinctive feature of the educational system in which they were schooled during the 1980s. Although CARICOM has made significant changes to the Caribbean education system and attempted to distance themselves from British colonialism, Diane and Vanessa’s educational experiences pre-date such changes and initiatives (Brissett, 2021). Diane has intentionally selected this story just as she carefully picks through the hominy corn to explain how she became a teacher. Additionally, her story conveys one of the differences between the U.S. and Caribbean requirements in teacher preparation. I view Diane’s story about her teacher training as significant to her cultural identity as a Black teacher working in America because it forms the basis of her start in the profession.

This part of our conversation leads me to probe and ask her to provide further insight about who she is as a teacher. She explains, **My teaching philosophy is borne on the premise that each child is gifted with special abilities and that results come from the efforts that are**

invested. Her words allude to both her asset-based mindset of students and her belief in a strong work ethic – themes of our talk. On the surface, her words appear somewhat adjacent to the work of Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) in which they posit an asset view of students’ knowledge tied to their home experiences because Diane uses the phrase **each child is gifted with special abilities.** She seems to indicate that from birth, children are **gifted.** Additionally, I see her use of the word **borne** along with the words **efforts invested** as evidence she takes responsibility just as parents bear the weight of raising and investing in their children. I come to this conclusion based on this utterance and because she later says “**You know, oftentimes, I would say *Okay, you don’t want to do it, then that’s on you. We can’t say that anymore. We have to push a kid. You know I would say I don’t want to be the parent of the kid, but you have to take on that role because . . . This is what I want from my child. This is what I’m going to give to every child that comes into my path.***”

Her views are consistent with other scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1995) whose research arose out of a “desire to challenge deficit paradigms” (p. 472). By viewing the academic gifts and **abilities** of students as derived from teachers’ investment in their students, Diane is echoing aspects of Gonzalez and colleagues as well as Ladson-Billings. Yet, with her choice diction of the word **efforts**, I interpret her words to mean no matter how much effort a child puts forth, some teachers may view them through a deficit lens. In the case of AP English, the curriculum and tests are not meant to assess students’ **efforts.** Instead, they quantify students’ success through results. In this way, sometimes teachers’ efforts like Diane’s are less visible.

She is expressing a positive view of her students’ academic abilities and perhaps even that their talents are inherent because as children they already come to school with these gifts. She may be indicating that a teacher with an asset view of students is apt to draw on students’

talents. In essence, Diane is expressing a positive depiction of her students. However, throughout our conversations and cooking as the day progresses, I discovered she still firmly believes in Westernized and European measures of learning and achievement which makes sense when I consider her colonial educational history.

For instance, in the texts she mentioned selecting for her students to read and her emphasis on the AP exam (both of which she discusses later in more depth), as well as her leanings towards Eurocentric authors and focus on the AP exam, she seemed to indicate she was not a rogue teacher championing for all things social justice. Despite her teaching philosophy which seemingly begins from an asset-based lens and appears to laud teachers' investment in their students through their **efforts**, its incongruence with Diane's later described teaching practices and curricular choices which are rooted in westernized conceptions of learning it is problematic. Hence, along the continuum of her narrative, Diane's past life experience as a student within a colonial educational system appears to contribute to her present and perhaps even future actions and beliefs as a teacher in America.

Caribbeans and Black excellence. In chorus with heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) and wanting to explore both women's thinking about teaching deeper, I invited them to whittle down their teaching philosophy to just six words. Vanessa reaches for her "teacher bag," and pulls out a small journal. Several papers come out of her bag as she grabs the journal. They appear to be curriculum documents, but she pushes them out of the way and sits for a moment to briefly jot down her thoughts. She bites the corner of her lip, says, "Give me a second," and scribbles something down. Diane and I continue to tend to the cooking when Vanessa announces, "I'm ready!" and says, "If I had to state my teaching philosophy in only six words, it would be:

relevant, rigorous, authentic, student-centered, flexible, fun. Her alliterative response is not lost on Diane nor I; we share an intuitive glance (Sultan, 2019) and smile knowingly.

What we understand is our experience and in many Caribbean households, high standards are often the norm. Usually, every waking moment is filled with a task, chore, or studying – at least that is the expectation. We may even internalize these expectations and in our drive to succeed and more importantly not disappoint our parents, we work to achieve academically. The work of Nicholas and colleagues (2008) speaks to this concept. Though these scholars focused on Haitian immigrant children's strive toward success, I see similarities in the study participants' desire for academic success, parental expectations, and in turn the participants' fear of disappointing their parents, and Diane's pursuit of education. For instance, she later told me **beyond her bachelor's degree, she earned her master's degree.** While Vanessa too spoke about her family's educational accomplishments and unspoken expectation of academic achievement, I could relate with my strive for a terminal degree. My family's emphasis on education aligns with the sentiments expressed in Nicholas and colleagues' (2008) work.

Though the story began with Diane's beginnings as a teacher, this theme of high expectations was woven throughout both women's narratives as the day progressed. It went beyond themselves and extended to both Diane and Vanessa's students. They discuss this in more detail later. I see this theme mixed throughout our conversations; it appears to arise as a substantial element of their identities. It is significant in the larger context of these women's educational backgrounds as recipients and participants of a colonized educational system. In my assessment, they also are reproducers of this system, in some ways.

Gonsalves (1998) provides context and helps to explain further. By noting despite the narrow view colonizers had of the colonized, their measures of what they considered a

civilization or even who they considered excellent could not diminish the abundance of personal and collective excellence Caribbean people historically and presently possess. Furthermore, while people in the diaspora demonstrated and continue to demonstrate excellence and a spirit of high expectations, here in the U.S. a myriad of examples of Black/African American excellence exist from author-activists to community members to classroom teachers (Harris, 1992; Fisher, 2009; Mosely, 2018). The point being, the concept of and strive towards “Black excellence” (Muhammad, 2020, p. 11) has a long history to which Black people are tied. However, without being cognizant and critical, we may exhibit dysconsciousness and calls for “systematic ethical praxis” (King, 2015, p. 15). We also may continue to laud the colonizer’s views of what is deemed worth learning and knowing if we fail to heed King’s call.

In response to the question about her six-word teaching philosophy, Diane pauses briefly to think and then says her philosophy is: **The Musings of a Relentless Educator**, and for clarification she notes “**Relentless**” here is used positively. Entwined with this theme of high expectations is the concept of rigor and persistence. Both women have selected words that express as much. For Vanessa, she uses the word **rigorous** while Diane’s use of the word **Relentless** implies an untiring never-give-up attitude. I too share in their belief of students reaching high expectations. Therefore, we are aligned similarly in this regard, but where I depart with my desire to have my Black/African American AP students engage with a rigorous curriculum that is directly linked to their cultural identities.

Island Girl’s Identity. In the dance of our rhythmic cooking, I run the water over the hominy corn kernels in one bowl as Diane passes me another in which to strain them. The water feels cold and causes me to shiver from the chill. Being in this space and talking to each of these women creates goosebumps up and down my arms. The similarities we share culturally make for

easy conversation and a cozy familiarity, yet we are also different individuals. It is not just the heat emanating from the stove, the brewing chocolate tea, and the oven's warmth that have engendered these feelings. I feel *in community* with these women and the kitchen seems like just the space *to create it* (Battle, 2009, p. 6). Perhaps it is because of the cooperative nature of cooking, our similar past teaching lives, or our common cultural experiences – all of which have brought us together today. My feeling is an internal warm-heartedness. I can sense the African concept of ubuntu is with us. Ubuntu is about personhood where “the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community” (pp. 1-2). Together we are creating our own community as CBI teachers who previously taught AP. Through their stories, we are socially constructing who we are as CBI teachers. I am learning what meaning they ascribe to being an educator of Caribbean descent. Hence, through their self-described teaching philosophies, I am beginning to gain a sense of the type of classroom communities they created for their past AP English students. Additionally, we are in community as teachers and learners to and of each other as we cook.

Diane explains her beginnings as a teacher further, “**I just never went back home from there, so I’ve been teaching ever since.**” Like so many immigrants from the Caribbean, her pursuit of an education brought her to another country – America – and it didn’t stop with her bachelor’s degree. I notice here Diane is in a sense between two worlds based on her words. One world is comprised of her place of birth (the Caribbean), and the other world is her adoptive home (America). I do not get the feeling though that Diane feels pulled or torn in any way. She accepts herself for who she is, and her words confirm my analysis.

Diane says, “**For me, I know we are placed within certain boundaries, and sometimes we have to be so mindful of what we say, and how we act, but for me, authenticity in itself,**

stems from that. I may not have the support I need, but I'm at a point now in my life and in my career, where what I think that what you get is the most authentic me and it's either you take it, or you leave it." The notion Diane would change or alter who she is to fit within someone else's boundaries is put to rest with this statement. She touches on the idea that she **"may not have the support [she] need[s]"** which may explain why she has not pushed for a more Afrocentric focus in the curriculum. However, I remember she no longer teaches AP and is not even in the English Language Arts (ELA) department, because she is currently a **special education teacher**. Still, Afrocentricity applies to more than ELA and is relatable and certainly beneficial to *all* students.

Considering where she is located mentally as well as physically, Diane's words indicate as an adult, she refuses to shrink, conform, or even contort herself for the comfort or expectations of others. Instead, they can either accept who she is or not. Her authenticity reminds me of Fournillier and Lewis' (2010) work. I believe through this statement, she is embodying Afrocentricity because she as an "African person [is] in the center of his or her own historical context, reality, and time" (Asante, 2007, p. 24 [emphasis added]). She has reached a stage and time in her life where she is authentically herself – take it or leave it. Her attitude also reminiscent of Bob Marley's lyrics, "Who the cap fit / Let them wear it" which I interpret as being honest and true to oneself; let people be who they are. I am inspired by what I perceive as her bravery because it was my fear – fear of retribution or reprisal – which has been one factor hindering my full-throttle embrace of Afrocentricity as an AP English teacher. Though, to be fair, we are in somewhat different positions as teachers since I still teach ELA and Diane does not.

Vanessa chimes in by saying **"Yes, I have never had to hide who I am as a person a teacher. When I – it's probably different for me and for some other teachers of color, but I**

don't walk into my building feeling that I am (sigh) a person of color going in, though I am just me. I always have been, and yes, sometimes – especially when we do things about culture or that unit about culture in World Literature or something some bit of touchy subject may come up, but I just deal with it as is, and yeah I just, I'm just me. I've been me for too long to not be me at this point in my very long life.” In her words is a strong sense of self-confidence and the theme of authenticity. Once again, a secondary but equally important component is Vanessa reiterates her **colorblind** mentality. I did not grow up in a majority environment, so it is difficult for me to relate to the concept of colorblindness.

While Diane, Vanessa, and I have much in common, neither of them appear to struggle as I have with navigating the worlds of cultural heritage versus the American classroom environment. At least, they do not express this idea. I am reminded of Anzaldua's (2012) borderlands theory. I certainly felt growing up I had to bestride two worlds: the Caribbean versus the Canadian parts of me. Anzaldua's personal experiences “taught her to stand within and outside cultures, languages, and social structures” (Anzaldua, 2012 p. 5). She highlights the arbitrary nature of borders especially those that appear to be constantly shifting and redefined. Interestingly, neither Diane nor Vanessa hint at such difficulties; therefore, I see this as a possible distinction between my own beliefs about my role in the classroom and theirs.

Caribbean communities are not monolithic. Just as African American communities are not monolithic, and I am weary of making sweeping generalizations about these women's beliefs whether it be regarding academic excellence or the role their cultural heritage should play in their classrooms, Black Caribbean communities are similarly not monolithic. Even so, my thoughts about their belief in academic pursuits are based on my upbringing and its similarities to Diane and Vanessa's. They also seemed to indicate a strive for academic achievement as we

talked more. Hudley (2016) asserts that little research regarding “students from Africa and the Caribbean” exists and instead studies have tended to focus on “immigrant children from Asia and Latin America” (p. 225). Yet, for both women, success may be tied to the success of their family and the broader community of Caribbeans.

For instance, Diane explains that she earned her master’s degree in addition to obtaining her bachelor’s degree. Implied in her quest for an advanced degree are her family’s expectations for her to go as far as she can with her educational pursuits. Though such familial expectations appear more explicit in Vanessa’s story, I too can relate. Vanessa, in discussing her upbringing, tells me **“My mom was a nurse, my dad was a doctor, and the MP [Member of Parliament] for our area. And we just never. We just knew that we were going to school. We were going to college, and we had to succeed.”** Through her words, I immediately see a difference in her experiences growing up in the Caribbean as opposed to stories of my mother’s childhood. Vanessa’s parents were professionals and had careers, whereas my grandmother struggled financially to support her children. Even so, for all of them (my mother, Vanessa, and Diane), their Caribbean experience involved familial expectations of success. Though they had disparate life experiences financially, all roads led to education as an indicator of progress and strides toward success.

To further substantiate my thinking, I consider Kamugisha (2019) in his book *Beyond Coloniality* and his discussion of differences in the contemporary “Anglophone Caribbean” and how “Black middle-class respectability was thus secured by literacy and professional success and a conservative view on social change, with educational accomplishments being the most highly prized single attribute distinguishing the middle class from the poor and the peasantry” (p. 49). In what I would describe as typical Caribbean fashion consistent with both my upbringing and

the self-described experiences of Diane and Vanessa (though Vanessa came from a more affluent family), we strive for excellence and cherish education. Though she now resides in the U.S., Vanessa's words about her family's expectation of attending college and success tell me she is rooted in Caribbean principles of education to which Kamugisha (2019) refers. It is the place upon which she firmly stands – her *djed* (Asante, 2007). Informing how she conducts herself and views her role in teaching. The influence of her Caribbean background forms the basis from which she operates. This is the same for Diane too, as she later explains in more depth.

Meanwhile, Vanessa has set up the crockpot and plugs it in while setting it to a low heat, all in preparation for the hominy corn which I slowly pour into the vessel. The gradual patience and investment of time necessary to cook the porridge is akin to the time it took for Diane to become a teacher and how Vanessa came to realize teaching was her calling. While Diane had to obtain credentials beyond her Caribbean training in education to become certified to teach in the U.S., those around Vanessa saw her potential as a teacher long before she recognized it for herself. Diane reaches into the cabinet for a tin of coconut milk. Next, she opens the tin of milk and pours it over the kernels. It will assist in the porridge thickening. Vanessa gathers the $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of flour which she adds to the already aromatic concoction. Meanwhile, I grate the nutmeg and retrieve the vanilla extract which I measure out and pour into the pot. Breakfast is well underway.

Mother Knows Best. In her usual pleasant demeanor, Vanessa's response to my question about her start in teaching begins with a quiet laugh. Her voice, familiar dialect, and accent again remind me of my mother, Mumma, and home. As a bright smile comes across her face she says, **“Well according to my mother, she always knew I'd be a teacher. I had no such knowledge. No such foreknowledge. She says I used to line my toys up and teach them.”** This image Vanessa describes relates to traditional conceptions of the teacher as the sole vessel of

knowledge and students as passive recipients. Dewey (1938) recognized the issues with predominate education stating, “[t]he traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside” (p. 18). Despite this, the scene Vanessa details is a familiar one. It causes me to have an immediate affinity for her – not just because we are both Black women, high school English teachers, of Caribbean descent, and not only because of her warm welcoming smile, but because I remember forcing my younger sister to “play” school too. It seems the effect of our early educational experiences served as models that permeated our imaginative worlds of play. In a similar manner to Vanessa’s early “teaching” experience, my own involved not only my sister, but her classmates were a myriad of my stuffed animals who stoically sat in submission as I relayed the day’s lessons (I smile). Her tale only further endears her to me.

Vanessa continues **“But I do remember that when I was in primary school because in the Caribbean it’s primary school not elementary, I started a school when I was in fifth grade, for the first, second, and third graders during lunch.”** She beams, **“I got teachers, and we used to go to the principal’s to get chalk. We brought a chalkboard, but with all of that I never knew that I was going to become or even wanted to be a teacher.”** This realization is despite her mother’s premonition that she would enter the profession.

She explains how she **“organized a set of substitutes when teachers were not going to be there”** and says, **“I would have someone from the math section go sit in for that teacher.”** These “personal and social (interaction[s])” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a, p. 50) in which Vanessa engaged as a pseudo-teacher perhaps provide a window into the spark that spurred her entrance into the profession. More of her previous interactions with those who would be pivotal in her journey begin to emerge in her story when she tells me it wasn’t merely Vanessa’s mother who noticed her aptitude for teaching in her play with toys, but Vanessa also remembers her

principal inquiring about her future and what her plans might be. She provides me with a general timeline from when she was a student until she decided to become a teacher. In doing so, she is relaying her past and the journey to her life at present (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a) all of which are a part of the three-dimensional narrative space. Some years later while still in the Caribbean, and as she was getting ready to finish up her schooling, her hopes of entering a physical therapy program were dashed due to her age and a snafu with chemistry. It was then that Vanessa's principal told her she'd be a perfect teacher. He provided her with the application and told her where and when the interviews would occur. So **"That's what I did,"** she says emphatically. **"And I've never looked back."**

Like Diane, Vanessa's tale of her journey to becoming an educator is one of continuity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a). It begins with her decision to leave her birthplace and home in the Caribbean, move to the United States, then she became a Spanish teacher, and an English teacher which portray her past. The story continues with her becoming an English teacher in America - her present. Finally, her story leaves open the possibilities for career next-steps: her future. Because Vanessa is sixty-one, I wouldn't be surprised if retirement was in her near future, yet she makes no mention of it. This fact and that she says she's been teaching for nearly four decades leads me to believe she still enjoys teaching enough to stay in it even after **thirty-nine years.**

In the three-dimensional narrative space, Vanessa's interactions both personal: her mother's and principal's encouragement and belief in her future potential as a teacher, and the social: her early "teaching" experiences through play, demonstrate this narrative dimension. Her current "place (situation)" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50) as a former AP English teacher and now high school English teacher are a result of her entrance into the teaching field here in

the U.S. The early life experiences of both women ground their philosophies as teachers and speak to their identities. Their beginnings in the Caribbean required both women to meet additional qualifications to become certified in America; however, once here, they extended their expectations of excellence to their students. Their expectations of their students academically appear to mirror those they had for themselves and which their families had for them. In this manner, their narratives begin with an interaction of the social and professional leading to the continuity of their journeys into the teaching profession.

As the porridge slowly boils, several clusters of cloud-like bubbles form on its surface. A somewhat thick skin is beginning to encase its surface. For me, the skin-like coating is one of the best parts. I remember asking my mom to always save me some. It is not much different when it comes to Advanced Placement. Of significance to many AP teachers is its seemingly appetizing exterior. Who wouldn't want to teach content they love to equally passionate students? The outward appeal of AP for some is found in the perception many teachers hold of AP English students as eager to learn and receptive to more challenging curricula. Additionally, for some teachers, the course presents unique teaching opportunities and challenges – a means to expand their pedagogical prowess. Oftentimes too, parents and students view the course as a leg up while administrators view it as prestigious. Why? AP can mean engaging in the reading and analysis of texts not taught in the general education curriculum. The perception of AP as appealing for some teachers is another theme that emerges in our conversations.

For Diane, this appeal was found in the rigor, and for Vanessa, it was about the content (the texts she taught and enjoyed). AP teachers and students need a thick skin too for several reasons. Specifically, teachers may encounter a parent who challenges a text as Diane experienced and later discussed, or a student who fails to do the summer work as in Vanessa's case; the

course content can test both teachers and students. However, if all involved parties can persist, they have the chance to delve deeper into abundant “sweet learning” (Christensen, 2017, p. 27) beyond the initial surface taste. For example, Vanessa lit up when she spoke about the texts she enjoyed teaching and her students’ responses to them. It was evident “the joy of education, the thrill of discovering something new” (Christensen, 2017, p. 27) were part of the appeal of AP for her.

In preparation for the next course in our marathon meal preparation, we adhere to the unspoken rule of any good cook and clean as we go. We’re washing dirty bowls, putting up the no longer needed spices, and wiping down the counter and kitchen table. We are working in sync and each one of us contributes to the clean-up effort without any fuss. It is so similar to how any good teacher approaches the curation of their course curriculum. Each end-of-year room clean-up brings with it the opportunity to discard lessons, files, or texts that no longer seem to “work.” We re-examine and re-think what we taught and consider what we may keep, add, or toss. Also, teachers may feel external or internal pressure to closely adhere to the CB course guidance. Simultaneously, many AP teachers experience a level of freedom unheard of in regular English courses; what they decide to keep in the curriculum and what they discard can shape a student’s experience in the course. For this reason, I wanted to learn more about those curricular decisions that each woman made when they were actively teaching AP English. I wanted to know how important it was for them to include Black and African American authors. Later in our cooking and conversations, both Diane and Vanessa provide some insight regarding curriculum choices: what they include and exclude and why.

Along the same vein as things of significance to them, I invited both women to bring something of importance to our gathering today (Bell et al., 2022). Diane’s item is intangible yet

invaluable because she ruminates on the sage words of her father. West Indians have a way with words and never miss an opportunity to instill wisdom within their children. Next, Diane reminisces about her father.

Daddy's Little Girl. Diane leans against the counter visibly tired, her smooth skin, dark brown hair, and kind eyes give no hint of her years of experience. As she sits down at the table, she shares, "For me, it's the love of learning in general. From my earlier days, I can remember my father saying that *Whatever else you do, or whatever else you have that someone can take away from you, they cannot take your knowledge from you.* So that's something I've always grown up to believe, and I try to instill that within my girls as well." I interpret Diane's words to mean she was taught the knowledge you obtain from reading and studying becomes an innate part of you. This lesson – of working hard to obtain knowledge through education – is one she took to heart and bestowed on her children. It is also tied to the theme of a strong work ethic. Once knowledge is innate, no one can take that knowledge away from you. I also view her beliefs about knowledge as relating to book learning because the understanding and information you gain from reading and analysis are housed within your mind. I respond by acknowledging it seems our Caribbean parents all took from the same text because my mother told me something similar. As if on cue, my mother pops her head in the door to ask if we need anything, and I respond, "No thank you." She returns to the other room.

Remembering my mother's instructions about tasting food, I retrieve a spoon from the drawer, lift the glass lid of the crock pot, and scoop a teaspoon-sized amount of hominy porridge from the simmering pot. I then blow and drop a dollop into the palm of my hand to taste the porridge; it is sweet and good. I discard the used spoon in the sink and can hear my mother's words in my head about how unsanitary it is to double dip. Contamination while cooking is frowned

upon, but for advocates of critical literacy, contamination or at the very least a disruption of the Eurocentric focus in AP can be viewed as favorable.

I was hoping to hear in Diane's and Vanessa's stories the many ways they actively sought to disrupt the canon in AP English. After all, as Black AP English teachers, I anticipated this would be something I uncovered. However, the data did not support my expectations. Each participant held certain views on knowledge as CBI educators. To explain in more detail how Diane's views on knowledge connected to the issue of Black AP English teachers, it is important to understand what book learning or knowledge may entail in these classes. In AP English courses, depending on the teacher and what they value, the literary canon may take center stage. Yet, the debate over the literary canon has long been of concern for critical literacy proponents. Sheridan (2000) refers to the fervent points of contention surrounding the issue as "the canon wars" (p. 84), and it presents a specific version of what is worthy to be taught in American culture. His ideas reiterate Berry's (2017) claims regarding the axiology in Afrocentricity. Because, for those who fervently hold on to the canon as superior, they fail to understand what is most valuable for people of African descent to know. To further substantiate this point, Asante (2007) posits unlike those who uphold the canon's preeminence, "Afrocentricity does not seek African hegemony; it seeks pluralism without hierarchy" (p. 111). King and Mitchell (1995) also warn against the unchallenged adoption of the canon. They state, "What we must appraise is the idea that true artistic inspiration is located in the literature of one culture, but not in that of another culture" (King & Mitchell, 1995, p. 50). Their words speak to the necessity of veracity and balance in curricula.

Without an intentional and thoughtful move towards inclusivity and plurality (Asante, 2007), teachers run the risk of continuing to relegate Black/African American students – and authors for that matter – to the margins. Such attempts on the part of some to limit the canon to a

single culture “define [the] canon by narrow guidelines that exclude, rather than include” (King & Mitchell, 1995, p. 50). The perspective is consistent with Wynter’s thoughts on Westernized knowledge (Thomas, 2006). Blacks/African Americans are already underrepresented across many branches of society; therefore, teachers who are complicit may dysconsciously (King, 2015) decenter their ancestry, history, and agency. Selecting Eurocentric texts alone and failing to enact one’s agency to expand the literature to which *all* students are exposed is problematic. Furthermore, it thwarts the aim of Afrocentricity which is liberation. Afrocentricity “is against racism, ignorance, and white hegemony in the curriculum” (Asante, 2007, p. 89). It is the opposite of Eurocentric hegemony which appears more commonplace in American curricula.

In my view, Afrocentricity is vital for all. In and of itself, the theory would serve as a disruption to the cornucopia of European authors. For people of African descent, particularly Black teachers, and their students, it centers and validates our culture and experiences. Embracing a curriculum which openly acknowledges the multitude of contributions Africans have bestowed upon the world is liberating and beneficial for *all* students. Africans and people of African descent serve as examples of excellence in the literary, scientific, mathematical, and historical world, and their contributions predate Greek and Roman cultures as the originators or inventors of anything deemed worthy (Asante personal communication, February 16, 2021). I believe teaching from an Afrocentric perspective would transform schools for the better.

The research behind teachers’ instructional practices indicates that their delivery methods may engage as well as disengage student readers. The task of navigating a variety of personal and cultural issues becomes challenging and influences students’ “motivation to read” (Hoffman, Andrews, & Wyse, 2010, p. 19). Those teachers supporting critical literacy practices and who are perceptive and familiar with their students recognize the hegemony of Anglo voices which can

pervade curricula. If they engage in rejection, thoughtlessness, or dysconsciousness about such issues, the effect is a solidification of “. . . the place of classic texts in English/literature curriculum” which holds up “the use of a single, well-established theoretical lens . . . cultural and social exclusivity, and the marginalisation of texts not deemed to fit ‘the great tradition’” (Hoffman, Andrews, & Wyse, 2010, p. 40). The canon is a powerful archetype that stands as an edifice for the dominant culture. Making instructional moves to disrupt such hegemony is an example of how contamination (or disruption) of a Eurocentric-focused curricula can be beneficial. Disappointingly, I did not see consistent evidence of such disruptions in the stories of Vanessa and Diane.

The devil is in the details. Although the impetus for my conversations with Diane and Vanessa was my struggles with teaching AP unchallenged, I desire to employ key concepts of critical literacy which include “concern about social inequalities, social structures, power and human agency” (Mills, 2016, p. 41) along with Afrocentricity (Asante, 2007), my conversation with these women indicates that such efforts were not their primary objective when they taught curricula. By contrast, my concern as a CBI former AP English teacher has been how my identity and the cultural identities of my Black/African American students provide me with the opportunity to infuse a more critical lens with teaching AP curricula. However, when I asked Diane about how she invoked her culture into her teaching of advanced ELA curricula, she explained:

Learning requires discipline and commitment (not corrective discipline more along the lines of preventative discipline). In this regard, many students came into an advanced class not ready or prepared for the rigor. I realized early on that to get students engaged, be it through a written medium or discussion, they had to read. Luckily, then, I had true autonomy in my classroom. Days would be spent with students sitting quietly and doing

nothing but reading. During these periods of reading, I too sat and read quietly, doing no other work at that time. By doing this, I showed my students how invested I was in their educational pursuits. Many of the books I thought, I read before, and so I didn't use that as an excuse to not be as equally engaged as they were.

The devil is in the details here. What stands out to me in her response are two things: the theme of rigor as deeply tied to her high expectations for teaching AP and a sense of control in how the students experienced the curriculum as she seems to describe it. Images of students in rows reading make me think about the ways both Vanessa and I played school with our passively obedient *students* stoically sitting and receiving instruction (Dewey, 1938). To be fair, she never mentions the physical setup of her classroom, but still, images of rows immediately pop into my head. Furthermore, although Diane says she served as a model for her students with respect to the importance of reading, she does not discuss the students' interests, active engagement with the lesson, selection of texts, the importance of their identity, nor their sense of agency.

Another theme is her work ethic. In my experience, it is not uncommon for high school ELA teachers to grab whatever free moments they have while students are working to grade, answer emails, or complete other tasks. What Diane describes here is her commitment to modeling a strong work ethic for her students. It sends the message to them that reading is important work. I am careful not to jump to conclusions, but I also consider the types of texts Diane taught, which she talks more about later in the day. Knowing this information, I feel it is safe to say she appeared to focus more on rigor than culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Noticeably absent from her response is any direct mention of her cultural identity. Instead, she returns to the theme of high expectations by discussing rigor and her investment in students' learning. While this is commendable and echoes sentiments of Irvine and Fraser's (1998)

conception of teachers as “warm-demanders” which they attribute to Vasquez (1988), her response sidesteps the issue of the role her cultural identity played in teaching AP English altogether. However, perhaps her answer and what is absent substantiates the view of some people from the Caribbean in which cultural identity is secondary to one’s work ethic. Additionally, there is a line of distinction between Diane’s approach and perspective toward teaching AP as opposed to my own. Diane does not seem to wrestle with the same issues of uncertainty when it comes to infusing culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) or culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) into AP English as I do.

Meanwhile, Vanessa intimates at the Caribbean view of culture in a later conversation where she talks about how she grew up in what she considered a more **classist** rather than **racist** society. Her thoughts do not align with things I have heard my mother say about growing up in the Caribbean, but it may simply be that they did indeed have different experiences based on their class. Specifically, Vanessa’s parents were married professionals; whereas Mumma raised her three children as a single mother leaving them and her home in the Caribbean in pursuit of “educational accomplishments” (Kamugisha, 2019, p. 49) and a career in England which would afford her family a better life.

During my formative years in Canada, I experienced many microaggressions from peers and teachers in my predominantly white school environment. Though, there was significant cultural diversity within my middle and high school environment – my peers were Polish, Jewish, Hindu, Pakistani, Chinese, Tamils, Somalian, or Caribbean descent, etcetera the diversity was predominantly among people who appeared White. Only at church and home was I surrounded by Black people primarily from the Caribbean. I felt torn between two worlds in a sense: the North American country in which I was born and grew up versus my home and community

which were Caribbean in nature. I lived in a type of borderlands (Anzaldúa, 2012). As a result, I dove into books such as *Black Like Me* and *Roots* to fill my cup and soul with what was lacking at school.

From the two women, their words suggest that their cup was filled through the warm brew comprised of their family and cultural environments. Both talk about the influence of their family and the values they instilled within them. Seeking the input and advice of Diane and Vanessa, I ask them to perform their taste tests on the simmering porridge. I believe it is good containing the right balance of coconut milk, vanilla extract, nutmeg, and cinnamon. They both agree with my assessment before we move on to the next dish up for preparation: Caribbean-style fried fish.

Assessment: AP means answer the prompt. Thinking about this idea of assessment, in my mind, I make connections from the women's views on the AP exam to their own educational experiences with assessment. Because the exam is the culminating assessment and standardized measure of a teacher's or student's success, it can mean the difference between a student receiving college credit or not (Mosser, 2004). It can also mean a school receives recognition (AP school honor roll, 2023). Consequently, the test is high stakes for teachers, students, and even schools. Additionally, I come to my conclusion regarding Diane and assessments based on an incident where she later details the difficulties she had when students who didn't take the AP exam seriously were **thrown** into her class. It seemed to be one among several reasons she decided she **no longer wanted to teach AP after 2016.**

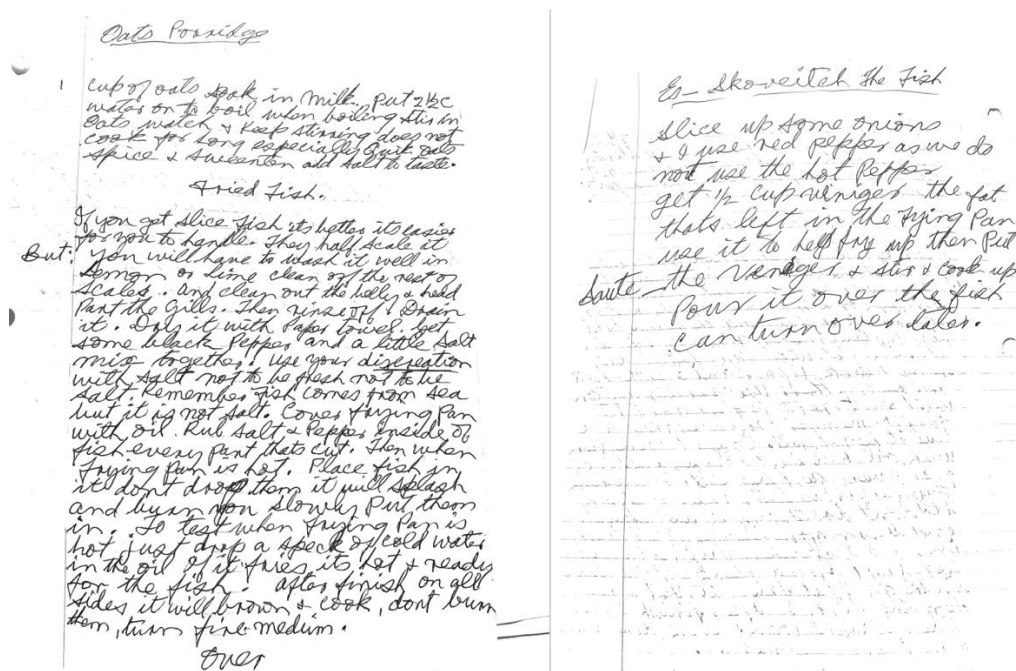
Beyond the actual test though, I consider what assessments for Vanessa and Diane were like while they were students. Although neither Diane nor Vanessa discussed in-depth the role assessments played in their schooling in the Caribbean, Vanessa did provide me with a brief

picture of this. She said, “**I finished high school; that’s five grades. Grades seven through twelve, and I went on to do A-levels. . . . So those of us who were taking A-levels, if the math teacher was away, I would have someone from the math section go sit in for that teacher.**” By “A-levels,” what Vanessa is referring to is an exam considered “The standard criterion used for entry into university-level studies” (Jamaica: Secondary Education, 2023). In both instances: the AP exam and the A-level examination, they are high stakes – meaning they come with not only recognition but also potential scholarships. Poor performance could deter a student from continuing to one educational course (i.e., college) and opt for another (i.e. trade school). AP English teachers are known for reinforcing the saying, *AP means Answer the Prompt*; because, in the intensity that is the exam, some students simply forget to do this. As strange as it may sound, the pressure of this high-stakes assessment sometimes causes students to lose sight of their goal when responding to the test’s free response writing prompts. This speaks to the power assessments can wield over students even if neither Diane nor Vanessa hint at similar feelings when they were students.

The context of Vanessa’s explanation regarding her unofficial teaching role as a student was a description of her journey to becoming a teacher. It is interesting how Vanessa appears to indicate the assessments she took in high school prepared her to act in her **unofficial role as substitute teacher and organizer of student substitute teachers** while she was still a student herself. She does not appear to convey a negative experience with assessments during her time in high school or associate those assessments with something bad. Since both women are from the Caribbean and only have a nine-year age difference, it is likely they both took similar tests or terminal exams at the end of their schooling before going on to post-secondary school.

The seriousness with which Diane approached her students' performance on the AP exam and Vanessa's sincerity with her early teaching initiatives indicate they both value assessments at least to some degree as a measure of learning or indication of their performance and perhaps effectiveness as AP English teachers. I must admit that I too measured my effectiveness as an AP teacher based on how well my students performed on the test. In my previous experiences teaching Black AP students, out of a class of fifteen students, only a few of those students who chose to take the exam (i.e., five exam takers) met the goal of earning the coveted score of three (i.e., two or three students earned this score). Often, those students who I felt would do best on the exam were the ones who preferred not to take it. It seemed the exam cost and its high-stakes nature were powerful deterrents. However, I also recognized for my African American students, reading texts from primarily European authors was not as engaging and may have skewed their performance on an exam not designed for them or with their cultural viewpoints in mind. I note here that while I sought approval from the very system I wanted to change, this paradox was indicative of my internal conflict with teaching AP English.

2. Lunch: Escovitch Fried Fish



We begin the task of cooking our next course: fried fish. To start, we scale the red snapper before cooking it; we each grab the necessary items. I grab a sharp knife. Next, I grab a trio of sweet peppers, Diane retrieves a lemon and lime from the refrigerator drawer and begins rolling them on the kitchen countertop cutting board with her palm, and Vanessa retrieves the salt and pepper from the cabinet along with several paper towels. We have been reminiscing about our past teaching experiences and upbringing, so I raise the question of what role the women believe upbringing plays in their views about teaching AP and how that might apply to Black AP teachers more specifically. Vanessa mentions the need for AP teachers to persevere in their teaching. Her choice of words here is important as it reflects how she sees the plight of Black AP English teachers concerning their students. By her admission, she is implying there is a difference in her upbringing opposed to her students' upbringing.

“Brought-upsy.” Framing Vanessa’s slender face is her dark tightly coiled hair which is in small plaits. Her skin is smooth, and its color resembles the inside of an almond – not a blemish in sight – creamy, milky-colored. Her eyes are welcoming and inviting. As she speaks, her signature warm smile emerges. A Caribbean phrase my mother often used to identify *how* a person was raised comes to mind: *brought-upsy*; it seems appropriate in describing Vanessa’s story. She makes an interesting remark. **“Well, with me, my upbringing had nothing to do with color or you not being enough because of what you looked like.”** She elaborates further by explaining that in her view, the Caribbean is more classist than . . . racist and chuckles. In revealing the environment in which she was raised, she says that her mother was a nurse and her father worked for the local government. The expectation of her parents was success which meant attending college. Here in my analysis, I find evidence of Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000a) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: “personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation)” (p. 50). It begins with the social environment of the Caribbean culture for Vanessa. She was raised in a colorblind manner.

Her upbringing in an upper-middle-class mixed-race family meant she was more focused on her parents’ past (continuity) expectations of educational success. This meant as an American teacher she initially was blind to issues of race with her Black/African American students.

Vanessa explains why she believes AP teachers should persevere, and states, **“But having lived in the United States and seeing – well pardon me – in a country where your race matters and seeing how African American students will at times look down on themselves because of what has been placed on them, now, my environment in which I have lived spurs me to say you know, *Hang in there. Give them the best of what you’ve got, and it will hit home to them one day.*”** By this statement, I infer she believes because Black/African American students

live and are raised in America, its racist history causes many students to have negative self-perceptions.

Dyk (1995) in answer to the existing educational system which supports and even creates Black/African American students' negative self-perceptions is a proponent of "a paradigm shift" (p. 4) in this regard. He states, "Under the new paradigm, the Afrocentric perspective arises as a positive statement of the cultural heritage of African people" (Dyk, 1995, p.4). Thus, when it comes to Black AP English teachers, Vanessa is advocating for other AP English teachers to persist in their teaching of Black/African American students and for those teachers to give students their very best. She suggests that doing so will eventually allow those Black students to succeed. To me, Vanessa's words indicate an awareness that she is in a borderland (Anzaldua, 2012) of sorts because her upbringing is far removed from that of her students, since she was raised in a predominantly Black country in the Caribbean. Additionally, as a voluntary immigrant (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) her lineage and experiences are different from her students's experiences. Her upbringing meant she has not had to navigate the same racial distinctions and discrimination as her students. Not until she came to America did she encounter or even recognize this boundary. I imagine her *djed* or current place as a teacher in a twenty-first-century ELA classroom continues to make her aware of these issues of race which Black/African American students face.

I stop for a moment and think about what critical literacy theorists and proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy might have to say about Vanessa's words, which could be deemed as a passive approach. Mills (2016) for instance argues that "Critical approaches reposition teachers and students to deconstruct dominant selective traditions in schools and society" (p. 42). I argue one of those dominant traditions is others' perceptions of Black/African American students and the students' view of themselves as less than others, which Vanessa references. Critical theorists

such as Freire (2017) believe in human agency; he sees teachers as transformers. In accordance, Morrell (2002) in his work utilizes teaching methods that draw on students' cultural interests. He states, "I believe that critical-literacy educators should envision teaching popular culture as compatible with the current educational climate" (Morrell, 2002, p. 76). He is advocating for centering students' culture and their experiences within the curricula.

I think about Vanessa's experiences growing up, and her life as she describes it is far removed from the life I recall my mother telling me she experienced in the Caribbean. Vanessa's parents were professionals in the Caribbean while my grandmother (Mumma) had to leave to obtain success and advance her career. This may explain why she views the Caribbean as more **classist than racist**. Her experiences and outlook on race are markedly different from my own experiences and those of my family. I have struggled with my own cultural identity as it relates to my students who share that same cultural identity in several ways. As a Black previous AP teacher, I feel the commitment to choose texts that speak to my students' identities, but in many ways, I have felt that my hands are tied. They are tied by the scope and sequence, weekly formative assessments, and a political climate that views virtually everything outside of the canon as having an agenda. I want my Black AP students to see themselves in the curriculum even if the curriculum was not initially created with them in mind, and for all my AP students, I want them to see the value in centering the identities and voices of authors of African descent.

To me, when Vanessa talks about giving students *the best of what you've got*, she means high expectations and a don't-give-up attitude, but she may also view Black/African American students as worthy and capable which is an asset-based mindset. I question in her response where opportunities for criticality come into play? My desire to gain insight her demonstrates the nature of heuristic inquiry. It is part of the "**Incubation** [emphasis in original] . . . process . . .

cultivation, and growth that enhances and encourages insight, understanding, and integration” (Sultan, 2019, p. 11). Continuing with this line of thinking, I view the political and educational climate as demanding a more critical approach to teaching Black AP students because the world seems to be attacking their very identity (Fieldstadt, 2022; Ujyediin, 2021). A more justice-centered teaching is necessary to arm Black/African American students against such assaults and to help white students appreciate and value all of humanity.

Is the proof really in the pudding? My thoughts shift back to the sound of the oil in the frying pan. Diane has splashed a drop of water in the pan to test its readiness. It hops across the pan’s surface like someone stepping on fiery coals. The sizzling sound indicates it is ready to receive the fish that we’ve prepared by scaling, washing, slicing, and seasoning. To displace the strong scents that will soon permeate the kitchen, we open the window and turn on the ceiling fan. I am struck by the thought of how some Black/African American students may also feel displaced considering the curriculum which lacks cultural relevance in many districts (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and is not culturally responsive (Gay, 2018). In clearing the table, I see Vanessa’s curriculum documents she earlier pushed to the side. I pick them up and peruse through them. Based on our conversations, I know these documents come from her time teaching AP English at a predominantly Black/African American private school. The stack includes an AP Language and Composition End-of-Year Project (see Appendix R), AP Literature Film Project (see Appendix B), AP Literature Summer Work (see Appendix Q), and an Adopt a Columnist Project (see Appendix P).

~ In the Researcher’s Mind’s Eye ~

My scan of the documents reveals three-quarters of the documents include elements of Afrocentricity and one is what I would consider primarily Eurocentric in nature. This alerts me

because perhaps this find indicates an incongruence between Vanessa's self-described philosophy, her beliefs, and teaching practices. Specifically, the AP Literature Film Project asks students to work in groups of 4 or 5 to **write, act and film a 10–15-minute movie on a topic of their choosing**. Because of the collaborative nature of the project and the agency of the students in its creation, I note it as Afrocentric. Suddenly in my head, I am transported to my previous experience as an instructional coach, and I envision a matrix (see Appendix A) I previously created. With this memory of *A Matrix for Examining the Characteristics of Curriculum Documents* (see Appendix A) appearing in my head, I evaluate and analyze the documents. The matrix has four columns and seven rows.

The columns allow me to assess the documents for evidence of Afrocentric, Neutral or Balanced, Eurocentric, or Additional (i.e. LGBTQIA, Feminist, etcetera) curriculum elements. For me, I categorize a document as Afrocentric if it possesses characteristics of Afrocentricity such as collectivity, centering on people of African descent, or embracing human agency. I consider the document Eurocentric if it appears to privilege the literary canon, White authors, or European educational values. Neter (1995) discusses such values and explains "American schools value analytical learning styles" (p. 184). Furthermore, conformity "to the European American cognitive/learning style and the politically and historically Eurocentric curriculum" (Neter, 1995, p. 187) are other key ingredients I utilize in considering into which category a document should fall. Examining Vanessa's film project, the students themselves are the "**authors**" and empowered to use their voices in the **creation of their films**. Hence, I check off the rows labeled "Authors and/or Literary Works," "Visual representations," "Organization & chronology," and "Evidence of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" as Afrocentric. Additionally, the students decide how their self-produced films will be organized, and it is based on *their* interests which is an element

of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsiveness (Gay, 2018). I am warmed to discover Vanessa's incorporation of these ideals.

Since the document includes some guidelines that could be considered vague such as **iii) Suitable music** and no rubric is available, there is some ambiguity regarding what Vanessa deems **suitable** and how exactly she will evaluate students' work. The fact that there is no mention of American Standard English I view as an opening for students to perhaps employ AAEV (Ball, 1995), but considering the course in which she used the film project was AP English Literature, this may be too big of an assumption. Consistent with heuristic inquiry (Sultan, 2019) some ambiguity arises as I have several questions about the documents which remain unanswered for now.

The next document, her **END OF YEAR PROJECT Photo Essay** (see Appendix R) assignment, I categorize as Afrocentric. The assignment was designed for her AP English Language and Composition course. In this instance, I check off the rows entitled "Visual representations," "Use of grammar & spellings," "Organization & chronology," "Authors and/or literary works," and "Evidence of critical literacy." Here the students oversee their learning because it is *their* interests that drive the creation of their **photo essay** which is an alternative method for students to demonstrate their learning. By using photos to present theme and tone, Vanessa is valuing a contemporary method: illustrations. This is a departure from what one might expect in a course normally heavily emersed in the tradition of writing. Visual representation is not typically valued in European culture as it relates to literature.

The directions on the assignment read: **Students will take a series of at least twelve pictures to create a photo essay which clearly lifts up theme and tone. The subject can be of their choosing (education, music, war, love, gender, politics, food etc.).** Because students can

select the subject and among the subjects provided as an example is **gender**, I check the column labeled “Additional (i.e. LGBTQIA, Feminist, etc.)” This choice diction of **gender** leaves room for students who may want to explore the topic in their **photo essay**. The document further states, **Each photograph will have a) a caption consisting of more than one word and b) an explanatory paragraph** leading me to believe Vanessa is asking students to synthesize their learning by first boiling down each photograph to a short phrase – no easy feat. However, she moves toward a more Eurocentric standard of representation when she adds they must write **an exploratory paragraph** and then states **At the end of the series of photographs, students will write a one-to-two-page reflection paper on the process, including why they chose that particular theme, and what they learned through the process**. When I realize students are required to write a traditional paper, I note the document displays some elements of Eurocentric curricula. Even so, I primarily view it as a more “non-European” representation of curricula in AP English.

It is important to note that the two assignments Vanessa so loved happened at the end of the year and are more peripheral than central to her AP English curricula. My reason for noting this is since the assignments did not occur during the regular school calendar, they could be viewed as less important. Though a third assignment, the students’ **summer** reading of *Native Son*, focuses on a Black/African American author, it falls outside of the academic school year. In my mental analysis of these documents, I consider what it might mean about the topics Vanessa deems worthy of teaching. While she does include Afrocentric facets in the assignments she has students complete, the fourth curriculum document I examine, **Adopt-a-Columnist**, is more Eurocentric because it relies on Eurocentric qualities of curricula. For instance, this AP English Language and Composition assignment requires students to **follow a national columnist in a**

newspaper or magazine, not use any **sports or entertainment writers**, annotate the articles for the **speaker's tone, rhetorical strategies/devices, organization, and diction**. Therefore, though three-quarters of the documents are more Afrocentric in my assessment because they are not central to the curricula – meaning they fall either outside the school calendar (i.e. in the summer) or at the end of the school year, they seem to marginalize Afrocentric values in AP curricula.

From an earlier conversation, where Vanessa explained **I love the two culminating projects because they give the students the opportunity to create their own thing using what they have learned from [the courses] and from each other** her joy was evident. She is emphasizing the Afrocentric quality of collectivity, even if she does not use the term Afrocentric. To place the narrative surrounding Vanessa's curriculum documents within the three-dimensional narrative space, it is part of her past (continuity) since she no longer teaches AP English. It is also part of her past because these curriculum documents are ways she previously assessed students' learning when she taught AP English Literature and Composition and AP English Language and Composition – both courses she no longer teaches. However, she is now in the present happily reflecting on the joy she recalls when assigning these projects (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a). I further note, through Vanessa's timing of these assignments (i.e. outside the regular school calendar year) as a part of my heuristic inquiry process illuminates what she may value (Sultan, 2019). I make this inference to illustrate the centrality of Afrocentricity to her teaching of AP curricula.

The AP Summer Work assignment is focused on Richard Wright's *Native Son* and calls on students to select a character **who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice** by writing an essay. When I think about her selection of this text, I am suddenly excited because this document and its subject appear to tackle an issue central to critical literacy: **justice and**

injustice. However, I temper my excitement when I realize at what time students read this text. Despite Vanessa's self-described reasons for loving this project and her articulation about how **satisfying** it was **to see the students come to love it**, the text was assigned outside of the academic school year. Vanessa said, **I included the *Native Son* Summer Work because I LOVE that novel so much.** Yet even though her selection of Wright's text and the corresponding assignment provides some evidence of a desire to infuse cultural relevance, by assigning it as **summer work** she appeared to decenter its importance. Yes, it was an example of a Black/African American author in the curriculum, but it feels like a missed opportunity.

Although culturally relevant pedagogy is not exclusive to Black teachers, and they are not solely responsible for enacting it, when a dearth of those teachers exists – especially Black teachers who are advocates of critical literacy (Morrell, 2002) – and this is coupled with their overall displacement in AP classrooms, I argue it can have a negative effect. Whether the issue is the underrepresentation of Black teachers – CBI educators included – their displacement, or the lack of critical literacy curricula, all students suffer. Consequently, while evidence of Afrocentricity does appear – a dash here or a sprinkle there – through Vanessa's curriculum documents, I gain a better understanding of what she meant by her words **I tried to include African American writers.** In this instance, the curriculum documents provide evidence of the extent to which she incorporated Black texts and authors. I cannot say there is consistent evidence of Afrocentric elements in the meat and potatoes (i.e. the bulk) of the course throughout the school year solely based on her stories and the curriculum documents she provides. In this case, solid proof was not in the pudding.

~ Now ~

The sound of the popping grease stirs me back to my current surroundings. I lay the documents back down on the table realizing I am not at my computer but in the kitchen with Diane and Vanessa. My personal thoughts about my commitment to including a more pluralistic approach (Asante, 2007) to teaching AP English are on my mind. Neither Diane nor Vanessa appears to have the same level of struggle or concern. They both talked about the texts they taught and infusing some diversity into their teaching of AP, but for Vanessa, it was evident she enjoyed teaching literature in general, Black/African American, and white authors included, while for Diane, the need to diversify the curriculum with Black/African American authors appeared less pressing. It may have been since Diane taught primarily Spanish speaking students, invoking her cultural identity was not a priority. She says, **“it’s been a while, but normally going through an AP test packet, the piece – the work that’s there you know you may see a few pieces by a Latino writer, you know, the passages that they read. I don’t recall.”** I take her words to mean she was cognizant of her Spanish speaking students’ need to identify with Latinx voices because they too need to see themselves in AP English curricula.

When I asked Diane how she prefers to refer to herself, she responded with **“African American. It doesn’t bother me. I guess that’s the box I check or whatever box I used to check. I’m not sure anymore.”** Through her seemingly ambiguous response (Sultan, 2019), I note there is no deep sense of commitment to being labeled. I might even characterize her words as somewhat flippant. I also infer, since Diane’s students were not primarily Black/African American and she downplays the role of her culture and race to her teaching, these factors may be why she did not make a concerted effort to focus on Black/African American authors. Diane’s recollection of the texts she taught substantiates my earlier claim about the benefit of a diverse curriculum and more Black/African American teachers as beneficial to all students. Thus, as I am

considering this, the sound of the frying fish and its pungent smell re-awaken my senses to the task at hand.

With the fish cooking in the grease and a watchful eye, I take a seat at the kitchen table for a moment. It is almost noon, and even through the kitchen window, the sun is unforgiving. I invite the two women to join me and take a load off their feet for a minute. This is when Mumma's words about the fish being *easier to handle* if you get it pre-sliced ring in my head. Somehow ease and teaching AP do not seem synonymous. For this reason, I ask about both women's reactions to the AP curricula and their previous students' responses to it. Diane expresses that in the past, her students in general had exposure to the material or **something similar** in their previous English classes. Consequently, AP was like those classes they had formerly taken. However, she does recall a tense situation with a student's selection of a Toni Morrison text. I lean in as if she is about to reveal a juicy secret. **THIS** is what I have been waiting to hear: her struggles with teaching AP.

Book Battle. While teaching at a small charter school, Diane recalls, **"I remember once we had a Toni Morrison book on it [list of books], and . . . there was a fight back for that from parents."** After explaining that a Caucasian male student selected the book on his own, Diane clarifies that she did *not* assign it. **"That's one where mom was really involved, and mom perhaps went through a few pages. I can't remember the name . . ."** she says. I too can relate to the frustration of having a student choose their own book in AP which is considered a college level class only for a parent to run to administration and raise a fuss about their child's choice. Diane says, **"I can remember the pushback from mom came in – it was a small charter school and at that time, my principal caved to whatever parents said, so I just said *It's one of the books.*"** Although Diane was not formally reprimanded, to avoid any future issues, **she**

just stopped putting it [the Toni Morrison book] on [her] class lists of books that students could read. I view Diane's story as what narrative inquiry scholars refer to as interaction which began in the social space of Diane's AP English classroom, and then in the continuity of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, she faced a parent challenge based on a student's selection of a text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a). The story reaches back to her previous time as an AP English teacher and reveals one of the difficulties she faced when she offered students a choice of a diverse text.

Considering the conflict and lack of support Diane received from her administration, I speculate this type of parental resistance to the curriculum may have contributed to why Diane later chose not to teach AP. This is her current situation, her *djed*. I wonder if the author being Black and the student being Caucasian had anything to do with the mother's opposition. I suspect it may have. Based on the books Diane recalls teaching (i.e. *Crime and Punishment* and *Heart of Darkness*), her approach to AP was more of a Eurocentric focus. The main African American author she could recollect – Toni Morrison – was the source of contention with one parent. Intriguingly, she could not recall the book's title, and it was also a choice text, meaning the students selected it from a list. Therefore, I infer Diane did not explicitly teach nor assign the novel. What I understand and take away from Diane's story is confirmation that Diane relied more on the canon in her selection of literary texts. In turn, based on the names of the novels she recalls teaching (authored by Dostoevsky and Conrad), Eurocentric texts formed the meat of her curriculum.

It is also important to recognize, Diane's memory of all the texts she taught and the assignments she gave is significantly cloudier than Vanessa's memories because it has been seven years since she taught either AP English Literature or AP English Language and Composition.

This gap in her recollections also explains why she did not have any curriculum documents on hand. Diane explained that her curriculum documents were housed on a jump drive which was packed up with her old teaching materials. What is important to understand though in this story Diane tells is her response to the conflict. She opted to abandon the Morrison text altogether when she was met with resistance from a parent. Now as I reflect on this conversation, I am curious about whether her decision to leave the text off her list for future students was merely because of the parent battle over the book or was it because she was growing tired of teaching AP more generally. What leads me to consider the latter may be the case are her description of what her AP English classes became. Later, she tells me how the course became a dumping ground and lost its appeal for her.

Texts as a litmus test. Related to Diane’s experience though not precisely the same, Vanessa’s experience with students’ choice of texts in AP English was linked to summer reading which she previously assigned outside of the regular school calendar. This was during her time teaching at a predominantly Black/African American private school. Based on how she described it, the summer reading assignment was used as a sort of litmus test to assess students’ willingness and readiness to complete AP level work. She expresses the belief **“One of the things that we used to use as a sort of – I wouldn’t say a tester – was we would give summer work . . . if you can handle the summer – they’re told, you know, this is what you have to do; they know beforehand. It’s given to them in June . . . IF they’re going to show up in September not having read, not having done [the assignment], then that probably isn’t a great start.”** In explaining the texts and novels she had her students read, Vanessa poses the rhetorical question: “How could you do AP without *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*?” Her tone is nostalgic and almost sorrowful at the thought of the exclusion of this Shakespearean text. I am beginning to

understand more about the specific texts students read in her AP class and why she enjoyed them.

She continues to explain saying, **One of my favorite books to start was *Native Son*. That was generally my summer reading. I tried to mix it up each time, and I know it can be a bit of you know a heavier reading, but the kids loved it. It ended up being most times their go-to reference. So, I tried to include African American writers. Another one of my go-tos was when we're doing drama, *Mulatto* by Langston Hughes. And they loved that. I tried to choose poems by Gwendolyn Brooks, you know, people like those. There was a short story. Was it called *Sweat? Was it Sweat?*** The excitement as she speaks about these texts and authors is evident in her lively demeanor. However, I am acutely aware of the fact her list of books, dramas, and short stories begins with a European author (i.e. Shakespeare) but continues with a string of African American writers. Additionally, there is a trend in the Black/African American works she mentions. It is that they consist either of shorter works or she assigned them outside of the regular school year. It might be an indication of how much she values these Black authors and texts – they are important to her but have a supplementary vibe because they may not be the ackee-and-saltfish (i.e. bulk) of her AP curricula. Or perhaps, she views her inclusion of these texts as *mixing it up*. Even so, unlike Diane, Vanessa appears to infuse more Afrocentric texts in her design of the AP curriculum. To be fair though, Diane's experience with teaching AP is seven years removed whereas Vanessa's is one year removed. For this reason, Diane may simply not recall in detail all the books she taught. Despite the time and distance from her experience with the course, the bulk of the books she mentions are by European authors. For Vanessa, there appears to be more inclusion of Black/African American authors, so this is not the case.

Vanessa explains why the reading of *Native Son* as a part of AP **summer work** was so crucial. She says, “**So, at my last school they [students] were allowed to drop [the AP course] after the first marking period. I’ve only ever had one person drop, and one of the things that that I heard that they’re doing this year is that they are – if you’re in AP, then you have to sit for the College Board exam.**” The implication here is if a student failed to complete their summer work, their grade would suffer severely. This means, to avoid permanently affecting their grade, a student might decide to **drop** the AP course if they were ill-prepared to submit their summer work by the deadline. In my experience, many AP students are often highly grade motivated. Being acutely aware of their overall Grade Point Average (GPA) and grades in their AP English class, students who show concern for their grades would not want their GPA to suffer due to one AP English summer assignment. By having the assignment due at the start of the school year, it was meant to encourage them to take the course seriously. As a result, students may choose to **drop** the course. She says students are told “***This is what you have to do. This is what you have to read. And these are the steps and so on.***” However, in Vanessa’s words, “**I’ve only ever had one person drop.**” I view her words here as an indication of the success of the summer work in having those students who were perceived as the *cream* rise to the top.

By the same token, motivating students to read in a course all about reading can be difficult. It appears in Vanessa’s case the summer work was designed to sift out the less serious students or those who might otherwise opt out of taking the exam. I know this as a previous AP English teacher myself. We AP English teachers or schools themselves will sometimes mandate summer work to separate the chaff from the wheat. In AP English courses, it is not unusual for students to take the course but opt out of the test. Students may feel intimidated or ill-prepared for the high-stakes test. The issue has even led some districts and/or schools to incentivize their

AP programs which often does not benefit Black/African American students (Davis, et al., 2015). I think about what Vanessa says and although many of my previous Black AP students qualified for a financial waiver to pay for their AP test because they met the requirements for free or reduced lunch, they still often elected to not sit for the exam. Hence, the idea of ease and AP don't seem synonymous when I think about issues that arise whether it be summer work, students' not taking the exam, or being unmotivated to read. In the case of Vanessa's story, summer reading acted as a sort of gatekeeper.

Therefore, despite some perceived benefits, AP does not seem easy for teachers or students. Teachers like Diane, Vanessa, and I may have to handle several potential stumbling blocks such as course content, the exam, administrative support, parental interference, or students included. As an example of administration serving as a stumbling block, Diane later provides additional insight as to why she stopped teaching AP when she explains the **unrealistic expectations** which administration placed upon her. Though initially she tells me that she felt supported, the reality of her administrator's response tells a markedly different story. I note this difference in Diane's words versus the reality of the administrator's lack of support as an incongruence.

Diane and Vanessa have gotten up from the table and begun preparing the escovitch for the fried fish which has finished cooking. They mix the vinegar and the fat in the pan where the fish was fried to make the escovitch sauce. Next, they add sliced onions and a trio of sweet peppers. The freshly cooked fried fish is draining on a paper towel-covered plate while the watchful eye of the fish is wide open and staring up at the ceiling fan. It is often considered a sign of respect to give the most important person in the family the fish head to eat. In this situation, it would be difficult for me to decide who that would be because both women are equally important to me. Now, I'm craving festival dumplings to be paired with this delicious treat.

Nonetheless, since the time and day are slipping away from us, we again clean as we go in preparation for our dinner: Oxtail with rice and peas. This dance of putting away and tidying up reinforces the idea of Ubuntu as we're collectively working as a unit to get the job done. We display no conflicts regarding who should do what. We are sharing our experiences and learning from and about each other. Yet, emerging from this conversation and our meal preparation is a sense of contrast regarding how we think about advanced English course curricula and instruction and what it should look like for students of color—and all students. My discomfort is not something Vanessa nor Diane appear to share.

3. Dinner: Oxtail and rice and peas

Deloitte & Touche

Oxtail

It will be chopped up already wash season up. with thyme salt onion skellan garlic etc. In peas frying pot pour some oil brown or fry up the oxtail take off the seasoning set aside for then after its brown up pour 3-4 cups hot water on it cover it and steam it down it takes a good cooking if water dries down its not yet tender pour a little more so when its almost done pour in some taste & see if its spicy to your taste.

Rice & Peas

that amount of Peas in the cups that I bring can do 2 times that Ganga Peas for you & Francis.

- 1 Look at it that no stones are in it.
- 2 Wash it Put about 5 cups of cold water to soak it overnight.
- 3 Cook on medium heat if you put it on high - when it starts boiling turn it down. You can take a qt after 3/4 - 1 hour. If its cooked so that between your fingers is it squeaky cooked. If you have coconut milk or the juice in tin of cream put it in you could also put the milk in fresh it Peas starts boiling it tastes better. Then put salt to taste 2 tsp or in to taste. Thyme, onion go spring on wash. Ride about 4 cups put in & stir. when start boiling turn down fire to medium then to low you can taste or feel the grain if its cooked. Dont pour too much water. If it needs a little water put cold water. Watch you pot if you stick a fork in the pot and find it sticking, run cold water in pink place pot in it cool off a little then place back on low fire it will release the rice from the or burning.

4 Red Peas use about 1 1/2 cups. do the same Peas swell after its soaked.

To begin this course, it's all hands on deck. I measure out and wash the rice. Diane cleans and seasons the oxtail. This begins with washing the meat with lemon or lime and includes a myriad of seasonings which starts with fresh thyme, then the minced garlic, seasoned salt, and

black pepper. Meanwhile, Vanessa chops up the scallion, garlic, and onion before retrieving the bowl with the peas which have been soaked overnight. We work well together and there is an ease in our cooking as there is in the conversations that surround it.

After picking off the onions and scallions from the meat, Diane browns the oxtail in the “dutchie” (i.e. Dutch oven). Vanessa adds the required three to four cups of hot water, and I cover the “dutchie” with the heavy lid. It clanks as metal hits metal. When I proposed that we gather to talk, cook, eat, and fellowship, our menu design was much like curriculum design – backward design – just like when creating any lesson. We had to determine what we were going to cook, the necessary ingredients, and which menu items paired best with each other. Thinking in this vein, I pose several questions to the women about their curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation. I also ask about their definition of Afrocentricity too. After all, we are three Black/African American women teachers who have taught AP English to Black and minoritized students. We also come from Caribbean backgrounds where Black people are often at the center of all facets of public and private life. In the Caribbean, Black people hold roles in government as leaders, serve as both administrators and teachers in schools, and display talents as artists or musicians who contribute to society. Even though Vanessa touches on the idea of evaluating students’ readiness for AP earlier in our talk when she mentioned **summer work**, it is her thoughts about her curricular choices I found most interesting. Before she begins her story, she lifts the lid to the “dutchie” to check the water level and tops it off with another cup of hot water.

African American vs. Canonical texts: Curricular Choices. We return to the earlier topic of text selection. But this time, we deepen our attention to Vanessa’s rationale for selecting certain texts. Vanessa explains, “**When I taught, I was aware that (clears throat) the majority of my students were African American, you know, of African American descent when I was**

teaching AP. So even though I expose them to all the great classics and what have you, we did our Shakespeare and all of that. *How could you do AP without A Midsummer Night's Dream? Or whatever. One of my favorite books to start was Native Son. That was generally my summer reading. I tried to mix it up each time, and I know it can be a bit of you know a heavier reading, but the kids loved it. It ended up being most times their go-to reference.*”

What Vanessa is talking about here is what every AP English teacher holds in the back of their mind: the AP exam. For the literary argument question (formerly the open question), students need to select a text either from the suggested list within the exam booklet or of their own about which to write in response to the prompt. Many teachers find it best to have students read several novels – normally novels the teacher themselves enjoy which in turn students are likely to enjoy. By doing this, students will have at least one or two texts in mind for the literary argument question. Vanessa adds some water to the bowl with the scallions, onions, and potpourri of spices which she will later add to the fragrant pot creating a sort of gravy. In a sense, I equate Vanessa's use of shorter texts by Black/African American authors to gravy. It is something savory she adds to her main dish. She views it as important, yet it is an added element instead of the entrée.

In asking the women about their literary text selections, I also ask them to define Afrocentricity. Selecting books from both African American authors and the canon (i.e. Eurocentric authors) was and has been my struggle; my interest is peaked. I am pleasantly surprised to hear Vanessa say she does not necessarily choose one (i.e. canonical texts) over the other (i.e. African American authors) because this may mean she takes a pluralistic approach (Asante, 2007). She goes on to mention other Black/African American authors such as **Langston Hughes** and **Gwendolyn Brooks** as well as a short story by **Zora Neal Hurston** entitled “**Sweat**” – all of which she says her students enjoyed. Much like anything else in teaching, it is a balancing act and

Vanessa ends by reiterating as she did earlier **“I tried to expose them, you know, to great writing by African American writers. So, when I hear Afrocentric, that’s what I think about.”**

What pleases me in her curricular choices is an awareness of her students’ needs and interests.

Students likely felt her enjoyment in teaching these authors, and it may have indeed transferred to them. I come to this conclusion because she notes **the kids loved it!**

However, I am reminded that Vanessa also appears to select a relatively small number of Black/African American authors, and of those she mentions, they are shorter texts. In Diane’s case, she could only recall one Black/African American author, Toni Morrison, and she could not remember the title of the text. Vanessa’s story and the texts she selects touch on Afrocentricity lightly. Mazama’s (2001) words might help to explain why Diane’s and even Vanessa’s light selection of Afrocentric texts and strong affinity for Eurocentric texts could be perceived as problematic. Mazama (2001) argues:

Afrocentricity contends that our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the Western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks. . . . Our failure to recognize the roots of such ideas in the European cultural ethos has led us, willingly or unwillingly, to agree to footnote status in the White man’s book. (p. 387)

The intention and thought Vanessa put into selecting texts by African American authors along with Eurocentric authors is a starting point to enacting a more Afrocentric curriculum in AP; however, the influence of her colonial Caribbean roots and views on race where she is to some extent **colorblind** (her words) demonstrate a difference in our views and approaches to the course.

When Vanessa realized that her Black/African American students in the U.S. had a distinctly different experience from her upbringing in the Caribbean, she had a shift in her perspective. She admits initially, **“I couldn’t understand it because that was not my experience. And then when I started working in the United States, it came home even more to me, and I had to have a mind shift too. Like whole perspective shift. I could not say *I’m colorblind. I grew up in a mixed family.* No, I had to make that shift myself, and it was a conscious shift that there is no such thing as being colorblind.”** Perhaps Fournillier and Lewis’ (2010) words explaining their challenges with self-perception in contrast to the academy’s views of them as Afro-Caribbean scholars help to explain Vanessa’s perspective. They state, “In the Caribbean, we are not minorities and do not possess that dispassion of acceptance of being the other. In the United States, we are so perceived” (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010, p. 150). Coming from a majority Black country, others’ perceptions of them were markedly different from the Caribbean.

The importance of Vanessa’s epiphany cannot be underscored enough. Her realization and understanding of *how* she initially viewed her students – as the same as herself with her Caribbean upbringing – caused her to not consider the differences in her students’ surroundings and upbringing as opposed to her own – reinforcing her to be *colorblindness*. Although she did eventually make this mental adjustment, it was not immediate. Hackett and colleagues (2022) speak of “[c]ritical awareness of systems [which] . . . require examining oppressive power relations and structures within social while critical awareness of self requires examining one’s own intersectional identity, privileges, biases, and experiences with oppression” (p. 5) in reference to teacher education. I agree, and would argue it is also necessary for experienced teachers to engage in such self-examination. I viewed Vanessa’s epiphany as an opportunity for self-examination. Furthermore, traces of her colonial education and its influence seemed to permeate her curricula

choices and pedagogical practices. To explain, though Vanessa became aware of how her students' experiences differed from hers, she did not necessarily see a need to completely overhaul her approach to AP English. Through tweaks here and there, a dash of diversity, and a dollop of Black/African American literary texts now and again, she seemed satiated.

I believe this might be one of the most important teachings I took from our conversations. My focus or even obsession with what I might be doing wrong denies the possibilities of what I may be doing right, and my conversations with these women allowed me to see that for the first time. I certainly have not arrived and do not hold myself above these women, because I recognize their home environments provided them with a different view of themselves. However, I do give myself credit for acknowledging the tensions and discomfort I feel which has urged me to take strides toward a more Afrocentric approach to teaching AP English. It was the inspiration for my inquiry (Sultan, 2019). To elaborate, through Vanessa's approach to the teaching of AP, I have realized that my teaching doesn't have to be all of nothing to be counted; however, the selection of texts in and of itself is not enough. Admittedly neither woman indicated when we began talking that they have an Afrocentric approach to teaching the course. Yet, there is some indication that both see a need to add more diversity among the list of authors they teach – Black/African American authors specifically. Nonetheless, their limited selection of Black/African American texts seems to confirm Asante's (2007) argument claiming, "School curricula see Africans as guests" (p. 91), and both Vanessa's and Diane's curricular choices make Asante's assessment evident.

In my analysis of Vanessa's story, she seems to dismiss the importance of the role of her own racial and cultural identity. I attribute this to her words describing that she "**grew up in a mixed family.**" It may be the case that for her to highlight these differences is to scrutinize and

break from her family in ways that are uncomfortable or unsettling to her. It may also simply be the reality that in a Caribbean country, people identify as Caribbean first and foremost. This is a place where most of its residents are Black, and where those who are not Black identify as Caribbean, not as Caucasian, Asian, or the like. Race may not be the dividing factor it is here in the United States, despite the Caribbean's colonial past. Yet, both Vanessa's and later Diane's remarks make sense when I consider Vanessa's personal family make up and the makeup of the students Diane previously taught; they were mainly comprised of Spanish-speaking students. In other words, "informed and influenced by" (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010, p. 155) their Caribbean heritage, both Diane and Vanessa appear to view themselves as Caribbean and as such when they taught AP English did at first see a pressing need to adjust their perceptions of their Black or minoritized student nor the curricula they taught. In this sense, their presence within their American classrooms is never too far removed from their Caribbean roots despite their classification as voluntary immigrants (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) and the time and physical distance from their country of birth.

I wash and rinse the rice three or four times before placing it in the pot while Diane pours in the five cups of water, and Vanessa adds the peas. In our symphony of cooking and exactly on cue, we each add the next three required ingredients: salt, thyme, and spring onion. I make sure the fire is turned to high heat. Diane's response to my question about curricular choices is one that I can relate to on a very personal level. She talks about writing expectations when teaching a college-level course such as AP. I have always felt being an English teacher and the expectations for reading, grading, and commenting on students' writing was exhausting. For this reason, when Diane explains one of the catalysts for her decision to no longer teach AP, I felt her words

deeply. I have even gone so far as to say it is a *near-death experience*, and that is saying a lot considering I'm a mother of three!

Praise and Polish: Unrealistic Expectations. Diane articulates her thoughts regarding the exhausting and unrealistic expectations that were placed upon her as an AP English teacher. She says while teaching at a larger school, where there were three AP teachers including herself, she had 180 kids. **“At that school too, we had to grade essays with full feedback every week for 180 kids. And at the end of my first year there, half of the kids didn't take the AP exam. And so, like it was a waste of time, in my book, because I can't be putting that much out. And so, we fought against it. We got to the point where if you [students] take the course, you had to take the class [exam].”**

Diane explains further how the students **“wanted to have the AP course on their record** (i.e. transcripts), **but they weren't putting out the effort, and so they switched me to teaching a college placement English course where if you're going to one of the community colleges there . . . if you took my English class, and you pass it with at least a 'C,' you didn't have to take the entrance exam.”** Being a hardworking teacher who values quality teaching and wanting to see the fruits of her efforts in students' scores, Diane says, **“I don't like to be teaching a tested course, and I'm not getting kids passing. If they don't pass, I think it's reflecting on me as well. My kids don't pass, I'm a part of it.”** I can see myself in her response. I, in what I might describe as true Caribbean fashion, want to do a good job, and I want my students' scores to reflect it; however, I remind myself that the test is not always the best measure of students' learning. I guess it's the distinctive Caribbean nature to aim for excellence that I see both within me and within Diane's story of her teaching experience. Consistent with heuristic inquiry, I recognize these feelings as “tacit-intuitive awarenesses” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 52). We appear

to share similar beliefs in this manner. We all seem to value education as our academic accomplishments show.

For me, Caribbean excellence is academic achievement, high standards, and making our families and ourselves proud. Likewise, other scholars such as Fournillier and Lewis (2010) touch on this concept of striving for excellence which appears to be ingrained in many people immigrants from the Caribbean. Diane, Vanessa, and I, also share an appreciation of the value of reading, writing, and analytical skills for the AP English students we teach. Diane says, **“I would add having a high moral compass as well as I was taught that in order to excel we should not compromise our morals.”** Vanessa concurs and says, **“I like the definition, and I also agree with Diane.”** We collectively agree with this vision and definition of excellence, and it may explain why our conversation and collaboration at times feel seamless.

Returning to Diane’s story of her insane workload, she provides more details. Since the school expectation was that Diane **“had to do give a praise, and you had to give something that was to be polished. So, you had to do two things on all the paragraphs, not just one, so you had to go through and identify words that they could switch to elevate their vocabulary. It was, it was an intense school . . . some of the kids in that class really really pushed for it, but they would be throwing all these football players in there. It was not fair.”** Her frustration with the unrealistic expectations is apparent in her exasperated tone.

Stories such as these along with parents’ challenging texts are some of the reasons why Diane has made the **decision to no longer teach AP**. I understand. AP, as we have taught it, is heavily focused on reading, writing, and analysis of literary texts. However, as a current AP reader, meaning for the past three summers, I have been invited to score AP Literature exams, I know what AP readers are told as we score hundreds of thousands of tests annually. At the AP

reading which occurs every summer after students have taken the exam, when evaluating students' writing, the emphasis is on rewarding students for what they do well instead of a minimum number of comments per paragraph. We are told to score *not* comment or grade. Reliance on the rubric to assess students' writing and training to do so are the focus of the first day of the reading. Thus, I view Diane's narrative about her previous school's expectations for grading as out of sync with the College Board's training for AP English readers.

Life in the AP classroom be like—. When I taught the course, I learned to let the AP rubrics do the work of commenting for me rather than to spend an exorbitant amount of time writing on students' papers. I also wonder what happens when Black/African American AP teachers like Diane stop teaching the course, who replaces them when Black/African American teachers are already so few? What happens when committed Black/African American AP teachers who hold high standards like Diane and Vanessa aren't in those classrooms anymore? Conceivably, their sheer presence as Black teachers to some extent may have been sufficient. Why? Based on their self-described teaching philosophies and beliefs, they appear to be "warm-demanders" (Irvine & Fraser, 1998) which the scholars attribute to Vasquez (1988). Perhaps for some of their students, learning from either woman meant their students had a teacher whose life experiences and expectations challenged what they believed or thought they could do. This might be students' beliefs about who an AP teacher could or should be or what a Black/African American teacher expects of them as students. Certainly, representation within the AP English teaching field matters, but we must move beyond mere representation. Both women described their expectations of excellence earlier in the day. As I recall, Diane said, **"My teaching philosophy is borne on the premise that each child is gifted with special abilities and that results come from the efforts that are invested,"** and for Vanessa, she said, **"If I had to state my teaching**

philosophy in only six words, it would be: relevant, rigorous, authentic, student-centered, flexible, fun.”

I have turned down the fire on the stove to medium heat and added the coconut milk to the water. The oxtail is cooking, and the mouthwatering fragrance makes it difficult not to want to eat something, so we each share out a small plate of our favorite foods from what we've prepared so far and eat a small portion. We savor the taste of our progress and momentarily indulge in the fruits of our labor. It's funny that Mumma was such a great cook of meat considering my entire life I only knew her to be a vegetarian. Long before it was the in-vogue trend that it is today, she made virtually every single Caribbean dish, plus many others from a variety of cultures and countries, into a vegetarian version. I argue, you do not have to share precisely the same experiences or beliefs as another person or group of people to appreciate their experience or learn from them or even empathize with them.

In this same vein, both Diane and Vanessa's cultural backgrounds are vastly different from their previous AP English students; however, they each indicated that they recognized the impact of these cultural differences. Diane expressed empathy when she spoke of how **“we are placed in certain boundaries, and sometimes we have to be so mindful of what we say, and how we act.”** To me, her words are an indication of the fact that no matter our past experiences, we all face challenges, and she took this into consideration when she taught AP. Hence, her words are an indication of her warmth even in the face of her demand that students meet her high expectations.

She went on to say, **“And so, with everything I do, I know we're talking about the nature of African Americans and so forth, but one of my favorite quotes is from F. Scott Fitzgerald, and it talks about being inclined to reserve judgment, and that's what I do. I don't**

go about criticizing, and I think this comes with time; because, perhaps ten years ago, I didn't feel this way, but now for me, I live an authentic self. And I live it for me not for others." Through her words, Diane indicates a level of confidence as she is in a place (*djed*) in her life her previous AP students (being teenagers) had not likely reached yet. Some high schools students can be filled with teenage angst and riddled with self-doubt. This makes being authentically themselves challenging; they still are discovering their identities. However, Diane also shows, she tried to refrain from judging her previous AP students even though their past was different from hers. Likewise, Vanessa expresses elements of compassion and understanding for her Black/African American previous AP students when speaking about her approach to her students, she says, **"I had to have a mind shift too."** Their awareness is an important starting point to bridge the cultural differences between themselves as Black Caribbean-born AP English teachers and their Black/African American AP students.

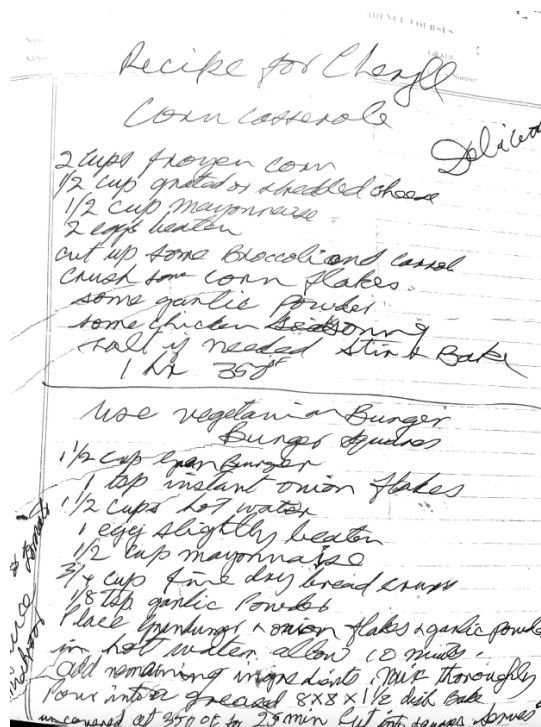
Mumma's way or the highway. Mumma's alternative perspective on food calls to mind a recipe for Corn Casserole that I mentioned to the two women who have joined me today in this meal preparation collaboration. Quite often people view those who are from the Caribbean as uniform and monolithic. However, this could not be any further from the truth. Caribbeans, Americans, Africans, Canadians – Black people in the diaspora may share in the moniker, but as much as they may be united in certain aspects, they are unique in others. They have their perspectives, beliefs, and understandings, and I found this to be true of Diane and Vanessa when it came to their beliefs about the role of race and their own cultural identities as Black AP English teachers.

~ Then ~

It was Mumma's Biblical faith which was deeply rooted in a health message that made her come home and unexpectedly announce to my mother and her siblings one day when she was a teenager: *We're no longer going to be eating meat!* Her beliefs about food came from the *Bible*, and so there was no changing her mind. It provided her with a different view of eating and healthful food – a view tied to her religious beliefs. For my mother and her siblings, there was no discussion of the matter. What Mumma said was set in stone. Mumma's journey to vegetarianism became theirs too, and that was just the way it was.

~ Now ~

4. Alternative/Vegetarian option: Corn Casserole



“Alligator lay egg, but him no fowl. **Translation:** The alligator lays eggs, but he is not a fowl (Beckwith) **Explanation:** Never view a subject from one point only” (Jamaican Proverbs, n.d.)

All heads are the same, but not all thoughts are the same

~ Ghanaian proverb

In preparation for this dish, Vanessa grabs the bag of frozen corn from the refrigerator freezer, Diane begins grating half a cup of shredded cheese, and I beat the two eggs and measure out the half cup of mayonnaise necessary for the vegetarian casserole. Next, Vanessa measures out two cups of the frozen corn, Diane cuts up the fresh broccoli, and then washes and slices the carrots before cutting them up too. After checking on the oven temperature, I gather the seasonings we'll need: garlic powder, chicken seasoning, and a few other spices. We crush up the cornflakes and then combine all the ingredients in a large mixing bowl before transferring it to a casserole dish and placing it inside the warm oven.

When I began this day of cooking and conversation with Diane and Vanessa, I had my own beliefs and ideologies about teaching AP English as a Black/African American high school English teacher. Through our talks and the stories, Diane and Vanessa relayed, I have come to see alternative perspectives because of their philosophies which are different from my own. When I asked Diane about her beliefs when it comes to teaching AP particularly as a Black/African American teacher, and whether her identity or race play any role, she tells me something I didn't expect.

Role of race in teaching AP. Diane says, “I wouldn't say that my race plays a role, but in certain instances, I see where it's [the curriculum] not balanced. There's no balance in the – if you know, it's been a while, but normally going through an AP test packet, the piece – the work that's there you know you may see a few pieces by a Latino writer, you know, the passages that they read. . . I've seen passages that were used that were not written by any African American writers. I know there are books, you know, Toni Morrison, Zora Neal Hurston . . . *The Invisible Man*? I know it was there at one point; I don't know if

it's still covered." In this teaching situation Diane describes, her students were mainly Hispanic students. This may be why the need to include Black/African American authors was not as important to her. However, her comments seem to diminish the importance of race or cultural background or at the very least view it as not a high priority. Despite this reality, Diane like Vanessa downplays the importance of her race and cultural background to her approach in teaching AP. What this may explain is why including a more diverse set of texts was not as big of a concern for her. Furthermore, she says "**But I didn't see a balance in the materials, and then it would make me think that perhaps, you know we're not pushing our African American kids hard enough . . .**" Her words tell me two things: 1) she does have some critique of the curricula and 2) she sees her minoritized students' potential to be pushed harder. This second point relates to the theme of her asset-based beliefs in her previous Black/African American and minoritized students.

While teaching at the small charter school, Diane expressed a belief in students' ability to learn. I asked her about what she believes might motivate an AP teacher today to teach AP. She responds with, "**I would say the level of rigor that's there . . . but the kids who have the potential to go higher and do better; you should be as engaged with them as often as possible to show that we're doing something here that they can take and be used elsewhere to be successful in their writing or be it talking or rhetoric – whatever they're doing. They can expand on that. When I had kids that were totally engaged, you know, you could feel it. There's a difference. You feel it in the classroom that this group of kids that's coming in here for this period – it takes learning to another level. And you appreciate that, and they appreciate it as well.**"

I can hear the sense of excitement and enjoyment in Diane's voice as she recalls teaching

AP English to students who were engaged. Additionally, she tells me **“I realized early on that in order to get students engaged, be it through a written medium or discussion, they had to read. Luckily, then, I had true autonomy of my classroom. Days would be spent with students sitting quietly doing nothing but reading. During these periods of reading, I too sat and read quietly, doing no other work at that time. By doing this I showed my students how invested I was in their educational pursuits . . . I didn’t use that as an excuse to not be as equally engaged as they were.** Her words highlight two themes: a strong work ethic and a positive perception (Ladson-Billings, 1995) of her students’ capabilities. I see these themes because she describes modeling the act of reading for her students which lets me know that she doesn’t simply tell her students reading is important, but she shows it takes work and an investment of time. Secondly, she uses the phrase **invested . . . in their educational pursuits** which lets me know she believes and views them as capable learners, and readers.

I also notice that she does not seem focused on the cultural identity of her AP students, nor does she appear to feel her own cultural identity plays a significant role in her previous teaching experiences. Yet, for me, teaching AP English means centering my students’ cultural identities as well as addressing the imbalance of cultural representation in texts. It is what I have grappled with as a Black AP English teacher. I know from our earlier chatter that Diane’s previous AP students were predominantly Spanish-speaking, but based on her descriptions, she did have some Black/African American students too. Like Diane, I also enjoy the engagement that comes with teaching AP students because we get to delve deeply into literary texts. Vanessa’s response to the question of whether her identity plays a role in teaching AP to her majority African American students at a private school is an unconventional perspective – just as Mumma’s

decision to stop eating meat was an alternative viewpoint – Vanessa’s words provide a similar sentiment in that she is confident in who she is and undeterred by others views of her.

Who we are. After checking on the casserole in the oven, Vanessa’s answer to my question about the role her racial identity plays in teaching AP English is **“Yes and no, and I’ll tell you why. I know this can be a sensitive subject (Laughs). I did not grow up thinking of myself as Black or mixed or whatever. I grew up in the Caribbean, so Caribbeans are Black, white, they’re Chinese, they’re Indian, they’re brown, but they’re all Caribbean. So, when I was on an island in the mid-Atlantic is when it started. It came home to me that this is a – I mean, I travelled all my life. Came to the United States . . . but living it is different. And it was on an island in the mid-Atlantic that it started coming home to me. The island was something like 60/40, so 60% Black and 40% white with people who were still at the *Yes Massa stage*.”** She ends with **“So, yes and no. I realized that I had to make a conscious effort with these African American children. My experience was different, and their experience was not my experience.”** She is affirming Fournillier and Lewis’ (2010) thoughts on minority-ness. In their scholarship, they discussed how they also continued to hold the “majority dispositions [they] brought” (p. 150) as Afro-Caribbeans working and researching within the academy. Vanessa appears to hold a similar disposition which differs from her previous AP English students.

I Interpret Vanessa’s choice diction of **“effort”** to mean conscious effort. Because Vanessa became cognizant of the fact that her students’ experiences differed from her own, she could no longer teach in a **colorblind** way. Furthermore, in her own words she confirms my earlier suspicion that many people from the Caribbean identify as Caribbean first and foremost. She had to consider her students’ environment when she taught in the mid-Atlantic. Though they

were in the majority, her students, according to Vanessa had a subservient mindset. She uses the phrase “*Yes Massa*” to describe their mentality. In this specific teaching situation (i.e. in the mid-Atlanta), she is explicitly saying she identified as “**Caribbean**” whereas it appears her students’ mentality did not reflect the same sense of self-pride Vanessa appears to possess. The students saw themselves as Black which it appears they interpreted as less than. Moreover, Vanessa’s story exemplifies Anzaldua’s (2012) observation, “we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates” (p. 100), and her cultural experience was not consistent with that of her students. In her experience, she did not have a minority mindset, but this was not the same for her Black students. Furthermore, her epiphany is consistent with Asante’s (2007) concept of identity as “cultural identity” without which “[you] are lost. You can no more divest yourself of your race or your culture than you can stop breathing oxygen and still be alive” (p. 88).

Vanessa’s tale seems to confirm Asante’s words.

Her realization required her to consider what being Black meant for her students and respond differently to this awareness. Previously, when discussing the Black/African American students she taught at a private school in the northeast, she notes “**in a country where your race matters and seeing how African American students will at times look down on themselves because of what has been placed on them . . . my environment in which I have lived spurs me to say you know, *Hang in there. Give them the best of what you’ve got, and it will hit home to them one day.***” It is evident Vanessa is demarcating the distinction between her upbringing as opposed to that of her students. She says, “**it will hit home to them one day**” as in teachers’ efforts to reach Black/African American students who are strapped with the burden of racism will eventually persevere. Critical literacy theorists and proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy are likely to disagree that persistence alone is sufficient to address students’ negative

self-perceptions and systemic racism. Instead, they would concur with Afrocentrists that only through human agency and liberation can such efforts reap the rewards of freedom.

When I consider Vanessa's commentary, her words appear to simplify things. Her view of continuing to do more of the same – meaning solely having a sense of persistence – will eventually yield the results of students coming to some moment of enlightenment seems a bit simplistic. It assumes that students will magically realize the sum of their teachers' efforts in delivering the curriculum was for their benefit. In my view, it isn't that simple. I think as an educator who desires her students to do more than read and analyze texts and instead effectively read the word and the world (Freire, 2017), being more critical, taking up issues of social justice, and enacting culturally relevant pedagogy require an intentionality and concerted effort. I take a cup from the cabinet and pour the chocolate tea I began brewing earlier. Adding condensed milk and some grated nutmeg, I blow the swirls of white smoke which rise from the cup.

Also brewing in my mind are my thoughts about what I have learned and the newly constructed knowledge I have gained through today's conversations. As the timer in the oven rings, it sounds the alarm to my own story. Diane and Vanessa's outsider perspective concerning their students is like my own experiences with Black students in the AP classroom. Being Canadian in many ways put me at odds with my African American students not to mention also being of Caribbean descent. Both Vanessa's and Diane's ideologies say to me they did not necessarily feel compelled to place their cultural identities at the forefront of their teaching lives because of their upbringing. The Caribbean surroundings may have allowed them to be secure in their identities. Perhaps the challenges they faced growing up had little to do with race, unlike the Black/African American students they encountered as CBI AP English teachers.

Whereas my own mother's high school memories in Canada as a teenager are steeped in stories of being taunted for her thick Caribbean accent, speaking in a dialect (i.e. patois), being asked if she climbed trees, and teased for her natural hair, Diane and Vanessa did not relay any such similar tales. Admittedly, they attended high school in the Caribbean not the U.S. while my mother attended high school in Canada. I recognize that this does not automatically, or necessarily mean Diane and Vanessa had no such experiences; however, based on the data and stories they relayed, I do not see evidence of this. The differences with their education and life experiences solidify the concept of Blackness as not monolithic. To demonstrate this idea, Hudley (2016) in describing research on Black students asserts "too often [they are] depicted as a monolithic group, and immigration history is ignored" (p. 225). Diane and Vanessa's perspectives – though they are from an adult vantage point – demonstrate variances in viewpoints as Black women from the Caribbean who immigrated to the U.S. as adults. Their accents and dialects, worldviews, and upbringing differ from their Black/African American students or in Diane's case Spanish speaking students and even my own mother's Caribbean experiences. There even appears to be a difference between the participants themselves because Vanessa came from a more affluent family with political connections, but Diane did not indicate the same in her stories of growing up. Just as for me, my accent, cultural views, and experiences are different from the majority Black/African American students I taught. I have been called out for sounding White, and my students made me aware of just *how* different I was from them.

It would seem Diane and Vanessa both view their high standards and expectations of rigor within their classrooms as sufficient to meet the needs of their students to some extent. I make this inference based on Diane's self-reported use of texts from Black/African American authors, and Vanessa's epiphany that she needed to make more of an "effort" with her students.

Although her self-described list of texts by Black/African American authors was more extensive than Diane's list, neither woman made mention of social justice, critical literacy, nor culturally relevant pedagogy. It was only through my analysis of Vanessa's AP English curriculum documents that I saw evidence of Afrocentricity through collectivity, student agency, and facets of social justice. Our conversations provided evidence of only cursory elements of critical literacy through their selection of Black/African American authors. They described themselves as "warm-demanders" (Irvine & Fraser, 1998) who did not compromise their high standards. Through an asset-based positive approach, they set the bar of an expectation of excellence both for themselves and their students

With the casserole cooling on the kitchen counter, alongside it sits the oxtail, rice and peas, escovitch fried fish, and hominy porridge. They are all safely placed on trivets of varying sizes and materials. Our conversation has ended and we're ready to feast. My mother peeks her head in and says, *Smells good*. She too is ready to eat. Though I am not completely satisfied with what I discovered, I better understand these two women's particular experiences are representative of *their* lives and not necessarily all Black Caribbean Immigrant AP teachers' experiences. As they say in the Caribbean, *A so it goh!* [patios for *That's the way it is!*]. The variety of dishes we've prepared and the way we've prepared them are unique to Caribbean culture and have ancestral ties to Africa. Similarly, Diane's and Vanessa's past experiences teaching AP are unique.

Because of our shared similarities with teaching AP English, our Caribbean roots, and our love of literature, I have gathered us here today. My perspective is an emic one as an insider to many hidden gems distinctly Caribbean in nature. I also have the emic perspective through my shared experience of teaching AP English Literature and AP English Language. Many of the understandings we shared were intuitive, unspoken, and innate to our shared cultural heritage

(Moustakas, 1990). However, my concern with being a CBI AP English teacher who enacts critical literacy through not only my selection of literary texts but also my delivery of the curriculum is one way in which I differ from Diane and Vanessa. It brings me outside of the insider view I hold in a significant way.

We are all around the same age (from the early fifties to the sixties), but maybe my upbringing in a predominantly White Eurocentric country has made me more acutely aware of a need to address issues of race, and European hegemony which can be a part of the prescribed AP curricula. I wonder if being raised in a country where you are surrounded by others who look like you and who represent a wide array of social, economic, and educational experiences is the key difference? I ponder this and many other thoughts as we dish out the food on our eagerly awaiting plates, and I thank them both for being so frank in sharing their personal and professional experiences as CBIs former AP English teachers. Though our conversations did not go as I had anticipated, I fell full. I don't want to let any of the knowledge I've gained go to waste. Thus, I have recorded their stories here to be forever memorialized in this fictional world.

Epilogue

This fictionalized kitchen narrative was inspired by the real stories Diane and Vanessa revealed to me in our virtual semi-structured interviews and Kitchen-Table Talk (Bell et al., 2022). Both women teach at the same suburban high school in the southeastern part of the country and knew each other before I met them virtually. It was through our discussions that I discovered several strings of attachment to the women: we are all Caribbean or of Caribbean descent, teachers in the same school district, have previously taught AP English Language and Composition as well as AP English Literature and Composition, are immigrants to the United States, and mothers to Black children.

Upon reading Joy Harjo's moving verse and considering my love for my grandmother's culinary and cultural wisdom, I decided to "move" my participants from their virtual setting into another virtual space: the fictional and figurative kitchen which re-presented our KTT (Bell et al., 2022). We imaginatively "cooked," communed, and consumed our shared and disparate experiences. Furthermore, in literature, "**whenever people eat or drink together, it's communion** [emphasis in original]," and "Generally, eating with another is a way of saying, 'I'm with you, I like you, we form a community together'" (Foster, 2003, p. 8). Therefore, in this narrative, we collectively feed off each other's knowledge.

Both Esquivel's novel and Harjo's poem were infused with metaphors of food. Harjo uses the kitchen table as a metaphor for life with all its trials and tribulations, "a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun" (line 12), and as the epi-center of our homes and the various communal worlds in which we live. In the time and space continuum (Asante, 2007), the kitchen existed before we were born and will continue after we die; "So it has been since creation, and it / will go on" (lines 2-3). Likewise, Diane and Vanessa had life experiences before becoming teachers in the U.S., and they will continue with their lives as their careers progress (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a). Through their narratives I illuminated several themes, immersed myself in the data, and arrived at ambiguous rather than definitive answers which are all part of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Sultan, 2019). The kitchen is a place where decisions are made "Wars have begun and ended" (line 13) and represents the cyclical nature of life. I represented the kitchen's importance to my grandmother by discussing her many uses for it (i.e. paying bills, cooking, etcetera). In many homes, the kitchen is its heart, and in my fictionalized narrative, the kitchen was a classroom for me to learn of my participants' experiences as we paid respect to our collective cultural knowledge – cooking foods from the Caribbean.

The larger findings of this qualitative narrative inquiry are tied to several themes. In chapter five I discuss these findings in detail; however, as I close out this chapter, I note the salient themes which emerged. Themes included: 1) a strong work ethic, 2) asset-based beliefs, and 3) rigorous content. Each of these themes related to different parts of my two research questions with some overlap. Next, I discuss the research findings.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Considering the issues of underrepresentation of Black educators in teaching and research and the Eurocentric focus of AP curricula, the purpose of this study was to understand the teaching and life experiences of two Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) teachers (Fultz, 2004; Carver-Thomas, 2018; Milewski & Gillie, 2002). As past AP English teachers, the participants' cultural backgrounds offered the field of research insight into this underresearched population. This inquiry occurred in the Devon County School district in the southeastern United States. Both participants – Diane and Vanessa – were veteran English teachers who currently teach at Meadow Valley High School located in the southernmost part of the county. The study participants were middle-aged, identified as Black and Caribbean women, and were born outside of the U.S.

Though my involvement in this inquiry did not necessarily rise to the level of co-participant, I brought myself into the work through interspersed personal anecdotes, my use of narrative inquiry research methodology (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000a), valuing the Caribbean and African traditions of orality along with storytelling (Asante, 1998), and drawing on ancestral knowledge in my re-presentation of the data. My cultural connections to study participants, utilization of my grandmother's recipes (i.e. literacy artifacts), setting of the kitchen space, and application of Caribbean culinary methods served as metaphors for communal learning and heritage knowledge (King, 2015). Moreover, this study pushes back against dominant conceptions of what qualitative research can and should be, and it centered people of African descent by recognizing issues of concern to African people (Mazama, 2001).

I next present the findings of this study as a series of contradictions or tensions. I do so to underscore the incongruencies that might be attributed to the competing identities of this study's participants. Their identities included being Caribbean-born educators, coming from countries

where they were the majority, and teaching Black and minoritized American students a Eurocentric curriculum. To elaborate, though initially the two CBI educators did not appear to wrestle with the same internal turmoil I did – and that was the impetus for my inquiry – their words juxtaposed against the underlying meanings provided a window into four significant incongruencies. What follows is my discussion of the tensions I found.

Tension 1: Colorblindness and Asset-Based Beliefs

In this inquiry, study participants' cultural identities – formed in their Caribbean home countries – were vital to their grounding or *djed* (Asante, 2007). As past AP English teachers, they displayed views about diversifying the AP curricula in different ways. To illustrate, Vanessa discussed her time teaching on an island in the mid-Atlantic where she described the mentality of her students as “Yes, Massa.” She became cognizant that her students' experiences were different from hers when she was faced with what she viewed as their subservient mindset. Being raised in a Caribbean culture with a majority mentality was contrasted with students' negative self-perceptions as she described it. This presented an initial predicament for Vanessa as she was unfamiliar with such mindsets. Her students' views of “minority-ness” (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010, p. 150) did not square with her majority mentality growing up in the Caribbean. This caused her to realize she could not remain “colorblind” – a view she held as a member of a mixed-race family. Not only did Vanessa discover this subservient mindset when she taught in the mid-Atlantic, but it was present in her American teaching context too. For example, she further observed, “But having lived in the United States . . . in a country where your race matters and seeing how African American students will at times look down on themselves because of what has been placed on them” (see Appendix K). Her epiphany resulted in her consciously adopting a mindset shift in her approach to her students; she did not relent. Instead, when asked

what advice she might offer to other AP teachers, she said “Hang in there. Give them the best of what you’ve got, and it will hit home to them one day” (see Appendix K). Her words are evidence of her positive view and asset-based beliefs. Thus, this first tension addressed both of my research questions. The two participants’ ideologies and beliefs were shaped by their cultural background and life experiences. Their upbringing in a majority environment seemed to provide them with positive self-perceptions, and the life experiences they described seemed absent of racism. Additionally, both teachers appeared to mirror their colonial educational backgrounds in their curriculum design and implementation as past AP English teachers.

Likewise, Diane’s Caribbean cultural identity played an integral role in this study. For her, it seemed to impede any urgent need to revamp her teaching of the prescribed AP curricula. Although she did not use the word “colorblind,” she described a desire for more “balance” (see Appendix I). At first glance, this might seem to indicate her design of the AP curricula in *her* classroom would offer the balance she sought. Instead, when she discussed the texts she utilized, she appeared to have trouble remembering the Black/African American titles and authors she utilized. However, once it came to canonical texts, her response was markedly different. To provide context, she indicated her race did not factor into her teaching which I would argue was a form of colorblindness. Yet, when she discussed the AP curricula, and commented, “passages that were used . . . [were not] written by any African American writers” (see Appendix I). Her words seemed to indicate she took issue with this lack of representation. In this sense, I viewed her concern for more balance in AP curricula, but belief her cultural and racial identity were immaterial to it as a disconnect.

Although Diane specifically named Toni Morrison and Zora Neal Hurston as examples of Black authors she remembered teaching in AP, these recollections were fuzzy at best. When she

identified specific titles of literary selections, not only were the majority comprised of authors and texts from the literary canon: Steinbeck, *Crime and Punishment*, and *Heart of Darkness*, but they also came to her mind with seeming ease. In the research literature, examples exist demonstrating how teachers can walk the tightrope of the canon versus diverse texts. Specifically, the literature of Dallacqua and Sheahan (2020) demonstrated how teachers can pair canonical texts with contemporary ones. In their study, students read *Hamlet* alongside *Yummy* – a graphic novel. Diane’s mental roadblock or curricular blind spot in her thinking seemed to indicate dysconscious (King, 2015) thinking when it came to Black authors and texts. This is one of those instances when the silences and what was not said may be telling.

Correlated with this first tension of colorblindness and blind spots was the theme of asset-based beliefs towards students. The connection became clearer under further scrutiny of the data. To elaborate, despite Diane’s blind spots, she did not flinch at the idea of her minoritized students reading challenging texts which indicated her belief in their ability to handle such rigor. Yet, including texts that aligned with either her cultural identity or that of her minoritized (i.e. Hispanic) students seemed of less concern. I viewed her curricular blind spot as a missed opportunity. Diane could have possibly tapped into her students’ cultural background or showcased her own cultural identity in her selection of texts which by her own admission was imbalanced; however, she did not.

Thus, in my assessment, Vanessa and Diane demonstrated limited evidence of drawing on their cultural identities in their curriculum design and implementation, though Vanessa appeared to use more Black/African American texts and authors than Diane. This meant for the two CBI educators who were a part of this inquiry, they privileged the canon. Additionally, their

asset-based beliefs (of their Black and minoritized students' academic abilities) were somewhat tempered by their colorblindness to the racial and cultural identities of their students.

In brief, with this first tension, both CBI participants appeared to concomitantly hold paradoxical beliefs as it pertained to teaching advanced English curricula. Diane's belief in her students' "potential" was contrasted with her self-described curricular blind spot in that she did not appear to recognize how her centering of the canon when she taught minoritized students might be problematic, and the canon was dominant in both CBI teachers' classrooms. On the other hand, their ideologies, and beliefs about students' capabilities in AP English led to their asset-based beliefs in their students' academic abilities.

Tension 2: Canonical Texts and Implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In my review of existing scholarship, I found several examples of teachers who have enacted the canon in critical ways (Acosta, 2018; Acosta, 2019; Ebarvia et al., 2020) as well as countermeasures in educators' and researchers' approaches to teaching ELA (Ball, 1995; Lee, 1995; Toliver, 2019). The British colonial education system which is commonplace in the Caribbean (Brock, 1982; Waters, 1999) and of which both CBI participants were recipients does not sufficiently speak to the identities of students of African descent nor *all* students for that matter. It is problematic because it claims a singular view and upholds the idea of universal knowledge (Asante, 2003; Asante, 2007; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Weedon, 1987). Perhaps most importantly, it fails to recognize other non-westernized ways of knowing and constructing knowledge (Burr, 2003). It was somewhat surprising for me to find few examples in my data of teacher-participants employing culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In some cases, teachers' treatment of curricula was surface level (Newell et al., 2009), the inclusion of critical texts was thoughtless (Berchini, 2016), or curricula were guided by the test

(Anagnostopoulos, 2003). Diane's interviews where she recalled texts she previously taught and Vanessa's curriculum documents served as examples from this study where the participants failed to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy.

As noted earlier, Diane remembered assigning *Crime and Punishment* to her high school AP English students, but there was no indication in her interview she viewed this challenging text as too difficult for them – a sign of the theme of rigor that appeared throughout the data. I would argue, many AP English teachers might balk at the idea of assigning the text to high-schoolers not simply because of its difficulty but also because of its lack of cultural relevance. Considering the increasing racial diversity of America's schools (Apple, 2008; Au, 1993; Bransford et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Graham et al., 2019; Nasir et al., 2016; Zernokleyev, 2013), seizing and more importantly sustaining students' interest is hard enough. By possibly pairing Eurocentric literary selections with culturally relevant ones as the scholarship of Dallacqua and Sheahan (2020) shows, it could provide one solution to the either-or dilemma. In my opinion, this tension suggested a conflict, because Diane centered the canonical text, yet she did not take issue with its lack of cultural relevance.

Conversely, Vanessa's incorporation of Black/African American authors, based on her interviews, was more purposeful and expansive than Diane's. Though Vanessa's integration of Afrocentricity was commendable, I do so with caution because upon further analysis of the data, I discovered a troubling pattern. These texts were either shorter in length or fell outside the regular school calendar year. For example, *Native Son* (a novel) was assigned as summer work, and the Afrocentric authors or texts such as "*Mulatto* by Langston Hughes . . . poems by Gwendolyn Brooks" and "*Sweat*" were all shorter selections (see Appendix J). The hidden message such curriculum design choices might send to students is Black authors only require cursory attention.

In the existing scholarship regarding Afro-Caribbean or Caribbean Black Immigrant (CBI) teachers, researchers discussed at length the influence of the European and British colonial education systems (Brock, 1982). People in the Caribbean as recipients of colonial education might also be inclined to replicate the methods and modes they were taught when they were students (Olan & Richmond, 2017). As teachers, the participants in this study relied on predominate modes of instruction and learning. Furthermore, they appeared to center European and canonical works. Considering extant research offered many examples of scholarship which rejected such modes (Ball, 1995; Lee, 1995; Toliver, 2019), twenty-first-century Black teachers do not have to be pigeonholed in their teaching. Even so, the influence of their colonial education was strong and seemingly bled through their implementation of AP English.

Vanessa's curriculum documents offered one example of the power of her colonial educational roots. By applying the matrix I created (see Appendix A) to the curriculum documents she provided, I noted limited evidence of resistance against the Eurocentric ways of knowing. To illustrate, her AP Literature Film Project (see Appendix B) and END OF YEAR PROJECT Photo Essay assignments (see Appendix R) were deceptive. The titles and language on the documents did allude to non-predominate modes of expression and means of assessment, but for the photo essay assignment, Eurocentric phrases such as "use of grammar & spellings" tempered others like "Evidence of critical literacy." In the end, students were required to "write a one-to-two-page reflection," which signaled a return to Westernized and predominate methods of expression. I thought about the possibilities that might exist if Vanessa chose to allow her students to orally present their reflections through rap or spoken word verse. Doing so would honor orality and employ Afrocentricity (Asante, 1998; Mazama, 2001). It was another missed opportunity in my view.

Diane also described her classroom as a site where Eurocentric patterns and ideals were reproduced. She discussed silent reading and described it fondly as, “Days would be spent with students sitting quietly doing nothing but reading. During these periods of reading I too sat and read quietly, doing no other work at the time” (personal communication May 6, 2023). Her words seemed harmless enough, but her description was reminiscent of Vanessa’s childhood story of *playing teacher* where she lined up toys. It also sounded like my games of school with my younger sister for its use of language which indicated predominate modes of learning (i.e. silent reading and students as passive learners). Thus, it privileged Eurocentric cultural knowledge. The point is, the issue with predominate education is its “traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside” (Dewey, 1938, p.18). This type of teaching environment seems cold and unwelcoming which was not the sense I got from either woman. They both appeared warm and inviting and expressed care for their students (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). Balanced with their warmth and care were high expectations and belief in rigor.

The participants held high expectations of themselves as well as their students. Diane exemplified this when she stated, “I don’t like to be teaching a tested course, and I’m not getting kids passing. If they don’t pass, I think it’s reflecting on me as well. My kids don’t pass, I’m a part of it (see Appendix I). It seemed she understood rigor was not just applied to her students but something she embraced. In her mind, their success was linked to her success. The research literature offered several studies which discussed “demanding instructional activities” (Lopez, 2011, p. 51) to engage students in addition to African American Pedagogical Excellence as in Acosta’s (2019) work. Teachers and researchers had like-minded views of their students.

Vanessa’s words about her decision to assign Black/African American author Richard Wright’s *Native Son* provided another illustration of a participant’s high expectations. She

excitedly described her feelings and students' engagement with the text by saying it was one of her "favorite books" although she knew "it [could] be a bit of you know a heavier reading, . . . the kids loved it. It ended up being . . . their go-to reference" (see Appendix J). Her observations about the text being "a heavier" reading were important for two reasons. First, Vanessa did not dilute her expectations of her Black AP English students despite their potential to struggle with it. Second, by using Wright's work, she was drawing on the rich Black literary canon versus the European canon. My optimism was mitigated by the fact that the students read the novel during the summer. Therefore, I am unsure of how much additional engagement they may have had with the text during class. I know based on her words and my previous experiences teaching the course, it was likely students' "go-to reference" because they may have frequently written about it in response to the free response essay questions used for timed-writing practice. Her inclusion of a text by a Black author during the summer leads me to wonder about the depth of discussion and analysis which occurred during class.

When asked to describe their teaching philosophies using six words, they either directly employed the term "rigor" or indirectly hinted at it. For example, Diane used the words "The Musings of a Relentless Educator" (personal communication May 6, 2023). She clarified what she meant by her use of the word "relentless" explaining she meant it in a positive sense. Likewise, Vanessa's six-word philosophy was "relevant, rigorous, authentic, student-centered, flexible, fun" (personal communication June 12, 2023). She outright used the term "rigorous" and the curriculum documents she provided supported this ideology. Even more than their six-word philosophies as evidence of their rigor were their descriptions of what that entailed in the implementation and design of the curriculum. The rigorous curriculum design of both participants demonstrated their high expectations for their students.

Celebrated in much of the literature were examples of Black excellence from the past (Fisher, 2009; Givens, 2021; Harris, 1992), present (Acosta et al., 2018; Acosta, 2019; Mosely, 2018), and future paths or possibilities (Toliver, 2019). Why might this be significant to Black teachers and more specifically to the CBI educators who were a part of this study? It provided a potential blueprint for their curriculum and design. However, critical literacy educators should seek to interrupt the historical mis-education to which Black/African American students were subjected (Woodson, 1933). Culturally relevant pedagogy paired with canonical texts, or even better the Black literary canon, is one such avenue. I argue that teaching half-truths or in the case of my study, having rigorous or high expectations absent of critical engagement is concerning. It leaves a gap in terms of criticality and identity development (Muhammad, 2017). Nonetheless, Ladson-Billings (1995) charged “Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities” (p. 476). It is the final part of her statement where I maintain the CBI educators fell short. Additionally, this tension between centering canonical texts and culturally relevant pedagogy is consistent with the research of Carrol (2017) who posited that “contemporary Black teachers’ pedagogy is centered less on racial uplift today than it was pre-*Brown* and in *Brown’s* immediate aftermath [emphasis in the original]” (p. 132). This is a somewhat shocking revelation. Yet my inquiry seems to substantiate Carrol’s claim.

To summarize this second tension, both women provided evidence of centering canonical literary texts – one more than the other – but simultaneously failed to draw on culturally relevant pedagogy. In the data, Vanessa’s curriculum documents provided limited examples of her attempts to infuse culturally relevant pedagogy, and Diane’s description of silent reading seemed out of step with racially and culturally diverse students’ needs. Their decisions to include

rigorous texts showed they had high expectations of their students, but Diane did so while still centering the European literary canon. When Vanessa opted to draw on the Black literary canon, she appeared to treat those texts as ancillary material. A caveat though is found with scholars such as Berchini (2016) who argued more is needed than simply providing or mandating literary selections from culturally diverse authors because it sends a message of inclusion “for inclusion’s sake” (p. 61). I concur.

Tension 3: Feeling Supported and Facing Impediments

A salient tension that emerged from the data was an incongruence between Diane’s and Vanessa’s words regarding the support they felt as AP English teachers in contrast with their self-described teaching experiences. Diane expressed feeling overwhelmed with her school’s expectations of grading, disappointed in some of the students in her AP classroom, and faced parent resistance to the curriculum. For Vanessa, she mentioned support but then discussed being left to fend for herself as a new AP English teacher. Because they essentially forged ahead and did what they needed to for their students, I viewed this tension as linked to the theme of a strong work ethic. I focus on the data related to Diane because she had three separate compelling examples of feeling supported yet facing impediments.

In one narrative, Diane discussed the amount of time she put into grading as her administration expected her to provide two pieces of feedback per paragraph on students’ writing. She was frustrated by the workload, but in her story, she never indicated she did not do what was expected of her. I attributed this to her strong work ethic. For another narrative, she remarked how football players were thrown into her class (see Appendix I). Since she took her responsibility to see students succeed on the test seriously, this was concerning for her. Diane explained it by stating, “I don’t like to be teaching a tested course, and I’m not getting kids passing. If they don’t

pass, I think it's reflecting on me as well" (see Appendix I). Next, her story about the parent battle over the Toni Morrison text, and how she along with the other AP English teachers at her school advocated for the text because it was on the list of AP texts. This was a telling example. The story provided evidence of impediments rather than support in her role as an AP English teacher. She said, "we fought against it. We got to the point where if you [students] take the course, you had to take the class [exam]" (see Appendix I). Diane intimated that her principal was not helpful in this situation and tended to cave to parents. Furthermore, it appeared that as a culmination of these impediments, Diane happily stopped teaching AP English. She explained how the students (i.e. football players) "wanted to have the AP course on their record [transcripts], but they weren't putting out the effort, and so they switched me to teaching a college placement English course" (see Appendix I). Rather than continue to face such dilemmas, she abandoned her teaching of the course.

Scholarship related to supports tended to address teacher support in terms of professional development (Mosely, 2018), or instructional models such as "*critical canon pedagogy (CCP)* [emphasis in original]" (Dyches, 2018a/2018b, p. 538). In one instance, the literature provided an example of extensive support for AP curriculum or instruction (Kyburg et al., 2007). To elaborate, the findings from Kyburg and colleagues' (2007) inquiry revealed "a complex web of interdependent relationships and factors" on four levels – the highest being the superintendent or district level and the lowest being teachers. The resulting effect was one principal created innovative programs – "a building network of AP teachers" – developed a program to hone students' skills, and "create[ed] a unique discussion group . . . to help male minority students participate in AP courses" (Kyburg et al., 2007, p. 197). By addressing supports at each of these various levels, it appeared to stave off impediments such as those the participants in my study faced.

Considering Diane's past experiences teaching AP, if the focus is on keeping parents happy, principals might dismiss a teacher's concerns about a parent's objections to AP course readings. When the focus is access to AP courses, it might lead to classes with students who are only there to pad their transcripts. Diane described the situation saying, "some of the kids in that class really really pushed for it, but they [administration] would be throwing all these football players in there. It was not fair" (see Appendix I). In the research I reviewed, apart from Kyburg and colleagues (2007), I found little discussion of supports for teachers connected to school level personnel making the lives of AP English teachers easier. Since a dearth of minority AP teachers exists (Milewski & Gillie, 2002), schools that falsely claim to support AP English teachers only to hamper them might explain the dearth of Black AP English teachers.

Tension 4: Celebrating Authenticity and Engaging in Gatekeeping

The final tension I noted in the data was regarding the teachers' view of themselves in contrast to the students whom they deemed suitable to take AP. While I have struggled with being true to myself in my teaching, they did not. Elsewhere, I have discussed how teaching AP English can mean being an island. Without peers in the building to bounce ideas off or discuss the curriculum, it can be lonely. After all, we are teaching a college-level course to high school juniors and seniors. Some of my uncertainties have resulted in my internal dilemma regarding being truer to myself in my teaching of AP to Black/African American students. For both women in this study, I did not gain the sense that they wrestled with similar feelings of self-doubt. If anything, they were both self-assured. This came to light when I inquired about the relationship between their cultural identities and teaching AP English.

In Diane's case, she stated "for me, authenticity in itself" (see Appendix K) is how she lives her life, and how she views her identity. Her words were in response to my question about

how she invokes her cultural identity into her teaching. Vanessa's statement of "I have never had to hide who I am as a person a teacher. . . I've been me for too long to not be me at this point in my very long life" (see Appendix K) showed her view on the topic. Upon closer examination of their responses, I found it interesting they tiptoed around the subject of race with Diane's cryptic words "I know we are placed within certain boundaries, and sometimes we have to be so mindful of what we say" (see Appendix K) echoing Vanessa's similar sentiments. Vanessa stated, "Yes sometimes – especially when we do things about culture . . . or something some bit of touchy subject may come up" (see Appendix K). What I admired in both participants' responses was they were unapologetic about who they are and how they show up as CBI teachers of Black/African American and minoritized students. What I found problematic was even though they welcomed authenticity in themselves, I was unsure whether or not it extended to their students.

Several scholars who have spoken to the idea of authenticity (Behizadeh et al., 2021; Fournillier & Lewis, 2010; Henke, 1997; King et al, 2019; Mosely, 2018). For example, directly linked to this study was the work of Fournillier and Lewis (2010). As Afro-Caribbean members of the academy, the researchers' cultural identities and experiences in secondary education were of relevance to the CBI educators in this inquiry. Though Diane and Vanessa are high school teachers, their experiences underscored Fournillier and Lewis' (2010) claim, "that authenticity is paramount" (p. 149) in navigating the academy – an ivory tower. In the research of Behizadeh and colleagues (2021), their application of authenticity was to writing in an English Language Arts methods course for teacher candidates, the concept of authenticity applied to the content and the study participant's feelings of hiding or wearing a mask. To some extent, this is how I have felt. The researchers used "*powerful writing pedagogy for adolescents (PWP-A)* [emphasis in original]" (p. 181) as a framework "to help teachers see alignment among evidence-based

approaches focused on improving writing quality . . . with the ultimate goal of increasing enactment of CCP [critical composition pedagogy]” (p. 182). I drew on the work of Behizadeh and colleagues here because I view one’s authenticity as a starting point for designing assignments which are equally as authentic and to which students might connect. The AP curriculum is a place where such authenticity certainly belongs. Yet in my study, despite both CBI participants’ strong beliefs about being authentic, when it came to their Black and minoritized AP English students’ access to the course, they used less celebratory language.

To provide context, they used contradictory language about gatekeeping access to AP classes. For Vanessa, an incongruency revealed in her interview transcripts pertained to her supposed openness to giving students opportunities “to try AP Language and Lit.” (see Appendix J) but simultaneously putting in place summer work as “a tester [to see if the student] can handle” the course. In this sense, her language appeared to indicate on the one hand, she desired to gatekeep students’ access to AP courses but at the same time not gatekeep. Perhaps, she was not aware of the dueling messages her words and subsequent curriculum design and practice generated. Furthermore, since she described her past students as Black/African American, her “tester” might prevent her Black students who wanted to take AP from taking the course. I considered whether she viewed potential Black/African American AP students as needing to *fit* a certain mold. Conceivably some of her potential students might not use Standard American English in their speaking or writing – meaning when those students were truly themselves they might not *fit* her vision of an AP English student. Because she did not specifically address her expectations of students’ language use, I only ponder these wonderings.

In the literature, several researchers discussed factors which might be attributed to AP course enrollment among Black students. For example, equity and access (Davis et al., 2015;

Whiting & Ford, 2009), low pass rates (Kolluri, 2018), along with course difficulty (Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017). I viewed the “tester” as related to equity and access. Teachers engaging in gatekeeping would certainly limit Black and minoritized students’ access to advanced curricula. It is especially concerning considering the current low numbers of Black AP teachers (Milewski & Gillie, 2002). It may be problematic if the few Black teachers who teach the courses engage in behaviors that might further hamper student cultural diversity based on ideas of who the *right* AP student is or should be. Notably, advanced English courses already suffer from a lack of racial and cultural diversity among students.

In Diane’s case, I would not say her words provided strong evidence of gatekeeping but rather, she implied AP English classrooms might have a particular *type* of student. For instance she discussed how when she taught the course at a large school, students such as football players were thrown in her class (see Appendix I). I got the sense that she believed the students did not care to be in the course, and she worried about their “scores” reflecting her teaching; she was displeased. Diane spoke in terms of cost-benefit as she discussed the amount of effort she put forth versus the lack of seriousness of the football players in her AP course. I wonder whether her frustrations were with a few of the players or if in her memories she grouped them as a whole? Granted, it is always much easier to teach the AP student who is engaged and eager than it is the less enthusiastic learner. Therefore, although Diane did not overtly say she wanted to gatekeep the course, the fact that she asked to stop teaching it and requested she be moved to a “college placement English course” (see Appendix I) in lieu of AP where the football players were being dumped says at the very least she may also have in mind a more *ideal* AP student.

Furthermore, the scholarship supported the multitude of ways Black/African American students may become marginalized because of their sheer identity. For instance, Carter’s (2007)

ethnographic study exposed the role of Whiteness in the curriculum and how “two Black young women were negatively positioned as a result of classroom interactions around the curriculum” (p. 46) of an ELA course. The researcher revealed one participant’s fears of being viewed as a troublemaker and even possibly failing the course prevented her from raising her concerns to the larger group. Perhaps the study’s student participants felt they could not be authentically themselves in their AP courses.

In closing this section, I drew attention to four major tensions which emerged from the data. These tensions included a) colorblindness and asset-based beliefs, b) canonical texts and culturally relevant pedagogy, along with c) feeling support and finding impediments, plus d) welcoming authenticity and engaging in gatekeeping. Peppered throughout these tensions were themes of rigor and high expectations, along with the CBI educators’ Caribbeanness as integral to how they taught AP English absent of a more culturally relevant way of teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995). I now move on to the limitations, then implications, and end with a concluding statement.

Limitations

Although this dissertation undertook the study of Black teachers, its narrow focus on CBI teachers, small size sample of two teachers, and concentration on their status as previous AP English teachers, meant the inquiry had certain limitations. Among those limitations were the selection of narrative inquiry as the research methodology (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000a). I acted as a filter of the two CBI teacher participants’ experiences and coalesced the data into a series of coherent narratives. Although, in my re-presentation of their stories I attempted to paint a comprehensive picture, I selected only those stories I believed were most pertinent to my research questions. As a result, I made certain decisions as the researcher. Additionally, even though I

involved the participants along the process by asking them to read my interpretations, those interpretations were still in my words. For this reason, it was important that whenever possible, I used the participants' language to characterize their experiences (Cortazzi, 1993). The depth of people's stories is complex, the resulting data provided insights; however, further exploration of similar participants over an extended period might prove helpful.

Though the findings of this study cannot be considered generalizable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), they do offer the field a look at two CBI teachers. An additional limitation was my study participants' preference for online interviews rather than in-person interviews. Technology issues meant in at least one of the interviews one of the participants was not visible. This meant I missed the social cues that come with facial expressions and body language – elements already hampered by the virtual format. This fact paired with my selection of narrative inquiry which can sometimes blur the lines between researcher and participants contributed to the several limitations of this inquiry.

Based on the above noted findings, this study has implications for several stakeholders: students, schools, teachers, schools of education, and the field of research. The implications for teachers and subsequently their students are primarily connected to critical literacy and the agency it affords *all* students. Furthermore, delimitations of the study were mostly defined by the district in which I conducted the study which determined the teachers available and willing to participate. I elaborate further next.

Delimitations

In several ways, this inquiry was shaped by the school district in which it was conducted. To explain, Devon County had a hand in the length of time allotted, number of available participants, site of the study, and identities of participants. Initially, I had envisioned conducting the

study over the course of twelve weeks with a cycle of interviews followed by participants reflecting through journal prompt responses. I also wanted to interview between three and five participants who were current AP English teachers. My plans were dashed due to the Devon County Research Review Committee's (RRC's) research protocols regarding time and access. My ideas involved using snowball sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Vogt et al., 2012). I hoped to use my connections to and relationships with AP teacher colleagues in the district to recruit Black AP teachers currently teaching the course. This did not occur.

Sampling. The district's bureaucratic process worked much like a funnel where I completed the RRC's application process, awaited approval, and contacted principals who put me in contact with the teachers who met my inclusion criteria. Only then was I permitted to directly contact the teachers. Once the process filtered down to me being in direct contact with the three potential teacher participants at Meadow Valley High School (MVHS), only two of them were willing to commit and available to participate. Consequently, my size sample was very small, and in this sense, the cultural backgrounds and racial identities of participants were pre-determined. This meant though my initial plans were to use snowball sampling, I ended up with convenience sampling procedures (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, a boundary of this inquiry was the selection of participants. Fortuitously and consistent with heuristic inquiry (Sultan, 2019), the participants shared much in common with me and provided an opening for my re-presentation of the data.

Time. Moreover, I was under strict guidelines to limit the amount of participants' time I took. Each interview could be no longer than 30 minutes and the total interview time was capped at 60 minutes. Not wanting to breach the previously agreed upon time commitment, I adhered to this restriction by limiting individual interviews and the KTT to 30 minutes each. Since, I was not

conducting action research, a guideline of the district RRC was I could not conduct the study at my own school (LaFayette High School). To accommodate my participants' wishes and schedules, all interviews were conducted virtually over Zoom. I acknowledge that doing so may have inhibited some of the intimacy of a face-to-face interview.

Teacher-participants. Finally, although it was not my intention to find study participants who shared in my Caribbean cultural identity, things worked out so that they did. In this way, I see God as playing a role in how everything unfolded. Both Diane and Vanessa were born in the Caribbean, and they also just so happened to no longer teach AP English. When I first crafted my research focus after my comprehensive exams, administration at my school informed me I would no longer be teaching AP. My disappointment at hearing this news changed to acceptance. I now view it as fate since Diane, Vanessa, and I ended up sharing the designation of being previous AP English teachers.

Perhaps if the participants and I had been current AP English classroom teachers, our focus on the exam, creating lessons, and teaching might not have afforded us the time to talk. Our shared identities led me to invoke more of my own cultural identity in my dissertation. I did this through re-imagining our Zoom Kitchen-Table-Talk (Bell et al., 2022) as occurring in my Caribbean grandmother's kitchen. As I was organizing items in my home, I happened upon several of her handwritten recipes. This finding along with my reading of Dr. Asia Symone Uzomba's dissertation, the scholarship of Norman Denzin (2003), and the social theory of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2009; Mazama, 2003) resulted in our shared cultural identity being central to my work.

With this overview of the study's limitations and delimitations, I now address the implications for teachers, teacher education, and research.

Implications

This inquiry has implications for increasing teacher diversity, addressing cultural irrelevance and curricula violence for Black students. As a result, the implications are tied to teacher education, as well as teaching and learning. Additionally, this inquiry has implications for research and the academy. What follows is a discussion of the implications as previously noted.

Teacher Education

Universities and colleges are charged with preparing the next generation of teachers. Unfortunately, there appears to be some dissatisfaction with teacher education programs and criticism about their effectiveness. Some states have turned to alternative paths for teacher licensure (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The public misconception “that anyone can teach, or at least that knowing a subject is enough to allow one to teach it well” (p. 167) is quite harmful to both schools of education and the classrooms they serve. For those who view teaching as easy, much of the focus has been on content knowledge, but extant research argues much more is involved (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Waddell & Ukpokodu, 2012). Because of the increasing diversity of America’s schools (Apple, 2008; Au, 1993; Bransford et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Graham et al., 2019; Zernokleyev, 2013), the high stakes for Black and brown students cannot be ignored. In turn, the stakes are even higher for the educators who graduate from such teacher education programs.

One remedy provided in the research literature was the theory of African American Pedagogical Excellence (AAPE) (Acosta et al., 2018). The approach centered the history and culture of students through the content. While this certainly sounds like a possible method schools of education could undertake with their teacher candidates, based on the tensions I found in my study, I would argue a more nuanced approach is warranted. Specifically, the two CBI educators did

not view themselves as Black/African American first. They foremost identified as Caribbean. Furthermore, their Caribbean upbringing informed their views and approach to teaching. This was an upbringing grounded in the British colonial education system (Brock, 1982; Waters, 1999).

Next, their ideologies and beliefs simultaneously exhibited an ethic of caring and upheld asset-based beliefs towards the abilities of their students (Acosta et al., 2018). However, the tension of colorblindness in opposition to their positive mindset proved problematic. This is not to say that only those Black teachers born and raised in America can teach Black/African American students, but what it does imply is schools of education and teacher licensure programs may need to do a better job of exposing immigrant teachers to the contextual issues of racism which exist in American classrooms. Affordances for those who do not pass through the traditional schools of education could help to address the needs of foreign-born teachers in the profession. Consistent with Acosta and scholar's (2018) work, simply focusing on "effective teaching" is inadequate.

Medina and colleagues (2005) argued "the ultimate responsibility for transformation within teacher education programs rests on the shoulders of university faculty who make vital decisions about course design" (p. 208). Though in my own doctoral program and experience as a teaching assistant in an undergraduate methods course, I consistently saw evidence of my university's and chair's commitment to social justice, this is not always the case in all schools of education. The participants in this study in certain ways became reproducers rather than resisters of mid-education (Woodson, 1933), and it makes one wonder how better supports or teacher licensure could have benefitted them. Perhaps if they had visited the Atlanta Civil Rights museum – as I did in one of my doctoral courses – and later reflected upon their visit – the participants

might have begun to gain a sense of the differences in perspectives between them and their students. Understandably, since they both have taught for nearly two decades or more, the museum did not exist years ago, but the point is exposure early on to the history and social context of their Black and minoritized students' lives could have greatly benefitted them. Reflection on the part of the teacher candidates (Behizadeh et al., 2021; Medina et al., 2005) through journaling might also assist them in fleshing out their thoughts on issues of social justice as it related to their students. It also might provide college professors with alerts to potential issues in teacher candidates' experiences early on in their matriculation.

Teaching and Learning

This study brought to light the tension between the CBI educators' centering of canonical texts while failing to sufficiently implement culturally relevant pedagogy. Through this information, we can gain valuable insights about teaching and learning in classrooms. I view culturally relevant pedagogy as an initial step toward enacting critical literacy. Specifically as a "model [culturally relevant pedagogy] not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Absent from the participants' stories of teaching their previous AP English students were pervasive accounts of this model. Thus, the understandings gathered from this inquiry have implications for teaching and learning.

Teaching. For teaching, this study aligned with research regarding assumption of race-congruence between Black teachers and Black students as not automatic (Warikoo, 2004). Schools and districts where teachers work should consider targeted professional development to provide teachers with the necessary supports to effectively implement culturally relevant pedagogy and not assume a "fictive kinship" (Mosely, 2018, p. 269) exists. Other scholars shared

similar sentiments in the research literature which underscored the importance and danger of assuming Black teachers who share some similarities with their students will know how to reach them (Cherry-McDaniel, 2017/2019; Kohli, 2019).

In my current teaching context, little attention is paid to methods for drawing on students' history and cultural identity. Instead, weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings focus on student data, instruction, and remediation of the standards. Because Diane, Vanessa, and I teach in the same district, I might safely assume the expectations at their school are much the same. Though they each expressed rigor and high expectations were important to their teaching of AP, they did not discuss the implementation of instruction that was culturally relevant to the Black and minoritized students. The two CBI educators who were a part of this inquiry admittedly had a learning curve in addressing the needs of their Black/African American and minoritized students. I was happy to find that once this came to light, they made the necessary adjustments. Yet, simply recruiting a more diverse teaching body into teacher education programs is insufficient. Schools and school districts themselves might need to better training to understand Black people are not monolithic (Hudley, 2016) – this applies to both teaching and learning.

Learning. Perhaps Freire's (2017) insights here would be helpful. For students as learners, they frequently are recipients of mis-education (Woodson, 1933) and centering canonical texts without addressing the history and cultures of *all* students might amount to curricular violence (Givens, 2021). It is unimaginable that some students never read texts or authors reflective of their own cultural identities. Also, if reading those texts appears ancillary to the curriculum, it may send a covert message of these texts unimportance to curriculum design. Although the participants in this study did not rely solely on the banking system (Freire, 2017), their limited

disruption of “hegemonic discourses about what counts as literacy” (p. 41) centered canonical texts. Teachers have a responsibility as critical literacy educators to help students speak truth to power.

A June 2019 National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2020) blog post indicated “The school-age population in the United States is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.” What this means is students’ learning needs to be reflective of their identities, histories, and experiences. Previous approaches teaching students are not likely to address such concerns. Changes to curriculum and testing might begin to address this. Knowledge of the rapidly changing student populace should include learning experiences where students can be academically successful, and more pointedly socially and culturally competent (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The participants in this inquiry held their students to a high standard academically. They did this as warm-demanders (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). However, their efforts were likely contradicted by their reliance on canonical texts and predominate modes of learning. If teachers do not adjust, they risk further marginalizing students and creating ineffective learning experiences for the students they seek to help. Returning to historical depictions of Black communities as centers of learning might teach us schools alone cannot be the sole avenues of students’ learning experiences (Fisher, 2009; Harris, 1992). Involving the communities where they live, their families, homegrown authors, and local activists would likely transform their learning experiences.

Implications for Research

The sheer study of the CBI educators who participated in this inquiry served as a disruption to their underrepresentation in teaching, but it also troubled the notion of what research for, and about Black teachers could entail. Though the breadth of this study did not cover a large sample of participants, wide-ranging geographic areas, or an extended length of time, this inquiry

exposed the experiences of two CBI former AP English teachers through their stories. Their experiences as K-12 teachers have not been explored to the same extent as White teachers (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Borsheim-Black, 2015, 2018; Lilach, 2020; Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor, 2014; Gillenwater, 2014; Jeffries & Silvernail, 2017; Olan & Richmond, 2017; Sarigianides, 2019) or even Afro-Caribbean teacher educators in the academy (Alfred, 2003; Fournillier & Lewis, 2010; Louis et al., 2017; Louis et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2018). Hence, this dissertation depicted the experiences and unique positionality; thus, it extended existing scholarship.

Additionally, this study was unique in its contribution to the field of research in its representation of the data (Denzin, 2003; Mazama, 2001) and offered a twenty-first-century portrait of the CBI participants' ideologies and beliefs around curriculum design. It did this through foregrounding the indigenous knowledge of my ancestors (my grandmother and mother), centering my CBI participants' experiences (Asante, 2009; Mazama, 2003), and socially constructing their stores of knowledge as twenty-first-century Black teachers (Burr, 2003). Furthermore, my dissertation though it utilized narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000b; McCormack, 2004) did so in ways that might offer researchers a nonlinear and non-European approach.

Although the teachers who participated were Black, their identification as CBIs appeared to highlight the existing research which has stated Black people are not monolithic (Hudley, 2016). The two teachers enacted limited evidence of Afrocentricity which seemed to be attributed to the Caribbean majority mentality (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010). Diane and Vanessa worked to understand and empathize with their previous students. Those students' experiences which differed greatly from their own created somewhat of a cultural divide. It meant there was a significant self-described learning curve before they recognized a need to shift their thinking and

approach to teaching AP curricula. Further research with a larger participant sample might include CBI AP English teachers who are presently teaching the course to paint a more comprehensive picture of their practice. Finally, creating a space for Afro-Caribbean educators within the academy to research and teach about issues and topics close to them and their interests might carve out more spaces for them to feel at *home* (Fournillier & Lewis, 2010). It could potentially afford them a sense of freedom too.

Perhaps the World Begins Here

The purpose of this study was to understand the life and teaching experiences of two CBI former AP English teachers. Utilizing a narrative inquiry methodological approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000a; McCormack, 2004), and qualitative research methods including interviews and a KTT (Bell et al., 2022), the study participants relayed their memories of teaching advanced English curricula to Black/African American and minoritized students. Theories of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2009; Mazama, 2003) and concepts about mis-education (Woodson, 1933) framed this study. Employing the Akan philosophy of Sankofa, participants were invited to “go back and fetch” (Asante & Mazama, 2005) from their minds their recollections. It was my hope that this study allowed the participants to ponder about the texts they taught, their beliefs, and interactions with their previous AP English students, and perhaps consider ways to enact critical literacy.

Findings of this inquiry included four significant tensions. They were colorblindness and asset-based beliefs, canonical texts and implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, plus feeling supported and facing impediments, along with celebrating authenticity and engaging in gatekeeping. As a result of the CBI educators’ Caribbeanness, they became reproduces rather than resisters of the prescribed curriculum – a form of mis-education, – yet, they simultaneously held high

expectations of their students, were warm demanders (Irvine & Fraser, 1998), and showed limited evidence of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings). Thus, their stories revealed layers of complexity which the tensions supported. This study was not intended to entirely revamp participants' perceptions but have them think about their previous experiences teaching Black and minoritized students and their design of AP English curricula. Thus, it was a starting point towards criticality.

While conducting this inquiry and in veneration of my ancestors, I drew on concepts from performance ethnography in my re-presentation of the data as a fictionalized personal narrative. Namely, I borrowed from “Red Pedagogy . . . [which] . . . privileges indigenous knowledge” (Denzin, 2003, p. 245) and “Afrocentric feminist aesthetic” for its “claims are based on a concept of storytelling, and a notion of wisdom that is experiential and shared” (p. 249). To explain, the recipes of my grandmother along with the life and teaching experiences of this study's participants are forms of “indigenous knowledge.” We “ate” and discussed; we filled our bellies, and we learned from each other. I did not want any of the nourishment and knowledge I gained from our conversations to go to waste; therefore, I used the kitchen as a metaphor for shared knowledge in my use of the fictionalized narrative. As Jamaican's say, *Before good food pwile, me belly buss* [Better you're too full than to let good food go to waste]. As such, this study centered the lives and cultural heritage of African people a principle of Afrocentricity (Asante, 2009; Mazama, 2003). It served to extend extant research about CBI educators.

As part of an underresearched and underrepresented teaching force, this dissertation contributes to the extant research about Afro-Caribbean teacher educators within the academy (Alfred, 2003; Fournillier & Lewis, 2010; Louis et al., 2017; Louis et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2018)

and extends the existing but limited scholarship related to teachers in K-12 classrooms (Beck, 2010; Broutian, 2016; Campbell-Barton, 2023) by providing a twenty-first-century depiction. My inquiry recognized that as teachers, participants had a curricula or course guidance that applied to their daily lessons, yet their individual life experiences and ideologies appeared to play a role in their delivery of the course content and views regarding their students' curricular needs. To gain a clearer picture of what that meant for CBI AP English teachers considering increased racial diversity and potential challenges with the hegemonic curricula, this study extends current scholarship about Afro-Caribbean and Caribbean Black Immigrant educators. Hence, since their life experiences and teaching lives are still in-progress, I have the hope their conversations with me might continue as we have developed a kinship and friendship. I am not aiming to convert them only to have them consider the many possibilities for critical literacy in the AP English classroom or general English classroom for that matter. For this reason, I say *Perhaps the World Begins Here?*

Hence, my study serves as an opening. It begins with my introduction to the field of qualitative research and honors my cultural identity and family's heritage. This study is not presented as a chef's masterpiece neatly plated to perfection and wiped clean but reflects the messiness of cooking filled with the sprinklings of spices, mismatched trivets, and pots soaking in the kitchen sink. In this manner, it is realistic, and illustrative of teacher's lives and experiences. Just as Diane and Vanessa's experiences included stories of triumph and tribulation, the findings demonstrated many paradoxes. By fictionalizing my re-presentation of the data, I displayed my participants' stories in a nonlinear manner (Sultan, 2019) and was open to where the study led me. This inquiry had many unexpected twists and turns. It is not the study I set out to conduct, but it was the study I needed to do.

In addition to my findings which I offered in the form of four tensions, there was a fifth tension. It was the tension housed within me as the researcher. This tension existed in my desire to disrupt AP English curricula from which I also sought approval. It was present in my use of qualitative research methods with a more Eurocentric leaning while drawing on the theory of Afrocentricity. Finally, the tension was between the study I desired and the one shaped by the delimitations which surrounded me. For this reason, I present my vision of what I hoped to do or conceivably would have done if the circumstances had permitted. This potential study is presented in re-imagined image of my research design (see Appendix V). The visual demonstrates a sole reliance on heuristic inquiry which more shrewdly fit the methods, embraces the creativity of my synthesis of the data, and centers me within the study. Additionally, this image and my confidence in heuristic methodology aligns more closely with Afrocentricity. In this image, I added teacher observations to my research methods because I was unable to make that happen initially. This additional layer would make my inquiry even more robust. Then, I connect my four research methods with concepts honoring the ways of knowing innate to people of African descent. Specifically, I link observations to heritage knowledge, journaling to creativity, the KTT to community, curriculum documents to literacy, and semi-structured interviews with orality. Thus, I more explicitly and intentionally highlight the ways my methods are tied to Afrocentricity. In the end, it is a vision – a beginning.

REFERENCES

- Acosta, M. M., Foster, M., & Houchen, D. F. (2018). "Why seek the living among the dead?" African American pedagogical excellence: Exemplar practice for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 69(4), 341-353.
- Acosta, M. (2019). The paradox of pedagogical excellence among exemplary Black women educators. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(1), 26-38.
- Adkins-Coleman, T. (2010). "I'm not afraid to come into your world": Case studies of teachers facilitating engagement in urban high school English classrooms. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 79(1), 41-53.
- Agatucci, C. (2000). *Ancient Africa & African empires timeline*.
- Alfred, M. V. (2003, August). Sociocultural contexts and learning: Anglophone Caribbean immigrant women in U.S. postsecondary education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 53(4), 242-260.
- Allen, R. (2021). Critical race hermeneutics In C. E. Matias (Ed.), *The handbook of critical theoretical research methods in education* (1st edition). (pp. 15-30). Routledge.
<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429056963-2/critical-race-hermeneutics-ricky-lee-allen?context=ubx>
- Alvermann, D. E., Unrau, N. J., Sailors, M. & Ruddell, R. B., (Eds.) (2019). Theoretical models and processes of literacy (7th ed.). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Anagnostopoulos, D. (2003, November). Testing and student engagement with literature in urban classrooms: A multi-layered perspective. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 38(2), 177-212.
- Anderson, B. N. (2020). "See me, see us": Understanding the intersections and continued mar-

- ginalization of adolescent gifted Black girls in U.S. classrooms. *Gifted Child Today*, 3(2), 86-100.
- Anzaldua, G. (2012). *Borderlands/La frontera: The new mestiza* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- AP school honor roll: New for fall 2023. (2023). *College Board*. <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap-school-honor-roll-overview.pdf>
- Applebee, A. N. (1974). *Tradition and reform in the teaching of English: A history*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Apple, M. W. (2008). Curriculum planning: Content, form, and the politics of accountability In. F. M. Connelly (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of curriculum and instruction*. Sage.
- Asante, M. K. & Asante, M. K. (1988). *Afrocentricity* (New rev. ed.). Africa World Press.
- Asante, M. K. (1991, Spring). The Afrocentric idea in education. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 60(2), 170-180.
- Asante, M. K. (2003). *Afrocentricity: The theory of social change (revised and expanded)*. African American Images.
- Asante, M. K., and Mazama, A. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Asante, M. K. (2007). *An Afrocentric manifesto: Toward an African renaissance*. Polity Press.
- Asante, M. K. (2009, April 13). *Afrocentricity*. Dr. Molefi Kete Asante.
<http://www.asante.net/articles/1/afrocentricity/>
- Asante, M. K. (2020). Afrocentricity. *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*, 147-158.
- Au, K. H. (1993). *Literacy instruction in multicultural settings*. Wadsworth.
- Ball, A. F. (1995). Text design patterns in the writing of urban African American students:

- Teaching to the cultural strengths of students in multicultural settings. *Urban Education*, 30(3), 253-289.
- Battle, M. (2009). *Ubuntu: I in you and you in me*. Seabury Books.
- Beck, M. (2010). Afro-Caribbean women teachers recruited for U.S. urban schools: A narrative analysis of experience, change, and perception [Doctoral dissertation, University of Rochester]. <http://hdl.handle.net/1802/11120>
- Behizadeh, N., Thompson-Smith, C. M., and Miller, P. J. (2021, April). Peeling off the mask: Challenges and supports for enacting critical pedagogy. *English Education*, 53(3), 179-203.
- Bell, J. S. (2002, Summer). Narrative inquiry: More than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 207-213.
- Bell, J., Ayree-Price, A. O., Baldrige, B. J., Campano, G., and Darling-Hammond, K. (2022). A kitchen-table talk about community cultural wealth in the time of COVID-19. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 55(4), 305-321.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2022.2158403>
- Berchini, C. (2016). Curriculum matters: The Common Core, authors of color, and inclusion for inclusion's sake. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60, 55-62.
- Berry, T. (2017). The intersections of Africana studies and curriculum theory: A counter-western narrative for social justice. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 32(1), 53-66.
- Black-Chen, M. (2013). Caribbean women finding a balance between returning to higher education and being successful: Voices from Jamaica. *International Research and Review: Journal of Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars*, 3(1), 40-54.
- Bogdan, R. and Biklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theo-*

- ries and methods* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Borsheim-Black, C. (2015, May). "It's pretty much White": Challenges and opportunities of an antiracist approach to literature instruction in a multilayered White context. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 49(4), 407-429.
- Borsheim-Black, C. (2018, April). "You could argue it either way": Ambivalent White teacher racial identity and teaching about racism in literature study. *English Education*, 50((3) 228-255.
- Bransford, J., Darling-Hammond, L., and LePage, P. (2005). Introduction. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Preparing_Teachers_for_a_Changing_World/5XVe7ovCPYUC?hl=en&gbpv=1.
- Brissett, N. (2021, November 29). A Critical Appraisal of Education in the Caribbean and Its Evolution From Colonial Origins to Twenty-First Century Responses. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. Retrieved 21 Apr. 2024, from <https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-1650>.
- Brock, C. (1982). The legacy of colonialism in West Indian education. In K. Watson (Ed.), *Education in the third world* (119-140). Routledge.
- Broutian, T. R. (2016). An exploration of the challenges and strategies used by high school immigrant teachers assimilating to the U.S. education system [Doctoral dissertation, University of La Verne]. ProQuest. <https://researchworks.laverne.edu/esploro/outputs/991004155286806311>
- Brown, Wendy. (2011, Fall). The end of educated democracy. *Representations*, 116(1), 19-41.
- Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Harvard University Press.

- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism (Second edition)*. Routledge.
- Busch, E. K., and White, J. W. (Eds.). (2013). *Civic education and the future of American citizenship*. Lexington Books.
- Campbell-Barton, D. D. (2023). A phenomenological study: The lived experience of Jamaican immigrant teachers practicing in northeastern North Carolina [Doctoral dissertation, Gardner-Webb University]. Digital Commons. <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1138&context=education-dissertations>
- Carrol, S. (2017, Spring). Perspectives of 21st century Black women English teachers on impacting Black student achievement. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 86(2), 115-137
- Carter, S. P. (2007). "Reading all that White crazy stuff:" Black young women unpacking Whiteness in a high School British literature Classroom. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 41(2), 42-54.
- Carver-Thomas, D. (2018, April). *Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/diversifying-teaching-profession>.
- Changes to the 2019-20 AP literature and composition course and 2020 exam.
<https://belinblank.education.uiowa.edu/educators/aptti/Docs/Syllabi/2019/ChangesAPLiteratureAndComp.pdf>
- Cherry-McDaniel, M. (2017). #WOKE: Employing Black textualities to create critically conscious classrooms. *The English Journal*, 106(4), 41–46.
- Cherry-McDaniel, M. (2019). Skinfolk ain't always kinfolk: The dangers of assuming and as signing inherent cultural responsiveness to teachers of color. *Educational Studies*, 55(2),

- 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2018.1500912>. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018) *Research methods in education*. Taylor & Francis.
- Christensen, L. (2017). *Reading, writing, and rising up: Teaching about social justice and the power of the written word (Second edition)*. A Rethinking Schools Publication.
- Clandinin, D. J. and Connelly, F. M. (2000a). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Clandinin, D. J. and Connelly, F. M. (2000b). Narrative understandings of teacher knowledge. *Journal of curriculum and supervision*, 315(4), 315-331.
- Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. Sage.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2018). Reflections from a narrative inquiry researcher. *LEARNing Landscapes*, 11(2), 17–23. <https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v11i2.941>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K (2018). *Research methods in education (8th edition)*. Routledge.
- Coffey, H., Farinde-Wu, A. (2016). Navigating the journey to culturally responsive teaching: Lessons from the success and struggles of one first-year, Black female teacher of Black students in an urban school. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, (60), 24-33.
- College Board. (2003). A brief history of the advanced placement program. https://www.oakparkusd.org/cms/lib/CA01000794/Centricity/Domain/295/APUSH/AP_History_history.pdf.
- College Board. (2010). *Engaging students with literature: A curriculum module for AP English literature and composition*. 2010 Curriculum Module, 1-38. Retrieved from https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/AP_CM_Eng_Lit_differential_instruction.pdf

- College Board. (2019). *AP English literature and composition: Unit 2 poetry I*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/5eetst43>
- College Board. (2020). *AP literature and composition: Course and exam description*. AP Central.collegeboard.org. Retrieved from <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ap-english-literature-and-composition-course-and-exam-description.pdf>
- College Board. (2021). *AP central: Benefits of AP*. <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/launch-grow-ap-program/discover-benefits>.
- College Board. (2022). *AP exams overview*. <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/ap-exams-overview#:~:text=AP%20Exams%20are%20standardized%20exams,of%20a%20specific%20AP%20course>.
- College Board. (2023a). *Parent resource: Understanding AP*. College Board. <https://blog.collegeboard.org/parent-resource-understanding-ap>
- College Board. (2023b). *AP Students: AP English literature and composition*. College Board. <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-english-literature-and-composition>
- College Board. (2023c). *AP Students: AP English language and composition*. College Board. <https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-english-language-and-composition>
- Conrad, J. (2007). *Heart of darkness*. Penguin Classics.
- COPH Staff. (2016, September 8). If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together. University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health. <https://blog.unmc.edu/publichealth/2016/09/08/if-you-want-to-go-fast-go-alone-if-you-want-to-go-far-go-together-african-proverb-martha-goedert/#:~:text=Proverb%20%20E%20%93%20Martha%20Goedert,%20%20E%20%9CIf%20you%20want%20to%20go%20fast%2C%20go%20alone%2C%20if>

,African%20Proverb%20%E2%80%93%20Martha%20Goedert

Cortazzi, M. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Routledge.

Cortazzi, M. (1994). Narrative analysis. *Language Teaching*, 27(3), 157-170.

doi:10.1017/S0261444800007801

Cortazzi, M. (2001). Narrative analysis in ethnography. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S.

Delamont, J. Lofland, & L. Lofland (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnography*. (pp. 384-394).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. SAGE.

Csicsila, J. (2011). Canons by consensus: Critical trends and American literature anthologies.

Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.gsu.edu>.

Dallacqua, A., and Sheahan, A. (2020). Making space: Complicating a canonical text through critical, multimodal work in a secondary language arts classroom. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 64(1), 67-77.

Darling-Hammond, L (2000). How teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 166-173.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(3), 291–309.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1315399>

Davis, C. A. M., Slate, J. R. , Moore, G. W., & Barnes, W. (2015). Advanced placement exams, incentive programs, and cost effectiveness: A lack of equity and excellence for Black students in Texas, New York, and Florida. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 84(2), 139-153.

deMarris, K. (2004). Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. In K. deMarris

- & S. D. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences*, (. pp. 51-68). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Denzin, N. (2003). Reading and writing performance. *Qualitative research*, 3(2), 243-268.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience & education*. Free Press.
- The diaspora collective. (2023). Celebrate: Global impact of African influence in our favorite cuisines. *The diaspora collective*. <https://thediasporacollective.com/blogs/celebrate/how-africa-and-the-african-diaspora-impacted-food-around-the-world#:~:text=The%20Africans%20introduced%20okra%2C%20callaloo,some%20of%20our%20Caribbean%20favorites>.
- Dunbar, P. (1913). "We wear the mask". *Lyrics of lowly life* (Lit2Go Edition). Retrieved September 25, 2022, from <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/187/lyrics-of-lowly-life/3819/we-wear-the-mask/>.
- Dostoevsky, F. (2007). *Crime and punishment*. Barnes & Nobel Classics.
- Dunbar, P. (1913). "We wear the mask". *Lyrics of lowly life* (Lit2Go Edition). Retrieved September 25, 2022, from <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/187/lyrics-of-lowly-life/3819/we-wear-the-mask/>.
- Dyches, J. (2018a). Critical canon pedagogy: Applying disciplinary inquiry to cultivate canonical critical consciousness. *Harvard Educational Review*, 88, 538-564.
- Dyches, J. (2018b). Particularizing the tensions between canonical and bodily discourses. *Journal of Literacy Research* 2018, 50(2), 239 –261.
- Dyer, H. S. and King, R. G. (1955). *College board scores: their use and interpretation*. no.2. *College Entrance Examination Board*. College Board Publications
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015048438892>
- Dyk, S. V. (1995). Toward an Afrocentric perspective: The significance of Afrocentricity. D.

- Ziegler ((Ed.), *Molefi Kete Asante and Afrocentricity: In praise and in criticism.* (pp. 1-19). James C. Winston Publishing.
- Ebarvia, T., German, L., Parker, K.N., and Torres, J. (Eds.). (2020). #Disrupttexts. *English Journal*, 110(1), 100-102.
- Edmonson, B. (1994). Race, tradition, and the construction of the Caribbean aesthetic. *New Literary History*, 25(1), 109-120.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2007). Studying teachers' lives and experience: Narrative inquiry into k-12 teaching. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 357-382). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Esquivel, L. (1993). *Like water for chocolate*. Black Swan.
- Ezzy, D. ((2002). *Qualitative analysis: Practice and innovation*. Allen & Unwin.
- Fairclough, A. (2007). *A class of their own: Black teachers in the segregated south*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Farrell, E. (2020). Researching lived experience in education: Misunderstood or missed opportunity? *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1-8.
- Fieldstadt, E. (2022, February 16). *Indiana school counselor tells parents their kids can opt out of Black history month lessons*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/indiana-school-counselor-tells-parents-kids-can-opt-black-history-mont-rcna16540>
- Fisher, M. T. (2009). *Black literate lives: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ford, D. Y., and Whiting, G. W. (2007). A mind is a terrible thing to erase: Black students' underrepresentation in gifted education. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 10(1/2), 28-44.

- Ford, D. Y., McZeal Walters, N., Byrd, J.A., and Harris, B. N. (2019). I want to read about me: Engaging and empowering gifted Black girls using multicultural literature and bibliotherapy. *Gifted child Today*, 42(1), 53-57.
- Foster, M. (1997). *Black teachers on teaching*. The New York Press.
- Foster, T. C. (2003). *How to read literature like a professor*. Harper.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish*. Vintage Books.
- Fournillier, J., and Lewis, T. (2010). Finding voice: two Afro Caribbean immigrant members of the academy writing 'home'. *Studies in Continuing Education*, (32)2, 147-162.
- Freire, P. (2017). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: With a new introduction by Donaldo Macedo and an afterword by Ira Shor 50th Anniversary Edition*. Bloomsbury Academic, New York.
- Fultz, M. (2004, Spring). The displacement of Black educators post-Brown: An overview and analysis. *History of Education Quarterly*, 44(1), 11-45.
- Fund for the Advancement of Education (U.S.). (1953). *Bridging the gap between school and college*. [New York]
- Gates, H. L. Jr. (2014). *The signifying monkey: A theory of African American literary criticism*. Oxford University Press.
- Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (Third ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Gee, J. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25, 99-125.
- Gillenwater, C. (2014). Reading images: The phenomenon of intertextuality and how it may contribute to developing visual literacy with Advanced Placement. *Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research*, 8, 251-263.

- Givens, J. R. (2021). *Fugitive pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the art of Black teaching*. Harvard University Press.
- Godley, A., Monroe, T., and Castma, J. (2015, September). Increasing access to and success in Advanced Placement English in Pittsburgh public schools. *The English Journal*, 105(1), 28-34.
- Gonsalves, R. E. (1998) Our Caribbean Civilisation: Retrospect And Prospect, *Caribbean Quarterly*, 44:3-4, 131-150, DOI: [10.1080/00086495.1998.11829594](https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.1998.11829594)
- Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms* Routledge.
- Graham, S. Hill, C., & Malo-Juvera, V. (Eds.) (2019). *Critical approaches to teaching the high school novel: Reinterpreting canonical literature* [Google Books version]. Retrieved from <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=9fh1DwAAQBAJ&hl=en&pg=GBS.PR1>.
- Griffin, J. H. (2004). *Black like me*. New American Library.
- Hackett, J., Behizadeh, N., Hobson, M., Summers, A., and Ford, J. (2022). Ascending critical consciousness: Designing an experiential liberatory teacher education collaborative in Atlanta. *Urban Education*, 1-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859221140400>
- Haddix, M. M. (2016). *Cultivating racial and linguistic diversity in literacy teacher education: Teachers like me*. Routledge.
- Haley, A. (1974). *Roots: The saga of an American family*. Doubleday.
- Harris, V. (1992). African-American conceptions of literacy: A historical perspective. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(4), 276-286.
- Hart, C. M. D. (2020, June). An honors teacher like me: Effects of access to same-race teachers on Black students' advanced-track enrollment and performance. *Educational Evaluation*

- and Policy Analysis*, 42(2), 163-187.
- Heath, S. B. (1989). Oral and literate traditions among Black Americans living in poverty. *American Psychologist*, 44(2), 367-373.
- Henke, H. (1997). Towards an ontology of Caribbean existence. *Social Epistemology*, 11(1), 39-58.
- Hoffman, J. V., Andrews, R., & Wyse, D. (2010). *The Routledge International Handbook of English, Language and Literacy Teaching*. London: Routledge. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.gsu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=311700&site=eds-live&scope=site>.
- hooks, b. (1992). *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Outlaw culture*. Routledge.
- Horton, J. A. (1996). Africa as the nursery of science and literature. In M. K. Asante & A. S. Abarry (Eds.), *African intellectual heritage: A book of sources*, p. 255). Temple University Press.
- Hsieh, H. F., and Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288
- Hudley, C. (2016). Achievement and expectations of immigrant, second generation, and non-immigrant black students in U.S. higher education. *Adolescent Identity and Schooling: Diverse Perspectives*, 5(3), 223-248.
- Irvine, J. J., & Fraser, J. W. (1998). 'Warm demanders.'. *Education Week*, 17(35), 56.
- Jackson, J. V., and Cothran, M. E. (2003, May). Black versus black: The relationships among African, African American, and African Caribbean persons. *Journal of Black Studies*, 33(5), 576-604.

- Jamaica: Secondary education. (2023). <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/729/Jamaica-SECONDARY-EDUCATION.html>
- Jamaican proverbs. n.d. National Library of Jamaica: Explore. Discover. Connect.
<https://nlj.gov.jm/jamaican-proverbs-2/#proverb1>
- The JBHE Foundation, Inc. (2008). *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 59, 63-67.
- Jeffries, R. and Silvernail, L. (2017). Barriers to black student enrollment. *The Negro Educational Review*, 68(104), 56-79.
- Johnson, J. M., & Winfield, J. D. (2022). Institutionalizing success: Practices and policies at HBCUs that promote student development and degree Attainment. *Journal of Higher Education*, 93(7), 989–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2022.2082759>
- Johnson, V. S. (2016, Fall). When Blackness stings: African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants, race, and racism in late twentieth-century America. *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 36(1), 31-62.
- Joshi, E., Doan, S. and Springer, M. G. (2018). Student-teacher race congruence: New evidence and insight from Tennessee. *AERA Open*, 4(4), 1-25.
- Kafka, J. (2016). In search of a grand narrative: The turbulent history of teaching. In D. H. Gitomer & C. A. Bell (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (Vol. Fifth edition, pp. 69-126). American Educational Research Association.
- Kaestle, C. F. (1985). The history of literacy and the history of readers. *Review of Research in Education*, 12, 11-53.
- Kamugisha, A. (2019). *Beyond Coloniality : Citizenship and Freedom in the Caribbean Intellectual Tradition*. Indiana University Press.
- Karenga, M. (2010). *Introduction to Black studies*. University of Sankore Press.

- King, J.E., and Mitchell, C. A. (1995). *Black mothers to sons: Juxtaposing African American literature with social practice*. Peter Lang.
- King, J. E. (2015). *Dysconscious racism, Afrocentric praxis, and education for human freedom: Through the years I keep on toiling*. Routledge.
- King, J.E. (2018). A reparatory justice curriculum for human freedom: Rewriting the story of African American dispossession and the debt owed. *Journal of African American History*, 102(2), 213-231.
- King, L. (2020). Black history is not American history : Toward a framework of Black historical consciousness. *Social Education*, 84(6), 335-341.
- Kohli, R., Lin, Y.-C., Ha, N., Jose, A., & Shini, C. (2019). A way of being: Women of color educators and their ongoing commitments to critical consciousness. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 82, 24–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.03.005>
- Kolluri, S. (2018). Advanced placement: The dual challenge of equal access and effectiveness. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(5), 671-711.
- Kyburg, R. M., Hertberg-Davis, H., & Callahan, C. M. (2007). Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs: Optimal Learning Environments for Talented Minorities? *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 18(2), 172–215. <https://doi.org/10.4219/jaa-2007-357>
- Labov, W. (1972).). The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. *Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular*. University of Philadelphia Press, 354-497.
- Labov, W. and Waletzky , J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience In Helm , J. (Ed.) *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, Ethnological Society, pp. 12-44.

- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(2), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11(1), 7-24.
- Larsen, N. (1929). *Passing*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Lauter, P. (1991). *Canons and contexts*. Oxford University Press, EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=cat06552a&AN=g-su.996875133402952&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Lee, C. D. (1995). A culturally based cognitive apprenticeship: Teaching African American high school students skills in literary interpretation. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30(4), 608-629.
- Lilach, M. (2020). [Not] speaking truth to power: Ethical dilemmas of teacher candidates during practicum. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 89, 1-9.
- Lopez, A. E. (2011). Culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy in diverse English classrooms: A case study of a secondary English teacher's activism and agency. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 10(4), 75-93.
- Lorenzi, J., and Batalova, J. (2022). Caribbean immigrants in the United States. Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/caribbean-immigrants-united-states#:~:text=The%20Caribbean%20diaspora%20in%20the,U.S.%20Census%20Bureau's%202019%20ACS>
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher; a sociological study*. University of Chicago Press.
- Louis, D.A., Thompson, K.V., Smith, P., Williams, H. M. A., and Watson, J. (2017). Afro-Caribbean immigrant faculty experiences in the American academy: Voices of an invisible

- Black population. *Urban Rev*, 49, 668-691.
- Louis, D. A., Thompson, K. V., Stanley, C. A., Louis, Jr., B., M. (2020, April). Reflections, relationships, and immigrant contributions: Narratives of Afro-Caribbean faculty members in American higher education. *Caribbean Educational Research Journal*, 5(1), 110-130.
- Macaluso, K. & Macaluso, M. (2019). Introduction: Challenging the canonical genre. In M. Macaluso & K. Macaluso (Eds.), *Teaching the Canon in 21st Century Classrooms: Challenging Genres* (pp. xi-xx). Brill Sense.
- Marshall, C., and Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research (Fourth edition)*. Sage.
- Maylor, U. (2009). 'They do not relate to Black people like us': Black teachers as role models for Black pupils. *Journal of Education Policy*, 24(1), 1-21, DOI: 10.1080/02680930802382946
- Mazama, A. (2001). The Afrocentric paradigm: Contours and definitions. *Journal of Black Studies*, 31(4), 387-405.
- Mazama, A. (2003). *The Afrocentric paradigm*. Africa World Press.
- McIntyre-McCullough, K. (2020). Critical approaches and social justice in the AP classroom: A teacher tackled her personal bias about text selection in the AP classroom. *English Journal*, 109(6), 81-86.
- McNair, J., and Sims Bishop, R. (2018, May/June). "to be great, heroic or beautiful": The enduring legacy of the brownies' book. *The Horn Book Magazine*, 28-33.
- Medina, M., Morrone, A., and Anderson, J. (2005). The relevance of educational psychology to teacher education. *The Clearing House*, 78(5), 207-212.
- Meire, T. (2014). The brown face of hope: Reading engagement and African American boys. *Reading Teacher*, 68, 335-343.

- Merriam, S. B., and Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Migdon, B. (2022, August 19). What is DeSantis' stop W.O.K.E. act? Enforcement of the law, which took effect in July, was partially blocked by a federal judge on Thursday. *The Hill*. <https://thehill.com/changing-america/respect/diversity-inclusion/3608241-what-is-desantiss-stop-woke-act/>.
- Mills, K. A. (2016). *Literacy theories for the digital age*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Milewski, G. B. and Gillie, J. M. (2002-10). *What are the characteristics of AP teachers? An examination of survey research*. College Board Research Report No. 2002-10 College Entrance Examination Board, New York, 2002.
- Mirra, N., Garcia, A., & Morrell, E. (2015). *Doing participatory action research: Transforming inquiry with researchers, educators, and students*. Taylor & Francis. *Google Books*, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Doing_Youth_Participatory_Action_Research/28jMCgAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0 Accessed 6 August 2021.
- Mollison, A. (2006, January). Surviving a midlife crisis: Advanced Placement turns fifty. *Education Next*, 6(1), 34-39. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=eric&AN=EJ763313&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Morgan, H. (2019). The lack of minority students in gifted education: Hiring more exemplary teachers of color can alleviate the problem. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 92(4-5), 156-162.
- Morrell, E. (2002, September). Toward a critical pedagogy of popular culture: Literacy development among urban youth. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 46(1), 72-77.

- Morrell, E. (2004/2008). *Critical literacy and urban youth: Pedagogies of access, dissent, and liberation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Morrison, T. (1994). Unspeakable things unspoken: The Afro-American presence in American literature. In A. Mitchell (Ed.), *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present* (pp. 368–398). Duke University Press.
- Mosely, M. (2018). The Black teacher project: How racial affinity professional development sustains Black teachers. *The Urban Review*, 50.
- Mosser, R.T. (2004). The AP jumpstart. *Careers & Colleges*, 25(1), 4.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). Research design and methodology. In *Heuristic research : design, methodology, and applications* (pp. 38-58). SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412995641>
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Chapters 6-7.
- Muhammad, G. E. and Haddix, M. (2016). Centering Black girls' literacies: A review of literature on the multiple ways of knowing of Black girls. *English Education*, 48(4), 299-336.
- Muhammad, G. (2020a, January 9). [Lecture notes on Conceptualizing reading/literacy]. Department of Middle and Secondary Education, Georgia State University. iCollege.
- Muhammad, G. (2020b). *Cultivating genius: An equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy*, Scholastic
- Nasir, N. S., Scott, J., Trujillo, T., and Hernandez, L. (2016). The sociopolitical context of teaching. In D. H. Gitomer & C. A. Bell (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching, Fifth Edition* (pp. 349-390). American Educational Research Association.

- Neter, T. S. A. (1995). Paradigms in Afrocentric educational theory: Asante's cultural conception. D. Ziegler (Ed.), *Molefi Kete Asante and Afrocentricity: In praise and in criticism*. (pp. 175-196). James C. Winston Publishing. The New London Group. (1996) A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-91.
- Newell, G. E., Tallman, L., Letcher, M. (2009). A longitudinal study of consequential transitions in the teaching of literature. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 44(1), 89-126.
- Nicholas, T., Stepick, A., and Stepick, C. D. (2008). "Here's your diploma mom!": Family obligation and multiple pathways to success. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 620(1), 237-52.
- Ogbu, J. U., & Simons, H.D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29(2), 155-188.
- Olan, E. L. & Richmond, K. J. (2017). Disrupting the dominant narrative: Beginning English teachers' use of young adult literature and culturally relevant pedagogy. *Journal of Language & Literacy Education*, 13(2), 1-31.
- Oliver, K. L. (1998). Research note: A journey into narrative analysis: A methodology for discovering meanings. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 17, 244-249.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative evaluation checklist. Western Michigan University Evaluation center, 1-18.
- Perry, K. H. (2012, Spring). What is literacy? A critical overview of sociocultural perspectives. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 8(1), 50-71.

- Picower, B. (2021). *Reading writing and racism: Disrupting whiteness in teacher education and the classroom*. Beacon Press.
- Pinnegar, S. and Daynes, J. G. (2007). Locating narrative inquiry historically: Thematics in the turn to narrative. In D. J. Clandinin (Ed.), *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* (pp. 3-34). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5-23.
- Prior, L. (2003). *Using documents in social research: Introducing qualitative methods*. SAGE.
- Rabaka, R., (Ed.). (2020). *Routledge handbook of pan-Africanism*. Routledge.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. SAGE Publications.
- Richardson, E. (2003). *African American literacies*. Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.
- Richardson, L., and St. Pierre, E. A. (2005). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research Third Edition* (pp. 959-978). Sage Publications.
- Rhone, A. (2007). Issues in education: Caribbean-immigrant educators: More than an ocean of difference. *Childhood Education*, 84(1), 44-47. DOI: 10.1080/000945056.2007.10522969
- Rodney, W. (1996). How Africa developed before the coming of the Europeans—Up to the fifteenth century. In M. K. Asante & A. S. Abarry (Eds.), *African intellectual heritage: A book of sources*, p. 706-720). Temple University Press.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of literary work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

- Ross, T. T. *The Making of the English Literary Canon : From the Middle Ages to the Late Eighteenth Century*. MQUP, 1998. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=404534&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Rothschild, E. (1999). Four decades of the advanced placement program. *The History Teacher*, 32(2), 175-206.
- Santoli, S. P. (2002). Is there an advanced placement advantage? *American Secondary Education*, 30(2), 23-35.
- Sarigianides, S. T. (2019). Performative youth: The literacy possibilities of de-essentializing adolescence. *English Education*, 51(4), 376-403.
- Schiele, J. H. (1996). Afrocentricity: An emerging paradigm in social work practice. *Social Work*, 41(3), 284-294.
- Schneider, J. (2009). Privilege, equity, and the advanced placement program: tug of war. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41(6), 813-831.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1998). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues* (pp. 221-256). Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1988). Unpackaging literacy. In E. R. Kintgen, B. M. Kroll, & M. Rose (Eds.), *Perspectives on Literacy* (pp. 57-70). So. Illinois UP. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-10318-8_5
- Sheridan, D. (2000). *Teaching secondary English: Readings and applications (Vol. 2nd ed)*. Routledge. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.gsu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db>

=nlebk&AN=53784&site=eds-live&scope=site.

- Siddle Walker, V. (1996). *Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated south*, The University of North Carolina Press.
- Siddle, Walker, V. (2018). *The lost education of Horace Tate: Uncovering the hidden heroes , who fought for justice in schools*. The New Press.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2011). An agenda to strengthen culturally relevant pedagogy. *English /Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 10(2), 7-23.
- Smith, P., Warrican, S. J., Kumi-Yeboah, A., and Richards, J. (2018). Understanding Afro-Caribbean educators' experiences with Englishes across Caribbean and U.S. contexts and classrooms: Recursivity, (re)positionality, bidirectionality. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 69, 210-222.
- Smith, P., Warrican, S. J., Alleyne, M. L. (2020). "You her my funny accent?!": problematizing assumptions about Afro-Caribbean "teachers turned educators." *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 14(3), 248-269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2019.1710042>
- Solorzano, D. G., and Ornelas, A. (2002). A critical race analysis of Advanced Placement classes: A case of educational inequality. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1(4), 215-229.
- Spanos, T. (1995). The paradoxical metaphors of the kitchen in Laura Esquivel's "Like water for chocolate." *Letras Femeninas*, 21(1/2), 29-36.
- St. Pierre, E. D. (2000). Poststructural feminism in education: An overview. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(5), 4177-515.
- St. Pierre, E. A. and Pillow, W. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Working the ruins: Feminist poststructural theory and methods in education*. Routledge.
- Street, B. V. (1995/2013). *Social literacies: Critical approaches to literacy in development, eth-*

- nography and education*. Taylor & Francis.
- Street, B. V. (2003). What's "new" in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2), 77-91.
- Stone-Mediatore, S. (1998). Chandra Mohanty and the revaluing of "experience." *Hypatia*, 13(2), 116–133. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810641>
- Sultan, N. (2019). What is heuristic inquiry, anyway? In *Heuristic inquiry: Researching human experience holistically* (1-22). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Sulzer, M. A., & Thein, A. H. (2016). Reconsidering the hypothetical adolescent in evaluating and teaching young adult literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60, 163-171.
- Thein, A. H. (2019). A critical emotional approach to canonical literature: Lessons from *Of Mice and Men*. In M. Macaluso, K. Macaluso (Eds.) *Teaching the Canon in the 21st Century Classroom: Challenging genres*. (pp. 167-180). Brill Publishers.
- Thomas, G. (2006). *PROUD FLESH Inter/Views: Sylvia Wynter* [Interview]. ProudFlesh.
- Temple, C. N. (2010). The emergence of *Sankofa* practice in the United States: A modern history. *Journal of Black Studies*, 41(1), 127-150.
- There is both good news and bad news in Black participation in Advanced Placement programs. (2005). *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 50, 97-101. EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.25073383&site=eds-live&scope=site.
- Toliver, S.R. (2019). Breaking binaries: #BlackGirlMagic and the Black ratchet imagination. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 15(1), 1-26.
- Ujjiyediin, N. (2021, December 3). Conservative parents are trying to ban books in Kansas City

schools. Students won't let them. [Radio broadcast]. NPR. <https://www.kcur.org/education/2021-12-03/conservative-parents-are-trying-to-ban-books-in-kansas-city-schools-students-wont-let-them>

Ullucci, K., and Battey, D. (2011, November). Exposing color blindness/grounding color consciousness: Challenges for teacher education. *Urban Education*, 46(6), 1195-1225.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). (2019) "Public School Teacher Data File," "Charter School Teacher Data File," "Public School Data File," and "Charter School Data File," 1999–2000; and National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2017–18. See Digest of Education Statistics 2019, table 209.22.

U.S. Department of Education. (2020). Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics .

Uzomba, A. S. T. (2022). *The Ancestral Legacy and Daughters of Anna Julia Cooper: An Historical Ethnography of Black Women Teachers in the South* [Doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University]. ScholarWorks. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/mse_

van Manen, M. (1990). Human science, In *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. State University of New York Press, 1-30.

Vasquez, J. A. (1988). Contexts of learning for minority students. *The Educational Forum*, 52(3), 243-253, DOI: 10.1080/00131728809335490

Vetter, A., Hungerford-Kressor, H. (2014). "We gotta change first": Racial literacy in a high school English classroom. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education* [Online], 82-99. Retrieved from <http://jolle.coe.ugs.edu>

Vogt, W. P., Gardner, D. C., & Haefele, L. M. (2012). *When to use what research design*. Guil-

ford Press.

- Vygotsky, L. (2012). *Thought and language*. The MIT Press.
- Waddell, J., and Ukpokodu, O. M. (2012). Recruiting & preparing diverse urban teachers: One urban-focused teacher education program breaks new ground. *Multicultural Education*, 20(1), 15-22.
- Warikoo, N. (2004). Race and the teacher-student relationship: interpersonal connections between West Indian students and their teachers in a New York City high school. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 7(2), 135-147.
- Waters, M. C. (1999). *Black identities: West Indian immigrant dreams and American realities*. Harvard University Press.
- Watkins, N., and Ostenson, J. (2015, April). Navigating the text selection gauntlet: Exploring factors that influence English teachers' choices. *English Education*, 47(3), 245-275.
- Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Whiting, G. W., and Ford, D. Y. (2009). Black students and advanced placement classes: Summary, concerns, and recommendations. *Gifted Child Today*, 32(1), 23-26.
- Williams Brown, N. K. (2017). *The transnational narratives and struggles of Afro-Caribbean immigrant women teachers in New York city school districts* [Doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University]. Education Commons. <https://surface.syr.edu/etd/784>
- Williams-White, L., Muccular, D., Muccular, G., and Braws, A.F. (Eds.) (2013). *Critical consciousness in curricular research: Evidence from the field*. Peter Lang.
- Williams, C. (2005). In defense of materialism: a critique of Afrocentric ontology. *Race & Class*, 47(1), 35-48.

- Wilson, A. V., and Segall, W. E. (2001). *Oh I remember! Experiences of teachers during the desegregation of Austin's schools, 1964-1971*. State University of New York Press.
- Wolfson, N. (1976, August). Speech events and natural speech: Some implications for sociolinguistic methodology. *Language in Society*, 5(2), 189-209.
- Woodson, C. G. (1933). *The mis-education of the Negro*.
- Wynter, S. (2005). Appendix B-2: Race and our biocentric belief system: An interview with Sylvia Wynter. In J. King (Ed.), *Black education: A transformative research and action agenda for the new century* (pp. 361-366). American Educational Research Association.
- Zernokleyev, L. (2013). An autobiographical journey of a Russian Teacher in America. In L.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

A Matrix for Examining the Characteristics of Curriculum Documents

	Afrocentric	Neutral or Balanced	Eurocentric	Additional (i.e. LGBTQIA, Femi- nist, etc.)
Author or creator's institution af- filiation				
Visual representations				
Use of grammar & spellings				
Organization & chronology				
Authors and/or literary works				
Evidence of culturally relevant pedagogy				
Elements of critical literacy				

Note. This figure is adapted from Patton's (2002) document analysis checklist. Additionally, I define culturally relevant pedagogy based on Sleeter's (2011) and Ladson-Billings (1995) works.

Appendix B

AP Lit. End of Year Film Project (Curriculum Document)

AP Literature and Composition

End of Year Film Project

Make a film employing the filmmaking techniques reviewed in class.

Each group of 4 or 5 students will write, act and film a 10-15 minute movie on a topic of their choosing. Each movie will be graded on:

- i) The introduction (Prelude. What is the film is about? Who are the characters? etc.)
- ii) Sound effects
- iii) Suitable music
- iv) Suitable lighting
- v) Should adhere to a common theme or idea
- vi) Chronology
- vii) Postlude (What each participant has learned from the experience etc. 1 ½-2 minutes.)

2) Students will turn in the following by May 16:

- a) the responsibilities of each group member
- b) the plot of their film
- c) the title of their film
- d) the prelude
- e) the names and number of extras they will be using, if any.
- f) When they expect to begin filming.

3) Students will turn in full copies of their scripts by May 24

4) Students will turn in copies of their postlude on June 6.

5) Students will make their presentations the week of June 10-14

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Georgia State University
Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education & Human
Development Informed Consent

Title: *Unsung: Stories of Twenty-first-century Black Advanced Placement English/Honors Teachers*

Principal Investigator: Dr. Nadia Behizadeh

Co-Investigator: N/A

Student Principal Investigator: Cheryll Thompson-Smith

I. Purpose:

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate is to understand the teaching and lived experiences of Black/African American AP English/honors teachers in suburban contexts. You are invited to participate because you are a Black/African American teacher of in a suburban school who may teach minoritized students. A total of five participants will be recruited for this study. Participation will require between 90 minutes, but no more than two hours of your time February 2023 through May 2023.

II. Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by the research investigator. These interviews may occur in three separate sittings. You will be audio recorded and if you so choose video recorded as you are interviewed. You will be interacting with the investigator in a setting of your choosing; however, the interview can take place virtually over Zoom. This portion of the research project will be completed by May of 2023. It is anticipated that the interviews will take up approximately 60 minutes of your time and each interview session will last no longer than 45 minutes. Separately, you will be asked to respond to brief journal prompts which you may respond in writing or through a pictorial representation and to return your responses to me. Finally, you will be asked to provide teacher-created curriculum documents of your choosing. For the journaling and curriculum document collection phase of this investigation, it will take no more than 30 minutes of your time.

III. Risks:

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life. However, because this study will ask you to reflect on your past experiences, you may recall memories which trigger certain emotions. If this does occur, and you wish to pause or stop the interview, you may do so.

IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may or may not benefit you personally. It may benefit you by having you actively reflect on your teaching practices and life experiences. Overall, we hope to gain information about your experiences with the teaching of AP English/honors.

V. Compensation:

You will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

VI. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VII. Confidentiality:

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. Dr. Nadia Behizadeh and Cheryll Thompson-Smith will have access to the information you provide. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). We will use pseudonyms rather than your name on study records. The information you provide will be stored in a locked file cabinet as well virtually in a password protected file to protect your privacy. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

VIII. Contact Persons:

Contact Dr. Nadia Behizadeh (faculty advisor) and Cheryll Thompson-Smith at 404.413.8397 or nbehizadeh@gsu.edu and cthompsonsmith1@student.gsu.edu or 770.864.8325 if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3500 if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, obtain information, or suggestions about the study. You can also call if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

IX. Copy of Consent Form to Participant:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio and/or video recorded, please sign below.

Participant

Date

Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Unsung: Stories of twenty-first-century Black Advanced Placement English/Honors teachers Division of Teaching and Learning Interview Protocol

Date.....

Time.....

Location.....

Interviewer.....

Interviewee Identifier.....

This interview is being conducted during the month of _____ 2022. We hope this will better help us to understand the experiences of Black/African American and Minoritized AP English/honors teachers in suburban schools. You have received a consent form to sign, which indicates your consent to the interview. The interview is being audio recorded.

Questions and Probes

- 1) First, I'd be interested in knowing how you became a teacher.
 - a. How long have you been in education?
 - b. What about teaching AP English/honors appeals to you?
 - c. Describe your previous teaching experiences.
- 2) Please explain your experience with teaching AP English/honors in suburban schools.
 - a. Describe your teaching. What might a typical lesson look like?
 - b. Who are/have been your students? How have they reacted to the curricula and your teaching?
 - c. How have you felt supported or challenged teaching AP English/honors?
- 3) Please describe your beliefs about teaching AP English/honors.
 - a. In your opinion, what would you indicate as a source of motivation for teaching the AP English/honors curriculum?
 - b. What support systems do you draw upon to assist you in teaching the AP English/honors curriculum?
- 4) Thank you for your time. You have been very helpful. We'd be interested in any other feelings and thoughts you'd like to share with us to help us understand your experiences of teaching AP English/honors.

- a. Is there anything you would like to add to this interview that would be helpful to understanding your teaching experiences?
- b. Are there any questions you think we should have included?

Appendix E

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Mail: P.O. Box 3999 In Person: 3rd Floor
 Atlanta, Georgia 30302-3999 58 Edgewood
 Phone: 404/413-3500 FWA: 00000129

April 15, 2022

Principal Investigator: Nadia Behizadeh

Key Personnel: Behizadeh, Nadia; Thompson-smith, Cheryl M

Study Department: Georgia State University, College of Education and Human Development

Study Title: Understanding the experiences of Black and African American Advanced Placement English and honors high school teacher

Submission Type: Exempt Protocol Category 2

IRB Number: H22453

Reference Number: 368645

Determination Date: 04/06/2022

Status Check Due By: 04/05/2025

The above-referenced study has been determined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to be exempt from federal regulations as defined in 45 CFR 46 and has evaluated for the following:

1. Determination that it falls within one or more of the eight exempt categories allowed by the institution; and
2. Determination that the research meets the organization's ethical standards

If there is a change to your study, you should notify the IRB through an Amendment Application before the change is implemented. The IRB will determine whether your research continues to qualify for exemption or if a new submission of an expedited or full board application is required.

A Status Check must be submitted three years from the determination date indicated above. When the study is complete, a Study Closure Form must be submitted to the IRB.

This determination applies only to research activities engaged in by the personnel listed on this document.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to ensure that the IRB's requirements as detailed in the Institutional Review Board Policies and Procedures For Faculty, Staff, and Student Researchers (available at gsu.edu/irb) are observed, and to ensure that relevant laws and regulations of any jurisdiction where the research takes place are observed in its conduct.

Any unanticipated problems resulting from this study must be reported immediately to the University Institutional Review Board. For more information, please visit our website at www.gsu.edu/irb.

Sincerely,

Jamie Zaikov, IRB Member

Appendix F*Journal prompts***UNSUNG: STORIES OF TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY BLACK
ADVANCED PLACEMENT ENGLISH / HONORS TEACHERS****Division of Teaching and Learning Journal Prompts**

- 1. In your earlier years of teaching, how did you invoke your culture into your teaching of advanced ELA curricula? (Your response may be written or in the form of video, TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression)**
- 2. If you had to describe your teaching philosophy during your early years, how would you describe or represent it? (Your response may be written or in the form of video, TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression).**
- 3. How do you currently infuse your culture into your teaching of advanced ELA curricula? (Your response may be written or in the form of video, TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression).**
- 4. If you could write a six-word memoir revealing your current teaching philosophy, what would it be? (Your response may be written or in the form of video, TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression)**

Appendix G

Themes overview

- **Most Significant/important narratives for:**
 - **RQ1 (Ideologies & Beliefs)**
 - **N8.4 Being a Representative (Vanessa)**
 - **N6.1 Role of race in teaching AP (Diane)**
 - **N8.3 Current Climate (Diane)**
 - **N7.2 How I see IT (Vanessa)**
 - **RQ2 (Life Experiences of AP Teachers)**
 - **N1.3 Love of Learning (Diane)**
 - **N1.1 Start in teaching (Diane)**
 - **N1.2 Start in teaching (Vanessa)**
 - **N10.3 Sense of Responsibility (Diane)**
 - **N8.2 African American vs. Canonical Texts (Vanessa)**
 - **N4.1 Support vs. Expectations (Diane)**
 - **N3.1 Book Battle (Diane)**

Appendix H

Storyboard for Chapter 4 “The Kitchen”

Breakfast	Porridge: A Nutritious Filling Start (Oats, Hominy, & Cornmeal)	Becoming a teacher <i>Notes...Life Experiences (Personal)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISLAND GIRL N1.1 (Diane) • MOTHER KNOWS BEST N1.2 (Vanessa) • UPBRINGING N10.4 (Vanessa) • DADDY’S LITTLE GIRL (Diane) N1.3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N1.1 Start in teaching (Diane) ▪ N1.2 Start in teaching (Vanessa) ▪ N1.3 Love of Learning (Diane) ▪ N10.4 Upbringing (Vanessa)
Lunch	Escovitch Fried Fish (“easier for you to handle”)	Preparation for AP <i>Notes...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TENSE TEXT SELECTION N3.1 (Diane) • SUMMER READING N4.2 (Vanessa) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N3.1 Book Battle (Diane) ▪ N4.2 The Litmus Test (Vanessa)
Dinner	Oxtail (“see if its spicy to your taste”) with Rice & Peas (“look at it that no stones are in it”)	Curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation <i>Notes...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRAISE & POLISH N4.1 (Diane) • CURRICULAR CHOICES N.2 (Vanessa) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N4.1 Unrealistic Expectation (Diane) ▪ N8.2 African American vs. Canonical Texts (Vanessa)
Vegetarian Option	Corn Casserole (“Delicious”)	New/Alternative Perspectives (Ideologies, & Beliefs) <i>Notes...</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BELIEFS & IDEOLOGIES N6.1 (Diane) • IDENTITY – WHO I AM N7.2 (Vanessa) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N6.1 Role of race in teaching AP (Diane) ▪ N7.2 How I see IT (Vanessa)

Appendix I

Cheryll Thompson-Smith
 March 25, 2023, 5:01 p.m.
 Running time 30:59

Interview #1 Transcription

IRB: Interviewer

IEB1: Interviewee

--: Indicates an abrupt shift in topic or interruptions in train of thought

Boldface: emphasis

Italics: Dialogue reenacted or in a different voice

Title: Literary title

(inaudible): could not discern what was being said

(Sigh): Expression of air being blown out of the mouth

(00:00): Indicates the time

[]: Indicates a name or title that has been redacted from the transcript or explanation of previous acronym/title

. . .: Continuation of train of thought or trails off

- 1 IRB Okay. Thank you so much today for meeting with me on your weekend. I really appreciate it.
- 2 IEB1 You are welcome.
- 3 IRB Okay, so my first question is: First, I'd be interested in knowing how you became a teacher.
- 4 IEB1 Well, I became a teacher in the Caribbean. I attended teacher's college in the Caribbean, and then
- 5 I migrated to a southeastern U.S. metropolitan city to get a full degree because back home that's
- 6 not a degree. It's a teacher's diploma, so I came to study in a southeastern U.S. metropolitan city
- 7 for a bachelor's to move on to a masters, but I just never went back home from there, so I've been
- 8 teaching ever
- 9 since.
- 10 IRB And how long is that?

- 11 IEB1 Seventeen years in all.
- 12 IRB Okay. How many years did you teach in the Caribbean versus the States?
- 13 IEB1 I taught for a few months. After I got out in July, I taught for a few months, and then, the follow-
14 ing year, I migrated. I started school here, so . . .
- 15 IRB Okay . . .
- 16 IEB1 I didn't do . . . I taught elementary school back home for two or so months.
- 17 IRB Okay. How long . . . You answered that. You've been in education seventeen years total?
- 18 IEB1 Mhm. Yes.
- 19 IRB Alright, so I know that you said that you used to teach AP English, right?
- 20 IEB1 Mhm. Yay.
- 21 IRB And currently, you don't teach AP English. Do you teach any honors courses? Or you teach regu-
22 lar courses?
- 23 IEB1 I actually -- I am in the ESE [Exceptional Student Education] department, so I'm a co-teacher in
24 an English class, and then I have a resource class that I teach on my own, but . . .
- 25 IRB Okay, but you are responsible for your own class in that resource class? Right?
- 26 IEB1 Yes. That is correct.
- 27 IRB Okay. Alright, so if you could think to the past when you did teach AP English, what about it ap-
28 pealed to you?
- 29 IEB1 The level of rigor and the students that -- back then when I taught AP, the students who took an
30 AP course were really interested in taking the course, passing the course, and using it for college
31 credits. Back then, dual education was not (long pause) as easily accessible as it is now, so. AP
32 was more of a go to back then for students.
- 33 IRB And when you say dual education you're talking about when people can do dual enrollment,
34 right?
- 35 IEB1 Dual enrollment, yes.

- 36 IRB Not as accessible you said. And do you remember what years you did teaching of AP English?
37 And if you taught AP English Literature or Language or both?
- 38 IEB1 I taught AP Literature from perhaps 2008 to 2011 or so. And then, in 2014, I taught AP
39 Language 2014 through 2016.
- 40 IRB Kay. So, when you taught AP English Literature and AP English Language, remind me, did you
41 say it was in a suburban school setting or would you say it was more urban? What was the setting
42 like?
- 43 IEB1 For both, it was I would say semi-urban, because one of the schools was in the middle of a state
44 in the southwest. It wasn't in a rural or suburban area. And another one I wouldn't say it was full
45 suburban either. It's semi-urban I would say.
- 46 IRB Okay. And so then what were your – what was your student population like when you taught in
47 a state in the southwest?
- 48 IEB1 In terms of?
- 49 IRB In terms of demographics, so how would they probably identify racially? Would they have been
50 considered middle class? You know? What would their socioeconomic status have been?
- 51 IEB1 Well the school that I taught at with the – where AP Language that would have been middle class
52 to upper middle class. The one prior to that it was. It was a charter school too it wasn't; it was a
53 title one school, so.
- 54 IRB Okay, and that was for AP English Lit. right?
- 55 IEB1 Yes.
- 56 IRB Title one. Okay, can you describe your teaching? Like what might a typical lesson have looked
57 like when you were teaching AP English Lit. or Lang.?
- 58 IEB1 That's far back, but generally, we would read novels, and analyze the novels looking for certain
59 elements. The students would write essays; they were expected to write essays on a weekly basis.

60 And we were looking for certain things, and they would be provided with feedback weekly feed-
61 back on an essay.

62 IRB Okay.

63 IEB1 Every week there was feedback to see what they could strengthen what elements of their writing
64 could be strengthened, and what it was lacking. You know, what they were doing well, and so
65 forth and so on. Depending -- and it would always be geared towards from -- that would be com-
66 ing from College Board directly.

67 IRB Okay. So, what would you say your students would identify as? Were they mainly Caucasian?
68 African American? Spanish speaking? A mixture?

69 IEB1 Majority I would say would be from first generation Spanish speaking students. Then, it would be
70 followed by Caucasians, and a few African Americans, but majority was students from a Spanish
71 speaking background.

72 IRB Okay. So, did you find with those few African American students that you had that there was any
73 kind of special relationship between you and them because they recognized that *Oh you're a*
74 *teacher, a Black teacher, and I'm a student who's Black?* Did you find anything like that?

75 IEB1 Yeah, there was always a deeper connection or p--- not to say that you expected more from that
76 group of students, but somewhere, there was I would say a hidden message that this is expected
77 of you to surpass expectations and do well. And for the most part, students who did take an AP
78 class with me, were the top achieving students at that school anyways. So, they were expected to
79 do well, and they did.

80 IRB Okay. So, they met the expectations then? How have you or they reacted to the curricula and your
81 teaching of it? So, like what's your response? How did you feel about the curriculum? And then,
82 how did they respond to the curriculum?

83 IEB1 For the most part, I think those students have been exposed to that -- the material before, you
84 know, when they took English classes before, so it was something similar. They were coming

85 from an honors class that have use basically the same materials or structure. And they just raise
86 up to the next level to mine. Most of the materials we use were by – I remember it was a small
87 charter school – I remember once we had a Toni Morrison book on it, and it was there was a fight
88 back for that from parents, and so we were asked not to teach it. If a child wanted to read that
89 book, they could read it on their own. If they were asked to read books outside on their own, to
90 pick books that they want to read that they liked, and they were encouraged to do that more so. I
91 never have my kids stick solely to the list . What is it? Is it the question three? I don't remember –
92 (crosstalk)

93 IRB Yeah. That used to be the open question.

94 IEB1 Yes.

95 IRB Now it's --

96 IEB1 I would have my students read books that were not on the list. And those students would do well
97 generally speaking. You know, they would read Steinbeck books, but you know, they would read
98 the guy who – I knew one of the kids who got a five one year, and I didn't expect him to get a
99 five, but he got a five, and I think the book he focused on was Crime and Punishment. And I
100 don't recall ever seeing that book on that list. And I always have them read Heart of Darkness as
101 well.

102 IRB Okay. That's a harder work. (crosstalk)

103 IEB1 They did – my students did relatively well, not just on the AP exam, but on the state exam as
104 well; because for the southwestern state, you had to pass in order to graduate. And we always had
105 high passing rates on the state exams. Unlike here what I've seen here.

106 IRB (laughs). Can you tell me more about that – you started telling me a story about you remember
107 the fight with the parents with the Toni Morrison book? Was that a book that a child picked on
108 their own? Was it a book that you assigned? You know, can you talk more about --

109 IEB1 I didn't assign. I mean, I suggested it.

- 110 IRB Okay (crosstalk).
- 111 IEB1 It wasn't assigned. It was on one of the lists that I told the kids they could read from, and that stu-
112 dent for some reason – it was a boy – he picked that. I'm not even sure why. It was a Caucasian
113 boy.
- 114 IRB Oh.
- 115 IEB1 That's one where mom was really involved, and mom perhaps went through a few pages. I can't
116 remember the name. I can remember that it was a red-ish pink-ish colored book, but I can't re-
117 member the name of it right now off the top of my head.
- 118 IRB Uh, maybe Song of Solomon? Cause I know--
- 119 IEB1 I don't even remember what it was, but I can remember the pushback from mom came in – it was
120 a small charter school and at that time, my principal caved to whatever parents said, so I just said
121 *It's one of the books*. I think that one must been on an AP list at some point because I could de-
122 fend myself where that book came from, so. I didn't get in trouble or anything like that, so, but I
123 just stopped putting it on my class lists so of books that students could read.
- 124 IRB Okay. Okay. And do you remember if the student ended up reading it in the end? Or did they
125 pick something else?
- 126 IEB1 No, the kid didn't read the book any at all. Mom didn't want it at all.
- 127 IRB Okay. How have you felt supported or challenged teaching AP English or honors? How have you
128 felt supported or challenged?
- 129 IEB1 I've always felt supported at that charter school, but when I moved to the other school which was
130 a **way** bigger school, and I had way more students at – there were three of us teaching AP Lan-
131 guage, and I had 180 kids, and I saw those kids every **day**, and at that school too, we had to grade
132 essay with full feedback every week for 180 kids. And at the end of my first year there, half of the
133 kids didn't take the AP exam. And so, like it was a **waste** of time, in my book, because I **can't** be
134 putting that much out. And so, we fought against it. So, we got to the point where if you take the

135 course, you had to take the class. That – my second year teaching the course that was what was in
136 place for that; because, after we met with the principal, we met with the vice principal, we met
137 with the dean. A matter of fact I asked to not teach it anymore actually, the second year. Because
138 the kids wanted to have the AP course on their record, but they weren't putting out the effort, and
139 so they switched me to teaching a college placement English course where if you're going to one
140 of the community colleges there -- you guys call it a technical college here – if you took my Eng-
141 lish class, and you pass it with at least a "C," you didn't have to take the entrance exam. And so, I
142 started, that was something new going on there, and I opted to teach that instead of AP because it
143 was becoming too stressful for me. I cannot be grading a hundred and eighty papers every week
144 with intense feedback. Because you had to give a praise, and you had to give something that was
145 to be polished. So, you had to do two things on all the paragraphs, not just one, so you had to go
146 through and identify words that they could switch to elevate their vocabulary. It was, it was an
147 intense school. Now we had kids, some of the kids in that class really really pushed for it, but
148 they would be throwing all these football players in there.

149 IRB Oh.

150 IEB1 -- In the classes so that they could pad their resumes for colleges, but they weren't putting out the
151 work. They were doing more work on the football field instead of in the classroom. It was not
152 fair, so now (crosstalk)

153 IRB So even though --

154 IEB1 I stopped teaching AP.

155 IRB So even though they changed that whole intense --

156 IEB1 Mhm

157 IRB --feedback on these weekly essays,--

158 IEB1 Mhm

159 IRB -- your second year after that you were just like *No, I'm gonna go to the ---?*

160 IEB1 --No, because my scores – I don't like to be teaching a tested course, and I'm not getting kids
161 passing. If they don't pass, I think it's reflecting on me as well. My kids don't pass, I'm a part of
162 it. It's not just the kids that are blamed, and if they're not putting the effort up to pass the exam.
163 When I look at my scores, I want to see scores like that, so even here when I you know moved
164 here, it wasn't an AP course the job that was offered. It was a ninth-grade course or something. I
165 don't even teach ninth graders. And when they asked if I was AP certified, I was like *Every year,*
166 *I attend an AP training session. So yes!* And at my school where I'm at, they're like, *No you have*
167 *to be gifted here to teach this.* And I'm like, *I have my gifted certification from a southwestern*
168 *U.S. state as well. Not certification. The courses that I took.* Each year in that southwestern U.S.
169 state, you had to have a certain number of credit hours of professional development in order to
170 teach the honors course, but it's different here. And then one of the other teachers here I met at
171 some training, and she's a department chair and she said, *No, you're qualified to teach, and it's*
172 *good enough to teach AP here.* And based on the testing culture that I've seen being here, at the
173 school where I'm at, I didn't want to do it here either, so.

174 IRB Okay. I understand. I understand. Can you describe your beliefs when it comes to teaching AP
175 particularly as a Black teacher? Does your identity? Does your race play any role? Can you just
176 describe your beliefs when it comes to teaching AP?

177 IEB1 I wouldn't say that my race plays a role, but in certain instances, I see where it's not balanced.
178 There's no balance in the – if you know, it's been a while, but normally going through an AP test
179 packet, the piece – the work that's there you know you may see a few pieces by a Latino writer,
180 you know, the passages that they read, I don't recall, I can't recall going back that far to say that
181 I've seen passages that were used that were written by any African American writers. I know
182 there are books, you know, Toni Morrison, Zora Neal Hurston, who wrote (trying to recall) The
183 Invisible Man? I know it was there at one point; I don't know if it's still covered, but I didn't see
184 a balance in the materials, and then it would make me think that perhaps, you know, we're not

185 pushing our African American kids hard enough from the middle school level in honors courses;
186 because if you throw them in one, when they're in high school, they're going to flounder because
187 they don't have the foundations to work with. So, that's that balance, that I didn't see. I didn't see
188 the balance in preparing kids at a younger age, and a balance in the materials that are expected to
189 be tested on per say.

190 IRB Okay. So, tell me if I'm describing this right: you saw that it was more of the literary
191 canon, so more Caucasian authors, and less diversity?

192 IEB1 Mhm. Yes.

193 IRB From what you can recall.

194 IEB1 Yes. That's correct.

195 IRB So. And I guess that would be important especially since you said that the majority of your stu-
196 dents in your first assignment there were Spanish speaking --

197 IEB1 -- Yes.

198 IRB And then you said there were some Caucasians, so they're not necessarily seeing themselves re-
199 flected in the curriculum. And certainly, the Black students you taught, weren't seeing themselves
200 reflected on a wide scale? They might have smatterings of authors, but not necessarily (crosstalk).

201 IEB1 Pieces here and there.

202 IRB So like a dash here or there?

203 IEB1 Yes.

204 IRB In your opinion, what would you indicate as a source of motivation for teaching AP
205 English? What would be something that might motivate someone to teach AP English? Now, you
206 have this experience, you've had these different jobs, what would you say?

207 IEB1 I would say the level of rigor that's there because in that sense, all kids, you know, all
208 kids can learn, but the kids who have the potential to go higher and do better, you should be as
209 engaged with them as often as possible to show that we're doing

- 210 something here that they can take and be used elsewhere to be successful in their writing or be it
211 talking or rhetoric - - whatever they're doing. They can expand on that. When I had kids that were
212 totally engaged, you know, you could feel it. There's a difference. You feel it in the classroom
213 that this group of kids that's coming in here for this period - it takes learning to another level.
214 And you appreciate that, and they appreciate it as well.
- 215 IRB So it sounds like there was a sense of enjoyment --
- 216 IEB1 Yes!
- 217 IRB -- when you had those kids that were eager. They didn't necessarily - although you seemed to in-
218 dicate that they were prepared from the middle and high school --
- 219 IEB1 -- they were prepared, but --
- 220 IRB -- but they may not have all the skills right away, but they had the thirst (crosstalk).
- 221 IEB1 Yes!
- 222 IRB They had the thirst, and so you were able to work with that.
- 223 IEB1 Yes. They wanted to be better. They wanted to do better. And they wanted that challenge as well.
- 224 IRB Okay. So, they invited it? (crosstalk)
- 225 IEB1 Yes, and for me it didn't lend itself to a pulling of tooth situation, where, *Oh my God read this*
226 *paragraph; tell me what it's saying; pick something from it; expand on it.* They had the founda-
227 tion to be able to do that and take it to another level. And they wanted to do it. AP--
- 228 IRB Kay. So, when you taught AP English and Literature, what support systems did you draw upon to
229 assist you in teaching it?

230 IEB1 Well, we had – each summer, I would go to a PD session. My school would pay for that, and even
231 mid-year too. In January, they had some mini-sessions, and once you asked to go there, and you’d
232 come back with, you know, materials that you could use, and you would feel supported, not just
233 within your campus, but from teachers because back then I – I forgot about this, I was a part of a
234 group where it was way back then because it was through Yahoo. Where we would be teachers
235 would be sharing ideas, you know, this is what I did. This is how the kids reacted to it, and so you
236 had, I had support, not just within my campus, but from other teachers across the nation as well.
237 This was a huge group.

238 IRB So across the nation. So, within your campus, how many other AP English or honors teachers
239 were there?

240 IEB1 At the charter school, I was the only literature teacher there. There was another one who taught
241 Language, and then when I went to the other school, there were three Language teachers, and I
242 think the same for AP Literature. I don’t remember, for literature rather, I’m not sure if it was
243 three, but I knew we had three AP Language teachers. And at that school, in 2014 we had dual
244 credit as well, so dual enrollment for the kids too, so they had access to both.

245 IRB So, yeah?

246 IEB1 On one campus.

247 IRB So even though they had access to dual enrollment, there was still three AP Lang. teachers?

248 That’s a lot!

249 IEB1 Yes.

250 IRB How big was the school? How many students was it?

- 251 IEB1 It was almost 3,000. It was a huge school. It was twice the school I'm at right now, so it was re-
252 ally big.
- 253 IRB So, the kids must have really enjoyed AP Lang. to have three sections, three teachers at least.
- 254 IEB1 Three teachers.
- 255 IRB Wow. Were they on a block or traditional schedule?
- 256 IEB1 It's traditional. We saw them every day, but it was for 55 minutes. It wasn't a long class.
- 257 IRB And currently, are you on a traditional or block.
- 258 IEB1 We're on block now. I hate block.
- 259 IRB Yeah, I'm on block too. Okay, so yeah, and you think that there were maybe two AP Lit.? Not
260 quite as many as AP Lang. at that school in 2014.
- 261 IEB1 Possibly, but I don't remember clearly, I'd have to like go search through things to see for sure,
262 but I don't remember.
- 263 IRB Do you remember how many other AP English teachers there were? Like Lit. or Lang.? Like
264 were you the only one, or were there others?
- 265 IEB1 I was the only African American AP teacher there.
- 266 IRB Is that the way you prefer to refer to yourself as African American or Black? Which do you pre-
267 fer?
- 268 IEB1 African American. It doesn't bother me. I guess that's the box I check or whatever box I used to
269 check. I'm not sure anymore, so.
- 270 IRB Okay. Alright, so in my study, I'm using a theory a social theory called Afrocentricity. So, I'm
271 curious to know, what does Afrocentricity mean to you?.

- 272 IEB1 I – for me it would be anything that focuses or centers on a culture that is African American or
273 Black.
- 274 IRB Sorry, I’m trying to write it down. So, in your current position as an ESE teacher, what - - are you
275 students African-American or Black? Is there a mix?
- 276 IEB1 Majority of the students are African American boys.
- 277 IRB And do you think that’s because it’s ESE that they’re African American boys, or do you think
278 that’s just the makeup of your school?
- 279 IEB1 I don’t think it’s the makeup of my school. I think it’s (long pause). I think it’s a cultural thing.
- 280 IRB Okay.
- 281 IEB1 I think from an early age, one, the reading levels are really poor. Two, I think any behavior that
282 goes out of the norm from an early age, and then they are not able to deal with them, they’re cate-
283 gorized as slow learners who are recommended for testing, and because they’re slow learners, and
284 they are not reading at their levels, and they identify that they cannot answer questions when they
285 are tested, so they are generally placed in ESE.
- 286 IRB Okay. I see. That makes sense. My last question is: Are there any other things you would like to
287 share your thoughts and feelings about that can help me to understand your experiences of teach-
288 ing AP English or Honors that maybe I didn’t touch on? Is there anything else that you can think
289 of?
- 290 IEB1 I wouldn’t say there is. I – though it was challenging, I enjoyed teaching it, and I think too one of
291 the things that made it so challenging for me was the number of students. When I was at a much
292 smaller school, it was – the expectation was manageable. But when you’re placed in an environ-
293 ment where you’re seeing that many students where when you identify an area that needed to be

294 polished because you never say *The kids cannot do this*; it's an area that needed to be polished
295 and so many areas to be polished, and you had to do it not for one, not for two, but for over a 150
296 kids, that was a lot of work. At my smaller school where I was at, I had no more than fifteen kids
297 doing AP, and so I could do all the one-on-one that I wanted to. I gave up my Saturdays to go in
298 and do mock exams with them. I couldn't do that at that much bigger school. So, I think that the
299 numbers is what turned me off from AP. I enjoyed it, and the kids enjoyed it too, but . . .

300 IRB So you said the numbers turned you off, not so much the curriculum.

301 IEB1 No (crosstalk).

302 IRB But the sheer volume.

303 IEB1 The sheer workload and volume. Yes. Yes.

304 IRB And are there any stories that you would like to share or that come to mind about teaching AP?
305 You mentioned the one about the Caucasian student and his mother. Are there any stories that
306 come to mind that kind of encapsulate your experience? You as an AP teacher? Anything comes
307 to mind?

308 IEB1 I think that actually knowing that most of the kids that I taught at that charter school went on to a
309 four-year college, many of them are doctors, many of them are lawyers. One of my African
310 American girls she has her own law firm, and she graduated in what 2013 or 2012, and she has
311 her own law firm (crosstalk).

312 IRB Wow.

313 IEB1 And she was one of my very few African American girls that took AP English with me. And you
314 know that kid was vocal from the get-go. You could see her going places, and it warms my heart
315 knowing that it was a small school, and the kids that I taught, they are pharmacists, doctors, and

316 you know, I keep in touch. They keep in touch, and I see where I made an impact. I see where I
317 made a true impact, and the relationships that were spawned from that, so. Yeah.

318 IRB Wow! That's amazing. I guess that hunger for learning and being goal oriented it went on with
319 her?

320 IEB1 Yes, it did. And now, she's doing phenomenally well.

321 IRB And I'm glad to hear you're still in contact -- I find it great when I can be in contact with students
322 because you know, as high school teachers we don't see them anymore. They're gone.

323 IEB1 Oh, I know.

324 IRB Okay, those are all the questions that I have for today for you. My only request is that I'm going
325 to send you a list of prompts. They're journal prompts. And so although it's called a journal
326 prompt, you can choose how you respond. Like you could video yourself. Responding, what was
327 the thing we used to use? FlipGrid? You could video yourself responding if you want to or you
328 could just use your phone, or you could write a poem if you wanted to or a haiku. You choose the
329 number you want to respond to, and if you could just get that back to me, and also if you can find
330 one or two samples of things that you either used or created in teaching AP that reflect your phi-
331 losophy and your experience teaching it, that would be great. A document. It could be your sylla-
332 bus, but it doesn't have to be your syllabus. It could be a graphic organizer. It could be a prompt,
333 something. One or two examples. Those are my data sets. My data sets are the interview that we
334 had just now, the journal prompts, and the journal prompts are there because you know how you
335 talk with someone, and then after the fact, you realized *Oh, I forgot to tell them about such-and-*
336 *such!* It kind of helps you know unpack things. And being English teachers, sometimes we're bet-
337 ter with writing.

- 338 IEB1 I don't know if I have anything physical though because I've moved. And back then, I was a flash
339 drive user. So . . .
- 340 IRB Okay. Okay. That's fine. If you don't have anything, that's fine.
- 341 IEB1 A Google doc, but I'll check; I'll check, but I don't know (crosstalk).
- 342 IRB Okay.
- 343 IEB1 I'll check.
- 344 IRB And I'll just get back to you about trying to get the participants together to have like one last con-
345 versation like sharing their experience; because I find as an AP teacher, sometimes you're like a
346 lone person, you know? There's not many people. Like when you talked about that campus and
347 all of those teachers, I was like *Wow!* Even though they may not have been Black, it's sometimes
348 just the comradery. Just being able to . . .
- 349 IEB1 Yes. Yes.
- 350 IRB Because you're a PLC of one.
- 351 IEB1 And that Yahoo page was so helpful for me when I was at that other school because I was the
352 only AP Literature teacher. The other guy was the Language teacher, and so there was nothing
353 else for us. We had to look outside so.
- 354 IRB Okay. Well, I thank you so much for your time. I don't want to take any more of your time. I
355 promised you I wouldn't be long, and it's been like 32 minutes, so I hope that wasn't too long.
- 356 IEB1 (laughs)
- 357 IRB And I will be in contact again. I will send that stuff for you, and I will be in contact again.
- 358 IEB1 Okay. Your most welcome.

359 IRB Okay. Have a great day.

360 IEB1 You as well.

361 IRB Bye.

362 IEB1 Bye.

Appendix J

Cheryll Thompson-Smith
March 27, 2023, 7:16 p.m.
Running time 39:59

Interview #1 Transcription

IRB: Interviewer

IEB2: Interviewee

--: Indicates an abrupt shift in topic or interruptions in train of thought or trails off

Boldface: emphasis

Italics: Dialogue reenacted or in a different voice

Title: Literary title

(inaudible): could not discern what was being said

(Sigh): Expression of air being blown out of the mouth

(00:00): Indicates the time

[]: Indicates a name or title that has been redacted from the transcript or explanation of previous acronym/title

. . .: Continuation of train of thought

1 IRB Okay. That seems to be good. Mmm. Okay. Alright. So you pronounce your first name
2 “Van-ess-a?”

3 IEB2 My mother does. I say “Vawn-essa.”

4 IRB Vawnessa. Okay. And Adams-Spears.

5 IEB2 Yes, Ma’am.

6 IRB So you’re hyphenated like me? That’s great!

7 IEB2 (Laughs).

8 IRB Okay. Um, because I want to be respectful of your time, I’m going to go ahead and get
9 started. I basically have four groups of questions, and they kind of fall into the categories
10 of looking at how you became a teacher, your experience, how you feel about AP, and
11 then anything you want to add. Okay?

12 IEB2 Mmm.

13 IRB Alright. So first, I’d be interested in knowing how you became a teacher.

14 IEB2 (Laughs). Well according to my mother, she always knew I’d be a teacher. I had no such
15 knowledge. No such foreknowledge. She says I used to line my toys up and teach them.
16 But I do remember that when I was in primary school because in the Caribbean it’s pri-
17 mary school not elementary, I started a school when I was in fifth grade, for the first, sec-
18 ond, and third graders during lunch. And we used to - - I got teachers, and we used to go
19 to the principals to get chalk. We brought a chalkboard, but with all of that I never knew
20 that I was going to become or even wanted to be a teacher. And then I (inaudible) I fin-
21 ished high school that’s five grades. Grades seven through twelve, and I went on to do A-
22 levels. And while I was there for those two years again, I (Laughs) I organized a set of
23 substitutes when teachers were not going to be there. So those of us who were taking A-

24 levels, if the math teacher was away, I would have someone from the math section go sit
25 in for that teacher. I would sit in for the English and the Spanish teacher, and so on. I still
26 had no idea that I wanted to become a teacher. And my principal called me, and he said to
27 me, "*What are you going to be doing after this?*" I said, "Well, I applied to do physical
28 therapy, but they told me I was too young, and that I also need to pass chemistry, so
29 that's what I'm working on." He says, "*You would be a perfect teacher. Now I know*
30 *someone at such a place, and they're having interviews for the Teacher's College. Here's*
31 *an application form. Go.*" That's what I did. And I got through with them, and the next
32 thing I know, I was in Teacher's College. And I've never looked back.

33 IRB Okay. Okay. So this was in the Caribbean?

34 IEB2 Yes Ma'am.

35 IRB So, where in The Caribbean are you from exactly?

36 IEB2 I lived in Bellevue.

37 IRB Okay.

38 IEB2 And I went to school in the Caribbean. I went to an all-girls Catholic high school.

39 IRB My mom is from Goldstone, but it's spelled G-O-L-D-S-T-O-N-E is how she pronounced
40 it?

41 IEB2 Yes. That's where I did sixth form.

42 IRB Okay. Wow! How ironic!

43 IEB2 (Laughs).

44 IRB So then how long have you been in education?

45 IEB2 You sure you want to know?

46 IRB (Laughs).

- 47 IEB2 Okay. Just so you know, I started teaching when I was twelve years old. Okay?
- 48 IRB Okay.
- 49 IEB2 Next year, will be my fortieth year in education.
- 50 IRB Wow! That is amazing. Okay. Wow! So, can you talk to me about some of the
- 51 different places you've taught maybe? You taught – did you teach in the Caribbean as a
- 52 professional position then?
- 53 IEB2 Yes.
- 54 IRB Okay. And in the United States? Anywhere else? Any other countries?
- 55 IEB2 Right. So, I started in the Caribbean. My first five years I taught Spanish, and afterwards,
- 56 I taught English and Spanish. And then I moved to an island in the mid-Atlantic, where I
- 57 taught Spanish. And then I moved to The northeast where I taught English, and that's
- 58 what I've been teaching for the past seventeen years.
- 59 IRB Okay, so The northeast: English seventeen years. Okay. What about teaching AP English
- 60 and honors appeals to you?
- 61 IEB2 I enjoy the maturity of the students. We can have mature discussions. To be really honest,
- 62 I don't enjoy teaching – you know – this is what a sentence is, and this is a noun
- 63 (Laughs). And one of the things too I liked about AP especially AP Literature is that we
- 64 got to devour poetry. We got to you know take it apart, and look at what the writer might
- 65 be thinking, and so I really enjoy the maturity of my students who could talk about more
- 66 mature subjects. We could analyze things you know rather than me trying to trying to
- 67 squeeze blood out of stone. I enjoyed that about AP.

- 68 IRB Okay. Makes sense because there is a certain level of freedom, because this is a college
69 level course so it's a certain level of freedom. And are you AP English and AP Literature
70 certified? Remind me.
- 71 IEB2 Language and Literature.
- 72 IRB Okay. Language and Literature. Okay. Me too. Alright. Can you talk to me about maybe
73 those seventeen years in the northeast; since, you taught English in a major metropolitan
74 city. Kind of describe what that experience was like. Like you know what you did? Those
75 kinds of things describe.
- 76 IEB2 Okay. So, for the first five or so years of that, I taught AP as well as British and American
77 Lit., so I was teaching juniors and seniors, and I enjoyed that experience so much.
78 And then, someone left, so I started adding to my repertoire World Lit. with the sopho-
79 mores. It was annoying at first; because I was so accustomed to being with the seniors
80 and juniors and, but I got to like the younger ones as well. When I started teaching in the
81 northeast at first, I had not taught AP because in the Caribbean there is no AP, but there is
82 A-levels, and (Sigh) there is a – what's that other exam called? It's called K-levels or
83 something. It's been many years. So, it was a new experience teaching AP, but the princi-
84 pal at the time, she assured me that she knew that I could do it. Well, I knew I could do it
85 too because it was English (Laughs), so but my love for AP grew over those years, and
86 especially for AP Lit.
- 87 IRB Okay. So currently, are you just teaching AP Lit.? Or are you teaching AP Lit. and
88 Lang.?
- 89 IEB2 No, remember I had shared with you in our first in our conversation, that here since I
90 moved from The northeast --

- 91 IRB Yes. Yes--
- 92 IEB2 I do not teach AP. I have not taught AP this year. These two semesters. I teach World Lit.
93 and Speech.
- 94 IRB Okay. Now I remember. So, from – and how long have you been here from The northeast
95 again exactly?
- 96 IEB2 Since last June.
- 97 IRB Since last June. Okay. So you're still kind of new to the southeastern area.
- 98 IEB2 Yeah. I'm still getting my feet wet.
- 99 IRB Okay. We're glad you came.
- 100 IEB2 (Laughs).
- 101 IRB We need more teachers you know that you know are excited about teaching literature and
102 enjoy it; because it can be kind of down in the dumps all of the things we have to do.
103 Okay, on to my second group of questions. Please explain your experiences with teaching
104 AP English whether it's Literature or AP English Language or honors English (if you
105 have taught that)? Have you taught in a suburban area, or has it been urban explain your
106 experiences with that?
- 107 IEB2 Yes. I taught in an urban area in the northeast. The students were from all over actually,
108 and the last two years, we actually had students who were out of state since COVID, we
109 actually had students who were out of state, and also, out of the city. So, they did not
110 commute, but they came in online.
- 111 IRB Oh.
- 112 IEB2 The majority of the students were African Americans. Though there were many Hispanic
113 students, a few Asian students, and even fewer Caucasian students.

114 IRB That's neat.

115 IEB2 (Laughs)

116 IRB That they – so people students from out of the state, high school students, joined online in
117 The northeast to take courses. Did they have to pay to take these courses, or was it open
118 to them and free?

119 IEB2 No. They - - it was - - the school was a church affiliated school, so some parents, some of
120 them started with us, and the parents moved out of state, and they decided that they
121 wanted them to continue with us. Others, got to know us through promotions that we did
122 with our students going out to do community service or to sing or whatever, and they de-
123 cided *Well I want my child to be there even though I live you know an hour and a half or*
124 *two hours away.* And that was what happened.

125 IRB So COVID kind of opened things up for people then? It was a good thing.

126 IEB2 Yes.

127 IRB Do you know if they continued that?

128 IEB2 I know that there is at least one student who has continued that. I know we have a few of
129 them who have graduated.

130 IRB Okay. Okay. And you said a few graduated. Alright. Can you describe your teaching?
131 What might a typical lesson look like?

132 IEB2 We typically would begin with what we call a Do Now or a Bellringer of some sort,
133 which might be - - might have something to do with the last lesson or something like
134 that. And then, I would typically have like a mini lesson, and then, the students there
135 would be something for them to do. That would be the typical lesson and then we
136 would end up coming back together, and having our what would you call it now?

137 Like our checkout I guess, and then class would end. When we - - later on in a
138 semester, I tried to make it so that the students would be more in control. So, they
139 would have a lot of writing, or they would be directing things like they would have to
140 research, and they would have to present. Then, in the end, I kind of brought it all
141 together.

142 IRB So can you talk to me more about that more control. I know you said a lot of writing, but
143 they would also have to present. Would this be on a daily basis? How would it work?

144 IEB2 Let's see, so we had classes every other day. Not every day for eighty minutes we had a
145 block A/B schedule, so at least for one week of the month which would be two or three
146 classes depending on whether we had an A, or it was three; it was flipflopped. They
147 would have to do that. So, they would do research on certain things that they were doing
148 or had begun, and they would be the ones who presented.

149 IRB Okay. Okay. And you said it was eighty minutes right? Your block?

150 IEB2 Yeah.

151 IRB Wow.

152 IEB2 (Laughs).

153 IRB So, I guess it – is your school currently on block schedule right now?

154 IEB2 Here in Devon?

155 IRB Yes. Okay. So, it wasn't a big jump to go from that block to this block? Only that we - -
156 you meet every day at this school? Or do you . . .

157 IEB2 Everyday here. Yes. That was a big jump for me.

158 IRB Right. So that means that it's not yearlong. Because I'm on block at LaFayette. We meet
159 every day, but then the way they have it (crosstalk)

160 IEB2 ...For one semester.

161 IRB It's one semester.

162 IEB2 One semester.

163 IRB And then, unfortunately, for some children, you might take AP Lit. fall semester, and
164 they don't offer it spring semester, and then you take the exam. Is that the same thing that
165 you all have?

166 IEB2 Yes.

167 IRB --And they still made it to school.

168 IEB2 Yeah.

169 IRB And you were teaching AP there. And then that's when you told me the story about the
170 gentleman who said you were his favorite teacher because you recommended him for AP.

171 IEB2 Right.

172 IRB Okay. Okay. So, we're kind of similar like that.

173 IEB2 Yeah. That would be quite a bit of a challenge.

174 IRB Yeah. I would think so. Who have your students been, so you know, in the past, at that --
175 especially in that school in the northeast because that's where you taught English for the
176 longest.

177 IEB2 Mhm.

178 IRB And that's where you taught AP. Right?

179 IEB2 Mhm. Yes.

180 IRB So you know -- are -- do those students fall into what you said before which was mainly
181 African American? A few Hispanic? A few Asian? And even fewer Caucasian? Is that
182 right?

183 IEB2 Mhm.

184 IRB I just want to make sure I have that right. Okay. How have they reacted to the curricula
185 and your teaching? How do they respond?

186 IEB2 I think because it was a private school, and the fewer Mmm I don't know how to say this,
187 but the students who were in the AP classes **wanted** to be there. So, they were ready for
188 whatever was thrown at them. They wanted to be there. (Laughs). For most years any-
189 way.

190 IRB Right. Right. So, they were hungry and thirsty to learn, and they were receptive?

191 IEB2 Yes, they were.

192 IRB Now, it was a private school?

193 IEB2 Mhm.

194 IRB So was there tuition involved? Did the parents pay tuition for the children to go there?
195 So, the parents had a bit of an investment, right?

196 IEB2 Yes.

197 IRB . . . in it. Okay. Well alright, that's interesting. How have you felt supported or chal-
198 lenged teaching AP English or honors?

199 IEB2 I felt very supported. At first (Laughs), at first I had to make a go of it on my own. And
200 there were not many readily available resources there. Like I didn't have anyone who
201 said to me *Okay, here's what it's going to be. This is what I have tried. Here are some*
202 *challenges you will meet and* (inaudible). I just came in and was told this is what you're
203 doing, so I ended up having to do a lot of research on my own becoming part of College
204 Board and – you know – all on my own. And at first, it was kind of trial and error, you
205 know? But it became so much easier as the years went by, but being aware of that when I

206 left, I made sure that the person that was coming in for me had my support, and I went
207 through you know beforehand we knew I was leaving. I got her as they say *hooked up!*
208 With all the things (Laughs) that she would need. I told her what she might need to do.
209 We went through most things together. As a matter of a fact, she still gets in touch now
210 and again. You know, if she has a challenge, so yeah at first, it was a great big challenge,
211 but it got easier with time.

212 IRB And were you the only AP English Literature teacher in that school? . . .

213 IEB2 (Nods yes).

214 IRB So there was no like how here we have PLCs to meet, you were really on your own. And

215 ..

216 IEB2 I was on my own. And . . .

217 IRB So you (crosstalk) . . .

218 IEB2 . . . Going online to find support (crosstalk).

219 IRB Okay. Okay.

220 IEB2 . . . from other teachers or whatever.

221 IRB So you kind of sought outside help because you didn't have anyone there? But you de-
222 cided to pay it forward to the next person?

223 IEB2 Mhm.

224 IRB Okay. Well, that's nice. Was the next person who replaced you also a Black female
225 teacher or no?

226 IEB2 Absolutely! Yes.

227 IRB Okay. Okay.

228 IEB2 A younger (crosstalk)

229 IRB A younger version (Laughs). More energy (Laughs). Willing and able I'm sure (Laughs).

230 IEB2 Absolutely.

231 IRB Okay, now I'm on to the third group of questions. So, please describe your beliefs about
232 teaching AP English or honors. What are your beliefs?

233 IEB2 That's interesting. I believe you used a phrase earlier, you said they were hungry and
234 thirsty for . . . I believe that once the student has the hunger, even if they're not what
235 some people might believe are top tier students, but I think that once they have that hun-
236 ger and thirst, they can do well. I think AP Language and Literature opens students up to
237 things that they might not ordinarily get in American Lit. general or World Lit. general or
238 whatever, and so I believe that students who have interest should be given the oppor-
239 tunity to try AP Language and Lit. Once they have that interest, and they understand that
240 *Okay guys it's going to be a lot of work* and they know and they are willing to extend
241 themselves, I think that they should be given the opportunity.

242 IRB So then, let me ask you how do you feel about the College Board in the last few years has
243 made a real push for open access where there aren't these barriers or gatekeepers to pre-
244 vent students taking AP English or AP English Language? Meaning you know some
245 schools had had an application process, and kids had to do a writing sample, and they
246 looked at PSAT scores, and they put it all together in a rubric, but now the College Board
247 is very much *If you want to take it, you should be able to take it*. So how do you feel
248 about that in light of what you said?

249 IEB2 There are some kids who will want to take it who as a teacher I can tell that they're just
250 not going to be able to handle that level of work. It's great that it's open and that no one
251 can stop me because of Mmm I don't want to . . . of other things. (Laughs). Right? No

252 one can stop me because of other things because *I wasn't in honors before*. Or because
253 whatever. That is great, but at the same time, the AP teacher really does need to have a
254 say in [pause] is he able to do this? There are some kids who will not. They will not. You
255 look at the way they have handled writing otherwise, and it's just not going to happen. If
256 you need the basics - - if you're still struggling with the basics, then it's better that you
257 are taught the basics, or you know, and you're good there, and you try to write papers,
258 and read things that you're - oh yah. Do you understand what I'm trying to . . .

259 IRB I understand what you're trying to say. You're not for stopping anyone, but you're also
260 about the reality of the situation. So, I don't know if you would agree with this or not, but
261 some schools, they will allow anybody to take it, but also once you sign up, you can't
262 drop. Other schools are like *You can drop*. So, how would you feel about that?

263 IEB2 (Laughs) One of the things that we used to use as a sort of - I wouldn't say a tester - was
264 we would give summer work.

265 IRB Mmm.

266 IEB2 And, if you can handle the summer - they're told, you know, this is what you have to do;
267 they know beforehand. It's given to them in June; because we started in September, so
268 it's given to them from June. *This is what you have to do. This is what you have to read*.
269 And these are the steps and so on. If they're going to show up in September not having
270 read, not having done, then that probably isn't a great start. You know? So, at my last
271 school they were allowed to drop after the first marking period. I've only ever had one
272 person drop and one of the things that I heard that they're doing this year, is that they are
273 - if you're in AP, then you have to sit for the College Board exam (crosstalk).

274 IRB Yeah.

275 IEB2 You have to sit that AP exam. If you do not sit the AP exam, then you're not -- cause it's
276 a **five**-credit course -- then you're not going to get those extra credits. Then you're going
277 to be graded like a general English.

278 IRB Oh. That's an interesting way to handle things. Okay. In your opinion, what would you
279 indicate as a source of motivation for teaching AP English or honors? What would be a
280 motivation for a teacher to teach it? You? Anyone? What would be the motivation?

281 IEB2 See, for me that was my happy place. That was where we could really dig into things that
282 I couldn't do with my sophomores or my other junior class or whatever. You know. So, I
283 guess it was a bit of selfishness going on there too because as a teacher you're also -- you
284 continue to grow, you continue to grow, and as you continue to grow, you have more to
285 offer your students. And not only those in the AP classes, but you know the other stu-
286 dents as well. So, selfishly, you know? (Laughs)

287 IRB I know what you mean because I think that it's like when you get, I know here you can
288 get gifted certified. When you have that knowledge, it benefits all your students. Even if
289 you're not teaching a gifted course. And I think AP gives you strategies. I'll have people
290 like *I never thought to do that!* And I'll say, well "It's an AP strategy." But just like those
291 special education strategies are good -- like scaffolding, chunking things up, the AP strat-
292 egies are good for the general ed students too. So, I know what you mean. I know what
293 you mean. My next question is: What supports do you draw upon to assist you in teach-
294 ing AP honors and English? I know that it's just in your most recent past, but after you
295 had already developed yourself in the teaching role, and it was no longer as much of a
296 challenge, what did you draw upon as your support system?

297 IEB2 I actually became a member of a number of fora, so I had these great AP teachers from
298 all over. We had never met personally, but we were there to support each other you know
299 in a myriad of ways. So, that was one thing, and I also had a personal friend who taught
300 AP as well, and we would have every couple of months or so we would get together and
301 go things over; if anything came up in the middle of that, she would call or I would call,
302 and that was great. And I try to keep up with whatever College Board you know whatever
303 they put out there.

304 IRB Alright. So, I am using in my research study a social theory called Afrocentricity. When
305 you hear Afrocentricity, what does that mean to you? What do you think about that?

306 IEB2 The first words that come to mind – the Black experience. That’s what comes to mind.
307 When I taught, I was aware that (clears throat) the majority of my students were African
308 American, you know, of African American descent when I was teaching AP, so even
309 though I expose them to all the great classics and what have you, we did our Shakespeare
310 and all of that. *How could you do AP without A Midsummer Night’s Dream? Or what-*
311 *ever. One of my favorite books to start was Native Son. That was generally my summer*
312 *reading. I tried to mix it up each time, and I know it can be a bit of you know a heavier*
313 *reading, but the kids loved it. It ended up being most times their go-to reference. So, I*
314 *tried to include African American writers. Another one of my go-tos was when we’re do-*
315 *ing drama, Mulatto by Langston Hughes. And they loved that. I tried to choose poems by*
316 *Gwendolyn Brooks, you know, people like those. There was a short story. Was it called*
317 *Sweat? Was it Sweat? I bet you know it.*

318 IRB Mm (no).

319 IEB2 The woman and the man were married, and he used to treat her bad. And . . . yeah, I think
320 that was it. There are two of them, and he ended up being bitten to death by a snake, and
321 she, and they're usually like yeah! *You naughty children!*

322 IRB (Laughs)

323 IEB2 I tried to expose them, you know, to great writing by African American writers. So, when
324 I hear Afrocentric that's what I think about.

325 IRB So do you feel like your identity and who you are played a role when you taught espe-
326 cially when you were teaching the majority African American students? Do you think
327 that played a role or not really?

328 IEB2 Yes and no, and I'll tell you why. I know this can be a sensitive subject (Laughs). I did
329 not grow up thinking of myself as Black or mixed or whatever. I grew up the Caribbean,
330 so Caribbeans are Black, white, they're Chinese, they're Indian, they're brown, but
331 they're all the Caribbean. So, when you were on an island in the mid-Atlantic is when it
332 started. It came home to me that this is a --- I mean, I travelled all my life. Came to the
333 United States for a (inaudible) different countries, but living it is different. And it was on
334 an island in the mid-Atlantic that it started coming home to me. The island was some-
335 thing like 60/40, so 60% Black and 40% white with people who were still at the *Yes*
336 *Massa* stage.

337 IRB Mmm

338 IEB2 And I couldn't understand it, because that was not my experience. And then when I
339 started working in the United States, it came home even more to me, and I had to have a
340 mind shift too. Like whole perspective shift. I could not say *I'm colorblind*. *I grew up in*
341 *a mixed family*. No, I had to make that shift myself, and it was a conscious shift that there

342 is no such thing as being colorblind. So, yes and no. I realized that I had to make a con-
343 scious effort with these African American children. My experience was different, and
344 their experience was not my experience. Does it make sense?

345 IRB Yes, because when you were saying about you know you're Caribbean, I thought of -- I
346 think it is on the money "Out of many one people."

347 IEB2 Yes.

348 IRB You know and so because you can have a Chinese Caribbean [person]. Everyone, and
349 Mr. Chin, he can be Caribbean. You know? So, and then you don't know until you hear
350 them talk, and they're not putting on as you'd say. It's authentic, so and I think of the co-
351 median, White Yardie, when you hear him speak, you think *Oh my*. But that's how Carib-
352 beans are, so I can definitely understand; because I don't know if I mentioned it, but I'm
353 Canadian actually. I was born in Canada, and - but my parents are Caribbean, so I feel
354 like I was raised Caribbean even though not in the country – in the household you know.

355 IEB2 Yes you were.

356 IRB Yeah. In the household. *You wan one lick ya see, mek yuh?* [in Caribbean dialect]. I re-
357 member all the stuff, you know. *If de sick man don't care, why should the doctah* [in Car-
358ibbean dialect]. That's what my grandmother would say. So . . .

359 IEB2 I've never heard that one.

360 IRB Yes. I know you do, so you know, I know that it's different, and so one of the reasons it's
361 kind of brought me around to the research is: I'm a Black teacher, and I'm teaching Black
362 students for the most part in my AP classes, but I sometimes, I felt like torn, like am I do-
363 ing too much of the canon; because, I want to prepare them for the exam, but at the same
364 time, if it's – they're reading about people who don't really look like them, who don't

365 speak to issues that they can understand; they're not as invested as when you said like
366 Native Son, reading Gwendolyn Brooks, and Langston Hughes. There's a different level
367 of investment and interest there, so that's why I'm interested in doing the research. Just to
368 find out what other Black teachers' experiences are like. Do you feel that kind of tare be-
369 tween the two things like I do, or have you found a balance. Just trying to find out what
370 they're experiences are like. That's why I wanted to do the research. So, my last question
371 really . . . first, I want to thank you for your time and that you've been very helpful. We'd
372 be interested in any other feelings or thoughts you'd like to share with us to help us un-
373 derstand your experiences teaching AP English or honors. So, like if there are any stories
374 that come to mind, or some kind of those you'd like to share to close out. I'm all ears.

375 IEB2 I can start by telling you that I really miss teaching AP so far. But as I think about it here
376 – I don't know if it's the southeast or Devon County or whatever it is – but there seems to
377 be way more control over what people teach, and as I hear some of the comments, I won-
378 der if I would be happy.

379 IRB Mmm.

380 IEB2 Teaching AP used to be my happy place. If I would be okay with having someone kind of
381 dictate so much, you know, over what I could do; because, I had freedom to [pause] fix
382 my curriculum however I wanted it. And if one year I thought it wasn't working, I could
383 toss it, or I could pull in whatever I needed, you know, using College Board guidelines, if
384 I'm doing all the themes and what have you then, you know, I choose what I like; give
385 the kids the broad overview and make sure that they're ready to write that exam. But I'm
386 not so sure if – I don't know what it would be like teaching AP here.

- 387 IRB You're not the first person I've heard say that. You're not the first person I've heard say
388 that. You have to wonder -- sometimes there's like the pendulum in education. You
389 know? And it swings. We're about to get new standards I hear next year in the southeast.
390 So, who knows what
- 391 IEB2 Ah.
- 392 IRB Yeah. We're about to get new standards again. I started teaching in the southeast when
393 we had [different simpler standards], --- and they were like one-liners. They were nothing
394 like the standards we have now. Very DOK [Depth of Knowledge] one standard, so I've
395 seen this metamorphosis to Common Core, and I'm interested in what it's going to go to;
396 because the climate in education has gotten very (breath in) you know everything people
397 what do they say *Those who don't know their past are doomed to repeat it*. So, we're tak-
398 ing out large bits of information because we don't want to offend people, but in the
399 meantime . . . just like COVID and the Spanish Flu was a hundred years, and it came --
400 and there's something else that comes. It makes me wonder: what's the cycle going to
401 be? So. Well that's the end of my questions, and I didn't want to keep you too long.
402 That's the end of my questions. There are two more parts to this, and that is I will be
403 sending you some journal prompts. So, you can respond to them either in writing and re-
404 spond to as many or as few as you can. I know that you're busy.
- 405 IEB2 Okay.
- 406 IRB And so I'm not necessarily looking for an essay. It really is just to get another data point,
407 so you know how sometimes when people are doing qualitative research they'll do obser-
408 vations; they'll do interviews, things like that? I'm not observing you, so I'm just inter-
409 viewing you, so the way to get another picture of what's in your mind when you've had

410 time to sit and not feel like you're under you know some microscope is through the
411 prompts. So, if you want to record yourself and send me a video, or if you want to write a
412 haiku for your responses – I mean, you're an English teacher! You could do it, so that's
413 what those are. And the last part would be I would like two to three examples of things
414 you've created or used in teaching AP that you think really represent who you are as an
415 AP teacher. Does that make sense? So, it could be something that you found that you al-
416 ways use or an assignment that you tweaked or created on your own. I just need to – you
417 know – that'll be the paper, so I have the interview is one data point, and then I have the
418 journal, and then I'd have the curriculum documents that you've created.

419 IEB2 Okay.

420 IRB Does that make sense?

421 IEB2 Sure. Yes.

422 IRB And I know that you're so busy, so I thank you. My committee has asked that I bring my
423 participants together for a kitchen table talk. So, I have to make sure that everybody can
424 do that and just kind of to share our experiences together. Not very long chat. So that
425 would be the last thing, and I will send you information about that. I'll follow-up this in-
426 terview with an email. Does that sound good?

427 IEB2 Yes, that's fine.

428 IRB Thank you so much. I appreciate it Ms. Adams-Spears.

429 IEB2 Great meeting you.

430 IRB Great meeting you too. Have a good evening.

431 IEB2 Thank you. You too. Bye bye.

432 IRB Bye bye.

Appendix K

Cheryll Thompson-Smith
 April 30, 2023, 3:00 p.m.
 Running time 35:22

Interview #2 Kitchen-Table Talk Transcription

IRB: Interviewer

IEB 1: Interviewee #1

IEB 2: Interviewee #2

--: Indicates an abrupt shift in topic or interruptions in train of thought

Boldface: emphasis

Italics: Dialogue reenacted or in a different voice

Title: Literary title

(inaudible): could not discern what was being said

(Sigh): Expression of air being blown out of the mouth

(00:00):Indicates the time

[]: Indicates a name or title that has been redacted from the transcript

. . . : Continuation of train of thought or trails off

1 IRB Hi “Diane!”

2 IEB 1 Hello!

3 IRB Oh good; I didn’t know if you could hear me. How are you this Sunday afternoon?

- 4 IEB 1 Not well, so I'm laying down. That's why I have my video off.
- 5 IRB Oh that's okay. I'm sorry!
- 6 IEB 1 That's okay.
- 7 IRB Is it allergies?
- 8 IEB 1 No. I did a back surgery in December, and for some reason my back is hurting me real bad today.
- 9 I'm not sure. I think I've just been up and about too much.
- 10 IRB Wow! I'm sorry.
- 11 IEB 1 Mhm. That's okay.
- 12 IRB Yeah. Those back things are no joke.
- 13 IEB 1 It is what it is so.
- 14 IRB Mhm. So, I guess your school is well in the midst of standardized testing or about
- 15 to be?
- 16 IEB 1 Starting tomorrow.
- 17 IRB Okay. Same with my school. We're starting tomorrow.
- 18 IEB 1 I woke up with the mindset that I was going to take tomorrow off until I realized that it's **my** test-
- 19 ing day, so.
- 20 IRB Oh. Is it? Well, I mean if it's bad enough, you might need to take it off because you know how
- 21 that works. If something were to happen more serious and you couldn't be there, they would have
- 22 to find a sub. So just remember that. I know, you know--
- 23 IEB 1 I know. I know. Right now (laughs)
- 24 IRB I know we have a work ethic that's pretty strong, but you know . . .
- 25 IEB 1 I know.
- 26 IRB I read somewhere about Jamie Foxx that they made the movie; they continued it without him.
- 27 (crosstalk) If you need to take the time, take time; because they're going to go on without you, so.

- 28 IEB 1 Yes. I know. Yes. When I saw that too. I've always lived that mantra anyway, but to see it play-
29 ing out from someone you know of that caliber it's okay, makes you take a moment.
- 30 IRB Yes. Yes. Because he has the money and the resources, you know--
- 31 IEB1 Mhm.
- 32 IRB --to get all the assistance, and still health it's not something you can control. I'm just texting
33 Vanessa to make sure that she's okay.
- 34 IEB 1 Okay.
- 35 IRB I'm not fast at texting.
- 36 IEB 1 (laughs) I understand.
- 37 IRB I'm trying to always make the correct **punctuation**--
- 38 IEB 1 Mhm.
- 39 IRB --and the kids are like *aww you just use shorthand*. I was like *well it's hard for me to do that*.
- 40 IEB 1 Mhm.
- 41 IRB So how have you been other than your flare up of your back?
- 42 IEB 1 I've been well thank you; yourself?
- 43 IRB I've been pretty good. I feel like this semester or at least these last couple of months have gone by
44 really fast.
- 45 IEB 1 Yes. Yup, we're almost halfway through the year already.
- 46 IRB I know. I know. And then you know summer, and then we'll be back at it before we know so.
- 47 IEB 1 (laughs)
- 48 IRB Okay. Let's see. I'm going to go ahead and start so I don't keep you too long. Hopefully she'll
49 join us soon. So, thank you for joining me again here today, and I just want to remind you that if
50 you at any time feel like you don't want to participate, you're always free to back out of the study
51 although this is really the last official thing that we have to do. The reason that I wanted to bring
52 us together today to talk was just a final conversation in the spirit of Ubuntu. I don't know if

- 53 you've ever heard of that concept. Oh, hold on, she just text me. Oh, let me see. Oh okay, she
54 says she's having Zoom trouble.
- 55 IEB 1 Tell her to try her phone if she has it downloaded on her phone.
- 56 IRB Okay let me see. Resend.
- 57 IEB 1 Because I didn't have it downloaded on my laptop, so when I tried joining that way, it was too
58 much.
- 59 IRB Okay.
- 60 IEB 1 I just used my phone.
- 61 IRB I'll tell her that. (typing/texting) *Diane said to try using your cell phone*. See I spelled phone
62 wrong because of this stupid phone.
- 63 IEB 1 (Laughs).
- 64 IRB That's what she did. Oh, I spelled "d-o-d" instead of "did."
- 65 IEB 1 (laughs).
- 66 IRB (laughs). It just makes you feel like a fool! I said-- *That's what she did*. Yeah I think I had done . .
67 . I was away from home, and I think I did use my phone. I think you're right. I used my phone
68 because the Zoom at school is that Devon County Zoom.
- 69 IEB 1 Mhm. Mhm.
- 70 IRB So, let's see if she responds to this. (sigh) Let me make sure I'm not see . . . It does a little door-
71 bell chime usually when people are trying to join, but I don't see it. Let's see. (talking to self: *I*
72 *can try and see it, but I don't know if she has*). Uh *yes please resend*. Okay. Let's try this way.
73 She said to resend it.
- 74 IEB 1 Okay.
- 75 IRB I will resend it. I understand because when I – Sometimes when I have those Zoom meetings, my
76 gosh. Um okay. It's like I had the link, then I go to do it, and it's not there.
- 77 IEB 1 (groans)

78 IRB Or I can't find it. Something about Outlook, and how it's setup, things get buried very easily
79 when it's in conversation mode.

80 IEB 1 Mhm.

81 IRB So, just sent it to her now. Let me send her a message (doorbell chimes). Oh, there
82 she is. Okay. Let's go back. That was quick.

83 IEB 1 (laughs)

84 IRB She must have um – Where is my thing here? Make this small. Make this large. Now I can't make
85 it large. (talking to self) Okay. Try this. There it is. "Admit." (doorbell chimes). I think she may
86 have gotten in. Did she get it? Hello! **Hey Vanessa!**

87 IEB 2 You can hear me?

88 IRB I can hear you (laughs). Oh, that's okay. That's okay. I was trying to find what screen I was on,
89 so I'm sorry it took me so long. I was just talking to Diane, and I was asking her how she's doing,
90 so how are you doing today?

91 IEB 2 I am fine thank you. You know I love you because it's Sunday, and I'm here with you.

92 IRB That's so sweet! And I love your shirt. What does it say? Reading aloud: *Teachers save lives.*

93 *Let's eat grandma. Let's eat, grandma.* Yes, the grammar. Yes! Yes! I love it! Alright awesome.

94 Okay. So, I want to remind you that of course with the study, at any time that you don't want to
95 participate, you're more than welcome to back out. Of course, this is the last real official thing as
96 far as interviews go that I need to do, so I just want to make you aware of that, and I hope you're
97 doing well on this Sunday.

98 IEB 2 Yes I am.

99 IRB So the reason that I wanted to talk today, and it's called the Kitchen-Table Talk or conversation
100 was in speaking to my committee members, one of the things they talked about was this idea of
101 Ubuntu. Have you ever heard of Ubuntu before?

102 IEB 2 Heard of what was that?

103 IRB Ubuntu. It's, no (IEB 2 shakes head). Okay, it's a concept. It comes from Zulu and the Xhosa lan-
104 guage in South Africa, and it really has two basic meanings. One is humanity towards others, and
105 the other is: I am because we are, so it is the idea of community, and learning in community with
106 one another. It's very non-Western. You know in Westernized learning, it's about the individual,
107 and your own merit opposed to this sense of cooperativeness or collaborative nature. So, I wanted
108 to bring us together just briefly to talk about you know how we maybe we invite that kind of
109 spirit into our teaching or maybe what our thoughts are on that. And sharing some of our experi-
110 ences together as a trio as a triad instead of as individuals. So, my first question would be, well
111 actually before I say my first question, I asked about bringing something of significance to you.
112 And so, I actually brought two things. This (holds up book). You probably can't see it. It's my
113 Roots. Alex Haley. It was a life-changing book for me. I was a little disappointed as an adult
114 when I found out there's a possibility that some of it is fabricated is what some people said. How-
115 ever, I read it like in the seventh grade, and it was very significant to me because my mom would
116 not let me watch Roots on tv. She felt seeing the images would be too jarring, and so I thought I
117 would show her, and I would read this 800-page like 600-page or whatever book, and I couldn't
118 put it down, and just thinking where we came from to where we are, it was a huge thing. And the
119 second thing I thought of was Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem We Wear the Mask which I actually
120 cite in my research because I kind of felt like that at times as a teacher; because, I don't know if I
121 can truly do and say everything that I want to because sometimes there's other powers at play, so
122 those are the things that I brought that are kind of representative of life-changing or important
123 things to me. And so, I didn't know if you had either of you had anything you wanted to share. It
124 could be a story. It could be a poem. It could be something you referenced about something that's
125 significant to you.

126 IEB 2 Well, I just picked up this book (holds up Edith Wharton's Mythology). Not because there's any-
127 thing special about it, but books it represents books in general. If I could turn my camera around,

128 which I won't, you would see that I am surrounded by books. Every room in my house has books,
129 and I can't remember learning to read. I think I was born reading. I love reading, and one of the
130 things about me becoming a teacher – an English teacher – is that I wanted to pass on this love of
131 reading to my students. Doesn't always happen. Happens less these days than before. Yeah.
132 That's what I wanted to share.

133 IRB That is awesome. That reminds me of To Kill a Mockingbird when Scout talks about
134 that she was reading from like basically birth, you know? That's amazing. And you say, you
135 don't remember learning to read. It's like you were --

136 IEB 2 Nope. I just remember going to the library. I just remember always having books.

137 IRB Oh. That is pretty significant. Okay. Diane is there anything you would like to share.

138 IEB 1 For me, it's the love of learning in general. From my earlier days, I can remember, my father say-
139 ing that *Whatever else you do, or whatever else you have that someone can take away from you,*
140 *they cannot take your knowledge from you.* So that's something I've always grown up to believe,
141 and I try to instill that within my girls as well.

142 IRB That is ironic because I remember my mother saying that. I don't know if it's the West Indian, the
143 whole Caribbean thing, but you know, she was like *People cannot take away what's in your head.*
144 *They can't take away that knowledge. So, you know go as far as you can; do as much as you can;*
145 *learn as much as you can; because they can strip you of those material things, but they cannot*
146 *strip you of what you possess in your mind.* So, maybe its perhaps our connection with the West
147 Indian parents. I don't know.

148 IEB 1 Quite likely.

149 IRB (laughs) Okay.

150 IEB 1 Hello Ms. Spears.

151 IEB 2 Well, hello there Ms. J.

152 IEB 2 (laughs)

- 153 IRB So you talked about Diane your children, and --
- 154 IEB 1 Mhm.
- 155 IRB --them learning. You said you have two children? Two girls?
- 156 IEB 1 Yes, that's correct.
- 157 IRB Okay. And how old are those girls?
- 158 IEB 1 One's seventeen, and one's ten.
- 159 IRB Oh..
- 160 IEB 1 Turning eleven.
- 161 IRB Oh. Okay, so kind of like me. I have a six-year difference. And do you have any kids Vanessa?
- 162 IEB 2 I sure do. I have young adults. A son and a daughter.
- 163 IRB How old are they?
- 164 IEB 2 Twenty-eight and thirty.
- 165 IRB Wow. Wow. Okay. So, for me, I have three. I have a twenty-two-year-old, but she's about to be
- 166 twenty-three. I have a seventeen-year-old, and I have a fifteen-year-old, so I think it's interesting
- 167 because you know, we teach, but you're first teachers of your own children, first and foremost.
- 168 And you model for them what's important.
- 169 IEB 2 Mhm.
- 170 IRB So --
- 171 IEB 2 And can I say that --.
- 172 IRB Go ahead.
- 173 IEB 2 I actually taught my son through high school from sophomore year through senior year, I was his
- 174 English teacher.
- 175 IRB Now, how was that? Because I have never had to teach any of my children outside of the home.
- 176 IEB 2 It wasn't as strange as I thought (laughs) it would've been. And he had to remember to say, *Mrs.*
- 177 *Spears* and not *Mommy*.

178 IRB Hohm.

179 IEB 2 It was fine.

180 IRB Well that's great. And was that when you were in the northeast at the private school?

181 IEB 2 Yes ma'am.

182 IRB Okay. Have you ever had that experience Diane of teaching your own children?

183 IEB 1 No.

184 IEB 2 (laughs)

185 IRB Okay. Okay. I thought very briefly maybe I should homeschool, but I don't know that I could do

186 it. I know it's a different format than teaching in a classroom, but I don't know if I could do it.

187 Okay. How do you think Ubuntu or the idea of "I am because we are" relates to you as a teacher a

188 former teacher of AP and a teacher of Black children?

189 IEB 1 For me, it's that they see me as a representative per say because I've had students say to me be-

190 fore that *You're the first Black teacher I've had for a core subject*. So, I see myself as a repre-

191 sentative of what they can do, and what they can exceed as well.

192 IRB Wow. Okay. Sorry, I was just writing. That sounds familiar. I feel similarly. How do you feel

193 about that Vanessa this idea of "I am because we are," and how that shows up in your teaching or

194 current teaching or your previous teaching of AP students?

195 IEB 2 Yeah. I was just mulling over what Diane just said. For all of my teaching experience before now,

196 my students have all had teachers of color or a mixture of teachers, but you know teachers of

197 color. The students that I taught before now always knew that they could (pause) It's so difficult

198 for me to hear of now – and I know college is not for everyone – but to hear so many of my stu-

199 dents not opting to go to college or to go on to higher education as it were. So, I'm still wrapping

200 my mind around that. It's very strange to me. It's very strange to me; until my son pointed out –

201 we were having this conversation maybe a month or so ago, and he pointed out to me that *Do you*

202 *understand that you are a minority. That you have you're living in a household; your two*

203 *children have first degrees. Your husband has a terminal degree.* I have two masters. He says
204 *That's not usual.* And he started sharing statistics with me that you know people with first de-
205 grees or a college education in the United States are in the minority. Not the majority as we
206 thought because we were always surrounded by people who were always going off to college (in-
207 audible) you know. So, I resonate with what Ms. J. just said. And ending up in this situation that
208 I'm in now, I suppose I'll have to see myself in that light as well.

209 IRB You know, what Diane just said was so true because and also what you echoed because when I
210 talk to my own students, they are more the line of trying to be an entrepreneur, and I don't think
211 that there's anything wrong with being an entrepreneur per say, but the idea of debt has gotten a
212 lot of students – at least my Black students to say *I'm not even going to go for that.* They don't
213 even think of possible ways to pay for it. Whether it be a scholarship or perhaps athletics or
214 something else or academics. They're just like *I'm going to go a totally different route* because
215 that's going to help me avoid debt. I don't know if that's possible in a capitalist society, but you
216 know it is a little disheartening because we are like the guardians of learning as teachers, and to
217 see students like *I'm over it!* It makes me a little sad. Okay. Go ahead.

218 IEB 1 It's sad too because you think that you could use your platform to reach them to change that
219 mindset, but it's so hard. Because you know you have a group of students, and you see them for
220 80 minutes per day, and you would think okay *I see them every day*, but beyond that to make that
221 deeper connection sometimes that's lacking.

222 IRB Yes. It is. I was thinking about our last conversation Diane, and I know you talked about some of
223 your students and their success stories, and I think I hold on to those little pieces that I get of
224 (crosstalk) students.

225 IEB 1 Nuggets.

226 IRB You know, those nuggets of sometimes. . . And I know you mentioned some real positive experi-
227 ences too, Vanessa. I hold on to those nuggets like you said to give me hope. Because sometimes

228 the very students who would be my unofficial assistant and they say, *I could never be a teacher*
229 *Ms. Stewart-Henry. The things you put up with, and these kids!* And then I find out five six years
230 later, they've actually gone into the profession. It warms my heart a little bit because we are los-
231 ing so many teachers, and so to see them at least choosing either the profession or choosing to ad-
232 vance their education is a positive.

233 IEB 1 It is.

234 IRB Okay. I guess the final thing I would like to ask is: Are there any stories or words of wisdom that
235 you might give to someone who is trying to teach or reach those Black children today who are in
236 those more advanced courses or at least those children who like the challenge which could be in
237 an honors class or something? Are there any stories or words of wisdom that you know you could
238 think to offer those students or even those teachers?

239 IEB 1 Well, more and more at my current place of employment it's so very few African American stu-
240 dents that you see taking on or taking these honors or advanced courses, and one I think because
241 the emphasis that we place on reading whether it's reading for fun or reading a book in its entirety
242 and analyzing that book to show even though these are fictional characters, when someone writes
243 a book, it's based on lived experiences for the most part. And so, we should try to place ourselves
244 in these roles, and surpass whatever obstacles we are facing. You know, oftentimes, I would say
245 *Okay, you don't want to do it, then that's on you.* We can't say that anymore. We have to push a
246 kid. You know I would say I don't want to be the parent of the kid, but you have to take on that
247 role because sometimes, it's not in all cases, but in some cases, that is lacking at some point in
248 their lives, and you have to take on that role of a parenting - a parental role, and you will say, *This*
249 *is what I want from my child. This is what I'm going to give to every child that comes into my*
250 *path.* So . . .

251 IRB That's deep. That sounds like mothering all these other children that you didn't birth, but you
252 know--

253 IEB 1 Mhm.

254 IRB --feeling that obligation to do that. Do you think that your upbringing and being of a West Indian
255 background plays any role in your idea of that responsibility to each other?

256 IEB 1 I don't know anything else, so I'd have to say yes. You know because I grew up in a big family. I
257 had . . . My dad had two kids before he got married to my mom, and my mom had one child be-
258 fore she got married to my dad, so that was three, and then all together, they had five, so, we were
259 always taught to be best friend to our group. We didn't have to seek anything outside. We were
260 self-sufficient in that regard that we got everything we wanted from that core group. You know,
261 and even today, my sisters, my brothers *meh* they're wayward, but my sisters you know, we have
262 this close knit, this bond, that nothing can break, and so we feed off that you know. For each
263 other and for our kids. And whoever comes into our path who is a part of our club, if you're a
264 friend of my sister, you're a friend of mine. And if I have a friend, that's a friend of my sister,
265 everybody becomes a family, and we push each other forward.

266 IRB That's amazing. That's amazing. It sounds like your upbringing and family life you have kind of
267 tried to replicate that in who you are as a teacher, and a person, and a friend to others.

268 IEB 1 I think, I think I do for the most part.

269 IRB Vanessa, do you have any thoughts?

270 IEB 2 I'm just thinking like of other of AP teachers for example of honors teachers who have these kids
271 in their classes. Just keep doing what you're doing. Sometimes the light doesn't come on immedi-
272 ately. For some students, it takes a while, and it may take them a few years you know before they
273 understand what was really happening in those honors classes. Not even in terms of say the con-
274 tent that was given but just what it meant, you know or what it means for them to be there now.
275 They may not get it right now, but I think they will, so I would encourage you know, teachers of
276 color or yeah who teach these classes just keep doing what you're doing; keep giving what you
277 have because the message will hit home at some point to some of these kids.

278 IRB Okay, I thought of two things when you said that. One, do you think your upbringing had a
279 played a role in your view of that idea of perseverance with these teachers of color and these hon-
280 ors students? That's the first thing. Go ahead and answer that Vanessa.

281 IEB 2 Well, with my upbringing had nothing to do with color or you not being enough because of what
282 you looked like. So, I'm Caribbean; I think we're more classist than we are racist (laughs). And
283 my family – my mom was a nurse, my dad was a doctor, and the MP [Member of Parliament] for
284 our area. And we just never. We just knew that we were going to school. We were going to col-
285 lege, and we had to succeed. We had people around us who were quote unquote successful, and
286 there was no other path we could take, so (pause) yeah, so that's that. But having lived in the
287 United States and seeing well pardon me in a country where your race matters, and seeing how
288 African American students will at times look down on themselves because of what has been
289 placed on them, now, the environment in which I have lived spurs me to say you know, *Hang in*
290 *there. Give them the best of what you've got, and it will hit home to them one day.* So more my
291 environment now, than my previous upbringing.

292 IRB Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. Two things, one, I remember what Diane was saying about
293 the characters in the books and how you know, even though they were fictionalized, often they
294 come from the real-life experience, that is exactly why I like literature. Because it would be
295 wrong to talk about the characters if they were real people the way we sometimes do and we tear
296 them apart, but with it being a piece of literature, I feel like you can learn from it, and so that's
297 one reason I love it! I do think we've gotten away from that especially when we think about the
298 learning progressions and there's really not a lot of time to read whole books. If they are going to
299 do it, it would have to be outside of the class and you just come having read, and we know how
300 that works with homework. And the second, and final thing I want to talk about before we end is
301 this idea about being authentic. I think I told you that my research stems from the idea that I kind
302 of felt like that poem that I mentioned by Paul Laurence Dunbar where I've had to wear a mask at

303 times, and I couldn't be fully authentic for a number of reasons. Whether it be I was a Black
304 teacher in the minority at a white school, and I didn't have the support of the administration, or
305 my current situation where I was a Black teacher in a predominantly Black school, but I still felt
306 like I couldn't do for whatever – What do you think about the idea of being authentic as far as
307 who you are identity wise, culturally wise, when it comes to teaching?

308 IEB 1 For me, I know we are placed within certain boundaries, and sometimes we have to be so mindful
309 of what we say, and how we act, but for me, authenticity in itself, stems from that. I may not have
310 the support I need, but I'm at a point now in my life and in my career, where what I think that
311 what you get is the most authentic me and it's either you take it, or you leave it. And so, with eve-
312 rything I do, I know we're talking about the nature of African American and so forth, but one of
313 my favorite quotes is from F. Scott Fitzgerald, and it talks about being inclined to reserve judg-
314 ment, and that's what I do. I don't go about criticizing, and I think this comes with time because
315 perhaps ten years ago, I didn't feel this way, but now for me, I live an authentic self. And I live it
316 for me not for others.

317 IRB Thank you. And Diane do have any thoughts on authenticity.

318 IEB 1 Is that I live, and I breathe authenticity, my life, my practice, everything I do is with plain hon-
319 esty. No fabrication at all..

320 IRB And Vanessa, do you have anything that you would like to add.

321 IEB 2 Yes, I have never had to hide who I am as a person a teacher. When I – it's probably different for
322 me and for some other teachers of color, but I don't walk into my building feeling that I am (sigh)
323 a person of color going in, though I am just **me**. I always have been, and yes, sometimes – espe-
324 cially when we do things about culture or that unit about culture in World Literature or something
325 some bit of touchy subject may come up, but I just deal with it as is, and yeah I just, I'm just me.
326 I've been me for too long to not be me at this point in my very long life.

327 IRB Thank you. Alright well, I think we hit the thirty-minute mark, and I said, I wouldn't keep you
328 long, so thank you both. The only thing I would be in touch with you about, if you haven't had a
329 chance yet to give me any responses to the journal prompts or any kind of artifact of something
330 that was important to you with teaching. If you can't find something from the past, you can use
331 something from now. I think Vanessa you already sent some things to me already, but when it
332 comes to like I know Diane, you said it's been a while, and it would be difficult to find because it
333 was on jump drives. If it was something that you use now in teaching, you can provide that. An
334 example of an assignment or something you found online that **you** like, and you use or maybe
335 you tweaked it, that would work as well, and if you could respond to one or more of the journal
336 prompts, that would be great.

337 IEB 1 Could you give me 'til Thursday for that?.

338 IRB Of course! Of course. I don't mean to be rushing you. I hope I don't sound like I'm rushing you.

339 IEB 1 No it's fine. But I know that I needed to get it back to you and I didn't, so . . .

340 IRB I know that we're busy, so I'm you know, I just didn't want to infringe on you know we're going
341 into testing and infringe on that time. So, if you can send it to me by Thursday, that would be
342 great. I will send you like a copy of the transcript and my interpretations and things like that, so
343 you all can read it over and see if there is anything that you wanted me to change or you feel like
344 I didn't capture the essence of what you were trying to say. I will send that to you once I get that
345 written up. Okay?

346 IEB 1 No problem.

347 IRB Alright. I'm going to let both of you go cause I'm sure you have things to do. And thank you so
348 much. I cannot thank you enough. I cannot thank you enough for all you've done.

349 IEB 1 It was my pleasure.

350 IRB Alright, you all have a great afternoon and week.

351 IEB 2 Thank you. You as well.

352 IRB Bye-bye.

353 IEB 1 See you tomorrow Spears!

354 IEB 2 Okey dokey.

355

Appendix L

Letter of concerns from Devon County Schools

January 18, 2023

SENT VIA EMAIL TO cthompsonsmith@
Cheryll Thompson-Smith

Dear Ms. Thompson-Smith,

Thank you for submitting your request to conduct research in Henry County Schools (HCS) as a requirement for your Doctoral Dissertation at Georgia State University titled *Unsung: Stories of twenty-first century Black Advanced Placement English and Honors Teachers*.

The HCS Research Review Committee (RRC) reviewed your request, including your supporting documents, and determined that your application, as submitted, requires revisions prior to approval. More specifically, the RRC identified the following questions/concerns regarding the submitted proposal and/or supporting documents:

1. What are the journal prompts?
2. The time commitment for the 5 staff members is extensive at 5 hours, with our district guidelines preferring no more than 45 minutes.
3. What are the curriculum documents that are referenced in the proposal/documents?
4. If there are multiple interviews, what are the questions for each of the interviews? Only one list was submitted.
5. Additional clarification regarding the research protocol is requested. Examples for clarification include- Since your participant criteria is very specific, how will you solicit participants? How and when will you conduct the interviews?
6. Only action research can be completed at the school in which you are employed. Therefore, you will not be able to conduct the proposed research at Dutchtown High School.

The district requests that you revise your proposed research to address these identified concerns. Revisions to applications for the current review period need to be submitted no later than midnight on Tuesday, January 24, 2023, so that the committee can promptly review the submitted revisions and provide a response during the week of February 6, 2023. Any revisions submitted after this deadline but before February 27, 2023, will be considered for the

next review period, with district decisions issued the week of April 24, 2023.

Please note that applications to conduct research with revisions from an initial review will only be reviewed once more by the Research Review Committee. Therefore, it is highly recommended that you consult with your assigned advisor/professor to ensure all areas of concern are addressed prior to resubmission.

You may contact me at _____ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Appendix M

Letter of Approval from Devon County Schools RRC pages 1-2

February 6, 2023

SENT VIA EMAIL TO cthompsonsmith@
Cheryll Thompson-Smith

Dear Ms. Thompson-Smith,

Thank you for your interest in conducting research in Henry County Schools. Your application to conduct research in our school system as part of your *Doctoral Dissertation* requirements from *Georgia State University* has been reviewed. It is the Research Committee's understanding that you plan to examine, "*Unsung: Stories of twenty-first century Black Advanced Placement English and Honors Teachers.*" Consideration was given to the description of your research project, proposed data collection procedures, instruments, and research timeline.

Congratulations! I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved by the Research Review Committee, as well as the following principals for their respective schools:

****If you requested a school that is not listed, your request is not approved at that location.**

Your application to conduct research in Henry County Schools (HCS) as described in your proposal has been approved subject to the conditions outlined below:

- Research will be suspended if HCS Superintendent Mary Elizabeth Davis indicates that conditions in the schools are insufficient to engage in activities deemed "non-critical."
- The study will be completed by May 2023.
- All communications from the researcher will be sent directly to the Principal of the approved school. The Principal will share recruitment materials from the researcher with the teachers, parents, etc.
- If applicable, IRB approval must be received from your educational institution prior to beginning your research in Henry County Schools (HCS). A copy of your approved IRB must be sent to _____ prior to conducting research in HCS.

- Research may not interfere with students' instructional day, standard curriculum, and educational services, nor can it interfere with HCS employee work duties and responsibilities.
- If you are an employee of Henry County Schools, your research activities may not be completed during the work day.
- The researcher must assume all responsibility in conducting all aspects of the study including, but not limited to, recruitment, consent forms, and data collection.
- Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Employees, parents, and students who do not wish to participate have a right to refuse or withdraw consent. Principals or directors of research sites may decline/withdraw the opportunity for their school or department to participate in the study at any time.
- Any student, staff, school, or district information should be used solely for completion of your research study. To preserve the privacy of students and employees, information collected must remain completely confidential. Pseudonyms for students, employees, schools, and this school district must be used in all reporting.
- All data collected must be used solely for the purpose articulated in your research application.
- HCS resources (laptops, Henry County Schools email address, copiers, etc.) should not be used for personal research.
- HCS may terminate research being conducted at the district (including all schools/programs) for any reason deemed appropriate at our discretion.
- If modifications or changes to your research procedures or instruments (as outlined in your application) are needed during the research project, changes must be submitted in writing to the Director of Policy & Systems Design, Summer Cox, at _____ prior to implementation.
- Within 6 months of completion of the research project, you must submit a report, detailing your findings and conclusions. Prior to publication, you must submit a copy of the final report to _____.
- After publication or completion of the research project, you must delete all data collected or received as a result of this application.

To ensure collaborative efforts between you and the schools, please contact each principal via email prior to beginning any research activities or attempting to contact other staff members.

Appendix M continued . . .

Letter of Approval from Devon County Schools RRC page 3

We are excited to be chosen to assist you with your research efforts, and look forward to a successful partnership. Please feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions or need clarification regarding the expectations and contents of this letter.

Best of luck to you in your research!

Sincerely,

Appendix N

Recruitment flyer for Devon County Schools



Volunteers Needed

Georgia State University

We are currently looking for Black/African American AP English Lit./Lang or Honors high school English teachers to participate in our research study (for a doctoral candidate).



Study Participants will be:

- AP English Literature and/or Language certified and/or Gifted endorsed
- Teachers with 3+ yrs experience
- Teaching in a non-urban school
- Teachers of Black/minoritized students
- Teacher who identifies as Black/African American

If you are willing to participate, then please contact me at:

cthompsonsmith@henry.k12.ga.us

When: Spring Semester 2023

Time: 60 mins.

Where: Online or in-person

Study Contact :

 Cheryll Thompson-Smith

There are no risks associated with this study. A potential benefit is the opportunity to reflect on one's practice.

Appendix O

Recruitment flyer for Georgia State University



Volunteers Needed

We are currently looking for Black/African American AP English Lit./Lang or Honors high school English teachers to participate in our research study (for a doctoral candidate).



Study Participants will be:

- AP English Literature and/or Language certified and/or Gifted endorsed
- Teachers with 3+ yrs experience
- Teaching in a non-urban school
- Teachers of Black/minoritized students
- Teacher who identifies as Black/African American

If you are willing to participate, then please contact me at:

cthompsonsmith1@student.gsu.edu

Study Contact :
 Cheryll Thompson-Smith

When: Spring Semester 2023

Time: 90mins up to 2 hrs.

Where: Online or in-person

There are no risks associated with this study. A potential benefit is the opportunity to reflect on one's practice.

Appendix P

AP Lang. Adopt-a-Columnist Project (Curriculum Document) pages 1-2

Columnist Project

AP Language and Composition

As a means of keeping abreast of public issues, you are required to follow a national columnist in a newspaper or magazine. You must collect five current, preferably consecutive, columns by your columnist. You will find links to columnists and journalistic websites at the end of this handout that you can select from. Archives can be searched on some of the columnists' sites, but many publications require payment for articles older than one or two weeks. Therefore, check your columnist's website ~~weekly~~.

You must choose your columnist by Friday, February 4. In class on the 4th, you will turn in the name of your columnist, along with a half-page explanation of what type of columnist he/she is, a sampling of topics he/she has covered, and why you chose him/her. You can find columnists in any major newspaper, or online with minimal searching effort. Nearly every national paper will list their columnists in the opinion section of their paper or website. **Do not go to the Letter to the Editor section. Letters of any kind will not be accepted. These writers must be opinion/news writers. No sports or entertainment writers.**

- Each article must be annotated and appropriately highlighted for the following (use your 4 highlighters as noted):
 - Speaker's tone and possible tone shifts (blue highlighter)
 - Rhetorical strategies/ devices (green highlighter)
 - Organization, arrangement, sentence structure (i.e. syntax) (yellow highlighter)
 - Diction (pink highlighter)
 - Also carefully annotate the columnist's use of Rhetorical appeals

Mark places in the text that evoke a reaction from you, be it laughter, anger, or confusion.

Some questions to ask yourself as you read:

- How does s/he open the column?
- How does s/he close the column?
- How soon does s/he announce the thesis?
- How does s/he organize? What are the parts or sections of the column?
- How much is based on observation? Personal experience? Interviews? Facts?
- What audience does s/he assume? How do you know?
- What unstated assumptions (warrants, enthymemes) does the columnist make?

2. After annotating and highlighting each column, write a one-page *précis* (see page three of this handout).

Your first annotated article and one-page *précis* are due Monday, February 14, and each Monday thereafter (except for Feb. 21 Winter Recess), until March 21, for a total of FIVE (5) articles.

3. Your final task is to compose an argumentative essay of your own, synthesizing material from the columns. Based on the columns, consider:

- The issues the columnist has addressed in his/her columns
- A tangential issue you might expect your columnist to address
- How the columnist might address your issue
- Your expectations of the columnist's position on the issue

- How you would respond effectively to the columnist's position on the issue.
- Do not simply address one argument raised in the columns, but create your own argument based on your perception of the columnist's ideological positions as you have perceived them.

Due: March 28

4. Write your columnist a letter/email expressing your experience and pleasure following his/her column. Be sure to include specifics about what you learned about his/her writing style and method of persuasion. You may also include the essay you wrote in your columnist's voice! Send the letter/email to the columnist (give me a copy) and report back to the class on any response you might receive.

Due: April 6

Suggested Newspapers:

- The Wall Street Journal* <http://www.wsj.com/public/page/latest-opinion-analysis-columns.html>
- L.A. Times* <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/op-ed/>
- Washington Post* www.washingtonpost.com
- New York Times* <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/opinion/index.html>
- The Boston Globe* www.boston.com/globe
- Chicago Tribune* <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/all/>
- The San Francisco Chronicle*: <http://www.sfgate.com/columns/>
- The Miami Herald*: <http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/columnists/>
- New York Daily News*: <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinions/index.html>

Additional places to find columnists:

Creative Syndicate www.creators.com

Real Clear Politics www.realclearpolitics.com/links.html

Blue Eagle Community www.blueagle.com/index.html

Appendix P

AP Lang. Adopt-a-Columnist Project (Curriculum Document) page 3

The Columnist Project: Writing a Précis

Rationale: A **précis** reveals your understanding of the arguments and points authors make in a specific piece. Composing a **précis** can be particularly useful when organizing sources for a research project or determining the utility of them.

Directions: When writing your one-page response, objectively summarize the article accurately in your own words by a) composing a **précis**. Below the **précis**, b) compose your response, noting any questions, objections or enlightenment generated by the column.

Note: Before you begin writing your **précis**, read the column a number of times to make sure you completely understand the author's rhetorical situation.

Example Précis:

The **first sentence** identifies the essay's author and title, provides the article's date in parentheses, uses some form of the verb "says" (claims, asserts, suggests, argues) followed by "that," and the essay's thesis (paraphrased or quoted).

Example: In his "In Defense of Prejudice" (1995), Jonathan Rauch argues that prejudice in society should not be eliminated.

The **second sentence** describes the author's support for the thesis, usually in chronological order.

Example: Rauch supports his position by providing anecdotal and historical evidence culled from segments of society which illustrates the futility and harm associated with attempts to eliminate prejudice.

The **third sentence** analyzes the author's purpose using an "in order to" statement.

Example: Rauch hopes to shift the paradigm away from absolutism, the idea of punitive action against racism and prejudice, in order to move society toward rejection, the idea of societal pressure when grappling with racist and prejudicial attitudes.

The **fourth sentence** describes the essay's intended audience and/or the relationship the author establishes with the audience.

Example: The author uses an erudite, yet defensive tone indicating that he primarily addresses a rather liberal intellectual audience.

Appendix Q

AP Lit. Summer Reading (Curriculum Document)

Academy

AP English Summer Reading July/August 2020

Dear AP Student,

Welcome to AP Literature and Composition!

I have assigned one title for your summer reading. The novel in this assignment is often on the AP exam and gives the reader an opportunity to explore new ways of understanding theme, character, and purpose. Please read it carefully and pay attention to detail. Do not wait until the end of the summer to do your reading. Assign yourself a time each day in which you will read and do the work ahead of you. If you do not rush, you will have enough time to complete the work. These assignments will be collected the first full day of class and discussed during the first week. They will be graded.

Native Son by Richard Wright

1. Read the book carefully. As you read, look for the following:

a. **Characters** – Who are the characters that you meet? Be able to describe the character’s personality and actions.

b. **Themes**- What themes, values, lessons or ideas does this novel present?

Essay Question:

Write an essay in which you refer liberally to the text as you respond to the prompt. Refer liberally to the text to support your ideas.

Choose a character from *Native Son* by Richard Wright who responds in some significant way to justice or injustice. Then write a well-developed essay in which you **analyze the character’s understanding of justice, the degree to which the character’s search for justice is successful and the significance of the search for the work as a whole.**

Please have a cover page. Include your name, and my name. Type your essay in a double spaced 12-point Arial or Times New Roman font. Be sure to include your name, title of essay, the class and date. Write *AP English* and the title of the work (*Native Son*) on the cover. Please do not stress or worry about the summer reading. Do the best you can and you will be fine.

Part 2

Native Son is split into three parts- “Fear”, “Flight”, and “Fate”. **After reading each section, you will write a 1-2 page, typed reaction.**

A reaction paper is just what its name suggests—a paper explaining your reaction to [the novel]...Your reaction may involve judgement or evaluation: it may be like an analysis, because your reaction may focus on a particular character, relationship, scene, or ...technique. It is also like a journal entry, in that it presents a personal reaction rather than an attempt to provide either a definitive judgement or detailed analysis. It differs from a journal entry, though, in that it is a more formal essay, prepared for an audience. ...your reaction paper should develop one primary idea or perception, support it with specific evidence...and present both ideas and evidence in clear language and a logical order. (Friedlander)

Part 3

Read Chapters 1, 10, 19, and 21 of *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*. A pdf copy is in the Resources section of AP Literature and Composition 2020-2021, [myHomework](#).

I wish you a wonderful, safe, and healthy summer. Use it to replenish your mind and body while you prepare yourself for a demanding and rewarding AP Literature and Composition experience. I look forward to working with you in September. ☺

Mrs.

Appendix R

AP Lang. End of Year Project (Curriculum Document)

AP Lang and Composition

END OF YEAR PROJECT (Due after AP Exam)

Photo Essay

This essay will be a culminating activity to be worked on as students are in review for the AP exam in the spring.

-Students will take a series of at least twelve pictures to create a photo essay which clearly lifts up theme and tone. The subject can be of their choosing (education, music, war, love, gender, politics, food etc.)

-Each photograph will have a) a caption consisting of more than one word; b) an explanatory paragraph;

-At the end of the series of photographs, students will write a one-to two- page reflection paper on the process, including why they chose that particular theme, and what they learned through the process.

The photo essay will be posted for student and teacher commentary.

Appendix S

Diane's Journal Prompt Responses via Email page 1

Sent from Outlook
 From: Cheryl Thompson-smith <cthompsonsmith1@student.gsu.edu>
 Sent: Monday, April 17, 2023 10:49 PM
 To: [REDACTED]
 Subject: Follow up journal prompts & request

Ms. [REDACTED]

I hope all is well. I don't want to disturb your evening time; however, I wanted to gently remind you about the journal prompts I sent along with possible samples of curriculum documents you either created or used while teaching AP that are *a strong representation of what you valued while teaching AP*, I would deeply appreciate it. Here are the journal prompts (respond to as many as you can). Thank you again for your assistance and time. 😊

Journal Prompts

1. In your earlier years of teaching, how did you invoke your culture into your teaching of advanced ELA curricula? (Your response may be written or in the form of video, TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression) Leaning requires discipline and commitment (not corrective discipline more along the lines of preventative discipline) in this regard, many students came into an advanced class not ready or prepared for the rigor. I realized early on that in order to get students engaged, be it through a written medium or discussion, they had to read. Luckily, then, I had true autonomy of my classroom. Days would be spent with students sitting quietly doing nothing but reading. During these periods of reading, I too sat and read quietly, doing no other work at that time. By doing this, I showed my students how invested I was in their educational pursuits. Many of teh books I thought, I read before, and so I didn't use that as an excuse to not be as equally engaged as they were.

2. If you had to describe your teaching philosophy during your early years, how would you describe or represent it? (Your response may be written or in the form of video, TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression) My teaching philosophy is borne on the premise that each child is gifted with special abilities and that results come from the efforts that are invested.

3.

4. How do you currently infuse your culture into your teaching of advanced ELA curricula? (Your response may be written or in the form of video,

Appendix S

Diane's Journal Prompt Responses via Email page 2

TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression) Even though I am not currently teaching advanced ELA, I hold my students to very high expectations. I place a very high value on their accomplishments and celebrate every attempt they make to produce work in the classroom.

5.

6. If you could write a six-word memoir revealing your current teaching philosophy, what would it be? (Your response may be written or in the form of video, TikTok, FlipGrid, etc., or artistic representation, poem, or other creative expression) The Musings of a Relentless Educator (Relentless here is used positively)

Appendix T*Vanessa's Journal Prompt Responses via Text Message*

Happy Summer! I hope I'm not too late with this:

*Six-word Philosophy: relevant, rigorous, authentic, student-centered, flexible, fun

*Haiku:

Watching minds open/
Students who enjoy learning/
Every teacher's dream!

Oops! *every teacher's dream|

Appendix U

Sampling of Researcher's Memos

Memo

June 15, 2023

Reading over Diane's transcript brought back my feelings of betrayal and mistrust that were the result of being told indirectly that I was no longer going to be teaching AP. It was pre-planning in 2021 (if I recall correctly). I was sitting in a department meeting and each teacher was asked to introduce themselves to the new team members. When it came to my turn, I said that I was *now* teaching American Literature (something I'd only found out about upon my return when my supervising administrator informed me that because a teacher had not returned and they didn't have a replacement, "they" were going to need my help). I also added that I taught AP English literature. The instructional coach chimed in that she was *now* teaching AP Lit. She added something along the lines of *Sorry*, but it was a surprise to me. Hence, I found out that I was no longer teaching AP at that exact moment. It was a gut-punch.

Memo

April 14, 2023

In a last-ditch effort to obtain what I believed would be relevant in-service AP English and honors teacher participants who are B/AA, I reached out to a former colleague: [redacted]. I previously worked with her at LaFayette High School, and I thought I could leverage my previous working relationship with her to my advantage. I felt forced to go in this direction because the principal at Mountainview Ridge High School had not responded to my email messages nor my phone calls. After calling, I sent her a text message. She returned my call, but we played phone tag instead of connecting. Since the end of the month was fast approaching, I abandoned the idea of connecting with her as I believed it was *not* meant to be. In my mind, I viewed this as both a disappointment and setback. The two participants from Devon county that I had already obtained while willing, did not perfectly fit the criteria for participation. Specifically, they no longer taught AP English Literature or Language.

Although I did not know for certain whether the teachers from Ridgeview Mountain High School would exactly meet my criteria, I had a hunch that they might. This was one of those lessons that as a neophyte researcher I had to learn through experience. I cannot make someone *want to participate* in my study, and you cannot always expect things to work out exactly as you desire. I tried not to dwell on this change to my study and instead focus on the positive: I had two participants who were willing.

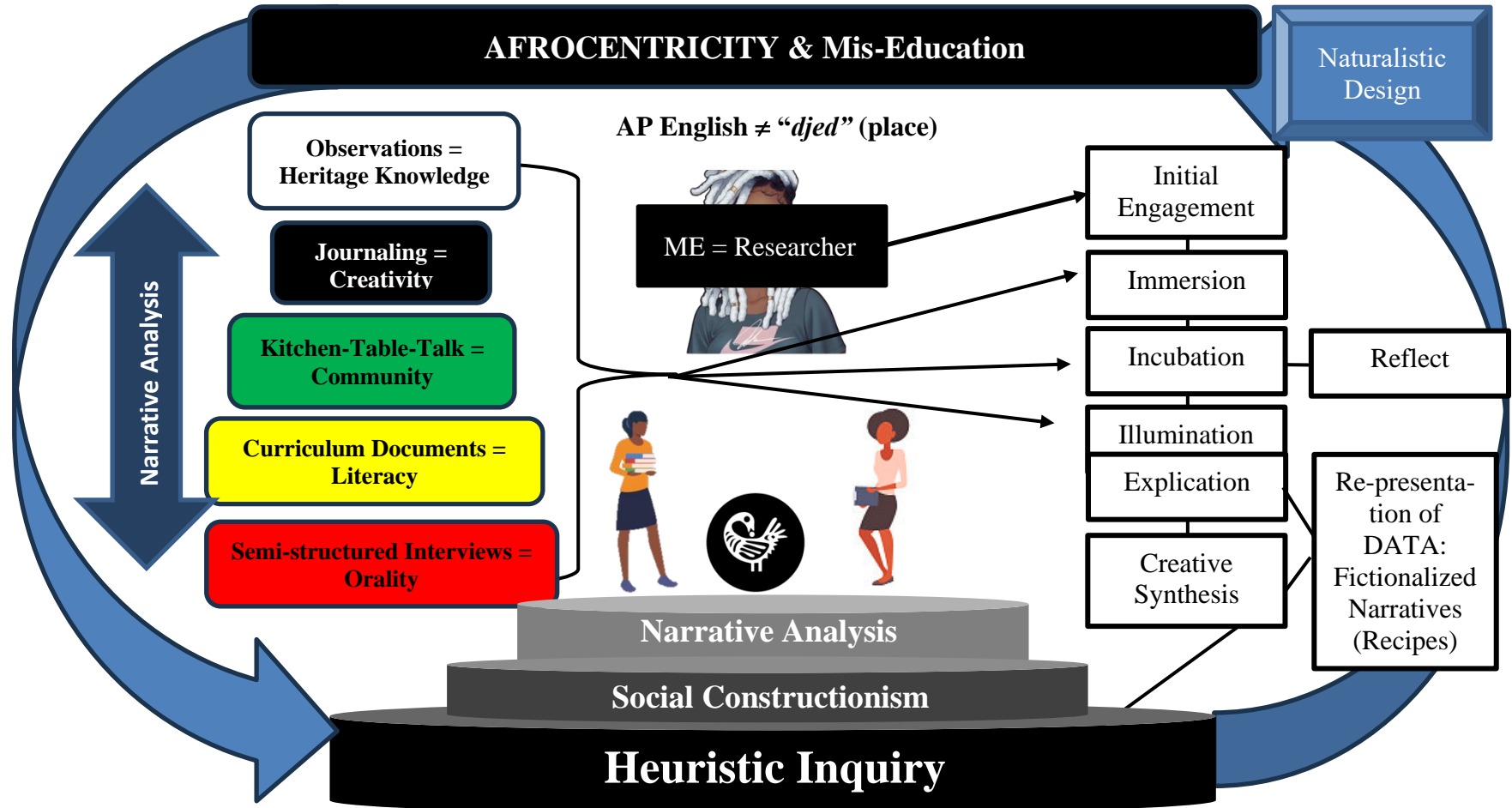
Memo

March 15, 2023

I just got off the phone with [redacted]. He was so helpful and proactive about assisting me in finding research participants who meet my criteria. First, I was surprised to call the school and then be immediately put in contact with him. Normally, principals are so busy, you would expect that they would have to call you back. When I heard his voice on the other end of the phone, I

Appendix V

Diagram Representing Structure of Research Design as Reimagined



Note. This reimagined research design centers me (the researcher), employs heuristic inquiry as its foundation in lieu of narrative inquiry, explicitly references African ways of knowing, and adds the tool of observations as a fifth research method.