June 2022

**Education Assemblage: Tracing and Undermining Raciality in the Era of Standardization and Accountability**

Chalais Carter
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

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Education Assemblage: Tracing and Undermining Raciality
in the Era of Standardization and Accountability

A Dissertation Presented

by

CHALAIS CARTER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2022

College of Education
Education Assemblage: Tracing and Undermining Raciality
in the Era of Standardization and Accountability

A Dissertation Presented

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated and delivered to the coalition of education freedom fighters who are faithfully sowing seeds for a transformative future.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Kate Carter, who has heard and seen more versions of this work than anyone else will ever know. You have made this possible for me, I could have never completed this work without your love, support, pep talks and willingness to think with me. I love you.

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A special thank you to all the family and friends who have continuously encouraged me throughout my doctoral journey. You all are in my heart forever and I love you.
ABSTRACT

EDUCATION ASSEMBLAGE: TRACING AND UNDERMINING RACIALITY IN THE ERA OF STANDARDIZATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

MAY 2022

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Directed by: Professor Korina Jocson

While many education scholars have discussed the racist and neoliberal capitalist relations that operate through education reform with impunity, the concept and tracing of raciality illuminates ethical, juridical, and economic dimensions that shape how one comes to know and intervene in the lives of the so-called educationally disadvantaged. In this dissertation, the researcher traces how the arsenal of racial knowledge works with/in and through US neoliberal education reform by studying out of school learning contexts. Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C), as a focus of this dissertation study, is a targeted intervention summer learning program that is designed to reduce summer learning loss for youth. Through tracing raciality, the researcher maps the web of racial, gendered, and political economic forces that shape T4C’s practices from the federal to the local level, demonstrating how this social scientific apparatus detracts from, more than advances, a quality and equitable education for students of color, students designated as English Learners, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty. The researcher also highlights student feedback at T4C to illuminate and undermine the arsenal of racial knowledge, and shares strategies for reading student feedback differently. This Black
Feminist Study of educational intervention has implications for informing how and for what purposes scholars engage with and propose educational interventions for youth under the current conceptualization of educational equity. In all, the dissertation aims to demonstrate how education scholars can apply radical Black Feminist Study, method-making practices, and analyses to rethink and undo the limits of educational equity’s conception and efforts.

**Keywords:** Raciality; Youth-Informed Research; Black Studies; Black Feminist Thought; Standardization and Accountability; Educational Equity
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GLOSSARY

Terms

Affectability: being subject to others’ power (see Silva, 2007)

Assemblage: actions, encounters, and events that constitute a design of some thing

Black Radical Tradition: Black persons active resistance to the extraction of their land and labor for the flow of global capital (see Robinson, 2000)

Economic: an axis of the modern subject; related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services; of or relating to the production, development, and management of material wealth of a country, household or business enterprise (see Silva, 2007; see Chakravartty & Silva, 2012)

Endless play of expression: an invitation to the multiple ways one can be, live, and exist (see Silva, 2014)

Ethical: an axis of the modern subject; of or relating to what is moral, good, or bad (see Silva, 2007; see Chakravartty & Silva, 2012)

Fractal: a pattern that repeats at different scales; an analytical frame through which to disrupt pervasive logics (Silva, 2017)

Juridical: an axis of the modern subject; of or relating to the administration of justice (see Silva, 2007; see Chakravartty & Silva, 2012)

Neoliberalism: a policy model in which the public and private spheres partner to administer social services (see Burch, 2009)

Poethical/poethics: moments that live as if the world has ended and another one has become (see Silva, 2014)

Productive nomos: The conception of reason that describes it as the producer or regulator
of the universe (see Silva, 2007)

**Analytics of Raciality/ Raciality/ Racial knowledge:** a social scientific apparatus that transforms human bodily and social configurations into signifiers of the mind (see Silva, 2007, p. 166)

**Racial Capital:** a general history of modern capitalism which illustrates how capitalism has operated within a system and ideology which assigns differential value to human life and labor (see Robinson, 2000; see Robin D. G. Kelley’s Foreword, pp. xiv-xvii)

**Racial Logic:** how race works

**Radical Black Feminist Thought:** An ontoepistemological frame that aims to free Blackness from categorical distinction by theorizing from the material realities of Black fem, trans, and nonbinary social, political, and economic life; an epistemological alternative to post-Enlightenment European thought

**Speculative:** To critically pose, guess, or imagine other-wise

**Subaltern:** youth, women, and workers who are on the frontlines of struggles against global capitalism across the world (see Spivak, 1988)

**Tracing:** The critical strategy of outlining the social, political and economic dimensions of some thing’s design

**Transparent I:** Man, the subject, the ontological figure consolidated in post-Enlightenment European thought (see Silva, 2007)

**Transparency Thesis:** an assumption that Man, the subject formed through and at the center of post-Enlightenment thought, is the only figure (or mind) endowed with reason. This assumption allows it to act as if its mind readily ascertains regulating
laws of the universe and the things of nature with the privilege to actualize itself and its global region as the favored thing and social configuration of global space and history or time (see Silva, 2007; see Carter & Jocson, 2022)

**Plays of Expression**

(re)/(im)/(un) – prefixes in parentheses used in place of describing with two words, e.g., (im)possibilities stands in for possibilities and impossibilities.

**Guide quotes** – thick quotes that are referenced and serve as a guide for the chapter or section’s hard-hitting points. These juicy quotes can be found at the beginning of each chapter and at the beginning of some sub sections.

**Theatre/Play/Scene/Act** – use of performance words to denaturalize how Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment Reason operates (see Silva, 2007)

**Acronyms**

**ESEA**: Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

**ESSA**: Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015; current federal education law

**LEA**: Local Education Agency or school district

**NCLB**: No Child Left Behind of 2001; previously active federal education law

**SEA**: State Education Agency or State Department of Education

**T4C**: Teaching for the 21st Century
INTRODUCTION

STAYING ANSWERABLE TO YOUTH OF THE FUTURE

[Lauren]: “I’m trying to learn whatever I can that might help me survive out there. I think we should all study books like these...Every time I go outside, I try to imagine what it might be like to live out there without walls, and I realize I don’t know anything...”

She gave me a nervous smile.

[Jo]: “You’ve been reading too many adventure stories,” she said…

[Lauren]: “I want you to be serious. I realize I don’t know very much. None of us knows very much. But we can all learn more. Then we can teach one another. We can stop denying reality or hoping it will go away by magic.”

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Wynter theorizes race outside raciology and positions blackness and black studies as an analytics of invention. My curiosity led me to think about the humanizing work black creatives illuminate in their scientifically creative and creatively scientific artworlds, while also drawing attention to the disruptive work that black feminists and black scholars do (as they breach the recursive field of feminist science and technology studies and other disciplines).

- Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*

We meet Butler’s main character of *Parable of the Sower*, Lauren Olamina, in 2024. Two years from now. Although Octavia Butler introduced her in 1993, she is only 13 years old in 2022. She is the age of many youth in United States (US) secondary education classrooms, whether they be remote or in person. She faces similar, yet heightened, challenges. Her world has been rocked by climate chaos, collapse of infrastructure, rising costs of living, the cholera epidemic, proliferation of company towns that are corporate-subsidized and private security-defended, and other forces that announce and pronounce the cataclysmic collapse of US democracy and a dying planet Earth. What is a quality
education system for her? What does achievement look like? In 2024, Lauren is homeschooled by her stepmother. She is at once a learner and a teacher for her siblings and the neighborhood children in her walled community. What did a quality education system look like for her before its collapse? What did her achievement scores indicate about her career readiness? What accountability rating did her district receive? She reads the signs of collapse as she lives through major sociopolitical, ecological, and economic shifts. She points to the need for fugitive flight or navigating her way out of the center of collapse while protecting herself and her companions as they seek to make a future life elsewhere. Staying may not keep her alive. Leaving may not keep her alive. She wants a chance at living. She wants Jo to take her seriously and leave with her when it’s time too (p. 58). That will be Jo’s decision to make. In the meantime, Lauren prepares – as much as she can. Who will join Lauren? What world will she and they make?

**Questioning the Unquestionable: Turning to Black Study in Education**

I open this dissertation with questions that are speculative and meant to be answerable to the youth of our future, a future that is riddled with the consequences of overextraction, overconsumption and overrepresentation of Man as the human itself (Wynter, 2003). Many more questions burn from a number of classrooms with walls and borders: my generations upon generations of grandmothers’ classrooms; the more than 100 numbers of classrooms (virtual and otherwise) I’ve entered into over 23 years of schooling; the Arizona classroom I taught in; the Massachusetts classroom I taught in; the classrooms from which I have coached generations of teachers. I have inherited my questions and thinking not only from the particular content tossed around in these now hybrid—yet
always box-like-spaces—but also from the actions, interactions, budgets, performances, activities, inconsistencies, policies, directives, hesitancies, theories of change, epithets, mandates, observations and more that shape the events inside of them. Indeed these questions have been additionally shaped by students; colleagues; mentors; my curiosity; my doctoral journey; my readings in and beyond teacher education; my engagement in Black Studies and contemporary Black Feminist thought; Black speculative arts; the socio- and geopolitical events of global present; and those on the frontlines witnessing the most devastating losses while also working toward the most exhilarating wins.

Through participating in the activities that shape schooling and classrooms, through my interdisciplinary studies, and through witnessing youth take action to reshape society and learning conditions,¹ I sense many sociopolitical entanglements that radiate, yet too often are explored through a Western onto epistemological frame in educational research. That is, many projects defer to Western scientific constructions of knowing and being to shape educational inquiry. Thus, many speculative questions remain about future possibilities in education and educational research: What else might we notice? What is really shaping events in the classroom? What is a quality education in the face of state brutality, a crumbling planet Earth, regular school shootings? Do our current education policies and practices meet the task of providing a quality education given the world we live in and the future we will inherit? What are youth really saying? When using a Western frame, how are students made to appear in education? How does the way they are made to appear impact our work with them? If we were to start over, rather than return to normal, what would we do differently? What happens when we go beyond

¹ see: Movement for Black Lives; FTP Boston; Sunrise Movement; March for Our Lives
educational equity to prioritize the endless play of expression in learning? I think responding to these questions requires a type of engagement that is not solely limited to zip codes, improved achievement scores, accurate school rankings, acceptable punishments, and outcomes of intervention. There is so much more that education scholars, policy makers, and practitioners ought to (re)consider and always in the practice of (re)considering. My point is that my questions were, and still are, racing around those classrooms unsatisfied with the talk of zip codes, predictions of learning loss, and categories of achievement. They are searching for different engagement, whether it be initial, partial, or incomplete. These questions aim to make space for conceptions of learning, knowledge, and knowledge-making that are so thoroughly incarcerated in the timed, disciplined, and hopscotched moves we take to claim educational equity as our ultimate prize.

Thank goodness for Black (un)disciplinarity and study, or thought and method-making, that can guide in questioning the unquestionable to undo and exceed Western modernity’s categories and processes for measuring, defining, and containing ourselves and our study in the world as we know it (Rashid et al., forthcoming). In this dissertation, I examine education as assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) through actions, encounters, and events that illuminate the design of an out-of-school context. I shed light on how the pursuit of educational equity relies on a monitoring apparatus and a reservoir of racial knowledge to intervene in student learning. While decolonial, critical race, and critical (Marxian) theories have offered substantive critique of education and educational interventions, in this dissertation I turn to Black Studies and Black Feminist thought. I turn to a Black Study of educational and sociopolitical entanglements to upend Western
liberal humanist ontoepistemology, and to rehearse alternatives that afford possibilities in making room for the not-yet, or a future, without strictly defining what is possible. Additionally, Black Study and Black Feminist thought offer critical praxis from knowing and living outside the definitions of human, always taking care to know and live with/out recursively repeating the colonial racial violence that constitutes our racial capitalist society (Robinson, 2000; Weheliye, 2014; Wynter, 2003). We do not want or need to keep going there again (Carter & Jocson, Forthcoming). Yet, interrupting the repetition of cruel legacies is often easier said than done, which is why Black Study is engaged with invention (McKittrick, 2021, p. 2), the speculative (Silva, 2014) or to borrow Saidiya Hartman’s term, critical fabulation (2008, p. 11).

In such a practical field like education, it is hard to make room for the not yet unless one is abiding by the Western construction of human and social science. Following these constructions makes educational study intelligible to funders, educational law, and sanctioned interventions. If Western intelligibility is not on our side, then innovation is mostly quelled (not completely); education policies must be followed with fidelity (though fugitive possibilities exist); and achievement must be measured, sorted, and ranked (Patel, 2016). Otherwise, schools, researchers, and policy makers cannot prove learning or teaching outcomes, especially for those particular “subgroups” of students that are the focus of educational equity efforts i.e., students of color, students designated as English Learners, students living in poverty, and students with disabilities as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. While intervention and evidence of academic growth are key to formulas for pursuing educational equity, these ingredients have not led to a substantive narrowing of the so-called achievement gap between low-
Taking the focus off of the achievement gap, Milner (2012) proposes that researchers use “opportunity gap” (p. 693) as an explanatory framework for addressing the processes that lead to difference in academic outcomes. He suggests that such a framework has the potential to focus efforts on addressing the structural inequalities that proliferate in school settings and contribute to differential outcomes. Irvine (2010) expands this point, noting structural “gaps” that contribute to academic outcomes such as quality child care, employment opportunity, school funding, wealth and income and more. Yet, to this point, reform approaches for educational equity have been inadequate. Especially during the last two years of a global pandemic that has upended what learning looks like or will continue to look like in the future (Carter & McIntee, 2021). Thus, I turn to Black Study to look at the pursuit of educational equity from the proverbial outside, where evidence may not hold as much explanatory power for why inequities continue to persist despite heavy educational regulations and staunch reforms. Through Black Study, this dissertation will breach the logic that evidence, proof, and rankings should form the basis for any approach to educational equity (McKittrick, 2021). This study will also shed light on how the formulaic rule sets for promoting high academic achievement amongst children of color living in the poorest zip codes and attending the lowest ranked schools is neither as innocent nor acceptable a task as it seems.

For example, we already know that a school day for low-income youth of color is most often structured by academic achievement goals for Math, English Language Arts, and Science (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; White, 2015). Though the following recipe is a bit facetious, it is not far off from what scholars suggest happens in schools,
even under the federal mandate of educational equity. To highly achieve, students in so-called low performing school districts must complete \( \frac{1}{4} \) part reading, \( \frac{1}{4} \) part math, \( \frac{1}{4} \) part science, and \( \frac{1}{4} \) part summer school to avoid learning loss (Bowers & Schwarz, 2018). They must forgo the arts during each school day; be given limited pass time to move from class to class; live without substantive rights and comply with the laws and policies meant to criminalize them (Vaught, 2017); gain research skills to tell us about why education is so inequitable (Caraballo et al. 2017); be mindful of the widening occupational attainment gap (Medvide & Blustein, 2010); do all of these things, even if the evidence is limited or flawed (Meyers & VanGronigen, 2018); do these things because there is some evidence that they lead to greater academic and social outcomes; do this or they will never be employed in this economy (Labaree, 1997); do these things although their wealthy suburban and private school counterparts do not.

How are these imposed ways of being and learning so easily embraced, and less widely challenged? *Something* is in the water. *Something* is in our methods. *Something* is in our data. *Something* is in the way that we know how to use methods to collect and analyze data. *Something* is in the way that we offer evidence that an intervention is needed. *Something* is in our evidence that deficitizes our children and rarely problematizes the conditions under which low achievement is always already predictable for the children designated under the ESSA’s subgroups. *Something* is in the way we conceive of and practice educational equity. In this dissertation, I go beyond the walls of educational equity reform and take up Black Study to work through what that *something* is. I work through how *something* gets caught up in our work, despite our efforts to intervene on inequity by including youth voice as well as employing critical analyses of
race, class, gender, sexuality, and language for more equitable approaches to education. I also explore the limits of solely thinking through the inclusion-exclusion binary for conceptualizing and addressing educational equity in an effort to dream otherwise educational futures. In the next section, I provide an overview and outline of the chapters that follow.

**Overview and Outline of Dissertation Chapters**

This study seeks to understand the limits of our conception and practices of educational equity as pursued by the US federal department of education, state and local education agencies, and the educational service providers that attempt to improve academic achievement for the “educationally disadvantaged.” The openings that are produced from the critical work of tracing raciality and undermining raciality through the speculative mode will be answerable to youth of the present by taking seriously their cautions about the purpose of schooling. The openings will also further expose the strategies of power that inform the pursuit of educational equity, which postpone playfully expressive learning practices beyond the neoliberal learning agenda (Zembylas, 2017). To begin, Chapter 1 will outline the educational reform and intervention issues lingering in the background of this dissertation, prodding me to take a different, albeit far less travelled road beyond the field. I share more about my Black Feminist approach to inquiry, and how it supports me to trace and undermine racial knowledge, or the support beams that sustain the problematic architecture and pursuit of educational equity. Then, Chapter 2 is offers a radical Black Feminist engagement with the educational literature on youth voice, subjectivity and representation. In reviewing the literature, I consider how
neoliberal, decolonial, and race-first theories represent youth within the context of educational equity. I also consider how critical education scholars have sought to challenge educational inequity through liberatory teaching and research practices that are attentive to the lived experiences of students of color as expressed in the aforementioned theories. Chapter 3 further outlines the study’s inquiry stance and design, which refuses Western ways of knowing as capable of promoting greater equity. I discuss pivoting as a methodological stance, which informs my return to the T4C project to open up insights that go beyond the previous liberal humanist read of T4C and students’ feedback. I also lay out the first analytical approach to this study, which draws heavily on Silva’s critical methodology of tracing raciality in social processes and contexts of subjection. This strategy supports me to trace raciality in educational text, exposing how racial knowledge works. I then lay out the second analytical approach I employ, which poses and responds to speculative questions from radical Black Feminist thought and Black Studies to reread student feedback. Chapter 4 examines raciality in policy and programmatic documents that outline how educational equity is to be pursued from the federal to the local level. Through fractals, or logic that repeats at different scales, I show how policy and programmatic documents repeat three assumptions of raciality. These assumptions inform the ways students, achievement, and academic performance are constructed, allowing colonial architectures to run amuck in the name of equity. Chapter 5 returns to student feedback to demonstrate how their comments opened up considerations of raciality at T4C and in the previous research design. My analytical engagement rereads student insights through queries in radical Black Feminist thought and Black Studies in a refusal to consider students as coherent subjects, T4C as an appropriate intervention for them,
and summer learning loss as a given phenomenon for students. I illustrate educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic by discussing the events, encounters, and actions that expose raciality’s design at T4C. I highlight how student comments and participation in this project refuse the idea that educational equity is an obvious outcome at T4C. Chapter 6 summarizes lessons for educational inquiry and methodology given the obstinacy of raciality. Rethinking equity and guided by Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*, this chapter also explores nodes of a fugitive learning agenda, or a learning practice that proactively navigates sociopolitical entanglements to make room for a different educational future. The idea is to unsettle the ease with which equity is conceptualized and pursued. I do this by illuminating equity’s assemblage of racial logic in an out-of-school context and by imploring us to ask more of ourselves in being answerable to youth of today and the future.
CHAPTER 1

THE LIMITS OF STATE-SANCTIONED EDUCATION REFORM

[Lauren’s diary] At the end of the program it was announced that KSF was looking for registered nurses, credentialed teachers, and a few other skilled professionals who would be willing to move to Olivar and work for room and board…

…it might work if I could find a job of some kind, but in Olivar they don’t need me. They’ve got hundreds of me, at least—maybe thousands. Every surviving community is full of unemployed, half-educated kids or uneducated kids.

…I think the new hires would be in debt to the company. That’s an old company-town trick—get people into debt, hang on to them, and work them harder. Debt slavery. That might work in Christopher Donner’s America. Labor laws, state and federal, are not what they once were.

“We could try,” Cory insisted to Dad. “We could be safe in Olivar. The kids could go to a real school and later get jobs with the company. After all, where can they go from here except outside?”

Dad shook his head. “Don’t hope for it, Cory. There’s nothing safe about slavery.”

-Octavia E. Butler, *The Parable of the Sower*

As sea levels rise and infrastructure collapse rocks the town of Olivar, KSF steps in to run the town by providing jobs, education, and private security. KSF thrives on understanding that the people of Olivar are in need of resources, stability, and security to sustain their living. Otherwise, they will be forced to survive beyond the community’s walls. And not many want to brave being outside. Although Lauren and her family have made a life, the walls of their community in Robledo are starting to collapse. Regular thefts are taking place. Lauren’s brother, Keith has been brutally killed. The community has implemented night watches to fend off thefts and has had varying success. Lauren’s stepmother, Cory, is desperate to find security beyond the crumbling walls of Robledo
and seems to be willing to leave at any cost. Yet, Lauren and her father notice how KSF works, its design. They know that KSF is a “company-town trick” (p. 121), which would sign the family up for corporate enslavement.

Lauren and her dad expose the logics of company towns in a way that sheds light on the current neoliberal context of education, where public and private partnerships work together to address educational inequity. While youth in US public schools do not accumulate financial debts from their K-12 academic studies—though lunch debt is a different matter (see Candid Philanthropy News Digest, 2019)—they are often described as though they have accumulated debts that they pay off through participating in academic interventions such as after school and summer programming. The debt is seemingly resolved through demonstrating academic growth as well as college and career readiness. With Lauren and her dad’s skepticism of KSF as an entry point, this chapter outlines the limits of state-sanctioned neoliberal education reforms and interventions for schooling inequities.

A focus on leveling the playing field amongst students in the US has been a galvanizing force for addressing evidence of academic disparities that persist in schools across the nation (Chmielewski, 2019). Since 1965, the US department of education has provided financial assistance to state educational agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) with the goal to address so-called achievement gaps for children from low-income families. While financial assistance has supported SEAs and LEAs to operate and provide targeted academic support to students, educational scholars’ concerns about

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2 See School Districts Seek Donations to Cover Student 'Lunch Debt':
financial assistance, standards-based achievement, and intervention approaches complicate the federal route to educational equity (Saltman, 2014; Burch, 2009; Patel, 2016). In the sections below, I organize my discussion by sharing the history of educational legislation for educational equity and the concerns that have accompanied education reform and intervention approaches. I also consider the conceptual and methodological limits of how educational equity is pursued through research with, or informed by, youth.

**ESEA of 1965: Financial Assistance to Improve Quality**

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the civil rights era Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which aimed “To strengthen and improve educational quality and educational opportunities.” Included in this act is a provision, Title I, to specifically provide “financial assistance to local educational agencies for the education of children of low-income families.” Further stipulating federal funding, Title II in the ESEA outlines:

> In recognition of the special educational needs of children of low-income families and the impact that concentrations of low-income families have on the ability of local educational agencies to support adequate educational programs, the Congress hereby declares it to be the policy of the United States to provide financial assistance (as set forth in this title) to local educational agencies serving areas with concentrations of children from low-income families to expand and improve their educational programs by various means (including preschool programs) which contribute particularly to meeting the special educational needs of educationally deprived children. (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965)

From its inception, the ESEA pursued quality education by pledging support for school districts to educate low-income children. The ESEA was a notable change from federal support in previous years, which did not interfere with curriculum or school operations at
the state and local levels (Standerfer, 2006). In establishing the financial-assistance-for-quality-education policy, the language of this act problematically conflates educational deprivation and special educational needs for children from low-income families. Yet, the ESEA’s confluences of deprivation, need, and family income have not been centered in its most public and political critiques. The main debates between its passage and several reauthorizations through 2002 centered questions about SEAs’ need for federal financial assistance, the efficacy of funding, and the need for standards-based achievement measures (Standerfer, 2006).

**NCLB of 2002: Standardization and Accountability**

In 2002, the ESEA was reauthorized by an act titled No Child Left Behind (NCLB) under George Bush’s presidency. NCLB continued to provide billions of dollars in financial assistance to SEAs and LEAs across the country, funding school budgets and supplemental academic programming. NCLB also sought greater accountability for federal funds and high academic performance on standards. That is, NCLB not only continued to ensure that public schools across the country receive supplemental funding to meet student learning needs, but also adopted standards-based achievement measures to hold students, schools, LEAs, and SEAs accountable for student achievement and educational spending. Given the standards-based approach to leveling the playing field under NCLB, Title I was updated to specifically state:

> The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. (No Child Left Behind, 2001)
NCLB expanded the reach of the federal government over the educational affairs of SEAs and LEAs (McDermott, 2011) and further cemented conflations of deprivation, need, and low-income families. Additionally, researchers argue that NCLB intensified problematic educational entanglements constituted by public-private partnerships, “evidence” of low-achievement, standardization and accountability, race, class, and capital.

**Neoliberalism under NCLB**

Educational researchers suggest that federal funding stipulated by standards-based achievement exacerbated neoliberal approaches to education reform, which favor deregulation between state and corporate or corporate-like entities (Burch, 2009; Saltman, 2014). In her book, *Hidden Markets: The New Education Privatization* (2009), Patricia Burch describes how private firms gained traction to operate in the educational sphere and to facilitate the mandates of NCLB:

The No Child Left Behind Act (the 2002 revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) has helped private firms make inroads into local education markets...This includes services such as test score data, storage, remedial instruction for the poor, online curriculum, and online school management. Public monies including federal, state and local dollars intended for schools, help fund the operations of the businesses that I describe. (p. 1)

As a provision of NCLB, SEAs’ and LEAs’ annual budgets can be used to pay for external educational services provided by private education companies, allowing education businesses to profit from public tax dollars. These companies charge a fee for their services, which is paid for—or partly paid for—by money allocated through the state and/or federal governments. The businesses that Burch describes have also made inroads into local education markets given their own practices of accountability and data collection on business performance; they are able to support schools to become the
assessment and accountability centers that NCLB required (Meyers & VanGronigen, 2018).

**Racialized Discrimination under NCLB**

School districts partnered with educational service providers whose strict practices and academic achievement data collection exacerbated old patterns of discrimination and created new patterns of discrimination for students, especially students of color. Terrenda White (2015) discusses how “No Excuses” Charter Schools adhere to the standardization and accountability movement by incorporating “distinct practices, which are grounded in a framework that emphasizes behavior, explicit teaching of middle-class values and norms, and a technocratic focus on data and test score production” maintaining, rather than addressing, “barriers to culturally responsive teaching” for students of color (pp. 121-123). Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa (2015) make clear how students classified as English Language Learners, Standard English learners and heritage language learners continued to be racialized as deficient learners under standards-based achievement measures and Western conceptions of language and literacy. As a result of standards-based education reform, language and literacy instruction is shaped by what Flores and Rosa term “appropriateness” or “the conceptualization of standardized linguistic practices as objective sets of linguistic forms that are understood to be appropriate for academic settings” (p. 150). Additionally, some multilingual students were (and continue to be) regularly pushed out of schools based on test performance (Hursh, 2007). Gebhard (2019) argues that teachers have not been adequately prepared to support students who are multilingual as a result of complexities in federal and state policies; fluctuating guidance regarding English-only instruction
mandates; and historic approaches to teacher education program curriculum. However, education act reauthorizations and instructional policy updates have neither wholly interrupted racialized discrimination, nor the conflations that continued to inform NCLB and its scientifically-sanctioned interventions for educational equity.

**Settler Colonialism under NCLB**

Leigh Patel’s *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability* (2016) demonstrates how the pursuit of educational intervention relies on damaged narratives of students of color and low achievement on high stakes state exams. Patel argues that educational research interventions start with the narrative of low achievement and typically seek answers or quick fixes that will move low-income students of color from the failing to the passing side of the achievement gap. Furthermore, Patel suggests that academic interventions are seldom answerable to more expansive conceptions of learning, or learning as “a constant becoming and unbecoming” (p. 77). In this argument, Patel makes clear how the notion that students’ academic achievement can be fixed through objective research and intervention is one that has secured many scholars’ tenure among other privileges associated with the publication of such work—despite the years-long persistence of such a vexing gap. Subsequently, Patel joins other scholars of settler colonial relations in arguing that educational research enlivens the logics of coloniality and turns knowledge into property or a form of ownership premised on the deficit and damage of “others” (Tuck, 2009). In contrast to the benefits for education scholars, in-service educators and school administrators are in jeopardy of losing their jobs and schools are in jeopardy of losing funding as a result of changes brought on by standards-based reform measures under NCLB. Classroom-level
and school-level standardized test performance is penalized for missing academic targets (Hursh, 2007; Gebhard, 2019; McDermott, 2011). Penalizing students, educators, and administrators as a result of test performance is also modeled after strategies used to manage corporate personnel and the growth of capital in the business world—and supports the US federal government to conceive of and facilitate far-reaching educational law (Picower & Mayorga, 2015).

**ESSA of 2015: Cementing Neoliberalism’s facilitation of Standardization and Accountability Measures**

The legacy of NCLB’s emphasis on standardization and accountability and the reliance on business strategies from education for-profit and nonprofit organizations continues to shape the federal approach to leveling the playing field in education. In 2015, President Barack Obama signed legislation titled, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which emphasizes greater flexibility in how SEAs meet federal mandates to prepare students for college and career pathways. Under ESSA, SEAs have agency in the ways they establish systems for evaluating school administrators, adopt standards-based curriculum, create assessments, and set indicators of school quality and student success. In a notable change from NCLB, the ESSA directly uses the terms “equitable” and “achievement gap” in outlining its purpose, “The purpose of this title is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” (ESSA, 2015). Though ESSA is more direct in its intention to address equity and “achievement gaps” through standards-based curriculum and assessments, its efforts also heavily focus on turning around the lowest performing
schools and schools with the largest measured achievement gaps (Meyers & VanGronigen, 2018). With a continued emphasis on the lowest performing schools and the largest measured achievement gaps, while supporting the continued proliferation of a neoliberal education economy that thrives on public-private partnerships, ESEA’s reauthorization under ESSA enlivens the logics of racial capitalism in public schools today (Robinson, 2000).

*Educational Reform and Racial Capital*

Racial capitalism is a term describing the modern capitalist system as one that relies on racialism, or differentiating groups of people by perceived ethnic, regional, and/or visualized differences. These perceived differences then contribute to the maintenance of a society that is concerned with the growth of a capitalist economic system reliant on a large laboring class and small ruling class (Robinson, 2000).

Robinson argues that the practice of racialism echoes the European concept of *herrenvolk*, which “explained the inevitability and naturalness of the domination of some Europeans by other Europeans” (Robinson, 2000, p. 27). He suggests that racialism has become so accepted as natural and inevitable in society that its consistent production goes without examination:

> racialism and its permutations persisted, rooted not in a particular era but in the civilization itself. And though our era might seem a particularly fitting one for depositing the origins of racism, that judgement merely reflects how resistant the idea is to examination and how powerful and natural its specifications have become. (p. 28)

Robinson is arguing that the social scientific compulsion to identify the origins of racism (and affix this narrative to the archive), is an example of staunchly upholding the fiction that race and white supremacy are natural and inevitable. Upholding such a fiction
undermines attempts to unsettle social scientific discourse on race. As he demystifies racialism and how it has implied the rule of certain groups over others, Robinson also addresses the limits of a Marxian ideology for comprehending Black people’s resistance to colonialism and capitalism. Exploring racialism is key to Robinson’s argument about the limits of a Marxian frame given how the idea of the inevitability and naturalness of race gets caught up in Marx’s ideology and his solution of a proletariat revolution.

Explicating the larger project of *Black Marxism*, Robin D. G. Kelley (2017) writes that Robinson:

> takes Karl Marx to task for failing to comprehend radical movements outside of Europe... Marxism also failed to account for the racial character of capitalism... He developed it [racial capitalism] from a description of a specific system to a way of understanding the general history of modern capitalism. (para 4)

In his response to the limits of Marxist critique of capital, Robinson explores the origins of Black radicalism through his tracing of Black persons active resistance to colonialism and enslavement as well as the creation of fugitive settlements from the 15th century onward. Proletariat or not, enslaved persons regularly resisted and thwarted the efforts of enslavers and plantation owners. He also explores how Black thinkers such as C.L.R. James, W.E.B. DuBois, and Richard Wright also challenged Marxist ideology. Each centered Black people’s resistance to actions, encounters, and events constituting the growth of global capital in their theoretical engagements.

Robinson’s Black Study of Marxian ideology and resistance to enslavement is key for examining how the ESEA’s interventions on low achievement are informed by racialism. From its inception, ESEA subtly provides the rationale that education deprivation (low achievement) is natural and inevitable for students of color, students with disabilities, English learners and low-income students. Under ESSA and previous
reforms like NCLB, the ESEA has consistently articulated whose children it intends to impact through its policies and these articulations map onto Cedric Robinson’s (2000) examples of how differences become exaggerated as racial differences: Regional (economically disadvantaged students), Subcultural (students from major racial and ethnic groups and children with disabilities), Dialectical (English Learners). Exaggerating regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into racial differences between students in the US education system has been maintained through a federal commitment to protecting educational quality for all. Yet this commitment requires some (e.g., those students who fall into ESSA’s defined “subgroups”) to bear the heaviest burden of educational quality efforts and interventions given evidence of low academic achievement. That is, concentrating efforts on those who are deemed as probable low achievers elides a more systemic examination of the logics that constitute the pursuit of educational equity. Under ESSA, the disaggregation of assessment data into the “subgroups” provides comparative evidence for intervening when students regularly demonstrate so-called “low achievement” on state tests.

Intervention into the lives and learning of students continues to enliven racial capitalism through public education, serving the US capitalist political economy function of economic growth for wealthy education service providers at the expense of the working-class poor’s tax dollars, preserving white supremacy. The play of education reform problematically mirrors times of early colonial expansion in the US. For example, Joel Spring (2007) discusses the forced removal of indigenous children from their families into boarding schools for learning English and Christian religion. James Anderson (1989) discusses how white farmers intentionally closed school buildings for
Black children who sought education instead of working the land after enslavement. These events offer just two examples of how education has long been entangled with ideas of inevitable racial dominance and subordinance, capital, horrific yet legalized intervention, and justified action – the stuff of racial capital.

Today, students of color in low-income urban areas continue to be entangled in the sociopolitical web of race, educational policy, and capital in concert with the federal education department and educational service providers that set their sights on “raising the academic achievement of the disadvantaged” (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Public school districts also rely on the academic interventions of corporate and corporate-like education nonprofits who uniquely possess the interventions and instruments schools need for responding to federal and state demands for assessment and accountability. Through expanded flexibilities in local and state budgets, these education intervention companies are able to operate on public tax dollars, transforming the flow of public dollars into profits for those who own educational intervention companies (Burch, 2009). The enduring neoliberal approaches to education reform continue to position young people as in need of intervention in districts that are targeted for federal financial and supplemental assistance. However, some educational researchers draw on the voices and leadership of students to inform educational practice, policy and research by situating youth as researchers and knowledge makers for educational equity. In the following section, I outline some of the foundational literature that blazed a pathway for youth voice contributions in education scholarship. I also unpack some of the challenges related to the education reform economy that youth encounter and the traditional qualitative
methods used to capture and make meaning of youth voice, which will be further outlined in Chapter 2.

**Youth Voice in/for Educational Equity**

Numerous scholars have explored the potential of collaborative research with youth to conceptualize and address persistent educational equity issues, particularly for students of color in urban schools (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Irizarry, 2009; Ozer & Wright, 2012). Although research with youth offers some promise for identifying inequities in schools, making change and building students’ critical research and literacy skills, there are also many challenges that preclude change. Scholars argue that educational mandates are roadblocks to more liberatory approaches to learning given the neoliberal rationalities that accompany mandates. In the wake of the previous NCLB Act and the currently active ESSA, neoliberal rationalities, coupled with standardization and accountability, relegate students to learning experiences that position them as deficient (Burch, 2009; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Patel, 2016; White, 2015) or don’t take into account their needs as children of color (Gay, 2000; Ladson Billings, 1995; Lynn, 2004; Muhammad, 2020; Paris & Alim, 2017; Parker & Stovall, 2004). However, scholars have attempted to refuse practices that position learners as deficient and have posited otherwise possibilities for learning, pedagogy, and knowledge-making by drawing on student voice (Akom et al., 2008; Boston Student Advisory Council, 2012; Brown & Rodriguez, 2017; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017; Caraballo, 2019; Coles, 2020; Freire, 1970; Jocson, 2017; Laman et al., 2018; McCarty & Lee, 2014; Morrell & Collatos, 2002; Stauber, 2017; Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019).
Youth Voice and CRT

Education scholarship that centers youth voice reaches back as early as the 1970s, always with the elusive objective of naming and examining one’s realities to transform education and immediate lifeworld. In Paulo Freire’s popular text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), he poses that dialogue and egalitarian relations between students and teachers are tools for examining material realities and building critical consciousness to transform the world for liberation. Education scholars have cited Freire’s work as a key contribution to Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), a methodological and epistemological practice that centers youth as knowledge makers who use the research process to address community and educational issues (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017; Scorza et al., 2017; Yonezawa & Jones, 2007). Scholars have also engaged youth voice and experiences beyond YPAR, turning to students to support educator practice (Clay, 2019; Mitra, 2003; Stauber, 2017).

The call to challenge oppression and transform the world from the realities of the oppressed is often coupled with centering Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE), or what Solórzano and Yosso (2000) describe as “a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the subordination of Students of Color” (p. 42). Introducing Critical Race Theory (CRT) from the legal field to the field of education, Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV (1995) argued that race is salient yet “remains un-theorized” (p. 47) in education, urging scholars to take up CRTE as an analytic for making sense of school inequities. Cabrera (2018) describes CRT as a theorizing counterspace, pointing to its growth from critical legal studies. By
inhabiting this counterspace, CRT legal scholars sought to provide “a vocabulary that could name the race-related structures of oppression in the law and society” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 9), which had not been taken up in critical legal studies (Crenshaw et al., 1996). Extending CRT into education, Ladson-Billings and Tate shared several analytical pathways for education scholars to conduct CRTE research such as making the case that racism is endemic and deeply ingrained in American life; reinterpreting ineffective civil rights law; and, challenging claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy. In calling education scholars to challenge the latter, the authors note the theme of “naming one’s reality” or “voice” in the CRT scholarship.

**Experiential Knowledge and Counterstorytelling**

With CRT as an impetus (Matsuda 1995), counter narratives and counter storytelling became popular methods for researchers to address disparities in education for youth of color (Fernandez, 2002; Kolano, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Discussing the importance of voice in challenging racism in education, Stovall (2006) writes about counter storytelling:

> In response to the adversarial relationship that many communities of color have experienced with urban school systems, a counter story is needed to identify the desire for said communities for quality education despite mainstream accounts that depict communities of color as “anti-school” or “anti-intellectual.” Such counter stories become the foundation by which to pose alternatives to education systems that operate to further marginalize communities of color. (p. 244)

Counter storytelling as a methodological approach has supported education scholars to listen to, respond to, and share the stories of students of color, in an effort to counteract stereotypes, deficit narratives and racist schooling practices. However, Ladson-Billings (2013) and Dixson and Rosseau Anderson (2018) also suggest that scholars should
couple counter storytelling with other conceptual constructs and analytical approaches to “advance larger concerns or help us understand how law and policy is operating” (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 42). Further, Lynn (2004) complicates methods that seek experiential knowledge through counter storytelling, asking:

What does it mean to utilize the knowledge of the oppressed as grounding for theoretical construct-building when the oppressed are only defined in relation to their oppressors? What is it that makes the story of the oppressed valid anyways? … Is it enough to simply reject prevailing modes of thought or does one have a responsibility to be explicit about one’s epistemological underpinnings? (p. 161)

These questions call on CRTE researchers to be clear about how and for what purposes experiential knowledge is used to expand theoretical constructs. Additionally, within the context of standardization and accountability, the concerns raised by Dixson, Rosseau Anderson, Ladson-Billings, and Lynn continue to inform the challenges of drawing on youth voice to address educational inequities.

Although many education scholars have centered youth voice with the goals of naming and transforming education inequity, not much has shifted to undo these inequities (Dixson & Rosseau, 2005; Dixson & Rousseau Anderson 2018). Scholars have argued that these challenges are related to educational mandates of standardization and accountability (Caraballo & Lyiscott, 2018; Fielding, 2004) and traditional qualitative approaches for drawing on student feedback (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). In the neoliberal reform era, student feedback may be picked up, but seldom listened to and acted on in ways that transform school and larger education systems (Irizarry & Brown, 2014). However, education scholars have drawn on youth voice to intervene on and inform knowledge about disparate impacts of school policies and practices (Ozer & Wright, 2012); advance understandings of youth needs through a CRTE perspective
(Coles, 2020; McCarty & Lee, 2014); and critique Black Resilience Neoliberalism in neoliberal policy discourse (Clay, 2019). While the focus on school and neoliberal policies has supported understandings of how youth can play an active role in knowledge making as well as how they internalize and/or challenge racialized and neoliberal discourses (Clay, 2019), feminist ontological and epistemological refusals can be extended to inform how researchers engage with youth voice and subjectivity (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Mazzei, 2014). From a new materialist feminist reading, projects about student voice tend to focus solely on how human activities can illuminate the need for change and stay within a traditional liberal humanist qualitative frame. These projects also tend to treat student voice as stable, or representative of an authentic student experience. However, similar to Lynn’s (2004) questions about the use of experiential knowledge for CRTE, new materialist feminist education scholars Jackson and Mazzei (2012 & 2013) challenge the idea that participant voice is authentic as spoken in the research setting. They encourage researchers to trouble voice by expanding analysis of participant voice beyond the human and beyond interpretation. Yet, while they offer approaches for expanding an analysis of voice, new materialist approaches to education research often elide critical discussions of sociopolitical entanglements and related to anti-Blackness, prompting scholars like Fikile Nxumalo (2020) to put new materialism in conversation with Black Studies and Black Feminist thought. Widening considerations of a Western gaze on subjectivity, contemporary Black Feminist thought engages in critical conversations about anti-Blackness in social scientific knowledge-making, and ontologically who and what constitutes human. Black Feminist thought also upends
widely circulated origin stories related to Man, society, and Western thought and theorizes onto epistemological alternatives beyond traditional liberal humanist frames.

Education scholars suggest paying attention to the inner workings of neoliberal education reform, the coloniality of traditional qualitative inquiry, the inauthenticity of voice and how these play out in our work. However, there is a paucity of scholarship that centers contemporary Black Feminist thought for its onto epistemological refusals and alternatives that address sociopolitical processes and contexts of subjection. A focus on Black Feminist thought would support education researchers to further destabilize the taken for granted logics that cannot help but repeat anti-Blackness and Western modernity’s logics in analyses of educational equity for youth of color. With the aforementioned limits, I draw on radical Black Feminist thought to unearth why and how youth can speak, while noting how their voices do not seem to rattle or deter the advances of racial capitalist neoliberal education law and policy.

**Purpose of Study**

In this dissertation, I engage in a Black Study that considers the top-down, neoliberal education protocols and mandates that structure the pursuit of educational equity. The study takes place with(in) and outside of Teaching For the 21st Century (T4C), an out-of-school summer achievement program specifically designed to reduce summer learning loss for children in so-called low-performing school districts. In 2018, I served as the Director of one of four T4C sites in the Northeast and worked with 4 students to collect data about the student experience at T4C. I designed the 2018 study to augment what could be learned about the T4C student experience from the student survey. Since the
2017 and 2018 T4C end-of-summer student surveys primarily used Likert scale questions and several open response questions, I and the students incorporated photo elicitation, focus group interviewing and cognitive mapping, or drawings to share feedback about the program. While the summer 2018 pilot study documented quite a bit about the student experience, it also alluded to larger entanglements that the students, staff, and I encountered throughout the summer. Student feedback explicitly named food, student to student conflicts, elective choices, learning activities, friendships, sports and more contributing to their experiences. However, implicit in the events and stories that shaped their feedback were decisions made about the program and its operations long before students arrived.

As the 2018 Director, I was more aware of the daily production and operations of the program than as an Assistant Director in 2017 and I started to question more. I especially questioned why I felt limited in my ability to influence greater programmatic change at T4C with evidence and suggestions from student feedback. Over time, it has become clearer to me how the 2018 student feedback could be alluding to larger protocols and mandates that shaped actions, encounters, and events at the program—especially with the documentation of student feedback via photos, drawings, and focus group interview data. After collecting, analyzing, and presenting the student feedback data to the T4C CEO, the larger protocols and mandates shaping the program became more visible. When discussing their updated approach to gathering student feedback in summer 2019, the CEO also mentioned survey plans for the following year. By summer 2020, T4C was planning to use a state-approved survey that had been externally validated. Rather than prioritizing student feedback in the ways the pilot study attempted
to—by engaging the feedback of youth beyond surveying—the state-approved survey intended to understand how young people’s participation in T4C is linked to measurable changes in academics and social emotional learning. After reviewing the state-approved survey, the opportunity to diversify the approaches for gathering student feedback seemed dismal—it had been overridden by a programmatic evaluation tool created by the SEA. A survey that would gather information about how effective the program is for students rather than what the program might change as a result of students’ daily experiences. Through this survey tool, the program’s participation in a larger educational design became more visible, prompting me to ask more questions about the protocols and mandates T4C has to follow and its sociopolitical entanglements.

Therefore, the purpose of this Black Feminist inquiry is to explore the design and manifestations of educational protocols and mandates in out-of-school spaces. This inquiry also rethinks the concept and practices of educational equity for youth in so-called low performing school districts. The analytical engagements in this study include feedback from four youth returners who attended the T4C program in the summers of 2017 and 2018. I also engage publicly available documents that outline T4C’s programmatic goals as well as the web of district, state, and federal policies that T4C adheres to when operating its program. Engaging Black Feminist thought and method, this study draws on youth focus group interviewing, drawings, survey responses, and a document review as texts for tracing raciality or racial knowledge (Silva, 2007). In this project, tracing raciality exposes the design and dimensions of “a productive symbolic regimen that institutes human difference as an effect of the play of universal reason” (p. 3) in education. Tracing raciality will support this study to demonstrate the productive
effects of race as a *modern* construct in educational law and interventions for educational equity. I also work through Silva’s examination of raciality to turn the lens on myself as a researcher and address how the T4C pilot study with youth was designed to participate in raciality. Without attention to raciality, the study considered education through a Western onto epistemological lens, and was unintentionally designed to create racial subjects by “transform[ing] human bodily and social configurations into signifiers of the mind” (p. 166). Extending Robinson’s engagement with racialism and the Black radical tradition and Silva’s engagement with tracing and undermining raciality I work with the data to engage in speculative mode or “thought experiments that attempt to expose how we think” as noted by Silva in her discussion of transformative justice (Peter Wall Institute, 2020). The speculative engagement will support my return to students’ 2018 feedback at T4C, examining input that I may not have noticed because of raciality’s hold on the project’s design, the T4C program, and the T4C site. The speculative engagements also support this work to open possibilities of the not-yet in education, more specifically out-of-school contexts.

**Importance of this Study**

[Lauren] “I wanted to know that I could do that—handle a dead animal, skin it, butcher it, treat its hide to make leather. I wanted to know how to do it, and that I could do it without getting sick.”

[Zahra] “Why?”

[Lauren] “Because I thought someday I might have to. And we might out here. Same reason I put together an emergency pack and kept it where I could grab it.

[Zahra] “I wondered about that---about you having all that stuff from home, I mean. At first I thought maybe you got it all when you went back. But no, you were ready for all this trouble. You saw it coming.”
[Lauren] “No one could have been ready for that. But… I thought something would happen someday… everything was getting worse: the climate, the economy, crime, drugs, you know. I didn’t believe we would be allowed to sit behind our walls, looking clean and fat and rich to the hungry, thirsty, homeless, jobless, filthy people outside.”

- Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower

Abolition, in my view, is not the absence of cops and prisons. It’s the presence of everything we need to secure that absence. And renew and rehearse the world… to make it.

-Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Both Octavia E. Butler (1993, pp.186 -187) (through Lauren Olamina) and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (as cited in Haymarket Books, 2021) notice the signs of collapse. Yet, both also incite us to prepare for survival, or to stay in the practice of rehearsing something else so that we can act with agency and in ways that unsettle a racial capitalist expression of the world. They make clear that working through the speculative is not merely about predicting the future, it is to rehearse the future we want knowing that there is another way to be together. In Octavia’s Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements (2015), Walidah Imarisha offers, “Because all organizing is science fiction, we are dreaming new worlds every time we think about the changes we want to make in the world” (p. 4). With the speculative fiction work of Butler and Black Studies scholars like Denise Ferreira da Silva, this dissertation has been invited to dream and express otherwise ways of knowing and being in education (Crawley, 2016; McKittrick, 2021).

Further speculating on the legacy of Butler’s several parable series, Imarisha asks, “are

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we brave enough to imagine beyond the boundaries of ‘the real’ and then do the hard work of sculpting reality from our dreams?’ (p. 5). I argue that tracing and undermining racuality unsettles conceptions and practices of educational equity for youth in the so-called lowest performing school districts. Examining how racuality contributes to the design of educational equity also supports youth, educators, researchers, and policy makers to imagine beyond the realities of our current US education system. The aim of this work is to sculpt reality from the dream of all children engaging in learning that allows for the endless play of expression, or learning that is not structured by classifying and describing them by their mental and moral attributes (Silva, 2007; Silva, 2014).

In expressing a Black Feminist Poethics from engaging with the work of Butler, Silva (2014) writes:

>a Black Feminist Poethics—inspired by Octavia Butler's female characters—reads Blackness to expose…the yielding of the self-contained and coherent image of the Subject, which necessitates and lives off the translation of the historical effects of the colonial architectures that allowed the expropriation of the total value produced by native lands and slave labor (juridico-economic effect) into the mental (moral and intellectual) deficiencies (natural lack) signified by the Category of Blackness every time it is articulated to justify otherwise untenable deployments of racial violence. (p. 94)

In Butler’s science fiction, Silva finds a method of challenging the coherence of the subject as stipulated by the Western imagination. This lack of coherence is key to Butler’s creation of scientifically creative worlds that allow her characters to defy boundaries that don’t seem possible in our day to day. In dialogue with Butler’s work Silva suggests that a construction like the Category of Blackness, a frame through which Blackness can only be imagined as having mental deficiencies, is a conflation that is necessary for colonial expropriation of labor and land. In refusing this view of Blackness in her work, Silva (and Butler) consistently demand nothing less than the end of a world
that depends on endless racial violence for the continuation of colonial expropriation.

With Silva and Butler as guides for this study, I also discuss how educational protocols and mandates depend on the racial violence of categorizing students into subgroups and categorizing school performance, moves that are premised on continued colonial expropriation of land and labor. Furthermore, Butler and Silva guide the imaginative work of this study, which proposes a fugitive learning agenda that supports youth, educators, and education scholars to respond to the changing world by navigating out of the center of collapse to make a different future where learning is informed by playful expression—undermining the neoliberal learning agenda (Zembylas, 2017).

Facing similar, and on the brink of many more, planetary and societal crises that shaped Lauren’s life in 2024, this dissertation notices that the potential of educational collapse surrounds us in the wake of COVID-19, which drastically shapes how we gather, live, and learn together. Pre-pandemic and throughout its duration, youth across the planet have been organizing and demanding that politicians consider what schooling and learning mean for them in the face of clear and present danger brought on by policies that center corporate interests. They aren’t only asking questions and making demands, they are living through the non-response or postponed response, and urgently seeking alternatives. Paying attention to them and their demands begs educational researchers to face ourselves. With so much that we know from our youth, why aren’t we listening and changing structures, even when it appears that we are? These are also issues Octavia E. Butler, through Lauren (and many other characters), has been trying to get us to address for at least more than two decades. So, as noted in the introduction, this work is answerable to youth demands for an approach to learning that prepares them to face the
changing world. It is also answerable to Black Feminist thought and Patel’s proposed coordinates for answerability in *Decolonizing Educational Research* (2016)—learning as transformation, context of coloniality, and knowledge as impermanent.

To this point, I have discussed the limitations of federal regulations that are meant to promote educational equity for youth and the limits of drawing on youth voice and experience for intervening on equity. I have also stated that the purpose of this study is to explore the design and manifestations of federal regulations in out-of-school contexts to rethink a practice for educational equity. In discussing the importance of this study, I engaged a discussion of the Black Feminist and speculative work of Octavia E. Butler and Denise Ferreira da Silva. Their work explores how to reach beyond the limits of the Western imagination, whose expropriative tendencies rely on colonial ways of knowing and producing the world through economy, legalized action, and coherent subject formation. In the section that follows, I discuss radical Black Feminist thought as the broader theoretical framework that informs the work of this dissertation. I outline how this ontoepistemological alternative supports this project to grasp at the root of social processes and subject formations that shape the design and pursuit of educational equity.

**Radical Black Feminist Thought**

Radical Black Feminist thought offers a montage of theory, method-making, and multiverse posing, that is attentive to the grooves of Black creative, gendered, and nonbinary livingness (McKittrick, 2021). Scholarship in radical Black Feminist thought explores differently than CRT and CRTE to address uneven playing fields. The latter primarily engage race and oppression through frames of whiteness and hegemonic
whiteness to expose the law and education as race-biased and non-neutral (Harris, 1993; Cabrera, 2018; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Matias, 2016; Solórzano, 1997). However, radical Black Feminist inquiry—also referred to as critical Black Feminist inquiry in the pages that follow—tends to investigate how the violence of “race” contributes to political, economic, social, and juridical architectures of the “past that is not past,” which “reappears, always, to rupture the present” (Sharpe, 2016, p. 9). With sharp precision, radical Black Feminist scholars expose and breach, the strict logics of top-down oppression, excessive descriptions that categorize Blackness, and disciplinary impulses to “fill in the gaps and provide closure” (Hartman, 2008, p. 12) for the colonial archive. That is, radical Black Feminist thought does the careful work of illuminating the hand and marionettes, or the logics, moves, gestures—and even ghosts—that (re)animate and tether whiteness together, making it appear as an always-been-there, immovable, and immutable structure in our lives.

In illuminating, Black Feminist thinkers make space to speculate on a world full of multiple expressions that break the rules of Man and modern science. More specifically, Black Feminist thinkers pivot. They carefully handle and cyclically turn what has manifested in the project(s) of whiteness around in the palms of their hands, identifying contours, crevices, material, and gestures that have sustained—or in many cases rewritten—its felt presence. Radical Black Feminist thought interferes with the montage of racialized, gendered, juridic, and economic moves that guide: ungendering (Spillers, 1987), Black persons’ deaths as spectacle (Hartman, 1997), (re)productions of conceptions of the human and social science (Wynter, 2001 & 2003), writings and rewritings of the subject (Silva, 2007), and the violence of disciplinarity (McKittrick,
Moreover, radical Black Feminist organizing, like that of the Combahee River Collective (2014), “combat[s] the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face” (p. 210) in response to the confluence of race, gender, sexual, and political-economic suppression(s). In essence Black Feminist theorizing, inquiry, and organizing is generated from the material realities of our/Black women’s and nonbinary persons’ lives.

Given the material conditions of our lives, Black Feminist thought is also deeply preoccupied with ethics or, as Silva offers, poethics, a kind of engagement from with/out the Category of Blackness. Or an engagement that lives with and exposes the violent constructedness of the category itself, yet slips from capture and lives out otherwise possibilities. Through engaging Black Feminist thought, I inherit Sadiya Hartman’s (1997) call for Black scholars to carefully consider how violence against Black people becomes spectacle in our work. Often this violence shows up to shock and poetically horrify, but can do more harm than generating lessons for Black Study and critical analysis toward the end of the world as we know it. In her work, Katherine McKittrick (2014, 2021) also addresses the spectacle of Black persons’ deaths, urging Black scholars toward questions and analyses of black livingness rather than staying with questions and theses that routinely rehearse black death. Similarly, in an interview with Leeb and Stakemeier (2019), Silva expresses concern for the Black artist whose artwork solely engages from an anthropological notion of cultural difference, or by placing more emphasis on artistic expressions of oppression. This emphasis undercuts opportunities

4 I use a lower case “b” here, which is consistent with McKittrick’s use. Any place that does not use capital “B” is consistent with the author cited. I primarily use “Black” throughout this dissertation as a bridge to work done in the field of education, but note that there are varied uses of “black,” all which respect the diverse struggles across the Black diaspora and/or speak to an unsettling of categorical thinking.
and openings for thinking against disciplinary, racially authentic, and colonial logics that attempt to bind Blackness in a strict biocentric category and foreclose expansive and playful expressions. Pointedly, radical Black Feminist thought seeks to rethink practices for knowledge-making without resolving to the rhythms of qualitative and quantitative inquiry in Western thought. It breaches that which is normed against our favor, making possible future breaches.

To reiterate, this dissertation engages radical Black Feminist inquiry to expose the roots of social process and subject formations that shape the design and practice of educational equity. In the section below, I discuss the central questions guiding this study and their contributions to Black Feminist inquiry.

**Inquiry questions and Contributions to Black Feminist Inquiry**

I want, instead, to reimagine blackness—as life and living memory and whatever is in between—as emerging from a black sense of place. My concern then is broadly methodological: How do we come to and formulate answers and what do we want from these solutions, politically? How might a black sense of place rethink the demand to fix and repair black humanity by lifting black folks up, from subhuman to a genre of humanity that cannot bear black life? What if black life opens up question marks and unanswerable curiosities? ... How might we shift our methodological questions so that we do not end up in an analytical bind that affirms rather than undoes racial violence?

-Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*

McKittrick makes clear that radical Black Feminist thought and inquiry unsettles inclusion-exclusion binary. To merely be included in the genre or category of humanity is to ignore how and for what purposes that category was (and continues to be) constructed. To merely be included in the category is to leave questions about black life and livingness unanswered while deferring to Western thought and its imagination, which is
less expansive in its conceptions of livingness, justice and freedom. By engaging radical Black Feminist thought, the methodological questions for this study shift from listening to and including the experiences of youth to inform changes at T4C. This is a deliberate shift that attempts to unsettle the problematic practice of educational equity at T4C, which aims to reverse summer learning loss for students in “low-preforming districts” as if they are predisposed to such a condition. By shifting from experiences of students at T4C to considering how T4C is sociopolitically designed, my inquiry questions “open up question marks and unanswerable curiosities” (McKittrick, 2021, p. 106) that undo racial violence. That is, they do not assume that T4C is an appropriate intervention for students who attend, they do not assume that students would benefit from sharing feedback to improve T4C, and they do not assume that students are predisposed to summer learning loss because of their school district’s performance status. The central questions I am asking in this study are:

1) How are educational and sociopolitical entanglements designed to promote educational equity?

2) How do educational and sociopolitical entanglements shape the pursuit of educational equity in an out-of-school summer achievement program?

3) How do educational and sociopolitical entanglements of pursuing educational equity shape student feedback in an out-of-school-context?

There is a paucity of research in teacher education and school improvement that pursues new insights about educational equity through radical Black Feminist thought. To be clear, much educational scholarship in this concentration produces knowledge through a logic of intervening or attempting to understand how lived experience, prescriptive
curriculums, teaching practices, and participatory research practices impact knowledge about educational equity and inequity. There are also numerous studies that are designed to understand experiences of racialized youth in education, promising to provide insight into authentic voices, lives, and behaviors for the purposes of promoting equity. However, this dissertation study will pause on repeating such approaches to breach a Western and liberal humanist qualitative orientation towards unveiling an immaculately authentic racialized subject. Toward otherwise, a radical Black Feminist inquiry will be taken up to expose the architectures and practices used to advance a problematic concept of and practices of educational equity.

In responding to the inquiry questions, this dissertation employs Silva’s strategy of tracing raciality (2007) to critically examine the ontology, or nature, of educational equity and its design in out-of-school programs. In undermining raciality, this dissertation also critically examines epistemology, or how one comes to know about educational equity. I closely read statements from: the federal government, the ESSA; T4C; and, the state and local district that contracts T4C to improve academic achievement. Like Silva, my turn to tracing raciality in the statements is not to dismiss or mark the statements’ irrelevance, but to offer a complex reading that demonstrates the statements’ productive impulses and limits. Then, I speculate on how students’ comments provided openings for exposing raciality at T4C by returning to their focus interview, photos, and drawings. This study assumes that the original qualitative inquiry practices I used can be breached with radical Black Feminist thought and methodologies. It also assumes that there are ways to show how things work, always with the risk of falling back into the traps of Western thought. Therefore, I acknowledge that a speculative approach, which comes in
where I seek to undo racial violence, presents limitations for traditional modes of knowledge-making. Speculative thinking does not take its cues from the rules of dialectics or the process of outlining dimensions and properties of categories as found in a grounded theory approach, for example. This is a risk I am willing to take in an attempt to pause on a trained impulse that routinely adds to the “already huge library of racial facts and precedents that authorize racial violence” (Silva, 2014, p. 81). In short, my study refuses to add to an arsenal of racial facts that cannot help but repeat the violence authorized by Western conceptions of being and knowing, a logic which informs how ESEA regulates the pursuit of educational equity.
CHAPTER 2

VOICE, SUBJECTIVITY, AND REPRESENTATION: A CRITICAL BLACK FEMINIST REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Even radical critics must be constantly vigilant about how they produce the object of their analysis, critique, or alternative politics, including those produced by them as investigating subjects.

-Kiran Asher and Joel Wainwright, After post-development: On Capitalism, Difference, and Representation

I hope to set the stage with a reminder of how the Black Feminist position troubles black and feminist critical projects. For each of them recalls how Black Feminism performs a double refusal. The refusal to disappear and the refusal to comply. More specifically, refusal to disappear into the general categories of otherness or objecthood that is blackness and womanhood. And a refusal to comply with the formulations of racial and sexual emancipatory projects these categories guide.

- Denise Ferreira da Silva, Hacking the Subject: Black Feminism, Refusal, and the Limits of Critique

In taking a radical Black Feminist position, it is important to consider the limits of Western representation, as Asher and Wainwright (2018) and Silva (2015) caution. Investigating subjects, or researchers, must stay vigilant in producing “the object of their analysis, critique, or alternative politics” (Asher & Wainwright, 2018, p. 36). I enter this chapter heeding their words and view their call to restraint as an invitation to unsettle a fixed or authentic notion of youth voice and subjectivity in the context of neoliberal education reform. Similarly noting limits with regard to critique, Silva (2015)\(^5\) reminds her audience that a critical Black Feminist position troubles emancipatory projects of

inclusion, or satisfaction with being an included other and/or object. Her words delimit an analytical position that welcomes the endless play of expression, or a continuous becoming in which (no)thing is reduced to the register of the commodity for the sake of global capital. I am thankful for this reminder as I enter this chapter because it informs how I will draw on Black Feminist scholarship to explore critical epistemologies like Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), which:

[R]epresents a radical effort in education research to take inquiry-based knowledge production out of the sole hands of academic institutions and include the youth who directly experience the educational contexts that scholars endeavor to understand. (Caraballo et al., 2017, p. 312)

Despite representative efforts in the field, education’s critical epistemological tools cannot help but reproduce youth voices and subjectivities in ways that do not fundamentally break with academic knowledge-making.

Educational research in the academy often works in tandem with federal education laws, whose monitoring apparatus and resultant reservoir of racial knowledge are repeatedly used to intervene in the lives and learning of students. In other words, an approach like YPAR does not claim that it will use fundamentally different tools, but it does try to include “indigenous knowledge” (Caraballo et al., 2017, p. 311) by working with youth who it claims suffer from inequity. At issue here is that including the perspectives of youth—while using knowledge-making tools that are similar to the neoliberal education apparatus—has not led to any significant change in how we conceive of Patel’s (2016) appeal to learning as transformation or pursue liberatory education. Again, given that I take up radical Black Feminist thought to guide this dissertation study, my goal is to undo racial violence by unsettling assumptions that youth benefit from having their perspectives included in educational equity efforts; that youth
require neoliberal education intervention; and that they are predisposed to any particular condition of learning loss given data collected about school or school district performance.

In this chapter, I ask how scholars attend to youth voice, subjectivity, and representation in pursuit of more liberatory forms of learning and education for students? I ask this question, while applying lessons from critical Black Feminist scholars, whose critical analytical positions trouble projects of inclusion. That is, they are not satisfied with being an included “other” and/or “object.” Turning to education scholarship with lessons from a critical Black Feminist position, I synthesize relevant studies about equity/inequity, justice, and liberatory education in grades K-12. Critical scholars in education have employed sociopolitical and political economic analyses such as neoliberal economic analyses (Hursh, 2007; Burch, 2009); settler colonial and decolonial analyses (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Patel, 2016); social justice and race-first analyses (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001); and asset-based pedagogy analyses (Paris & Alim, 2017). In shaping these discussions, many researchers have turned to youth, making the case for learning from them, or about their schooling experiences in relation to the entanglements of subjectivity, sociopolitical contexts, educational inequities, and resistance (Freire, 1970). Youth have also served as co-researchers, collecting data about their own and peers’ school experiences in an effort to challenge and change inequitable conditions (Cammarota & Fine, 2008).

In situating youth as knowledge makers and researchers, scholars have discussed the challenges of doing this work in hierarchical settings and in an education political economy that constructs students through a deficit lens, justifying one-way interventions
from state to student. In such a mismatched approach to understanding educational inequity and equity, with some researchers positioning students as knowledge makers about the system and state apparatuses positioning themselves as knowledge makers about students, there is more to consider about how the aforementioned analyses address youth voice, subjectivity, and representation for liberatory education. In the following sections, I review the literature on educational inequity, from a critical Black Feminist perspective. I discuss Black Feminist thought scholars’ considerations on voice, subjectivity, representation. Then, I allow critical Black Feminist lessons to conceptually guide my refusal of an emancipatory educational project that relies on inclusion of objecthood and otherness. In my engagement with the literature, I note how education scholars employ critical frames to inform their analyses of equity, inequity, and justice in US primary and secondary schools. My engagement supports me to acknowledge the efforts scholars have made to illustrate the struggle for more liberatory conceptions of learning; it also unsettles the ease with which educational equity is pursued when students are situated as coherent educational subjects and objects of equity. Following my engagement with the literature, I turn to Chapter 3 to outline a Black Feminist methodological and analytical approach to this study.

Contemporary Radical Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought follows the tradition of Black Studies. McKittrick (2021) notes that Black Studies “theorizes black liberation not through categories (identity) but from the perspective of struggle (struggle is entangled with identities-places-embodiments-infrastructures-narratives-feeling)” (p. 30). Furthering the project of Black Studies, Black
Feminist scholars breach the compulsion to fill in gaps or the tendency to provide closure to the colonial archive and present-day arsenal of racial facts. The gifting of theoretical considerations, critical strategies, and ethically (re)thinking contemporary analyses includes but is not limited to the Anthropocene (Karera, 2019); Intersectionality (Nash, 2018); Gender(s), Queerness and Sexualities (Musser, 2018; Roach, 2020); Afro-pessimism (Sharpe, 2016); Queerness and Afro-pessimism (Warren, 2017); and research methods with Black women (Hill-Collins, 2002; Evan-Winters, 2019). In this review, I limit my brief discussion of Black Feminist scholarship to the writings from scholars whose work shapes contemporary Black Studies, which challenges knowledge-making traditions and practices in general and knowledge-making about Black people and Blackness in particular. The scholars with whom I engage have “developed a series of comprehensive analytical frameworks — both critical and utopian — in the service of better understanding and dismantling the political, economic, cultural, and social exploitation of visible human difference” to further the project of Black Studies (Weheliye, 2014, p. 4). They have manufactured a critical arsenal with tools that study and undermine the logics of the racial capitalist world as we know it, eroding the overdetermination of Blackness. Hortense Spillers (1987) invites:

In order to for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down, through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by a particular historical order, and there await whatever marvels of my own inventiveness. (p. 65)

Saidiya Hartman (2008), breaches historical order:

By playing with and rearranging the basic elements of the story, by re-presenting the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view, I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done. (p. 11)
Denise Ferreira da Silva (2014) queers spacetime, leaning into indeterminacy:

When virtuality guides our imaging of political existence, then the only significant political demand is Reconstruction: the end of state capital is the demand for the restoration of total value expropriated through the violent appropriated of the productive capacity of native lands and slave labor. Forging Existence, without the separability imposed by the categories that name the task Barbara Christian describes, a Black Feminist Poethics… reads Blackness to expose the ruse of Reflection and Recognition, the yielding of the self-contained and coherent image of the Subject. (p. 94)

They take seriously the work of undoing by refusing to position themselves as other and object. They also refuse to contribute to the colonial archive and projects of knowledge that are made from such declarations. In refusing emancipatory projects theorized from the standpoints of patriarchy and whiteness, Black Feminist thought scholars carefully consider subjectivity, voice, and representation from with/out the mandate of inclusion. Beyond the demand to be recognized by racial colonial systems, Black Feminist thought scholars critically follow possibilities that exceed capture in the archive. They break through the archive’s logics by studying what makes the archive possible. They method-make by challenging the idea of a unified and discrete subject or character whose role contributes to the plot of conquest stories. It is their method making that “undercuts the profitable standardization of racial authenticities and disciplining practices” (McKittrick, 2021, p. 48).

Black Feminist thought scholars intervene into the archive or what Saidiya Hartman terms “a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property…” (2008, p. 2) to consider what the archive seeks to foreclose. Hartman enters the archive with an ethic of care and an impulse of restraint, asserting how to enter the archive or “scene of subjection” without “replicating the grammar of violence” (p. 4).
She contemplates stories and moments as well as how they may or may not be told. In ethically making space for what else might emerge despite the archive’s form of closure, Hartman respects “the limits of what can be known” and “the kinds of stories that can be told” by and about those “who live in such an intimate relationship with death” (p. 4). These are always hard questions with which she engages. Similarly, Katherine McKittrick (2021) intervenes into the pallbearing disciplines asking how corporeal knowledge or the centering of a violated Black body, as a site for knowledge-making about Blackness, elides considerations of black livingness. She writes of her storytelling method:

The purpose of this story is to worry rather than replicate violence, while knowing that worry requires some kind of engagement—often an overbearing and anxious engagement—with harm. This is a story that does not want description or descriptive tactics (this is us, violated and dead) to solely define who and what we are. This is a story that lives with violence, but cannot accurately describe violence. This is a story where I live with violence without knowing how to fully comprehend, or detail, violence…do not ask for more and more and more evidence and proof of the violence. (p. 125)

Both Hartman and McKittrick denaturalize how voice, subjectivity, and representation get stuck with/in the ledgers, facts, and records of colonial knowledge and knowledge-making. They also reckon with the (im)possibilities of recovering what has not been, cannot be, and will never be recorded. They open up stories that are more than just about resistance, oppression, certain death, and freedom. In doing so, they actively breach the archive and refuse the logic of inclusion as a mode of redress.

In addition to contemplating otherwise through storytelling with/out the arsenal of racial facts or resolving to inclusion, Black Feminist scholars interrogate the ways that legal, economic, and social gestures routinely attempt to stabilize voice, subjectivity, and representation. For example, Hortense Spillers (1987) outlines patriarchal gender’s
legally codified and socially sanctioned rules as well as how these rules are ruptured by
the taking of Black captives. In the life of enslavement, families born in captivity are
property protected by legal statues. There is no private sphere to which the captive family
can resign themselves. The legal status of the captive mother follows the child, and the
captive child inherits the family name of the property holder. Spillers deconstructs
patriarchal gender in the world of antebellum slavery by sifting through legal and policy
documents, thus theorizing the process of ungendering for Black captives. She skillfully
undermines the infamous 1965 Moynihan report detailing the “crises of” Black families
that are headed by “females.” In her theorizing, Spillers gifts a thinking with “…certain
representational potentialities for African-Americans…” (emphasis in original) that open
up an insurgent stance:

This problematizing of gender places her, in my view, out of the traditional
symbolics of female gender, and it is our task to make a place for this different
social subject. In doing so, we are less interested in joining the ranks of gendered
femaleness than gaining the insurgent ground as female social subject. (p. 80)
(emphasis in original)

Spillers refuses to disappear herself—and all of us—into a gendered emancipatory
project that does not have the tools for cultivating such rebellion. She carves insurgent
ground for critical Black Feminists to think with the captive, the ungendered, and
Sapphire—or what one might term an angry Black woman today—social subject.

Moving the torch through insurgent ground, Denise Ferreira da Silva also thinks
with the global female of color who is economically dispossessed, and directly challenges
the logics of inclusion and exclusion to guide her theorizing of race and the nation.
Silva’s (2007) project in Toward a Global Idea of Race is to outline a modern contra-
ontology, which is “a selective excavation of modern thought that seeks for what has to
be postponed, but never obliterated, in fashionings of the transparent I, the *homo historicus*, to write its trajectory ‘other’-wise” (p. 35). That is, her project is one that traces early post-Enlightenment philosophical writings on man, civil society, and regulative powers of the state. In reviewing these writings as *modern text*, she traces the use of various strategies of signification that are common in the fields of history and science. With these signification strategies, post-Enlightenment philosophers signify and produce man and his global racial “others” while also designating their places—and in the aftermath of colonial conquest and expansion, their origin—as either firmly within the bounds of the European social configuration or outside. In doing so, the early philosophers of man produce what Silva terms the analytics of raciality, or “an apparatus of knowledge manufactured by the sciences of man and society” (pp. xv). This apparatus is an arsenal deployed for the creation of racial beings with meaning that are (or are not) endowed by *productive nomos*, or realizing the capacity for reasoning with the mind in the progress of civil society. In solely fashioning man and the European social configuration as capable of reason, the early philosophers wield modern, historical, and scientific texts as weapons that postpone an affectable fate for Man, or being determined from outside rather than from self. Those constructed as racial others outside of Europe do not escape this fate. This modern will to truth about the things and beings of the world provides the rationale for Europeans to dislocate and disperse colonial projects of knowledge across the globe, engulfing the global space in a several century reign of terror.

In constructing her critical arsenal to offer a modern contra-ontology Silva breaches the logic of exclusion, demonstrating its fidelity to the thinking of man and its
eclipsing force in the struggle for global justice. Through her outlining of the modern contra ontology and the limits of inclusion, she offers an additional way to think about and demonstrate how racial subaltern subjects emerge in representation beyond the inclusion-exclusion binary. In doing so, she offers a strategy of tracing raciality, which I will return to discuss in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 4. By staying with the economically dispossessed woman of color to think through the traces of raciality in our global demands for justice, Silva’s modern contra-ontology makes a significant rupture in the colonial tomb. She creates an opening for reconsidering how ethical (moral), juridical (legal), and economic forces consistently mark transparency and affectability with the analytics of raciality—an arsenal whose ghosts still float through the penning of the inclusion-exclusion binary. She complicates what should be plainly accepted as fact and method. She incites readers to ethical outrage that “legal act[s] whose objective is to place more and more ‘others of Europe’ in a state of illegality” can be resolved into “neat sociological formulations that write the deaths…as events foretold” (p. 261). In turning to the following literature review I also stay with Black Feminist thought, an insurgent ground, to outline how voice, subjectivity, and representation are taken up across the critical spaces of education scholarship in the struggle for liberatory learning.

**Critical Frames Informing Analyses of Equity, Inequity, and Justice**

It is with critical Black Feminist lessons that I resist the trained impulse to fill in in gaps or provide closure for the arsenal of racial facts. In the following sections, I critically discuss literature about educational equity, inequities, and justice. As I read, I asked how scholars attend to youth voice, subjectivity, and representation in pursuit of more
liberatory forms of learning and education for students? In my review and discussion, I work from critical and insurgent grounds, and note how the articles selected for review meet up with the hesitations, questions, and potentialities posed by Black Feminism.

Since this dissertation study draws works from the insurgent grounds of a subject who is placed outside “of the traditional symbolics of female gender” (Spillers, 1987, p. 80), I paid attention to educational literature that addresses or calls on the experiences and voices of youth who might be imagined to be the insurgent subject’s children, family members, or her neighbors’ children and/or family members. They are youth whose zip codes are often placed outside of the traditional symbolics of educational advantage. In delimiting my review of the literature, I have selected educational research articles that engage youth schooling experiences in relation to the entanglements of subjectivities, sociopolitical contexts, and educational inequities. The articles examine youth experiences with schooling inequities through neoliberal economic analyses, decolonial analyses, and race-first analyses as well as learning and asset-based pedagogies analyses.

For my review, I used anchor texts such as academic books and education journal special issues to find articles that draw on the aforementioned analyses (see Table 2-1). What follows is a discussion according to the question that guides this review.

Table 2-1. Anchor Texts and Critical Analyses of Equity and Inequity in Education

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<tr>
<th>Analyses</th>
<th>Anchor texts: Books, Special issues, and Peer Reviewed articles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critiquing Neoliberalism in Education</td>
<td><strong>Book:</strong> Hidden Markets: The New Education Privatization (2009) by Patricia Burch</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Special issue:</strong> Power and Education, Volume 11, Issue 3, November 2019</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Potterton, A. (2019). Power, influence and policy in Arizona’s education market: We’ve got to out-charter the charters</td>
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Table 2-1: Anchor Texts and Critical Analyses of Equity and Inequity in Education (cont.)

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<th>Anchor texts: Books, Special issues, and Peer Reviewed articles</th>
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  • Wynter-Hoyte et al. (2021). A Revolutionary Love Story in Teacher Education and Early Childhood Education |
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**Analyses that Critique Neoliberalism in Education**

Neoliberalism in education describes educational policy that favors deregulation between state and corporate or corporate-like education entities, allowing education businesses to profit from public tax dollars (e.g., SEA or LEA annual budgets), and allowing students’ learning to be reduced to metric-driven standardization and accountability (Burch, 2009;
Grady et al., 2012). The turn to such corporate practices is used in the name of efficiency and global competition as well as determining student achievement, teacher promotion or contract non-renewal, and school ratings or closures (Saltman, 2014). For example, students, educators, administrators, and schools are penalized as a result of metrics such as test and evaluation performance (Hursh, 2007). These practices are modeled after strategies used to operate corporate companies—and supply a model that supports the US federal government to conceive of and facilitate far-reaching standardization and accountability educational law (Burch, 2009). In discussion of the neoliberal influence on education, scholars tend to represent youth subjectivities as precariously structured by or in opposition to the outcomes of neoliberalism’s facilitation of policy and law.

In a project initiated to study the need for more instructional time in school, Fine, Greene, and Sanchez (2016) turn to youth of color focus groups and a policy review to “examine the history, policies and also the subjectivities of structural and embodied precaritization” (p. 499) in light of neoliberal education reform. The picture they paint of youth of color under neoliberal duress highlights home lives impacted by economic dispossession and incarceration. They also note interrupted learning prompted by a revolving door of educators, random search policies, stratified academic classes, and over testing. Grady and colleagues (2012), make similar statements about the impacts of neoliberalism on queer youth of color, while also highlighting the possibility of overcoming challenges posed by the neoliberal project of schooling. However, Clay (2019) cautions against the narrative of overcoming or “triumphalism,” (p. 77) arguing that it normalizes Black suffering in schools, consistent with the neoliberal turn in Black politics and what he terms Black Resilience Neoliberalism (BRN). Clay theorizes with
BRN through a critical policy analysis and a YPAR project, illustrating how Black youth are impacted by the prevailing discourse of BRN. He calls on researchers and educators to intervene with culturally sustaining and politically engaged practices that undermine structural racism in lieu of perpetuating the narrative of resilience.

Researchers also discuss youth subjectivities in terms of being subjected to the logics and whims of the capitalist market. With privatization of education, public schools are increasingly run by Education Management Organizations (EMOs). Scholars argue that EMOs contribute to increasingly widespread: abandonment of schools in public school districts; predatory education practices; more school choices than ever; and consumer competition (amongst students and families) for schools with the best reputations and outcomes for student academic learning (Potterton, 2019; Saltman, 2014; White, 2015). Moreover, students are considered educational competitors for their future in the global market (Saltman, 2014). Identifying the ideological moves of neoliberalism, Saltman (2014) argues that students are made into “workers” and “commodities” with the privatization of schools and the act of narrowing the curriculum and learning to “numerically quantifiable and positivist test-based forms” (p. 249). Some researchers warn that these problems will likely get worse with states, like Arizona, whose school choice policies open the way to a totally privatized school system (Potterton, 2019). With these examples of how education is shifting from public to private regulation, researchers have also argued that students’ subjectivities inform how they fare in the competitive education market. They suggest that students who are poor, facing material dispossession, and acquire less cultural capital will fare, and have fared, worse in this era of corporate school reform (Fine, Greene, & Sanchez, 2016; Grady et al., 2012; Potterton, 2019;
Saltman, 2014). Their concerns seem to be that the education system does not account for the needs of all students, making some students routinely work harder to overcome systemic barriers that many students in private schools or wealthier school districts don’t face at all.

In outlining neoliberalism as oppositional to students’ learning and futures, scholars with critiques of neoliberalism call for more liberatory forms of education by addressing precarity, organizing, and calling for more communally-rich and creative approaches to learning. Studying neoliberalism and youth voice, Grady and colleagues (2012) call for educational scholars to study the “resistance and activist work” of queer youth of color (p. 1000). On behalf of students, Fine, Greene, and Sanchez (2016) advocate for students’ “human right: to a dignified education filled with challenge and support, possibility and stretch” as well as “public policies that honor continuity, community, democracy, relationships, inquiry and creativity” (p. 518). Saltman (2014) argues that concerned educators should organize to end the dual education system, which is characterized by hierarchy of resources, support, and academic outcomes. He suggests that the system should be resolved into “a single system as good as its best parts throughout” (p. 256). Potterton (2019) addresses the importance of studying “markets, organizing, power, policy and education” (p. 305) given the massive shifts in political environments. Clay (2019) argues for adopting “liberatory frameworks of resistance against White supremacist hegemony social class reproduction” (p. 106). The calls to study or take up resistance and reformulate the education system are consistent with countless other calls to action that researchers, activists and many more have discussed in the education scholarship regarding the pursuit of equity and justice. The critiques of
neoliberalism highlighted here have been important for illustrating how education reform efforts and public policy have not been as innocent as they claim. They also propose what actions we might take to resist neoliberal education forces in our communities given the nuanced impacts of education policy across the US. In addition to what has been proposed to resist neoliberalism, I also draw on Katherine McKittrick’s lessons for unsettling the ease with which students are often situated as coherent educational subjects. I argue that this engagement can further inform how we pursue a more liberatory learning agenda.

In (re)considering the aforementioned calls for confronting neoliberal education reform, I turn to McKittrick’s (2021) Black Feminist intervention, which directly addresses resistance:

> Studies that focus on resistance may counter objecthood while still assuming objecthood as cosmogony of black existence…So the conundrum is soldered to our analytical sites, specifically when blackness is conceptualized, a priori, as a site that signifies dispossession or emerges out of dispossession. (p. 49)

In this call to a third view beyond the oppression-resistance binary, McKittrick warns of how our narratives tend to make meanings stick. The narratives and meanings become so factual that we can’t help but think with them, even in attempts to subvert the system and discrimination we are contesting. There is more required of us in contesting the neoliberal landscape we have come to know. For example, when solely considering youth voice through the resistance-oppression binary, education scholarship can hide other considerations about silence, troubling authentic voice, and the use of traditional social science to make meaning with voice. The scholars above have some important lessons to consider about how neoliberalism meets up with problematic education law and policy to repeatedly intervene into the lives and learning of students. However, in their articles,
they often describe students without complicating assertions such as: at risk students; some students having more advantage than others; students not being allowed to think; and students calling for neoliberal intervention without knowing better. My concern is that these terms get applied to students and paint them as objects of equity or objects that need to be manipulated. Using these terms to describe youth becomes an entry point—and sometimes the only point—for explaining why we need educational change. There is very little complicating of how the policies themselves are designed to make us look at youth in ways that justify intervening into their educational and community environments, even with liberatory aims. I return to this point in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. In the next section, I review a selection of scholarship from scholars who theorize and subvert settler colonial relations given the analytical groundwork they have done to subvert the gaze of the colonizer. Though not all articles and books reviewed specifically discuss projects with youth, these scholars make clear how their projects are meant to contribute to work with youth in the field of education.

**Settler Colonial Critiques and Decolonial Analyses**

Education scholars who take a decolonial approach to work with youth voice, subjectivity, and representation, have theorized the persistence of settler colonialism, or viewing each other, knowledge and the land as property (Patel, 2016). Therefore, a decolonial stance tends to subvert the ways indigenous youth and youth of color are described through deficit and damage (Tuck, 2009). That is, a decolonial stance undermines the tendency for researchers to narrate perceived injuries that students of color sustain from the education system and their home lives. They decline to circulate the idea that *low achievement* on high stakes exams is an obvious and/or inevitable
outcome for youth. Additionally, decolonial scholarship in education centers a discussion of coloniality, Indigenous practices, affiliations, generations of storytelling, and stewardship of lands across the world (Smith, 2012; Wilson & Laing, 2019). In this section I consider these lines of thought as well as the tendency for education scholarship about Black, Indigenous and People of Color to split into several categories. This is an attempt, from what I gather, to more specifically name the different educational issues or oppressions that students of a particular cultural group may face. I start to discuss this tendency in my engagement with Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s pivotal text *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012) alongside Silva’s discussion of cultural difference. First, it is important to share more about decolonial critiques of education.

Patel’s (2016) *Decolonizing Educational Research* demonstrates how a continuous narrative loop cycles the damages done and the inescapable fate of bad academic outcomes for youth. The loop circulates with ease, while in the background neoliberal education reform tactics continue to play out: deregulation, standardization, identification, accountability (Burch, 2009; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Playing within the rules of the market and its property logics, education research interventions tend to rely on quick fixes that will move low achieving students from the failing to the passing side of the achievement gap, instead of being answerable to learning, or what Patel proposes as “a constant becoming and unbecoming” (p.77). Patel challenges researchers to interrupt these seemingly immutable logics in our research practices. Similarly, Tuck (2009) asks us to pause, re-think, and re-engage in education research, recognizing how a colonial gaze on the issues we face in education get stuck in the ways we frame research projects and theories of change. This gaze does not serve the task and
struggle for decolonization in the field of education. And in that struggle, Tuck and Yang (2014) also recommend researchers practice refusal or placing “limits on conquest and the colonization of knowledge by marking what is off limits, which is not up for grabs or discussion, which is sacred and what can’t be known” (p. 225). The practice of refusal joins in the struggle for decolonization to notice and subvert a colonial gaze and approach to our work with people, places, and knowledge that it is sacred. It is a refusal to quench the thirst of the colonial archive and present-day arsenal of racial facts derived from research. Furthermore, Tuck and Yang (2012) teach that decolonization is not a metaphor—as seen in ubiquitous declarations to *decolonize everything we do*. They emphasize that metaphoric uses of decolonization have the potential to rewrite settler innocence. For instance, the idea that we must decolonize everything—including our minds—suggests that we do not have to abolish the systems that give credence to the settler state(s). So it is a struggle, a practice and a way of seeing, doing, and knowing differently in the academy.

Scholars who illustrate the workings of coloniality and struggle for decolonization, also focus on the importance of land-based education and participating in cultural traditions for Indigenous youth (McCarty & Lee, 2014; Wilson & Laing, 2019). Engaging with the project of queering Indigenous education, Alex Wilson—interviewed by Marie Laing—imagines our entanglement with the land or how it is possible to be in relation to it. When speaking of restoring relationship to the land, Wilson offers, “When you’re on the land, all the socially constructed hierarchies around gender, around sexual orientation, around race, or around class disappear. The land engenders itself and we engender it” (p. 134). Here and throughout the chapter Dr. Wilson queers the
conversation about our relationship to one another and the land, compelling us to unthink the world as it relates to gender and sexuality hierarchies through embracing the concept of body sovereignty:

It means that we are reclaiming and returning to traditional understandings of our bodies as connected to land. That does not mean assigning women to roles as child-keepers or keepers of the tipis. It does mean understanding that our traditional cosmology, like all aspects of creation, was not and is not fixed. It is fluid, flexible, and constantly recreating itself. (p. 135)

Body sovereignty invites a different way to rethink the linearity of traditional ways we story our existence in the universe. Additionally, Dr. Wilson makes the case for entanglement in land-based education as she speaks on behalf of queer, indigenous youth who “bear the brunt of colonial hierarchies and processes” (p.135). Her engagement with land-based education seeks to undo how colonial processes and hierarchies have disconnected us from the land. That is, land-based education has the potential to reconnect us to living in relation to and stewarding the land, reminding us of our right to be on the land and protect it. Furthermore, McCarty and Lee (2014) make the case for Indigenous education sovereignty to be recognized as key to the project of tribal sovereignty (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Wilkins & Lomawaima, 2001). In concert with Brayboy’s (2005) work on Tribal Critical Race Theory, they also theorize culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogies (CSRP) “as an approach designed to address the sociohistorical and contemporary contexts of Native American schooling” (p. 102). The authors outline the practices of CSRP, which centers community-based accountability and attends to colonization by addressing its asymmetrical power relations and the need to revitalize what was interrupted by it. McCarty and Lee also share CSRP practices, possibilities, and tensions such as: teaching indigenous languages; creating Native-
operated charter schools; offering language immersion programs; critically centering Navajo history; the struggle to contend with accountability mandates; and, opening the possibilities for an inward gaze, or a “critical stance that counters colonization” (p. 117). CSRP is clear in centering the cultural practices and traditions of Indigenous people. I will return to this point shortly to discuss how CSRP is in conversation with asset-based pedagogies.

Firstly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2012) is a foundational text with a pulse on practices that speak back to the colonial project of knowledge through Indigenous ways of knowing. This work sets the stage for much of the scholarship that has already been discussed. Smith demystifies the post-Enlightenment Western knowledge project and colonial gaze as one that is dependent on establishing its superiority at the expense of peoples whose epistemologies directly confronted, and stood in the way of, the claim of an inherent (forced) Western superiority. She also demonstrates how the modern Western context arbitrarily conceptualizes otherness and uses philosophical ground—not only to make universal claims to reason and rational thinking, but also to establish colonial pursuits through scientific knowledge, economic systems, and legalities that made otherness undeniable in favor of the colonial interest. In later commentary on race and the Western project, Tuhiwai Smith makes a move to recover Indigenous peoples from the grip of race and other minority struggles. Yet, the text struggles to do the same for peoples who don’t readily fall into Tuhiwai Smith’s conceptualization of Indigeneity. For example, in discussing *Representing* as one of the 25 methodological Indigenous Projects, Tuhiwai Smith argues:
Being able as a minimum right to voice the views and opinions of indigenous communities in various decision-making bodies is still the focus of struggle. Even at the minimal level of representation indigenous communities are often “thrown in” with all other minorities, as one voice among many. The politics of sovereignty and self-determination have been about resisting being thrown in with every other minority group by making claims on the basis of prior rights. (pp. 251-252)

While Tuhiwai Smith argues for representation of Indigenous people by indigenous people—which is surely a move away from ongoing violence toward and misrepresentation of indigenous peoples—Silva (2007) argues for going beyond the logic of transparency and liberalism as a means for mobilizing for emancipation. On the one hand, I respect that the struggle for self-determination has been, and is one, that requires clear delineations of cultural practice to serve claims made for certain rights. On the other hand, through my review of the literature, I have noticed that the discussion of race—and specifically the gestures of race-first analyses—has relied on the transparent I’s strategy of particularization or “the categories of human beings deployed by the sciences of man and society” (Silva, 2007, pp. xvi). The danger in this approach to discussions on race and culture is to be so hardened by apparent race and cultural differences that a study of how coloniality and race have transformed over time is not taken up by more scholars. Silva (2007; also see interview with Leeb & Stakemeier, 2019) argues that with the hardening of neoliberalism and the formation of the security state apparatus, there has been further delimitation of the place where certain claims to rights do not apply. She further asserts that economically dispossessed people of color are becoming the objects of public policy or the public issues to be studied and addressed. In the next section, I will turn to this discussion more fully in my review of race-first analyses.
Race-first Analyses

Labored into existence from scholars of color in critical legal studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides language for discussing racial oppression (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005) and offers a variety of analytical practices that expose US law as far from neutral. According to CRT scholars, the law’s non-neutrality has contributed to racial disparities that impact education, reproductive health, and other societal outcomes for People of Color (Crenshaw, 1988; Harris, 1993, Roberts, 1999). Outlining the work that CRT seeks to do as a theory and analytical practice, Matsuda et al. (1993) and Carbado (2011) offer a set of themes and boundaries that delineate what CRT does and its domain of operation. Even with its boundaries, CRT covers considerable grounds that have propelled scholars to highlight the way race and racism function in US policy, law, and socio-political systems. With limited space, it is difficult to fully discuss the conceptual richness and impact of CRT in legal studies and beyond. In the following discussion, I will focus on how CRT has contributed to analyses of race, voice and school inequities, starting with Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV’s (1995) article Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education (CRTE). In exploring their call for race to be an analytic for the examination of school inequities, I also note how their work informs various moves in CRTE including: the proliferation of various “crits” or analyses that apply to specific experiences of various racial groupings; a focus on youth voice and experiences to examine school inequities; and, more recently, theorizing on culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSP).

It has been several decades since Ladson-Billings and Tate IV (1995) drew on insights from Critical Race Theory legal scholars to “theorize race and use it as an
analytic tool for understanding school inequity” (p. 48). No doubt, this was a crucial pivot in the educational literature; many cite this work as an invitation to interrogate, analyze, and counter narrate what race has to do with educational inequity and strategies for overcoming it. Citing CRT’s analytical practices for addressing the presence of racist logics, yet absence of race as an analytic for addressing school inequities in educational scholarship, Ladson-Billings and Tate IV illuminate the thorny threads of race, property, and school inequity. Central to their pivot to CRTE are three propositions that draw from CRT legal scholarship, “(1) race continues to be significant in the United States; (2) US society is based on property rights rather than human rights; and (3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytical tool for understanding inequity.” Notably, the authors also advocate for putting race first in working toward emancipation in education. They do so in two ways. First, they argue that considerations of gender and class had been widely discussed and theorized, yet entail several shortcomings related to race. Second, they highlight the limits of countering inequities in schools via the popular turn to multicultural education at the time. In their view, multiculturalism “attempts to be everything to everyone and consequently becomes nothing for anyone allowing the status quo to prevail,” (p. 62) a liberal project at best. Furthermore, they argue that multiculturalism allows difference to proliferate, and rarely addresses the tensions between and amongst its groups. Throughout this section, I review CRTE scholarship as well as the pedagogies and methodologies that have come from a sustained engagement with this theory.
The Crits in Education Scholarship

CRT scholarship as well as Ladson-Billings and Tate IV’s appeal to a race-first program of emancipation in education informed my review of the splitting into and proliferation of various “crits” that take up education scholarship on the basis of race such as 1) AsianCrit (Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Iftikar & Museus, 2018), 2) BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016; Roberts, 1999), 3) LatCrit (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), and 4) TribalCrit (Brayboy, 2005), to name a few. The crits in education have endeavored to further develop CRTE, drawing from interdisciplinary scholarship to form their analyses (Cabrera, 2018). More specifically, AsianCrit, BlackCrit, LatCrit, TribalCrit have been accompanied by papers that outline their central tenets, making the case for studying race issues that inform particular group experiences.

For example, following in the footsteps of their legal scholar predecessors, Solórzano and Yosso (2001) offer LatCrit in education as an analysis that can “theorize and examine the ways in which race and racism explicitly and implicitly impact on the educational structures, processes, and discourses that affect People of Color generally andLatinas/os specifically” (p. 479) (emphasis in original). In this piece, the authors illustrate LatCrit and the methodological practice of counter storytelling to highlight the experiences and perspectives of Latina students in higher education. In 2005, Brayboy’s TribalCrit article, he “provides a way to address the complicated relationship between American Indians and the United States federal government and begin to make sense of American Indians’ liminality as both racial and legal/political groups and individuals” (p. 425). In this piece, Brayboy makes the case to study the unique political history of Indigenous peoples, highlighting the diversity of groups that fall under the umbrella of
Indigenous.” Dumas and Ross (2016) similarly offer tenets of BlackCrit, specifically noting that CRT falls short of addressing how the specificity of “antiblackness… informs and facilitates racist ideology and institutional practice” (p. 417). Iftikar and Museus (2018) offer an AsianCrit framework, recognizing transnational political contexts shaping Asian American students’ experiences of schooling. The authors also push back on idea that Asian American students do not need or benefit from culturally responsive practices.

Upon review of education scholarship in the crits, one finds that they have common approaches and discussion points that map back to CRT key tenets such as concerns about: intersectionality (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Kolano, 2016); the boundaries and principles for taking up CRT in education (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2013); addressing the impacts of whiteness (Cabrera, 2018; Kolano, 2016); youth voice (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001); and, pedagogy (Akom, 2009a). One tendency among the founding papers for the crits in education is a preoccupation with a Black-White binary, and deconstructing such a binary for other voices and experiences to enter into the discussion of race and racism in the US (Brayboy, 2005; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Of this preoccupation, Dumas and Ross (2016) comment:

At their best, these “crits” deepen and complicate our understanding of how race is employed ideologically and materially, and extend the theoretical and empirical utility of CRT. However, their existence either presumes that CRT functions in the main as a BlackCrit, or suggests that “race” critique accomplishes all that Black people need; Black people become situated as (just) “race,” whereas other groups, through these more specifically name crits, offer and benefit from more detailed, nuanced, historicized, and embodied theorizations of their lived racial conditions under specific formations of racial oppression. (p. 417)

Here, the authors explain the need to understand and name the specific issues that various racial groups face, clear up some potential misunderstandings about race and Blackness,
and claim their own theoretical grounds for BlackCrit. Cabrera (2018) also gets at these underlying tensions between and amongst the crits, arguing the need for a critical theory of racism. In response to this need and in concert with the work of Antonio Gramsci, he offers an analytic he terms hegemonic whiteness, which “highlights both the systemic and cultural means by which White supremacy is continually reproduced” (p. 223). That is, Cabrera argues US society is held up by forced consent to the law, which is always underwritten by “white privilege, racial inequality, and anti-minority affect” (p. 224). Collectively, the crits are concerned with discussing the overwhelmingness of white supremacy yet have seemed to construct frontiers between each other in service of naming how identity shapes particular experiences in education.

While I think the crits’ distinctions have illustrated the vast inequities K-12 students face, again, I am concerned about the limits of their critique for unsettling the ease with which educational equity is pursued when students are made to be coherent racial and educational subjects. In their recent book, *Maroon Choreography* (2021), fahima ife challenges readers to consider how coloniality, or viewing the self and others as property, choregraphs the ways one might rely on “bodily identities” (p. ix) to pursue liberatory aims. They continue:

Creatively, methodologically, and theoretically, *Maroon Choreography* is preoccupied with anachoreography. Anachoreography is a recursive practice of refusal. I refuse the choreographed appurtenances of coloniality, its methodologies, its origin stories, its naming rituals, and its movements…I began with a series of questions on the mythic human body, questions about proprioceptive sense limits, how a body moves in space, how we make sense of our movement in space, and how to expand our flesh limits. (p. ix)

In refusing a colonial sense of self definition—and definition itself—ife explores what liberatory potentialities can be opened if we do not lead by looking at our bodies through
the eyes of the colonizer. Given the crits’ choreographed movements for articulating educational differences among the races, equity remains uncomplicated in its current manifestation. Students continue to be viewed as coherent racial subjects that would succeed if we knew how to intervene on negative racialized experiences for more positive racialized experiences in education. I think scholarship from the crits has been helpful for knowing the ways in which inequity manifests, but what other liberatory aims might we follow if we were to conceive of learning without the weight of a colonial gaze? Though there are tensions, crit and CRTE scholars highlight the need to learn from those who are most impacted by structural inequality in education, youth and educators.

**Learning and Asset-Based Pedagogies**

Many scholars have intervened into education by recognizing that students’ lives and learning are constructed through sociocultural context(s) (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, students have lived experiences and learning experiences that are shaped by the society and cultural contexts they live in. To recognize the sociocultural context that constructs student learning, researchers have drawn on and developed the concept of asset pedagogies—for example, Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994), and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). Jeong (2021) writes that asset-based pedagogies are “resource” based and “propose that everyone is competent to learn if provided the right context for learning” (p. 81). Therefore, scholars engaged in asset-based practices are working to inform how teachers build relationships with and engage their students through curricula that resonates with student lived experiences of language, culture, religion, race, and other
aspects of identity (Laman et al., 2018; Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2019; Wynter-Hoyte et al., 2021). In the sections that follow, I will outline key asset-based pedagogy frameworks and practices, sharing how they have been taken up to further inform teachers’ work with youth of color. In my reading of the literature, I also note how asset-based pedagogy frameworks and practices, retain the school, and more specifically the classroom, as a site for change. To complicate these sites for change, I argue that asset-based frameworks should more widely engage how schools and classrooms have been shaped by sociopolitical and political economic forces, especially considering neoliberalism.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Culturally Sustain pedagogies (CSP) are two popular frameworks for studying race and academic achievement with youth of color. In her 1994 book, Ladson-Billings highlights her work with 8 Black teachers, sharing the practices they use to foster academic achievement for Black students. Offering a theory of CRP she directly addresses deficit perspectives about Black children and learning. In her foundational study leading to the idea of CRP, she denotes 3 major components: student learning, fostering cultural competence of students, and raising students’ critical consciousness. Growing from its CRP predecessor, CSP “seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). Similarly, to Ladson-Billings’ formulation of CRP, CSP is meant to be an asset-based method of teaching which honors multiple languages, literacies and cultural practices in schools. The authors also recognize schools as political sites of knowledge (re)production, which either frame students and learning in deficit or asset-based ways. Key differences in these theories can be seen in 1) an emphasis on cultural plurality and 2) making space for the
counterhegemonic potential of youth culture in the classroom, while leaving space for critical reflection with youth about their cultural practices (Paris & Alim, 2017).

In addition to these major frameworks, scholars have advocated for recognizing the practices students of color use to navigate an oppressive society; they also highlight pedagogical practices that support students to critique the education system. Yosso (2005) introduces the idea of community cultural wealth, or “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts…to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77). Likewise, Borck (2020) argues that developing a sense of belonging and developing students’ critical racial awareness were key practices for supporting students to navigate the cultural hegemony of schooling or – in applying Cabrera’s (2018) view — schooling that is underwritten by white privilege, racial inequality, and anti-minority affect. Apart from such approaches, Kirkland (2021) propels beyond the domains of CSP much like Dumas and Ross (2016). Kirkland outlines a pedagogy for Black people that centers on race, freedom, self-love, critical consciousness, and value for Black lives. His considerations of CSP prompt him to problematize its non-explicit focus on race generally and Blackness in particular. In critiquing CSP’s multiculturalism, he clarifies Ladson-Billings’ theorization of CRP as a pedagogy that is explicitly for Black students, “[s]he was asking questions as to how does culturally sustaining (white) pedagogy promote the erasure of Black students in ways that deny them the right to learn, expand, grow, and most importantly, exist” (p. 66). Kirkland expresses a concern that CSP is trying to be everything to everyone without an explicit focus on the specificity of anti-Blackness. While I recognize Kirkland’s suggestion that CSP could stand some reworking, I also consider it from a slightly different angle. That is, through a Black
Feminist position, I consider how a sole focus on exclusion takes attention away from other moves that are guiding the (im)possibilities of representation of poor Black kids and poor kids of color whose interests are seemingly represented in any demand for a more equitable education. There is a larger pattern and design that needs to be outlined before we can reformulate a pedagogical approach that can comprehend Blackness beyond the constraints of the Category.

Rather than challenging the school as a place apt for emancipatory aims, asset-based pedagogies tend to recuperate the school as a site for political activity. They suggest that schools have the potential to bring about education for liberation or new visions of teaching and learning. They also suggest that asset-based and cultural pedagogies will allow students to have access to power given the future viability of their cultural difference (Paris & Alim, 2017). However, this argument obscures the larger context of hegemonic state law, neoliberalism, and the desire to intervene on the education of the so-called “disadvantaged.” A radical education political project might contest the school as a site of modern knowledge (re)production and aim for visions of teaching and learning that fundamentally disrupt the education system and its colonial racial logics as we know them. This point informs my intention to unsettle the idea that once we prove that Black students encounter anti-Blackness or students of color face racialized discrimination, then we have the information we need to intervene for equity. Beyond solely focusing on anti-Black and racialized experiences that produce exclusion in schools, we might ask, what schools and the education system are designed to do? If we were to expose its design, would we really want “in?” Once we lift the veil of anti-Black oppression or racialized oppression, then what? Unfortunately, I don’t think lifting
the veil on racism in education or lifting the veil on asset-based practices for youth of color has afforded much to the aim of liberatory learning since Ladson-Billings and Tate IV’s (1995) paper imploring education scholars to study race as analytic for school inequity. I am reminded of Silva’s call to study how the racial operates as a strategy of power. She elaborates:

The pressing task, I believe, is to engage the racial as a modern political strategy rather than attempting, once again, to resuscitate the sociohistorical logic of exclusion. There are only so many ways we can recount the mechanisms and effects of exclusion. (p. xxxv)

Instead of continuing to examine students and the inequities they face given what we think we know about them I join Silva in her caution to be wary of the logics of inclusion-exclusion. I take this caution into my consideration of including youth voice for more liberatory education research practices.

The Turn to Voice: Learning from those who Experience Education Inequity

When drawing on youth voice to inform educational research, practice and policy, scholars suggestions cohere around several practices: theorizing dialogue, highlighting approaches for interpreting student feedback, sharing outcomes of student initiatives, and sustaining efforts. Many emphasize theorizing dialogue with youth by drawing on the work of Paulo Freire (1970) to stress the importance of dialogue, trust, and social justice praxis to build student critical consciousness (Akom et al., 2008; Akom, 2009b; Cammarota, 2016; Cook-Sather, 2002; Emdin, 2009; Robinson & Taylor, 2007). Further, researchers discuss approaches for highlighting and interpreting student perspectives such as drawing on students’ experiences and feedback via surveys, interviews and photo elicitation (Caraballo, 2012; Flutter & Ruddock, 2004; Plank et al., 2014; Stauber, 2017;
Tuck, 2009). Through these methods, researchers identify equity issues and suggest changes to curriculum, pedagogy and school-wide practices. Additionally, when drawing on youth voice or apprenticing them as researchers, scholars discuss positive actions and outcomes of these initiatives (Boston Student Advisory Council, 2012; Brown & Rodriguez, 2017; Caraballo et al., 2017). For example, researchers argue that students gain critical research, pedagogical and presentation skills through participation in Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR), allowing students to shift deficit narratives about themselves and their peers (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Ozer & Wright, 2012; Scorza et al., 2017). In sharing how to sustain efforts, scholars propose that adults ensure students have the resources, structures, and support to continue seeking and making change (Mitra, 2003; Mitra, 2007; Morrell & Collatos, 2002; Yonezawa & Jones, 2007).

However, many challenges arise when centering youth feedback to suggest classroom-level and school-level changes. Dana Mitra (2006) argues that students are given numerous opportunities to provide feedback via surveys compared to leading their own student voice projects. Additionally, scholars suggest that a distrust of students pervades top-down, or hierarchical, educational environments making collaborative and non-hierarchical research activities difficult to implement with youth leaders (Cook-Sather, 2002; Brown & Rodriguez, 2017; Irizarry & Brown, 2014; Winn & Winn, 2016). Students in pervasively top-down school environments often face heavily regulated learning spaces and disciplinary measures more than they are asked to lead (Caraballo & Lyiscott, 2018). Therefore, pursuing change is also stunted by the prevalence of standardization and accountability practices, which can “co-opt” the emancipatory aims of projects that center youth voice and leadership (Caraballo et al., 2017, p. 238).
When explaining how to navigate federal and state education mandates, student voice scholars suggest removing barriers to student participation by securing funding, dedicated meeting time, and providing student stipends. They also suggest focusing on measurable goals and outcomes (Mitra, 2007; Morrell & Collatos, 2002; Yonezawa & Jones, 2007). However, the challenges presented are more difficult to eliminate than suggested and the solutions presented can alienate emancipatory aims of research with youth. Measurable results-oriented solutions are entangled with neoliberal education reform rationalities. Fielding (2004) highlights this issue when discussing how student voice project teams are often asked to prove their value. He argues that teams are regularly asked to create goals aligned with “high performance approaches” that lead to measurable results given the neoliberal frameworks schools use to guide educational investments and innovations (p. 211). To uncritically take up such solutions, as researchers, aligns research aims and practices with deficit notions of learning and research. This is a fate Leigh Patel (2016) outlines in her call to move from ownership to answerability in educational research. More recently, Jocson and Dixon-Román (2020) call for ontoepistemological shifts in education research that complicate the tendency to seek quick solutions to the challenges we encounter. That is, in seeking solutions to the problems we identify in educational settings, we often elide greater consideration of material-discursive forces, such as how policy shapes how and what one interprets or what is readily visible in educational contexts (Brown, 2009; Jackson & Mazzei 2012 & 2013; Nxumalo, 2020; Taguchi, 2012). Zembylas (2017) also suggests that ontological analysis “pays attention to the changing socio-historical roles of entities and relations in social and political lives” and addresses “the web of practices” that make an event
“knowable” (p. 1402) to us. Moreover, Jackson and Mazzei (2012 & 2013) complicate traditional approaches for reading participant voice. They encourage researchers to investigate how voice constitutes and is constituted by actions, encounters and more-than-human forces such as, power dynamics, places, objects, and more. I return to their analytical engagements with voice and where they meet up with my Black Feminist approach to illuminating the assemblage of racial logic in education intervention programs like T4C in the next chapter.

**Turning to Silva’s Considerations of Voice, Subjectivity, and Representation**

The work of Denise Ferreira da Silva illuminates the racial as a modern construct and strategy of power. With this critical purview, she urges scholars to pay attention to the ways in which the exclusion-inclusion binary is not enough for making critical interventions. According to her, in the global logics of race, “the economically dispossessed black female,” and I add, her children, have become, “object[s] of public policy” (p. 267). She further argues that “people of color now inhabit a sort of ‘state of nature’ to which the juridical devices that classic liberal theorists saw as necessary for the protection of life and liberty do not apply” (p. 267). That is, in being situated as the objects of policy, people of color are under the microscope as policy makers poke, prod, test, dispose, and repeat without restraint, always with the mandate of obliteration. In the case of education, it is the obliteration of so-called “disadvantage.” With Silva as a guide, I argue that the logics of exclusion-inclusion—which have starred in the call to rebuild an education system that works for all—might be missing a more critical engagement with how the move to privatize schools not only continues to exacerbate an...
uneven economic and educational playing field, but is also part of an insidious design. The way in which policies are being created to address educational equity and academic achievement erodes any guarantees of governments intervening to uphold protections for children and families. Children and families unable to compete will be left altogether outside, admonished for their inability to become what policies narrowly dictate. Silva suggests that we organize for more than inclusion. Her insights incite toward understanding the system’s design to tear it apart. In the chapter that follows, I discuss critical Black Feminist inquiry as a site for educational study. Black Feminism is an analytical position that can guide education scholars in considering what learning has the potential to be if we were to move beyond the system’s design, which depends on a continued racial-capitalist expression of the world.

In order to rise
From its own ashes
A phoenix
First
Must
Burn.

EARTHSEED: THE BOOKS OF THE LIVING

- Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower
CHAPTER 3

A CRITICAL BLACK FEMINIST INQUIRY

AND METHODOLOGICAL STANCE

[playing]
Solange,
Can I Hold the Mic (interlude)\(^6\)

From without the World as we know it, where the Category of Blackness exists in/as thought—always already a referent of commodity, an object, and the other, as fact beyond evidence—a Poethics of Blackness would announce a whole range of possibilities for knowing, doing, and existing. For releasing Blackness from the registers of the object, the commodity, or the other would halt the trial of Trayvon Martin's killer before it is added to the already huge library of racial facts and precedents that authorize racial violence.

-Denise Ferreira da Silva,
Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World

The method guiding this writing practice is best described as critical fabulation… Narrative restraint, the refusal to fill in the gaps and provide closure, is a requirement of this method, as is the imperative to respect black noise—the shrieks, the moans, the nonsense, and the opacity, which are always in excess of legibility and of the law and which hint at and embody aspirations that are wildly utopian, derelict to capitalism, and antithetical to its attendant discourse of Man. … It is an impossible writing which attempts to say that which resists being said … it is a narrative of what might have been or could have been; it is a history written with and against the archive.

-Saidiya Hartman,
Venus in Two Acts

In “Can I Hold the Mic,” Solange (2019) declares her multiplicity, or all of the ways in which she is endlessly emerging and expressing. As I listen to her, I hear her calling for a way of being that is always open, a way of being that cannot fit or be limited to a category. Her words and the ideas they evoke also remind me of Silva (2014) and

\(^6\) I encourage the reader to listen to Solange (2019) “Can I Hold the Mic” and read the lyrics to more fully engage the ideas presented here.
Hartman’s (2008) refusals to contain Blackness in any category or legible rendering for the sake of the archive or for preserving the world as we know it. When Silva proposes a turn from the “Category of Blackness” to a “Poethics of Blackness” she is proposing a kind of study or inquiry that unsettles the inclusion-exclusion binary to “announce a whole range of possibilities for knowing, doing, and existing” (p. 81). That is, her call to analytical action demands that one engages knowing, doing, and existing with/out a colonial view. It acknowledges that, while pervasive, the colonial way of knowing, doing, and existing is but one way to be. She makes clear that a Poethics of Blackness doesn’t want “in” on the founding deal, whose logics are not capable of anything but maintaining difference as separability (Silva, 2007; Silva, 2016). In considering Blackness beyond a categorical formation, she also invites and actively works toward unleashing Blackness’s creative potentiality. Hartman also engages this way of thinking and knowing black when she refuses to engage with the archive as a practice of filling in gaps, or continuing to document in ways that foreclose a more expansive sense of Blackness. Tending to the dead, specifically those lost in the founding atrocities that insured colonial capital, she engages a practice that can speculate on a Blackness unrestrained, “which hint[s] at and embody[ies] aspirations that are wildly utopian, derelict to capitalism, and antithetical to its attendant discourse of Man” (pp. 11-12).

Black Feminist Inquiry Practice

Radical Black Feminist art and scholarship provides lessons for the methodological stance and analytical approach to this education study. In noticing the contradiction between targeted educational policy interventions and their limited ability to erase so-
called gaps in academic performance, I take a different approach to studying educational equity. A different approach requires a different view. Therefore, I do not use methods that are familiar for measuring gaps or intervening to measure difference in achievement. I also do not rely on a categorical notion of race or Blackness to inform pedagogical strategies for higher achievement on standards. Instead of treating learners as the objects of study for greater educational equity, I situate educational equity as an object of study. This shift to studying educational equity and how it is pursued in the US is a move that also situates Black Feminist thought as a site of ontoepistemological alternatives for educational studies. Shoniqua Roach makes a similar move, as a professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, by centering “Black feminism as a crucial site of sexuality study” which “urgently unsettles and recalibrates conventional assumptions about what sex, gender, and sexuality are and have the potential to be” (2020, p. 181, emphasis in original). In this dissertation, I am concerned with unsettling the ease with which educational equity is conceptualized and pursued. I also aim to dream-plan what learning spaces have the potential to be, if not expressed in their current manifestations—which are tightly conjoined with the desires of global capital. It is also a project that aims to stay answerable to the societal and learning concerns of youth today and youth of the future by learning from Lauren of Octavia Butler’s Parable of the Sower. So, I intend for this inquiry to be engaged in preparing for the not yet, or as was stated in Chapter 1 “to stay in the practice of rehearsing something else so that we can act with agency and in ways that unsettle a racial capitalist expression of the world… knowing there is another way to be together” (p. 33).
Connected to this dissertation’s inquiry questions, a critical Black Feminist approach to inquiry is in conversation with any project that is attempting to unravel sociopolitical entanglements, especially those entanglements that work on behalf of the “exploitation of visible human difference” (Weheliye, 2014, p. 4). Going beyond the practice of forming categories, this approach also unsettles ideas like authenticity, fact, and reality. Critical Black Feminist approaches to research lead from different ontological and epistemological views than a traditional qualitative study. For example, Glesne (2006) writes of qualitative ontological and epistemological beliefs “…reality is socially constructed…What is ‘real’ becomes relative to the specific location and people involved. The qualitative epistemology holds that you come to know those realities through interactions and subjectivist explorations with participants about their perceptions” (p. 6). These ontological and epistemological beliefs are a point of departure for this critical Black Feminist inquiry given the work of Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) in Toward a Global Idea of Race. First, for Silva, the real is constructed by modern rules of reason, thus it is a contested point of view. Additionally, in considering how reality is shaped by the rules of reason, Silva works from the view that concepts like race are modern constructs, relying on modern, historical and scientific texts to bring them into the theater of reason, rendering them actual. To be clearer, her work does not inquire about voices and identity as authentic expressions of a physical (bodily) traits or particular social configuration, but rather considers how these things are transported into the realm of the real, producing consequences and effects that feed global colonial capital’s insatiable hunger.
In this chapter, I introduce the approach to inquiry for this Black Feminist Study regarding the manifestations of educational mandates for equity in out of school spaces. The questions guiding this dissertation study are:

1) How are educational and sociopolitical entanglements designed to promote educational equity? 
2) How do educational and sociopolitical entanglements shape the pursuit of educational equity in an out-of-school summer achievement program? 
3) How do educational and sociopolitical entanglements of pursuing educational equity shape student feedback in an out-of-school-context?

A Black Feminist approach allowed for a deeper understanding of the entanglements that youth encounter and navigate in out-of-school settings that are beholden to top-down, neoliberal education protocols and mandates. In the sections that follow, I discuss Silva’s (2007) Black Feminist critical mapping exercises in depth and how they were used in this study. The inquiry design including, the critical mapping exercises, the study context, the youth inquiry partners, the analytical approaches, and ethical concerns are key sections in this chapter.

**The Arsenal of Raciality**

Since this dissertation study is about sociopolitical entanglements that exploit visible educational differences and educational social configurations, Silva’s work is highly pertinent. Her tracing of race as a *modern construct* outlines modern, historic, and scientific texts and their signification strategies, demonstrating how they work together to produce the racial and maintain the transparency thesis. Her mapping of the arsenal of
raciality, or “an apparatus of knowledge manufactured by the sciences of man and society” (pp. xv) highlights that the real, in relation to notions of identity and fact, is constructed and reconstructed by modern political-symbolic gestures. These gestures follow the moves of the Hegelian subject, which always seeks to write Europe’s inhabitants and its social configuration in transparency, or as endowed with the tools of reason that allow it to exploit the world of things in service of progress, or achieving its highest self. Much like transparency is consistently rewritten in service of the transparent I’s progress, the things of the world—including here the “others of Europe” (p. 2)—must be consistently be rewritten in affectability for such a long-standing plot of terror to play out. In other words, the things of the world—including those persons who have been subjugated in this terror plot—must consistently be rewritten according to how they/we are subject to the power of the transparent I. Silva illustrates the modern rendering of affectability in outlining how early Chicago School sociologist, Robert Park, theorizes race relations. He argues that songs produced in captivity reflect an authentic Black consciousness while poetry of the Harlem Renaissance that speaks back to the predicament of Black people in the US does not. Working through his comments, she writes:

In his account, these moments of subjection —“isolated” enslaved conditions and segregated regions of the U.S. social configuration —reflect circumstances that, though determined from without, are not political because of the assumption of the ruling racial group’s transparency and blacks’ affectability. This argument suggests that complete assimilation would result in a total loss of an authentic Negro subjectivity. More important, it introduces the thesis that the fully modernized Negro would necessarily cease to be a Negro. By erasing the effects of power of the racial, ignoring the political-symbolic relationship it encapsulates, race relations has produced racial subjection as an effect of the fundamental impossibility of certain strangers’ becoming transparent, of being modern. Not only does this produce blackness as an impossible basis for formulating any project of emancipation; it suggests that, because it is always already the
exclusive attribute of a transparent I, the racial subaltern’s desire for emancipation, for inclusion in the dominant (white Anglo-Saxon society), is fundamentally a desire for self-obliteration. (p. 162)

Silva’s move to demonstrate how this modern sociologist writes the others of Europe in affectability makes clear the effects of such moves in qualitative studies that work to render things authentic and factual. These are modern moves. They depend on the arsenal of raciality, which provisions for Europe to lay claim to transparency in its social, and juridical (legal) formations. The issue here is that this work has been taken as a true word, and much of the work on race relations, in education and beyond, relies on these interpretations of the reality of race. Here and throughout the book, Silva illustrates race as a modern strategy of power, it always postpones an affectable fate for the transparent I while securing such fate for the others of Europe. Transparency is always the given that needs to hold true for modern reason to play out in favor of the transparent I reaching its highest self. Otherwise, transparency would come crashing down on its own false pretenses. This is how racial subjugation has become so justified that ethical outrage does not ensue as these modern political-symbolic strategies continue to construct an arsenal of race facts that serve strategies of educational assimilation.

Following Silva’s excavation of modern thought and deploying her critical arsenal, this study will also refuse to add to the arsenal of racial facts, forgoing the move to offer strategies that youth and the educators who love them can use to help them better assimilate to the education system. As alluded to in Chapters 1 and 2, I draw on her critical methodology of tracing and undermining raciality in my refusal to add to the arsenal of racial facts. I also follow Silva’s move to allow the imagination to guide this study, working through insurgent grounds that can meet the future Octavia E. Butler
warned. While this study does not center on an inquiry partner group composed of young Black girls, it chooses to remember the young Black girls who were part of the out-of-school space through the words and diary entries of Lauren Oya Olamina. This study also chooses to remember that I was once a young Black girl in the public school system—though the time and space were different than this study. However, my own experiences as a young person and adult are entangled in and inform this inquiry. So I stay with us/them through Black Feminist speculative fiction and choose an inquiry practice that is capable of critically exposing the issues they might doubly face in school. More than that, this inquiry practice is also capable of unraveling and critically remapping the entanglements that might support Black girls’ and all youth’s struggle for and searching for freedom. I, we, move through insurgent ground, thinking with the lessons of Black Feminists before us, like the Combahee River Collective, which organized to “combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face” (p. 210). In the next section, I share more about myself in relation to the study that will unfold in the remaining sections and chapters.

**The Inquire-ist: Pivoting as a Methodological Stance**

In 2018, I served as the director of T4C Milltown (pseudonym) when the youth feedback portion of this project was conducted. The purpose of the inquiry with youth was to explore the feedback and experiences of students at T4C. During this time, I was not able to take my director hat off in any setting. I was always moving between the spaces of self, director, and researcher. Even when caught up in the flow of inquiry with the four youth co-researchers, there were moments when I had to pause our conversation(s) to address other programmatic, staff, and student concerns. Amongst the inquiry team, there are moments when I had to
interject in our conversations to reset expectations for how to work collegially with one another. My position was always already entangled in the programmatic goals for students’ summer academic growth and my position was entangled in my being a queer Black educator. In this current study, I return to my inquiry partners’ feedback seeking more than findings from a qualitative engagement with their voices. This study represents a pivot; I am seeking to find other angles from which to engage the program to explore its sociopolitical entanglements and design for promoting educational equity. I also contemplate how the youth illuminated these entanglements long before I could put words to them. I return to their feedback to more thoroughly attend to my positionality and how it was entangled in T4C’s programmatic practice. I also return to what I could or could not disentangle in student contributions and ways of engaging in the project. I allow this return to generate ethical and methodological questions about staying with moments that trouble or haunt us—contemplating these moments, and allowing them to shift future approaches (Dixon-Román, 2017).

**Pivoting in the Pause: Expanding the T4C work**

When dancers turn through pivots and pirouettes, they are revolving. They are spinning, rotating, turning, and returning. They are reorienting to the world while moving in place, showing that revolutions can happen from within us—from within our cores—from where we already are. This is another way to think through the concept of revolution.

— Jasmine Brooke Ulmer, Pivots and Pirouettes: Carefully Turning Traditions

Learning is fundamentally about transformation. It is coming into being and constantly altering that being; it is a subjective and often messy act. It is, in essence, letting go of a rung we have a firm grip on in order to fumble with the specter of a different rung. Coming into being is in essence about being-in-relation.

- Leigh Patel

Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability

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Ulmer (2020) describes shifting and pivoting as “reorienting to the world while moving in place” (p. 456). In the same year, pivoting came up during an advising conversation about transitions that were happening in my work. In the same conversation, it also showed up as an embodied practice when Dr. Korina Jocson twisted from side to side. Through her movements, I, too, instinctively understood the embodied practice of pivoting. The feeling of being anchored, yet compelled to move. Embracing the need to shift directions toward new learning. It is a space of becoming. What Leigh Patel might call the “fumble[ling] with the specter of a different rung” (p. 76). More than a pause, it is the space between the firm grip on one rung and reaching to grip the next and then the next. It might also allow space for reorienting, and shifting our examinations to pursue the “how” and “why” of things. Considering education in Chapter 1, I argue for engaging “radical Black Feminist thought to unearth why and how youth can speak, while noting how their voices do not seem to rattle or deter the advances of racial capitalist neoliberal education law and policy” (p. 28). Following that intention, I turn the lens on myself and my previous researcher practice (Madison, 2005). To do this work requires radical vulnerability and agility in how I perceive the world before me to seek otherwise, or “the fact of infinite alternatives” (Crawley, 2016, p. 2). Taken together, these orientations might be termed a methodological stance of pivoting. In the following pages, I will share how I have come to this methodological stance and practice.

**Radical Vulnerability**

In the act of pivoting, one might reckon with acknowledging the rung they are firmly gripping and the prospect of letting go to move to another rung. To acknowledge one’s firm grip involves reckoning with the concepts, beliefs, and ideas one is holding on
to. These concepts, beliefs and ideas shape the way we read the world and how we approach our theories of change in our work and research. Embedded in this reckoning, is also an acknowledgement of the self and how one arrives at and departs from these concepts, beliefs and ideas, introducing the possibility of instability. The praxis of radical vulnerability, as discussed by scholar-activist Richa Nagar, describes my own acknowledgement of firmly gripping one rung while inviting the prospect of easing my grip to eventually let go and reach for another rung. In her work Hungry Translations (2019), she writes that a praxis of radical vulnerability, in coauthorship:

Forego[es] the very category of a “subject” in the form of a singular, autonomous self, and in actively co-constituting an intersubjective space, such a praxis does not look for corporeal or moral protection of one individual from another. It recognizes that each of us is limited by our locations and languages, by our pasts and presents, by our desires and complicities. (p. 7)

Engaging with a praxis of radical vulnerability might introduce discomfort as we come to acknowledge the limitations of our locations, languages, pasts, presents, desires and complicities. It does not bring a great deal of joy and pleasure to acknowledge how one is complicit in what bell hooks calls “imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy” (The New School, 2013). However, a praxis of radical vulnerability allows us to acknowledge a firm grip and entanglements that constitute it. With this acknowledgement of our grip and our entanglements, one opens up the possibility of letting go and moving beyond. Radical vulnerability taps into other-wise, and agility reaches for otherwise, or other rungs in response to a heightened perception of the greater context of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy.
Agility and Seeking Otherwise

AGILE: Borrowed from Latin agilis, from agere to drive, be in motion, do, perform

– Merriam Webster

Agility allows us to continuously reach for transformation. It is to be constantly in motion. Caught up in the rapture—and staying there. It is motion that serves to reorient to multiplicity and playful expression and away from the violence of categorical distinction. Moving beyond the limitations of the Ordered World (Silva, 2016). Perhaps it is an invitation to allow the imagination guide as it does in a speculative text, or as Stephanie Toliver teaches, texts that refuse to “mimic our everyday reality” (2020, p. 508) and that are “a step toward emancipating the imagination from the clutches of dominant ideals” (2021, p. 146). Being agile in the context of pivoting as a methodological stance might describe one’s compulsion to move in multiple directions for new learnings beyond the status quo or against what Beverly Tatum (1997) describes as a “moving walkway” (p. 11). Being agile in the context of pivoting as a methodological stance might also result in nimbly moving from rung to rung in the act of learning, rather than holding on too long or too firmly. It is the compulsion to inquire about new possibilities. It is to change directions, moving from rung to rung in an other-wise space that aims to free one from excess (Silva, 2017, para. 7).

Or perhaps it is to find new angles from which to study and do our work. Never being satisfied with sitting still. This flow reckons with how to suspend our complicity in an imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy. It reckons with how not to be enticed by the ease or ignorance of complicity (Mills, 2007). It reckons with the promise of reward or the comfort of a firm grip. I do not intend to simplify the ways in which we
might be able to suspend or free ourselves from this context or these complicities. However, it is an appeal to become familiar with the methods and works of those who have attempted to name this context, expose its inner workings, and pluck off the layers of excess. For example, Black Feminist thought is supporting me to nuance my noticing and naming of how race works in our educational theories of change. Hartman, hooks, McKittrick, Okiji, Silva, Spillers, Wynter and so many more invite me to momentarily suspend myself from the violence of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy and immerse myself in otherwise notions of being and knowing—and I am rewarded far beyond money and status. As I engage in a variety of scholarship that alerts me to the context in which I am participating, I am constantly engaging in processes of becoming and unbecoming. I am introduced to more possibilities as I let go and latch, let go and latch. I move from the stasis of fixity to the motion of *endless play of expression* (Silva, 2014, p. 91). Across, forward, and diagonally while constantly seeking the possibilities of otherwise expressions of learning.

The work on which I am embarking has prompted my engagement with pivoting as a methodological stance because it calls on me to practice radical vulnerability, or to name my complicities with the liberal humanist project of educational research. My work also calls me to pause, be answerable to context, and be answerable to the knowledge I am attempting to produce (Patel, 2016). Additionally, my work calls on me to refuse traditional qualitative inquiry to, instead, open up spaces of possibility for what might be or become when I stick with what is puzzling me about my work (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; St. Pierre, 2014). The following section will introduce the inquiry site, inquiry partners, and processes for data collection and analysis.
Study Design

Staying with the intention to dream-plan and rehearse learning that is answerable to youth of today and the future, this study pivots to Black Feminist thought as a site for educational study, and is attentive to what learning has the potential to be. To open up otherwise expressions of learning, I situate educational equity as an object of study, unsettling the ease with which it is conceptualized and pursued. In troubling how we know educational equity, this study shifts from merely including youth voice as a way to pursue equity and avoids treating them as objects of inquiry. I consider youth and youth voice to be incoherent opposed to authentic — capable of calling up educational ghosts even — as a way of further illuminating how educational equity is insidiously designed and how this design shapes out-of-school contexts. As was stated in Chapter 1, my engagement allows me to push against the assumption “that T4C is an appropriate intervention for students who attend…that students would benefit from sharing feedback to improve T4C, and…that students are predisposed to summer learning loss because of their school district’s performance status” (p. 39). The openings in this study are an alternative to intervening in the traditional ways qualitative education research performs its loyalty to laws like the ESSA of 2015, which often fills in gaps by producing prescriptive strategies for academic achievement. Yet, this study pauses on academic achievement as a goal. Instead, I pursue openings that allow a different expression of learning than is currently practiced in K-12 education.

In the following sections, I share more about the two phases of this project. The first phase took place in 2018, and was primarily designed for gathering youth feedback. I took a youth informed approach to gathering the feedback, asking the 4 youth inquiry
partners to shape our photo elicitation protocol. The second phase of this project involved gathering publicly available documents to map and trace the sociopolitical entanglements that constitute out-of-school contexts like T4C. Below I discuss the site of inquiry and share more about the 4 youth I worked with before discussing the two inquiry phases more in depth.

Site of Inquiry: Teaching for the 21st Century Summer Achievement Program

Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C) is an organization that seeks to prevent “summer slide,” or loss of the previous year’s academic learning in the summer, for rising fifth through eighth grade students in the Northeast and Southwest regions of the US. T4C summer sites are coordinated in collaboration with local school districts and housed in local school buildings. Milltown, the district partnering with the T4C site in this study, has been subject to state receivership in recent years and has contracted with T4C for the past 5 summers (2017-2021) to produce a 5-week summer program. To measure the program’s impact on reducing summer learning loss, the program tracks students’ beginning and end-of-summer scores on district-aligned Reading and Math assessments. Located at one of the four Northeast sites in the summer of 2018, the site in this study consisted of 4 professional educators serving as leadership staff, 5 professional educators serving as academic coaches, 28 high school and college-aged teachers, and 115 students who were rising fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders in the local partner school district. The program serves as a summer learning program for students and a teacher professional development program for prospective educators. T4C serves as a summer teacher training program for teachers—who are high school and college students from
across the US and local school districts. In 2018, teachers and students came together during morning academic classes, recess, lunch, and afternoon elective classes offering a range of topics and activities throughout the day: Reading, Biomedical Engineering, Math, Social Studies, Basketball, Soccer, Arts and Crafts, Theatre, Anime, Step among other classes, site wide activities, and community field trips. The T4C site was also shaped by state and federal protocols regarding Title I funding, programmatic decisions about daily schedule and curriculum, and district partnerships that informed the daily operations of the site. Through this study additional attributes of the site were illuminated, which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Inquiry Partners**

While student voice research has a fairly large number of projects conducted with high school students, relatively few studies describe student voice projects with middle school students, which informed my choice to work with Ana, Angelo, Elijah, and Matthew (pseudonyms). Serving as the 2018 summer achievement program director and having been an assistant director in 2017, I worked with the CEO of the organization to commence a study with students who had returner-status or who attended and completed the program in both summers 2017 and 2018. After sharing the research project, parental consent, and assent forms with the eleven 2018 T4C summer returners, four T4C students returned consent and assent forms to participate in the project. At the time of the study, I asked students to self-report age, gender, race, and the grade they were to enter. I share this information in Table 3-1 below:
Table 3-1: Student’s Self-reported Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>Rising 7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelo</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>unidentified</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Rising 6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Black and Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Rising 7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>Rising 7th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yet, they are more than can be captured in a table. I remember Ana’s interest in robotics, coding, and acting. I also remember her radical vulnerability in sharing how events with family and friends shaped her approach to caring for peers. I remember Angelo’s interest in sports and his expressiveness about the activities he enjoyed. I remember him always saying what came up for him. I remember Elijah’s deep admiration for his friends, peers, and basketball. I also remember his sharp societal critiques. I remember Elijah and Matthew’s brotherhood. Their respect and love for one another. I remember Matthew’s leadership in a crowd, his taste for good food, and always being in motion with a basketball.

Phase 1 Data Gathering: Youth Feedback

The initial approach to inquiry was designed to gather student feedback beyond the T4C student survey. It was T4C’s regular practice to survey students at the end of the summer, but the survey only offered a partial glimpse of student experiences. T4C’s questions were designed to understand how the program impacted students, using an agree scale, and left much to be desired about students’ day to day experiences in the program. For open response prompts, students either left short comments or didn’t respond with
comments. My initial questions were: *What are the experiences of middle school students attending Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C)? How do student experiences and feedback inform potential changes for the end-of-summer student survey and program itself?* To answer these questions, I drew from participatory methods for the purpose of involving youth in the design of the research project and supporting them to gather data about their experiences (Freire, 1970). To work with the students, I employed nontraditional participatory strategies such as photo elicitation and drawing to generate research participation and construct knowledge. Of these techniques, Alice McIntyre (2008) expresses, “…the use of nontraditional strategies for tapping into the participants’ experiences, thoughts, ideas and emotions provided individuals with unique ways to express themselves” (p. 22). In this study, photo elicitation was used as a method for drawing on student voices by using photos in the interview setting (Harper, 2002). Bates, Kaye, and McCann (2017) found that the use of photos to learn about student satisfaction captures the context of experiences compared to self-reporting survey methods. They also argue that the use of photos can allow for a more “student-centric perspective rather than a traditional approach that is largely framed by what the institution deems important or valuable to student satisfaction” (p. 299).

**Data Collection: Youth Feedback**

Ana, Angelo, Elijah, Matthew, and I met over the course of the last 3 weeks of the 5-week student program to familiarize ourselves with the project and one another as a research team. Knowing that I was the Director, I took the following steps to mitigate the reality of my position of power with students: I met with students three times to contextualize the project, answer student questions and build our team before collecting data; students were given space to create, discuss, critique and change photo prompts for the project; and, in
every interaction with students, I led with consent or requesting students’ opting in or out of recording photos or their voices. We also met to devise a photo elicitation protocol for a focus group interview.

**Photo Elicitation.** To create the protocol, students drafted prompts or sentence frames to describe their experiences at T4C, such as: “Me and my friends like to…,” “My class experience…,” and “Student should choose...” (see Appendix A for a full list of prompts students created). Then, they took 3-5 photos to respond to prompts. Since students were not allowed to have cell phones, they used my phone to take photos. Taking photos in these conditions was not ideal. However, I had access to student schedules and routinely visited them during their classes and recess/lunch time to help them take photos. As photos were taken, they were instantly uploaded from my phone to an online research folder on Box. After photos were taken, I arranged them by prompt in a Powerpoint slide deck for the focus group interview.

**Focus Group Interview.** We used the deck to guide our time during the focus group. I recorded the group interview for later transcription and analysis. The focus group interview was structured, using the same set of four questions for each photo prompt (Glesne, 2006). The questions reflect the mnemonic device SHOWeD typically used for photovoice discussion groups (Wang et al., 2004). SHOWeD represents common questions posed for discussion of photos (i.e., S: What do you see here?; H: What’s really happening?; O: How does this relate to our lives?; W: Why does this problem or strength exist?; and D: What can we do about it?) (p. 912). Gubrium and Harper (2016) describe this set of discussion questions as prompts that provoke groups to, “discuss their relationships with photographic subjects, changes they would like to see in their lives,
and strategies for collective action to address problems depicted in the photos” (p. 74). (See Appendix B for the list of focus group questions I asked students).

**Cognitive Maps.** Additionally, students drew cognitive maps to describe their experience at the program (Tewell et al., 2017). For the cognitive mapping exercise, participants were given six minutes to draw a map of their student experience, alternating black and orange marker colors every two minutes. (See Appendix C for students’ cognitive maps).

**Surveys.** Students completed the end-of-summer student surveys for the program and the CEO shared this data with me for analysis. (See Appendix D for 2017 and 2018 student survey questions).

**Pivoting: Analytical Engagements with Student Feedback**

Pivoting with analysis is key for this Black Feminist inquiry. My initial approach to data analysis was informed by liberal humanist conceptions of knowledge-making, which considers subjects to be individuals whose words express a coherent, authentic self. This conventional approach to knowledge-making, does not consider entanglement, or the ways in which we are constantly becoming such that “our research participants interact with the matter of their worlds in ways in which they are transformed by matter and vice versa” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013, p. 268). Furthermore, my original engagement did not consider how raciality would have a hold on a research project that understands possibility solely from the purview of the transparent I. That is, in using a practice like coding to transform student comments into neat categories, I emphasized “what is known, not only to the experience of our participants but also to our own experience as well; it
also disallows a repetition that results in the production of the new, a production of different knowledge” (p. 267). I performed an analysis that was not capable of comprehending events, actions, and encounters that did not fit what was already known about student experiences in educational environments.

For example, I performed data analysis in the following ways: after the data was collected, I used a grounded theory approach to analyze the data collected (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). First, I listened to the recording and jotted down major concepts, then I transcribed the focus group recording verbatim. Once the focus group transcript was transcribed, I reviewed the transcript by applying codes to each students’ comments, and compiled a list of 69 unique codes into a codebook. I uploaded students’ photos, survey responses, the focus group interview transcript, and cognitive maps into Dedoose, a cloud-based, computerized data management system. I applied the 69 unique codes to the data sources in Dedoose and started analysis by reviewing the most frequently occurring count of codes. Dedoose also produced a tab of code “co-occurrences,” denoting the number of times a code is applied to an excerpt and co-occurs with another code. I explored code co-occurrences higher than 8 through writing memos, and I worked with recurring concepts in the development of core categories from the data. Several techniques were used to collapse the data and identify major concepts such as questioning; making constant comparisons; and, looking at meanings of a word, emotions expressed, metaphors, and similes. Through writing memos or notes to track data analysis, I developed two core categories to describe the experiences and feedback of the middle school participants at the Teaching for the 21st Century summer learning program: doing what you love and playing roles.
While these categories played a role in illustrating a richer picture of how students spent their time, what they enjoyed—and allowed me to offer suggestions of changes—the emphasis on coding elided a consideration of what equity is, how it is pursued, and why the students were there in the first place. At the time of proposing this project and analyzing the data, I did not consider these questions. The questions came later as I shared the findings with T4C’s CEO, returned to T4C in 2019 as teacher coach, and engaged with the works of Cedric Robinson, the Boston Review, Robin D.G. Kelley, and Denise Ferreira da Silva that expose how racist logic works. Studying these scholars and their methodologies prompted me to pause on my approach to knowledge-making, and pivot in how I was making sense of students and their experiences. My studies also prompted me to pivot in how I considered what else their feedback could be illuminating about education and the ways equity is pursued.

In this project, I return to the data that was collected using the participatory methods discussed above. I also re-turn the data—“re-turning as in turning it over and over again” (Barad, 2014, p. 168). Like a rung I am still fumbling with, I hold on to these methods as a bridge toward Black Feminism as a site of ontoepistemological alternatives for educational study, which offers thinking and analysis that follows a Poethics of Blackness (Silva, 2014, p. 81). In the current approach to analysis, which I detail next, the students’ feedback creates openings for exploring what education has the potential to be. In addition to students’ feedback, I also explore education’s sociopolitical entanglements through a document review.
Phase 2 Data Gathering: Document Review

Attending to entanglement at T4C, I draw on the concept and method of assemblage to unsettle its coherence as a program known for reversing summer learning loss. The concept of assemblage is derived from the theoretical work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Exploring the use of the term, John Phillips (2006) explains that assemblage implies “specific connections with the other concepts” and how concepts are given their “sense” due to their arrangement and their connections (p. 108). Like my approach to returning the student feedback to unfix previous categorical readings, my turn to assemblage requires reading how the events, actions, and encounters at T4C expose the dangerous design of educational equity. Given that T4C markets itself as an organization dedicated to reducing summer learning loss, it is tempting to view the organization and its summer learning program in isolation from the multiple arrangements, connections and events that constitute it. However, these arrangements, connections and events will be highlighted and explored to illustrate how T4C is matter-in-action that produces itself and particular expressions of race, gender, and political economy. Additionally, I examine how transparency is written into the programmatic, district, state, and federal documents that constitute T4C as an organization.

Data Collection: Documents

To examine how educational equity’s design informs T4C’s program, I collected publicly available documents that outline T4C’s programmatic goals. I also collected documents that outline federal, state, and district educational regulations and how these regulations meet up with T4C’s programmatic operations. I used a purposive sampling technique to collect the documents, allowing student feedback topics about the program,
classes offered, teachers, and more to guide document collection. Documents were available on the T4C, LEA, SEA, and federal education department websites. I used search terms such as “teaching for the 21st century” (pseudonym) on district and state websites to collect documents concerning contractual relationships with the program. While searching, I saved the documents to a digital folder, labeling them with the naming convention “LevelType_LevelDescription_Year_DocumentDescription.” Documents for analysis included information about: T4C’s sources of funding, its core values, its mission statement, and its use of district service providers; the district’s summer and yearly learning priorities for students; state learning targets and funding opportunities for out-of-school programs; and, federal standardization/accountability mandates and compliance measures. Table 3-2 lists the documents including document type; the issuing body e.g., federal education department, State Education Agency (SEA), Local Education Agency (LEA), Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C); the document count; and page count.

Table 3-2: Documents Examined for Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Issuing body</th>
<th>Document Count</th>
<th>Page Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Reports from Federal Commissions and Department of Labor, Elementary and Secondary Education law (as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act), Transition guidance documents for ESSA</td>
<td>Federal Education Department</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>658 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State reports and guidance for grant applications</td>
<td>State Education Agency (SEA)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>225 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milltown District Accountability Plan documents and district budgets (e.g., District “turn around” plans)</td>
<td>Local Education Agency (LEA)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>418 pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3-2: Documents Examined for Analysis (cont.)

| Teaching for the 21st Century marketing materials and information about board members (e.g., websites for recruitment of staff and students) | Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C) | 2 | 2 websites |
| Teaching for the 21st Century, Teach Milltown, Funding Foundation tax forms (e.g., 990 forms) | Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C) | 10 | 326 pages |
| Auditing documents (e.g., audits and impact reports) | Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C) | 5 | 70 pages |
| Programmatic Surveys | Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C) | 2 | 2 pages |
| **TOTAL COUNT** | | **37 documents** | **1,701 pages** |

The student feedback and document data collected for this project was primarily analyzed by me between May 2020 and December 2021. Throughout this time, the analyses pivoted multiple times. Memos were key to keeping track of the analysis and allowing them to shift. In the sections below, I outline the analytical approaches used to read the data and respond to the guiding inquiry questions.

**Analytical Approaches to Data**

My analysis of Hegel’s formulations shows how, when assembling the horizon of life, he manufactures the ethical principle transcendentalism, and introduces a notion of freedom (self-determination or inner determination) as transparency, the one that provides the ground for modern ontological accounts and is the basis of ruling conceptions of the right and the good, that is, of justice.

-Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*

In Hegel’s formulations, modernity is not just the most advanced stage of the human trajectory. It is the culmination of a temporal trajectory, the moment where human consciousness realizes its intimacy with the transcendental (active, self-productive, and self-determined) reason — that is, the moment in
which individual consciousness and social (juridical, moral, and economic) conditions reveal themselves as the actualization of transcendentality. This is the place of transparency, where the transcendental subject is now conscious of itself as a (interior and exterior) thing of the world, and the (interior and extended) things of the world are recognized as the transcendental subject.

-Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, Silva’s charting of post-Enlightenment will to truth (reason) offers what she calls a modern contra-ontology. That is, an understanding of modern reason that allows readers to consider that, while it overwhelms any sense of other ways of knowing and being as if it is knowing and being itself, it is but one expression of these acts. Key to Silva’s modern contra-ontology is outlining Hegel’s formulation of the “ethical principle of transcendentality” (p. 70) and the transcendental I, the figure that models moral and ethical life itself because, as Hegel argues, it has followed the same trajectory of Spirit—or that which is capable of producing and regulating the world around it to its supposed highest form. Silva turns to Hegel’s formulation of the transcendental I as a way of showing that he models freedom, “the basis of ruling conceptions of the right and the good, that is, of justice,” after it. Silva finds that Hegel’s transcendental I provides the basis for her account of the transparent I. To reiterate, Silva is providing a modern contra-ontology. Therefore, she does not hold on to the same language of “transcendental,” and her use of transparency instead shows that she is charting modern representation to avoid “remain[ing] prisoner to its terms” (p. 35). What Silva is illuminating in this excavation is that the transparent I, the figure that assumes that it both produces and regulates (productive nomos)—achieving freedom and the highest form of social configuration—haunts how Western conceptions of justice are
administered and pursued through the law. That is, what becomes morally right and good in the law, as we know it, is based on achieving a highest form of self or social configuration that can only be modeled after Europe’s, and the transparent I’s, supposed favor. This will become clearer in my discussion of the transparency theses in Chapter 4. For now, it’s helpful for stating my research draws on Silva’s charting of modern reason as analytical groundwork for examining how the logics of transparency are enlivened by US education law (ESSA) in its pursuit of educational equity without producing ethical outrage.

A major assumption that I made in my analytical engagements with educational law and policy documents is that they can be analyzed as specimens of modern reason, which as Silva’s charting shows, is modeled after Hegel’s assumption that modernity is the moment where “individual consciousness social (juridical, moral, and economic) conditions reveal themselves as the actualization of transcendentality” (p. 86). Thus, I analyzed documents with the assumption that transparency is written into federal, state, and district documents as well as programmatic goals that constitute T4C’s pursuit of educational equity. An examination transparency logic highlights the ways in which the racial figures in conceptions of and in the administration of educational equity. To highlight the racial’s role in the education law, I exercise the critical strategy of tracing raciality, or tracing how the pursuit of equity relies on “transform[ing] human bodily and social configurations into signifiers of the mind” (p. 166).
**Tracing Raciality**

Silva prods readers to trace raciality, a critical strategy for mapping the productive effects of the analytics of raciality. She writes:

> We need to trace every and each articulation of raciality, including those that profess its irrelevance, trace at each moment how it rewrites the racial subaltern subject in affectability, producing statements that not only excuse the violent effects of this rewriting but also redeploy the transparency thesis. (p. 267)

For my inquiry, I deployed this critical strategy to map the productive effects of statements that appear in education law, policy, and marketing materials at the federal, state, district, and programmatic levels. I traced how they rely on raciality in 1) rewriting the racial subaltern student in affectability, or as subject to natural conditions and other’s power, 2) excusing of the effects of the rewriting, and 3) redeploying of the transparency thesis. The purpose of tracing raciality is not to mark the irrelevance of the laws, policies, and marketing materials examined; the purpose is to highlight their limits and productive effects as a way of unsettling the ease with which educational equity is pursued. The purpose is to also consider what a new learning agenda has the potential to be with/out colonial-racial logics. With the trace, I outline how raciality functions in the name of pursuing a racially just education system for those most affected by society’s imperfections.

In Chapter 4, the excerpts from statements are introduced with a format that repeats for clarity. First, I introduce a trace that maps how racial subaltern students are written in affectability. To trace, I offer context for the statements, then I present excerpts from the statements in boxes. Following the excerpts, I offer some analysis of how the statement works through affectability. Then I proceed with traces that follow a similar format, offering context for the statements, providing an excerpt, and then providing
analysis regarding how the statements both excuse the effects of the rewriting, then
redeploy the transparency thesis. Taken together, the exercise plays with fractal thinking,
or identifying fractals. That is the exercise identifies how the statements describe
situations that participate within a larger scaled pattern. Silva (2017) discusses fractal
thinking as:

an invitation to complexify these situations by placing them in a larger, in a
longue durée, historical moment as well as attending to the global moment, in
order to identify the juridic and economic processes, structures and discourses that
are playing out in the same moment. One aspect to it is of course at the attention
to the singularity – the singular event, “refugee crisis,” for instance – to locate a
particular kind of repetition, but a repetition that has to be interrupted. So the
composition in the fractal is the positioning of those different moments in time
and space, but as part of the same context. (para. 14)

The analysis produced when tracing raciality illuminates the statements and their effects
as a situation that is part of the context in which the transparency thesis is rewritten with
the help of raciality, a fractal pattern that “has to be interrupted.” In the next section, I
turn to a discussion of how I re-turned and re-read youth feedback, as a way to consider
raciality and its assemblage at T4C. I discuss how Silva’s (2007) theorization of raciality
and Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) analytical engagement with voice-as-effect can meet up
to illustrate the assemblage of racial logic at T4C through openings in students’ feedback.

Student Feedback and Openings for Undermining the Assemblage of Racial Logic

Discussing voice-as-effect, or what voice does, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) question how
voice functions and suggest that researchers analyze participant data by “‘seeing’ voice”
(p. 747) through out of field experiences. That is, refusing a “singular speaking subject”
(p. 748) through contextualizing participant voice in multiple spaces beyond the site of
the research. For example, while Ana, Angelo, Elijah and Matthew shared multiple pieces
of feedback with me during the focus group interview and other research activities, I was the director—a role most congruent with the responsibilities of a principal. My presence in the research space was always already contributing to how students expressed their feedback compared to if they were solely with each other, a group of friends, their parents and so on. Furthermore, to explore the complexities and textures of voice, Jackson and Mazzei suggest that researchers pay attention to the *other* of the *true* and *authentic* voice. While Jackson and Mazzei are not Black Feminist scholars, I consider these practices a jumping off point. I not only stray away from seeking an authentic youth voice, I also stray away from seeking an “othered” voice. Instead of treating the students as “Other,” I pay attention to their comments, gestures, choices, and speculations. For the current study, I asked “what else might they the youth be saying or alluding to?,” and to follow up “in what ways does that expose and/or undermine the arsenal of raciality?” These questions supported my thinking and helped me take my analytical focus from searching for the *authentic* T4C student experience or its other.

For Chapter 5, I worked to free the analysis from the constraints of interpreting voice by considering the students as incoherent subjects. I do not hold them prisoner to Hegel’s notion of a transcendental subject or its other. By considering them as incoherent subjects, I did not make assumptions that aim to prove they benefit from the T4C program. Though I do argue that it is a goal of T4C is to make them coherent, modern subjects. Yet, towards unsettling the ease with which educational equity is conceptualized and pursued, I treated their comments as openings to expose how educational equity’s problematic design plays out at T4C. Further considering the assemblage of racial logic at T4C, I allowed my inquiry partners’ comments and gestures to open up considerations of
how raciality was playing out in its ethical (moral), juridical (legal), and economic expressions. In re-turning students feedback I considered voice-as-effect by examining how silence, speculation, and the mundane figured in our conversations and work together, pointing to raciality. Sometimes students didn’t respond to questions. Other times they spoke minimally. Silence was also imposed by me in moments where I attempted to facilitate a more collegial conversation. Sometimes Elijah, Ana, Matthew, and Angelo dreamed up new iterations of the program. At other times, they speculate to consider others’ perspectives. I also examined comments that illustrate what they considered ordinary at T4C. I noted their silences, speculations and other ways in which they responded to my questions to examine how students’ comments are exposing raciality, even though we had not studied Silva together. I also take up Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) practice of expanding the frame. Therefore, based on my purview as director, I offer more context for the exchanges, photos, and cognitive maps to consider voice-as-effect. I provide excerpts or images to unfix previous interpretations or provide new examinations by speculating about what the excerpts and images illustrate about undermining raciality. With 4 students, this analytical engagement is not meant to generalize all students’ experiences of the program, but rather to show how the students’ comments pointed to ghosts, or the behind-the-scenes inner workings of modern reason, which as Silva proposes, is shaped by raciality.

Sharing Findings with T4C

In December of 2021, I discussed the major threads from my analytical engagements and directions of this study with the current Director of T4C Milltown. In this section, I
briefly share some reflections from that discussion. My sharing of the project’s threads prompted the Director of T4C Milltown to share more about their own educational journey as a student and education professional. They mentioned that my question “what else is possible for summer learning programs?” stood out for them. They also noticed that the issues I, students, and families faced during my time as director are still present for the program today as it works with the school district. COVID-19 and its impact on the program heavily featured in our discussion. The Director also mentioned that recruitment of teachers is tough, and that teacher recruitment has been a major focus of theirs for the past 3 years. Overall, they were interested in what this project was uncovering, and I imagine that future conversations could allow us to explore more of the project’s threads about raciality and how greater attention to it could open otherwise expressions of learning.

Confidentiality and the Institutional Review Board

While this research is meant to make explicit how political, economic, gendered, and racial entanglements come together for an organization like T4C to operate its summer learning program, I also take into account and take seriously the protocols as outlined by the University of Massachusetts Institutional Review Board (UMass IRB). I acknowledge that the UMass IRB is an entity meant to ensure that there is no harm done to participants during the course of research given the legacy of harm research has inflicted on individuals and whole communities of people. I also acknowledge that while the UMass IRB is meant to prevent harm from happening during the course of research, it is seldom possible to anticipate and prevent every instance of harm even with care and
consideration taken by me and the IRB. Therefore, I commenced this study by taking into account the protocols of the UMass IRB and I have taken additional measures to reduce harm to the student participants, the school district and the organization with regard to confidentiality.

First, I created a research protocol and submitted it for IRB approval. While the current study draws on the perspectives of young people who the IRB considers “the educationally disadvantaged,” the study includes ethnographic methods and focus group interviews, which collect data samples in a manner that are not anonymous. Given these procedures in the study, the research is considered to pose no more than minimal risk to research participants. Assent and consent forms that were approved for this study specifically named that the nature of focus group dialogue prevents full confidentiality and explained participants’ rights to refuse participation in the research. When sharing consent and assent forms with parents and students, I discussed that the intent of the project was to capture student perspectives about survey and programmatic changes to the summer learning organization and reiterated their right to refuse to participate. Of the 11 students who were invited to participate, 4 students returned parental consent and student assent forms.

Secondly, there are several measures I have taken for the write up of this study that attempt to reduce harm through affording confidentiality to the participants, organization, and school district. More specifically, given that I have worked in both the organization and school district previously, I am opting to afford confidentiality to the organization and school district to limit any sense of exposure or exposé. It is not my intention to write a hit piece. The methods I am using to illuminate and address the
political, economic, gendered and racial entanglements that are a focus in this study are meant to contribute to and expand the ways in which we conceptualize and pursue education and learning in the US beyond its current manifestations and practices. I hope this study illuminates how local education systems are designed according to federal education mandates. I also hope to demonstrate how these mandates might be refused—or even abolished and reconceptualized without the white supremacist and colonial ideas/practices to which they adhere and with practices that honor the potential for endless plays of expression that facilitate learning. This study attempts to illuminate how the education system and equity are designed. In the write up of this study, I place a focus on events and processes that are happening in the T4C organization and Milltown school district. I also discuss how these events and process are a likely outcome of the federal system of education to which students, organizations, school districts, and states are beholden. The approach to analysis in, and implications of, this study may be relevant across contexts.

To limit any sense of exposure that this study might evoke for the organization and school district in which I have been employed, I have taken the following steps in the write up of this dissertation to ensure further confidentiality of the students, organization and district: using pseudonyms for students, the summer learning organization, school district, and any staff titles referenced; displaying photographic data that does not include student likeness, the organization’s name, staff titles, or other descriptive information; sharing student demographic data in the aggregate rather than individual form; limiting my digital footprint with regard to my employment at T4C; refraining from citing direct quotes or exact percentages from the organization, school district, state websites, and
other materials that are easily searchable on the web; treating public documents/record as
data samples, rather than bibliographic and appendix sources. Although I am taking these
important precautions, I am also aware that if an interested reader wants to take the time
to demystify the identity of the organizations involved, they might be able to use the web
to do so regardless. However, the names and likenesses of the students will remain
confidential as their information and connection to this project will remain anonymous.
CHAPTER 4

TRACING RACIALITY IN EDUCATIONAL TEXT

Though among the most readily available “whipping boys” of fairly recent public discourse concerning African-Americans and national policy, “The Moynihan Report” is by no means unprecedented in its conclusions; it belongs, rather, to a class of symbolic paradigms that 1) inscribe “ethnicity” as a scene of negation and 2) confirm the human body as a metonymic figure for an entire repertoire of human and social arrangements. In that regard, the “Report” pursues a behavioral rule of public documentary. Under the Moynihan rule, “ethnicity” itself identifies a total objectification of human and cultural motives—the “white” family, by implication, and the “Negro Family,” by outright assertion, in a constant opposition of binary meanings. Apparently spontaneous, these “actants” are wholly generated, with neither past nor future, as tribal currents moving out of time. Moynihan’s “Families” are pure present and always tense. “Ethnicity” in this case freezes in meaning, takes on constancy, assumes the look and the affects of the Eternal. We could say, then, that in its powerful stillness, “ethnicity,” from the point of view of the “Report,” embodies nothing more than a mode of memorial time.

-Hortense Spillers,
Mama’s Baby Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book

What the prevailing strategy of racial subjection in the United States indicates is not that the racial explains class subjection but that the association of criminality and material (economic) dispossession has become the new signifier of the affectability of the racial subaltern. That is, the gang banger and the welfare queen correspond to a rearrangement of the analytics of raciality, one that relies not on the strategies of the science of man but on the very sociological strategies that enable the identification of the causes of racial subalterns’ juridical and economic exclusion.

-Denise Ferreira da Silva,
Toward a Global Idea of Race

In order for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down, through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by a particular historical order, and there await whatever marvels of my own inventiveness.

-Hortense Spillers,
Mama’s Baby Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book

Spillers’ intention to “strip down, through layers of attenuated meanings, made in excess over time, assigned by a particular historical order” (1987, p. 65) speaks to the
weightiness of accumulating energy that is not your own. Her statement recalls the act of
deep breathing through, walking off, or even washing off the energetic grime that one
cannot help but pick up and encounter while moving about a work day. I imagine that her
command to strip down through layers of attenuated meanings describes her release of
other people’s stuff. Stuff that many students carry around from being tested, grouped,
tracked, monitored, incentivized, intervened on, disciplined, and rewarded. Stuff that
students carry from being hailed by educational zealots from universities and in
classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, offices and other spaces in their school environments.
Shedding light on the constant hailing, or the constant shaping of students’ learning,
odies, and movement, Silva proposes that the constant grasping to assign meaning
“corresponds to … the very sociological strategies…that enable the identification
of…exclusion” (2007, p. 265). Her words about sociological strategies recall data
collection and analysis that measures and predicts everything from literacy growth to
prison bed count, constituting the logics of what many activists and scholars have
exposed as the school-to-prison pipeline (Muñiz, 2021).

Examining the Layers of Racial Meanings in Educational Text
Following Spillers’ (1987) examination of how ethnicity “freezes…takes on constancy,
assumes the look and the affects of the Eternal” (p. 66) and Silva’s (2007) theorization of
the analytics of racality—and its rearrangement as constituted by modern thought and,
more recently, sociological facts—this chapter considers how accumulated racial
meanings have shaped the project of educational equity. I ask, how are educational and
sociopolitical entanglements designed to promote educational equity? How do
educational and sociopolitical entanglements shape the pursuit of educational equity in an out-of-school summer achievement program? To respond, I turn to an examination of how accumulated racial meanings have shaped the pursuit of equity in my refusal to take my inquiry partners’ feedback as authentic expressions of their coherent selves and their experiences in the T4C education and research setting. I refuse to take them at their word knowing there are layers of racial meanings that they carry from being students whose learning is shaped by laws, policies, and goals that are meant to provide them with a quality antiracist education backed by the powers of the US federal education department. Like Spillers, in order to speak a truer word concerning lessons from students’ feedback, I must examine the layers of racial meanings that have shaped currently active laws and policies for equity. Since I refuse to codify students’ comments in the ways I did before, I can only engage with their voices and feedback after I gain a more nuanced understanding of how they are meant to appear at the T4C program. That is, how they are considered to be in the right place at the right time to be recruited, or perhaps targeted, for T4C’s learning loss remedies.

In what follows, the nuance comes just after I have stripped down accumulated racial meanings in such a way that educational equity’s design is exposed. By way of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Jackson and Mazzei (2013) work with the methodological practice of “plugging in” theory to “to think with…data (and use data to think with theory) in order to accomplish a reading of data that is both within and against interpretivism” (p. 261). As part of their methodological maneuvers for plugging in, they call on Foucault as an invitation to working with the same data chunks over and over to “deform [them], to make [them] groan and protest” (Foucault, 1980, p. 22-23). I do
something similar to “plugging in” to deform data chunks by tracing raciality in federal, state, school district, and T4C text to disrupt the ease with which these documents are used as instruments of equity. I primarily draw on Black Feminist thought from Spillers and Silva as I make three moves to pluck off the layered meanings that constitute the pursuit of educational equity. After making the three moves, which I outline in more detail below, I then introduce a graphic representation of educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic, which supports my analysis in Chapter 5. While there are limits to representation, as will be clear from the analytical groundwork in this chapter, the graphic is meant to help guide the reader through what has otherwise been difficult to think through and say in amplifying youth voice under the weightiness of racial meanings that constitute educational equity law, policies, and efforts. My hope is that the graphic will allow the reader to engage with the openings I follow in students feedback.

**Tracing Raciality’s Pattern at Different Scales**

In addition to stripping down through layers of racial meanings to expose educational equity’s design, Silva’s experiments with fractal thinking are a helpful mind map. The fractals in this chapter illustrate how racial logic and knowledge repeats and expresses itself at different scales (i.e., the federal, state, school district, and programmatic levels). Raciality, when presented as fractals, illustrates a pattern of racial logic that is recursive, making itself over and over again until it is interrupted. Taking methodological guidance from Silva to trace raciality’s pattern, I place educational texts in a “longue durée, historical moment as well as attending to the global moment, in order to identify the juridic and economic processes, structures and discourses that are playing out in the same
moment” (Silva, 2017, para. 14). That is, I break down the racial logic in laws, policies, and efforts that constitute educational equity through a “behavioral rule of public documentary” (Spillers, 1987, p. 66). While doing so, I also consider how these laws, policies and efforts are productive in their processes of creating subjects of educational quality (ethical), adhering to federal mandates for administering equity through states and school districts (juridical) and contract educational service providers that stay loyal to standardization and accountability (economic). I begin to outline the fractal by regarding Silva’s (2007) Black Feminist call to analytical action, which prods readers to trace articulations of raciality in how they 1) rewrite the racial subaltern subject in affectability, 2) excuse the violent effects of this rewriting, and 3) redeploy the transparency thesis. For the purposes of the tracing, I treat the documents as educational text, which supports me to demonstrate how the texts function and what they produce, especially with regard to raciality’s political-symbolic logics. I also treat the documents as educational text situated in globality, or as written discourse that rely on historic and scientific signification strategies from the arsenal of raciality, producing and repeating a logic of obliteration where economically dispossessed youth of color are concerned (Silva, 2007).

In each trace, I share some context for the text and moves I make before presenting excerpts, formatted in boxes, to illustrate how raciality repeats at different scales. For example, in the first trace, I review documents that shape education at the federal, and school district levels and how they rewrite the racial subaltern student in affectability. It will become clear how rewriting in affectability is done at the federal, state, and school district levels—or at different scales—creating a repeated pattern of raciality. Further outlining the fractal, I trace how the documents excuse the violent
effects of rewriting students in affectability. In the second trace, it becomes clear how excusing repeats at the federal, district and programmatic levels. In the third trace, the fractal pattern becomes clearer and demonstrates how the documents redeploy the transparency thesis at the federal, state, district, and programmatic level. In outlining the repeated pattern of the fractal, I show the educational text’s productive impulses or how it has served to redeploy the transparency thesis. As noted elsewhere:

To be more precise, the transparency thesis refers to an assumption that Man, the subject formed through and at the centre of post-Enlightenment thought, is the only figure (or mind) endowed with reason. Through this assumption, it acts as if its mind readily ascertains regulating laws of the universe and the things of the world. It also acts as if it has been gifted with the privilege to actualise itself and its global region as the favoured thing and social configuration of global space and history or time. (Carter & Jocson, 2022, p. 7)

The three traces below illuminate how the educational text hails, signifies, and functions, consistently reproducing the transparency thesis by writing youth of color in affectability and by extension of their mothers and families, a double affectability. It also makes clear the racial logic that underwrites educational equity’s insidious design.

Tracing Raciality: Rewriting the Racial Subaltern Subject in Affectability

Key to sustaining the transparency thesis is writing others in affectability or as subject to others’ power. Silva (2007) argues that “the association of criminality and material (economic) dispossession has become the new signifier of the affectability of the racial subaltern” (p. 265). Turning to education with Silva’s discussion, when racial and class subjection are associated in what we think we know about youth of color, they are written in affectability. How the association of criminality and material dispossession contributes to rewriting low-income youth of color in affectability is evident in the 1983 report, A
Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform from the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Standerfer (2006) argues that the Commission’s report “painted the picture that US schools were failing and that if corrective measures were not implemented into the educational system, the nation would not remain economically competitive in the global market” (p. 27). Standerfer also suggests that the report contributed to a 21% decline in federal funding for elementary and secondary schools. Doubling down on its warning-like register, the report ends with “a word to parents and students” (p. 128). Addressing students, the report writes them in affectability if they do not pursue academic achievement with their greatest discipline. The report outlines a fate that can only indicate a life of criminality, which would subject one to the greatest powers of the state:

“You forfeit your chance for life at its fullest when you withhold your best effort in learning. …When you work to your full capacity, you can hope to attain the knowledge and skills that will enable you to create your future and control your destiny. If you do not, you will have your future thrust upon you by others” (p. 129).

[emphasis added]

More importantly, Silva argues that rewriting others in affectability is part of a long-standing practice to delimit the “the place of the transparent I,” indicating “the necessity of writing certain human beings as subjects of affectability; otherwise, the frontiers between post-Enlightenment Europeans and their ‘others’ would not be maintained” (p. 262). With the association of criminality and economic dispossession one can’t help but notice the Commission’s “report” also plays a deputizing function, pledging the resources of the federal government and its coercive powers with the backing of national interest:
“the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur—others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments … We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament” (p.112). [emphasis added]

“In addition, we believe the Federal Government's role includes several functions of national consequence that States and localities alone are unlikely to be able to meet: protecting constitutional and civil rights for students and school personnel; collecting data, statistics, and information about education generally; supporting curriculum improvement and research on teaching, learning, and the management of schools; supporting teacher training in areas of critical shortage or key national needs, and providing student financial assistance and research and graduate training. We believe the assistance of the Federal Government should be provided with a minimum of administrative burden and intrusiveness” (p. 128). [emphasis added]

Silva cautions one to pause and question what a claim to intrusiveness has meant for the state’s ability to claim its sovereign patriarchal role. This is clearer in her discussion of how raciality and patriarchy meet up to produce a double affectability for economically dispossessed black mothers. Silva (2007) explicates how affectability doubles:

How the racial and patriarchy operate as strategies of subjection require an account of how racial difference and gender difference signify affectability, that is, outer determination… this construct has produced economically dispossessed black mothers as social subjects entitled neither to the legal protections nor the remedies ensured in civil rights legislation … the female racial subaltern has consistently been written to inhabit the public (non-European or non-white) place produced by scientific strategies where her body is immediately made available to a transparent male desire but where her desire (passion, love, consent) is always already mediated by her double affectability. The result is that she is constructed as the subject of lust; hers is a dangerously unproductive will because it is guided by nothing but that which human beings possess as being ruled not even by the “laws of [divine] nature,” the preservation of life. Over the last thirty years or so, since the publication of Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s (1965) report The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, this construction has rendered the economically dispossessed black female an object of public policy, for she has been constructed as the subject of an unrestrained, unruly sexual desire that thrives in the moral degeneracy that proliferates in the dwellings of the black subaltern subject. (pp. 265-266) [emphasis added]
Not only did the Moynihan report situate economically dispossessed Black women as objects of public policy, or as the things of study and manipulation, it also did so for their families and children. When putting Silva (2007) in conversation with Spillers (1987), by extension of the mother, the children (female, male, they, and them) are written in double affectability. Spillers (1987) rethinks previous critical engagements with *partus sequitur ventrem,* or, as Jennifer L. Morgan (2018) translates, the legal doctrine that literally reads “offspring follows belly” (p. 4). Pivoting in her pause to consider the reading that the child follows the “condition of the mother” (Goodell, 1853, p. 273), Spillers asks, “Is it the ‘condition’ of enslavement the writer means, or does he mean the ‘mark’ and the ‘knowledge’ of the mother upon the child that here translates into the culturally forbidden and impure?” Here, Spillers is asking the reader to reconsider that perhaps this legal doctrine’s work continues in that it is “a profound reversal of European notions of heredity in the service of a relatively new notion of difference and bondage” (Morgan, 2018, p. 5). Spillers considers that difference and bondage has not ended over time or with the passage of the 13th amendment, so to speak. Difference and bondage are sampled and transferred in ways that impact how the mother and her children are written in the

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7 In Spillers (1987), she engages with the work of Goodell: “If we can account for an originary narrative and judicial principle that might have engendered a ‘Moynihan Report,’ many years into the twentieth century, we cannot do much better than look at Goodell’s reading of the partus sequitur ventrem: the condition of the slave mother is ‘forever entailed on all her remotest posterity.’ This maxim of civil law, in Goodell’s view, the ‘genuine and degrading principle of slavery, inasmuch as it places the slave upon a level with brute animals, prevails universally in the slave-holding states’ [Goodell 27]. But what is the ‘condition’ of the mother? Is it the ‘condition’ of enslavement the writer means, or does he mean the ‘mark’ and the ‘knowledge’ of the mother upon the child that here translates into the culturally forbidden and impure? In an elision of terms, (p. 79) ‘mother’ and ‘enslavement’ are indistinct categories of the illegitimate inasmuch as each of these synonymous elements defines, in effect, a cultural situation that is father-lacking” (p. 79). (emphasis added)
Moynihan report as objects of public policy. To make the point that youth of color are written into double affectability clearer, it is helpful to fashion Moynihan’s infamous “report” as an educational text. The report argues that the Black family is in crisis and in need of intervention given a “tangle of pathology,” (p. 29) of which poor Black families led by mothers are at the center. The report “pursues a behavioral rule of public documentary” (Spillers, 1987, p. 66) in that it adds to the arsenal of social and racial facts, which describe the state of Black life as a result of cultural mismatch with the US social configuration and white patriarchal family norms:

“The Negro American revolution holds forth the prospect that the American Republic, which at birth was flawed by the institution of Negro slavery, and which throughout its history has been marred by the unequal treatment of Negro citizens, will at last redeem the full promise of the Declaration of Independence” (p. 1). [emphasis added]

“After an intensive study of the life of central Harlem, the board of directors…summed up their findings in one statement: ‘Massive deterioration of the fabric of society and its institutions…’” (p. 4). (emphasis added)

“It is the conclusion of this survey of the available national data, that what is true of central Harlem, can be said to be true of the Negro American world in general. If this is so, it is the single most important social fact of the United States today” (p. 4). [emphasis added]

“At the heart of the deterioration of the fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family” (p. 5). [emphasis added]

“Nearly a quarter of Negro women living in cities who have ever married are divorced, separated or living apart from their husbands” (p. 6). [emphasis added]

“As a direct result of this high rate of divorce, separation, and desertion, a very large percent of Negro families are headed by females. While the percentage of such families among whites has been dropping since 1940, it has been rising among Negroes” (p. 9). [emphasis added]

“Nonetheless, at the center of the pathology is the weakness of the family structure. Once or twice removed, it will be found to be the principal source of most of the aberrant, inadequate, or anti-social behaviors that did not establish, but now served to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation” (p. 30). [emphasis added]
“Eighth grade children in central Harlem have a median IQ of 87.7, which means that perhaps a third of the children are scoring at levels perilously near to those of retardation. IQ declines in the first decade of life, rising only slightly thereafter” (p. 36). [underlined emphasis added, italics emphasis in original]

“The effect of broken families on the performance of Negro youth has not been extensively measured, but studies that have been made show an unmistakable influence” (p. 36). [emphasis added]

“Such a national effort could be stated thus: The policy of the united State is to bring the Negro American to full and equal sharing in the responsibilities and reward of citizenship. To this end, the programs of the Federal government, bearing on this objective shall be designed to have the effect, directly or indirectly of enhancing the stability and resources of the Negro American family” (p. 48). [emphasis added]

In these excerpts it is clear how Moynihan works out supposed relationships among race, gender, class, and patriarchy, writing mothers and children in double affectability. He finds the economically dispossessed Black family pathological when he constructs it as the patriarchal antithesis of the white family. He situates the poor Black family at the opposite end of a spectrum and offers statistics that become just plain social facts about the Black family. This is more than falsity; it gains traction to produce effects in how it writes ethnicity as static. In other words, it locks poor Black people into a fundamental cultural difference destined for educational failure. Spillers (1987) affirms my reading:

the use of “ethnicity” for the living becomes purely appreciative, although one would be unwise not to concede its dangerous and fatal effects. “Ethnicity” perceived as mythical time enables a writer to perform a variety of conceptual moves all at once. Under its hegemony, the human body becomes a defenseless target for rape and veneration, and the body, in its material and abstract phase, a resource for metaphor. For example, Moynihan’s “tangle of pathology” provides the descriptive strategy for the work’s fourth chapter, which suggests that “underachievement” in black males of the lower classes is primarily the fault of black females, who achieve out of all proportion, both to their numbers in the community and to the paradigmatic example before the nation. (p. 66)

By placing blame on economically dispossessed Black mothers, Moynihan’s educational text serves as evidence for staging interventions into the lives and learning of poor Black
children and poor children of color generally. Their mothers cannot save them. They have only put them at a disadvantage. Their disadvantage requires help from the state.

Following the letter of logic in Moynihan’s educational text, the economically dispossessed and culturally different student is always already on the road to failure, and is similarly written in double affectability in the educational text of *A Nation at Risk*. The report outlines strategies for that mitigating risk, recommending the following: students follow a particular content program of study; schools and institutions of higher education adopt more rigorous standards; schools lengthen learning time; districts improve the preparation of teachers; and citizens hold educators and elected officials responsible for strong leadership on necessary reforms.

The doubling of culturally different students’ affectability is most clear at the end of the “report” when the Commission directly addresses parents:

> “Above all, exhibit a commitment to continued learning in your own life. Finally, help your children understand that excellence in education cannot be achieved without intellectual and moral integrity coupled with hard work and commitment” (p. 129). [emphasis added]

While the report merely states “to parents” without denoting that they are speaking directly to poor parents whose children carry the marks of difference, and thus a perpetual disadvantage, one can be sure the Commission intends to address these parents because these are the parents whose familial structures have already been constructed as putting their child at a disadvantage because of their own moral shortcomings. Additionally, their children’s shortcomings have been especially named throughout the report:
“About 13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate. Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent” (p. 115). [emphasis added]

“Despite widespread publicity about an overpopulation of teachers, severe shortages of certain kinds of teachers exist: in the fields of mathematics, science, and foreign languages; and among specialists in education for gifted and talented, language minority, and handicapped students” (p. 123). [emphasis added]

“The Federal Government, in cooperation with States and localities, should help meet the needs of key groups of students such as the gifted and talented, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, minority and language minority students, and the handicapped. In combination these groups include both national resources and the Nation's youth who are most at risk” (p. 127). [emphasis added]

One could read the Commission’s intention differently given the mention of gifted and talented students. However, it is clear that this report has contributed to rewriting youth of color in double affectability, prompted by their racial, economic and patriarchal familial subjection, which coheres in the term “the educationally disadvantaged” (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). In other words, these particular students are subject to certain outcomes of criminality if they do not work to overcome their race, economic, and familial subjection. Today, double affectability does not rely on the explicitly racist language and social facts presented in the 1965 Moynihan “report,” or the same fearmongering in A Nation at Risk. However, cultural difference, destined for educational failure and in need of intervention, has become the object of analysis in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act’s Title I, which is named “Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged” (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Or through the logic of double affectability, one could say improving the academic achievement of the offspring who follow the belly. The ESSA defines who these children are when it outlines which children are to be considered “subgroups” whose achievement is monitored closely
through the statewide accountability system, writing them in a double affectability where educational achievement is concerned:

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“SUBGROUP OF STUDENTS. —In this subsection and subsection (d), the term ‘subgroup of students’ means— (A) economically disadvantaged students; (B) students from major racial and ethnic groups; (C) children with disabilities; and (D) English learners.”
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In the official educational law of the US the students who are denoted as subgroups are constructed as permanently locked into their disadvantage by their race, economic, and familial subjection. When they exhibit low performance, the State Education Agency (SEA) has the power to excessively designate them:

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“In April 2015, the [state] Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to designate the [Milltown Public Schools] as chronically underperforming, placing the district in state receivership”
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Here double affectability follows them right into their being designated at the lowest level of achievement, as will be made clearer in the next trace.

**Tracing Raciality: Excusing the Violent Effects of Re-Writing in Affectability**

*An Nation at Risk* excuses the violent effects of rewriting youth in affectability by referring to how the US education system has borne success out of challenge:

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“The American educational system has responded to previous challenges with remarkable success. In the 19th century our land-grant colleges and universities provided the research and training that developed our Nation’s natural resources and the rich agricultural bounty of the American farm. From the late 1800s through mid-20th century, *American schools provided the educated work force needed to seal the success of the Industrial Revolution* and to provide the margin of victory in two world wars. In the early part of this century and continuing to this very day, *our schools have absorbed vast waves of immigrants and educated them and their children to productive citizenship*. Similarly, *the Nation’s black colleges have provided opportunity and undergraduate education to the vast majority of college- educated black Americans*” (p. 128). [emphasis added]
```
The US can do what it has done before. It is in its history. It has faced other challenges and risen to the occasion by harnessing its powers and its surroundings. It has even successfully educated those who seemed destined to fail. Title I’s statement of purpose follows suit, rising to the occasion. The Title excuses the violent effects of locking students into a fundamental difference and thus disadvantage by using the register of a civil rights movement, making the student a necessary policy object:

“The purpose of this title is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.” [emphasis added]

Whether this Title—this law—has good intentions is not meant to be questioned. It is obvious. It is pledging its resources and its might (force) to ensure children, especially students denoted by the subgroups, are afforded a chance to receive a fair, equitable and high-quality education. It will take away resources from schools to prove its force if it must. Additionally, the Local Education Agency (LEA) or school district, excuses the effects of the SEA designating its schools as “chronically underperforming.” This designation is a good thing, which allows the district a chance to prove that it can academically succeed:

“This designation provided an opportunity to transform the district from one of the lowest performing in the state to an extraordinary district with sustained high performance.” [emphasis added]

And how could it refuse the administration of justice, its juridical responsibility, for students who are destined to fail otherwise? It cannot. So it will do what it can to support students to make academic growth in any way it can. Multiple educational service providers exist for the sole purpose of joining up in this effort too. Marketing the chance
to address educational injustice, Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C) enlists future teacher across the country in districts similar to Milltown:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>You are the…leaders who will end racial injustice and inequity in education. Start this summer. [emphasis added]</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You value contributing to a diverse community. You want to invest…in the success of others. You are eager….to become the teacher your students deserve. [emphasis added]</td>
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Future teachers do not know that the educational injustice they are signing up to end is loyal to a racial logic that is meant to obliterate the academic failures that students are destined to carry from their economically dispossessed mothers and families. By the time they see this plea to end racial injustice and inequity in education, they are merely seeking to put students on an even playing field. They do not know the weightiness of this logic.

Each of these texts justifies the violent effects of their rewriting the disadvantaged culturally different student in double affectability by noting their intentions to promote social and racial justice; close achievement gaps; drive high academic performance; and provide student mentors who have followed the same trajectory. That trajectory is toward transparency or toward being a student who is disciplined, high achieving, and ready to graduate on time. Appealing to America’s past educational victories, A Nation at Risk excuses its rewriting of students in double affectability, arguing that the US school system has been able to produce other successes that have led to positive economic change and academic trajectories. These instances have created productive and highly educated students. A direct focus on the nation’s riskiest educational behaviors would allow the same to transpire again. A focus on disadvantage and eliminating achievement
gaps is written as good thing, a thing worthy of shaping the gestures of the first title of
the ESSA. Milltown justifies the designation of chronically underperforming schools by
arguing that this label gives them the opportunity to transform the district from low
performing to high performing. T4C joins up, pledging its programmatic resources to
eliminate educational injustice. It asserts that there are teachers who can end racial and
educational injustice in just 5 weeks. Because other students have been situated in this
way, and have overcome, enrolled students will too. They will be directly guided by
those who have achieved and graduated on time.

Taken together, these texts echo Silva’s concern about the neoliberal remapping
of the global configuration, “the analytics of raciality rewrites the others of Europe as
modern subjects whose temporal trajectory is the fulfillment of the logic of obliteration”
(p. 234). That is, the arsenal of raciality rewrites culturally different others as moving
toward a time in which they no longer exist as “others,” but rather don’t exist at all as
they are currently understood in pathology. By making the “educationally disadvantaged”
child achieve, by making America’s education system great again, by closing
achievement gaps, by becoming a high performing district, and by ending racial injustice
and educational inequity, the disadvantaged student will be obliterated, or no longer a
problem for those concerned and tasked with America’s academic progress.

**Tracing Raciality: Redeploying the Transparency Thesis**

A pathway is cleared to intervene for racial and educational justice. The ESSA, SEA,
Milltown’s school district plans and T4C’s proven interventions get wielded as weapons
that produce social facts about how to get youth to achieve. In doing so, they redeploy the
transparency thesis. Man and his social configuration are made to look as if they are favored. At an advantage. That everyone wants to be like it. Nevermind that this appearance is unnatural or always requires force. Per the ESSA, states will not receive the multi millions of federal dollars allocated to them unless they file a state plan that outlines a statewide accountability system:

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“SEC. 1111. STATE PLANS. (a) FILING FOR GRANTS.— (1) IN GENERAL.—For any State desiring to receive a grant under this part, the State educational agency shall file with the Secretary a plan”

“(1) CHALLENGING STATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS.— (A) IN GENERAL.— Each State, in the plan it files under subsection (a), shall provide an assurance that the State has adopted challenging academic content standards and aligned academic achievement standards (referred to in this Act as “challenging State academic standards”), which achievement standards shall include not less than 3 levels of achievement, that will be used by the State, its local educational agencies, and its schools to carry out this part. A State shall not be required to submit such challenging State academic standards to the Secretary.”

“(c) STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM.— (1) IN GENERAL.—Each State plan shall describe a statewide accountability system that complies with the requirements of this subsection and subsection (d). (2) SUBGROUP OF STUDENTS.—In this subsection and sub subsection (d), the term “subgroup of students” means— (A) economically disadvantaged students; (B) students from major racial and ethnic groups; (C) children with disabilities; and (D) English learners.”
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The ESEA outlines what the system should do, ensuring a process to monitor the achievement of subgroups of students:

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“(4) DESCRIPTION OF SYSTEM.—The statewide accountability system described in paragraph (1) shall be based on the challenging State academic standards for reading or language arts and mathematics described in subsection (b)(1) to improve student academic achievement and school success. In designing such system to meet the requirements of this part, the State shall carry out the following:

(A) ESTABLISHMENT OF LONG-TERM GOALS.—Establish ambitious State-designed long-term goals, which shall include measurements of interim progress toward meeting such goals— (i) for all students and separately for each subgroup of students in the State—(I) for, at a minimum, improved— (aa) academic achievement,
as measured by proficiency on the annual assessments required under subsection (b)(2)(B)(v)(I); and (bb) high school graduation rates…

(B) INDICATORS.—Except for the indicator described in clause (iv), annually measure, for all students and separately for each subgroup of students, the following indicators: (i) For all public schools in the State, based on the long-term goals established under subparagraph (A), academic achievement— (I) as measured by proficiency on the annual assessments required under subsection (b)(2)(B)(v)(I); and (II) at the State’s discretion, for each public high school in the State, student growth, as measured by such annual assessments…

(C) ANNUAL MEANINGFUL DIFFERENTIATION.—Establish a system of meaningfully differentiating, on an annual basis, all public schools in the State, which shall—(i) be based on all indicators in the State’s accountability system under subparagraph (B), for all students and for each of subgroup of students, consistent with the requirements of such subparagraph…

(D) IDENTIFICATION OF SCHOOLS.—Based on the system of meaningful differentiation described in subparagraph (C), establish a State-determined methodology to identify—(i) beginning with school year 2017–2018, and at least once every three school years thereafter, one statewide category of schools for comprehensive support and improvement, as described in subsection (d)(1), which shall include— (I) not less than the lowest-performing 5 percent of all schools receiving funds under this part in the State; (II) all public high schools in the State failing to graduate one third or more of their students…

(E) ANNUAL MEASUREMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT.—(i) Annually measure the achievement of not less than 95 percent of all students, and 95 percent of all students in each subgroup of students, who are enrolled in public schools on the assessments described under subsection (b)(2)(v)(I). (ii) For the purpose of measuring, calculating, and reporting on the indicator described in subparagraph (B)(i), include in the denominator the greater of—(I) 95 percent of all such students, or 95 percent of all such students in the subgroup, as the case may be; or (II) the number of students participating in the assessments.

(F) PARTIAL ATTENDANCE.—(i) In the case of a student who has not attended the same school within a local educational agency for at least half of a school year, the performance of such student on the indicators described in clauses (i), (ii), (iv), and (v) of subparagraph (B)— (I) may not be used in the system of meaningful differentiation of all public schools as described in subparagraph (C) for such school year; and (II) shall be used for the purpose of reporting on the State and local educational agency report cards under subsection (h) for such school year.”
The ESSA requires that states annually measure the academic achievement of its students and separately measure the achievement of each subgroup to identify schools with subgroups that are consistently underperforming.

The ESSA outlines mechanisms for monitoring and providing support to those who find themselves at the bottom 5 percent of schools, defined by low performance on various academic indicators that mark a high-quality education. These schools are designated for extra support:

“(d) SCHOOL SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES.—

(1) COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT.— (A) IN GENERAL.— Each State educational agency receiving funds under this part shall notify each local educational agency in the State of any school served by the local educational agency that is identified for comprehensive support and improvement under subsection (c)(4)(D)(i). (B) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY ACTION.— Upon receiving such information from the State, the local educational agency shall, for each school identified by the State and in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents), locally develop and implement a comprehensive support and improvement plan for the school to improve student outcomes, that— (i) is informed by all indicators described in subsection (c)(4)(B), including student performance against State-determined long-term goals; (ii) includes evidence-based interventions; (iii) is based on a school-level needs assessment; (iv) identifies resource inequities, which may include a review of local educational agency and school level budgeting, to be addressed through implementation of such comprehensive support and improvement plan; (v) is approved by the school, local educational agency, and State educational agency; and (vi) upon approval and implementation, is monitored and periodically reviewed by the State educational agency.

(2) TARGETED SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT.— (A) IN GENERAL.— Each State educational agency receiving funds under this part shall, using the meaningful differentiation of schools described in subsection (c)(4)(C)— (i) notify each local educational agency in the State of any school served by the local educational agency in which any subgroup of students is consistently underperforming, as described in subsection (c)(4)(C)(iii); And (ii) ensure such local educational agency provides notification to such school with respect to which subgroup or subgroups of students in such school are consistently underperforming as described in subsection (c)(4)(C)(iii).

(B) TARGETED SUPPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN.— Each school receiving a notification described in this paragraph, in partnership with stakeholders (including
principals and other school leaders, teachers and parents), shall develop and implement a school-level targeted support and improvement plan to improve student outcomes based on the indicators in the statewide accountability system established under subsection (c)(4), for each subgroup of students that was the subject of notification that—(i) is informed by all indicators described in subsection (c)(4)(B), including student performance against long-term goals; (ii) includes evidence-based interventions; (iii) is approved by the local educational agency prior to implementation of such plan; (iv) is monitored, upon submission and implementation, by the local educational agency; and (v) results in additional action following unsuccessful implementation of such plan after a number of years determined by the local educational agency.

C) ADDITIONAL TARGETED SUPPORT.—A plan described in subparagraph (B) that is developed and implemented in any school receiving a notification under this paragraph from the local educational agency in which any subgroup of students, on its own, would lead to identification under subsection (c)(4)(D)(i)(I) using the State’s methodology under subsection (c)(4)(D) shall also identify resource inequities (which may include a review of local educational agency and school level budgeting), to be addressed through implementation of such plan.” [emphasis added]

“(3) CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL AND LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY IMPROVEMENT.—To ensure continued progress to improve student academic achievement and school success in the State, the State educational agency—(A) shall—(i) establish statewide exit criteria for—(I) schools identified by the State for comprehensive support and improvement under subsection (c)(4)(D)(i), which, if not satisfied within a State-determined number of years (not to exceed four years), shall result in more rigorous State-determined action, such as the implementation of interventions (which may include addressing school-level operations); and (II) schools described in paragraph (2)(C), which, if not satisfied within a State-determined number of years, shall, in the case of such schools receiving assistance under this part, result in identification of the school by the State for comprehensive support and improvement under subsection (c)(4)(D)(i)(III)”

And the ESSA plays its financial role in support of the journey to educational triumph.

The ESSA provides guidance for supplying targeted assistance funding. That is, supporting SEAs and LEAs to additionally monitor students who are most at risk with the support of nonprofits and for-profits who play an economic role in this fight. The federal guidance accompanying Section 1115, Targeted Assistance provides additional insight into how the ESSA requires those who join up for educational equity to use evidence-
based strategies that would support disadvantaged students to secure educational advantage. They can only do this by collecting data such as performance before intervention and performance after intervention. This data has the power to illustrate “truths” about what effectively gets the disadvantaged to demonstrate academic growth. Only successful obliteration strategies are allowed. Setting this logic in motion at the state, district and programmatic levels, Section 1115 states:

| “TARGETED ASSISTANCE SCHOOL PROGRAM.” —To assist targeted assistance schools and local educational agencies to meet their responsibility to provide for all their students served under this part the opportunity to meet the challenging State academic standards each targeted assistance program under this section shall—(2) serve participating students identified as eligible children under subsection (c), including by—(B) using methods and instructional strategies to strengthen the academic program of the school through activities, which may include—(i) expanded learning time, before- and afterschool programs, and summer programs and opportunities” [emphasis added] |
| “ELIGIBLE CHILDREN. —(1) ELIGIBLE POPULATION. — (A) IN GENERAL. — The eligible population for services under this section is—(i) children not older than age 21 who are entitled to a free public education through grade 12; and (ii) children who are not yet at a grade level at which the local educational agency provides a free public education.” [emphasis added] |
| “(B) ELIGIBLE CHILDREN FROM ELIGIBLE POPULATION. —From the population described in subparagraph (A), eligible children are children identified by the school as failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the challenging State academic standards on the basis of multiple, educationally related, objective criteria established by the local educational agency and supplemented by the school 2) CHILDREN INCLUDED.—(A) IN GENERAL.—Children who are economically disadvantaged, children with disabilities, migrant children or English learners, are eligible for services under this part on the same basis as other children selected to receive services under this part.” |
| “(h) DELIVERY OF SERVICES. —The services of a targeted assistance program under this section may be delivered by nonprofit or for-profit external providers with expertise in using evidence-based or other effective strategies to improve student achievement.” [emphasis added] |
The strategies for targeting disadvantaged students become clearer at each level.

With targeted assistance for more time in school, LEAs are said to support students who are most at risk for low achievement. The SEA that Milltown reports to has a plan for supporting “chronically underperforming” school districts. It specifically lists summer learning opportunities as a key strategy. This can be seen in the SEA’s 2016 - 2017 report to the state legislature on Intervention and Targeted Assistance, which discusses key initiatives for the SEA’s “underperforming” schools that receive targeted assistance:

“Milltown Public Schools:

**Interventions:** FY2017’s key initiatives included: fostering autonomous schools through the use of individual school improvement plans, incubating partners to operate and support schools, increasing vacation-learning and summer-learning opportunities, increasing enrichment opportunities, expanding teacher leadership opportunities, and continuing the high school transformation and redesign. Each school’s program is tailored to the needs of its students.

*The use of targeted assistance funds* under line item 7601-9408 to assist Milltown emphasized leadership training and turnaround plan development. The plan prioritizes providing:

- High quality instruction for all;
- Personalized pathways;
- Engaged students, family, and community;
- An effective and thriving workforce; and
- A system of empowered schools.”

[emphasis added]

Following these goals, the district has expanded its summer learning programs to put students on track to graduating “on time.” T4C aids the LEA, or the Milltown school district, in meeting academic goals for its middle school students. Milltown Public Schools has articulated a plan and goals in concert with the requirements of ESSA for targeted support and improvement. Milltown’s budget listed 2016-2017 school year accomplishments, in including partnering with T4C:
“Targeted Intervention through Vacation Academies and Summer Learning. …We are introducing a targeted summer program for middle school students in partnership with [Teaching for the 21st Century], a program which connects high potential high school and college students as summer teachers to reverse the learning loss.” [emphasis added]

The following year, continued partnership with T4C was listed as a “proven model” and key for delivering on Milltown’s district renewed turn-around plan, offering personalized pathways for to target “students who are not on track for on-time graduation and re-engage those who have left the system”:

“In summer 2018, more than 1,100 students were enrolled in summer learning, compared with 1,000 enrolled in 2016 and 770 enrolled in 2016. We have also introduced innovations in our summer programming, such as adding Teaching for the 21st Century, a proven model for middle school students.

In the next three years, the district aims to:

- Increase the percent of students reaching the Meeting Expectations level on each of the English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and Science MCAS assessments to 50 percent.
- Increase the percent of English learners (EL) making progress towards English language proficiency on an annual basis to 50 percent.
- Increase the four-year graduation rate to 75 percent.” [emphasis added]

Additionally, T4C’s website promises to deliver a proven model for strong learning over the summer. They pledge to serve the students who are primarily at risk in education. The program is free for families, serves a majority of students of color and directly addresses racial injustice and inequity:

“T4C serves over 80% students of color.”

“We offer research-based, proven [free] programming for…high-quality summer learning” [emphasis in original]

Teaching for the 21st Century testimonial: T4C “achieves outstanding summer learning results, especially for…Black and Latinx students” [emphasis added]
Enticing new districts to partner with them, a T4C testimonial asserts that the program achieves outstanding summer learning results, “especially for Black and Latinx students.”

Who does T4C really benefit? While these goals are not dubious on their own, in the longue durée, they become increasingly problematic. Whether intentional or not, the program relies on the notion of youth of color’s double affectability by recalling the need to root out disadvantage through the language of high-quality summer learning and reducing summer learning loss. T4C directly markets a program that is at no cost to families. While the cost is paid for by the federal government—whose funds are made available to the state and local school district—a no-cost opportunity for summer learning recalls the students as written in double affectability. That they better choose to overcome their birthright to disadvantage. Parents are able to send their children to a free program that also has a goal of reducing summer learning loss. One’s choice to turn down such an opportunity is already mediated by the facts that have been circulated about where and who educationally disadvantaged children come from. One is choosing to thrive in moral degeneracy if not taking their children’s learning seriously or if choosing their children’s idling fate over their academic triumph. As targets and objects of policies, they ought to accept the support that has been provisioned for them. All while Man continues to secure itself and its social configuration as the mind and place of transparency. The students must try to be like Man if they do not want to suffer a life of criminality. LEAs and SEAs must try to place them in transparency so that they can achieve. If LEAs and SEAs use the tools provided by the generosity and might (force) of the ESSA, then students have a chance at overcoming such significant challenges.
Each level (federal, state, district and program) redeploy the transparency thesis, justifying the idea that there are truths about disadvantaged students’ academic performance. The truths rely on the students’ boundedness to their mothers and now the facts from regularly assessing students’ mental attributes and subtly referring to students’ minds as bounded to time. A time where the European “transparent I” engulfed lands, insistent on bringing the “racial other” into the narratives of progress and modernity through capture, colonization, and enslavement. And a time that continued into the writing of mothers and their children as objects of public policy. An attempt to get them on par with the time and space of the transparent I.

What is perhaps most dangerous about redeploying the transparency thesis to help children escape the fate of disadvantage is that “it sustains the assumption that through their recognition and inclusion (in the political babble) of their ‘voices’, the subjects of cultural difference would be recuperated, brought back into the universal reservoir of humanity” (Silva, 2005, p. 325). This logic is evident in T4C’s particular approach to fighting racial and educational injustice and disadvantage and its student survey:

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Teaching for the 21st Century “offers experiences that center the history, stories, and strength of people of color and provide all participants with windows and mirrors of their…lived experiences” [emphasis added]
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By relying on the sociohistorical logic of exclusion, and seeking inclusion as a remedy, T4C and its strategies for eliminating racial and educational injustice do not find an ethical crisis when children are put in harm’s way as a result of attending their program. They cannot comprehend the productive effects of raciality because raciality is what constitutes their work. This is a point to which I will return in Chapter 5. For now, it is clear that children are made to learn at their own risk. They are meant to obliterate their
disadvantage coming into transparency through learning their own histories, struggles, and strengths as a guide. No matter if these things cannot protect them from racial violence. It is their right to be recognized as racial beings and to demand justice on the basis of such experiences. Moreover, T4C’s student survey also recalls the logic of obliteration. They want to know, from the students, that they have been transformed *in just 5 weeks*:

**Figure 4-1: A photo of Matthew’s responses when examining the 2017 end-of-summer student survey**

In the survey, the questions assume that T4C’s actions can be beneficial if students would recommend the program, have met role models, are confident about college, and have learned new things. The questions are meant to assess T4C’s impact on them, and serve as indicators of T4C’s ability to redeploy the transparency thesis by demonstrating that it
can transform disadvantage to advantage. It also is meant to demonstrate that T4C helps students find likeness in those who are models of educational success (teachers). The survey also contributes to the arsenal of racial facts as evidence that T4C’s program is a proven model for student attendees and worth more funding.

Outline of the Fractal

In this chapter, I have argued that the logic of obliteration, as posited by Silva (2007), thrives in US educational text where economically dispossessed youth of color are concerned. I treat the documents reviewed as educational text situated in globality, or as written discourse that rely on historic and scientific signification strategies from the arsenal of raciality. Those signification strategies have written economically dispossessed youth of color as affectable, and twice affectable when considering Hortense Spillers’ reading of *partus sequitur ventrem* and the Moynihan report, demonstrating how the “report” constructs Black women as the cause of their children’s supposed low achievement, locking Black children into a fundamental cultural difference that is destined for academic failure. Such a formulation then provides the ethical and moral rationale to easily describe students as disadvantaged and in dire need of intervention, which is heightened in *A Nation at Risk*. The effects of labeling students as affectable and disadvantaged is excused with the argument that intervention is a logical choice for closing achievement gaps and promoting a high-quality education. The juridical mechanisms used to meet these goals require that students perform mental labor needed to assess their academic progress and address particular needs. These mechanisms are facilitated by economic entities, or nonprofit and for-profit programs that have the tools
to assess, measure, diagnose, and correct the educational disadvantage that students inherit. The educational facts of achievement and growth become proof that interventions indeed work (or not) for the educationally disadvantaged no matter how much in harm’s way the students are put in to accomplish such proof. In Figure 4-2 below, I reiterate the fractal to illustrate how the ethical, juridical, and economic come together to constitute educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic. This graphic will be key to the next chapter where my inquiry partners’ feedback create openings for me to explore the assemblage of racial logic at T4C.

Figure 4-2: Educational Equity’s Assemblage of Racial Logic
CHAPTER 5
UNDERMINING RACIALITY IN AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING CONTEXT

Focusing on the productive effects of the analytics of raciality allows us to shift the questions from a consideration of how exclusion and differentiation contradict the modern ethical embrace of the universal... In other words, the analytics of raciality allow us to see how, since the last third of the nineteenth century at least, modern political economic architectures—in Europe and in its colonies—have been accompanied by a moral text, in which the principles of universality and historicity also sustain the writing of the ‘others of Europe’ (both colonial and racial other) as entities facing certain and necessary (self-inflicted) obliteration. Just like this time around in the global financial capitalist casino, the house (the cozy state financial capital home) cannot but always win because when betting on the other’s (Black and Latino/a) inability to pay back its debt, it is betting on something it has itself brought into being.

-Paula Chakravarty and Denise Ferreira da Silva, Accumulation, Dispossession, and Debt: The Racial Logic of Global Capitalism—An Introduction

[Lauren]: “Slavery again—even worse than my father thought, or at least sooner. He thought it would take a while.”

[Bankhole]: “None of this is new...In the early 1990s while I was in college, I heard about cases of growers doing some of this—holding people against their wills and forcing them to work without pay. Latins in California, blacks and Latins in the south...Now and then, someone would go to jail for it.”

[Lauren]: But Emery says there’s a new law—that forcing people or their children to work off debt that they can’t help running up is legal.”

[Bankhole]: “…I’ve heard nothing about it. Anyone dirty enough to be a slaver is dirty enough to tell a pack of lies...that woman’s children were sold off like cattle…”

[Lauren]: “Things are breaking down more and more.” I paused. “I’ll tell you, though, if we can convince ex-slaves that they have freedom with us, no one will fight harder to keep it. ... And we need to be so careful...It will be especially dangerous with those little girls around.

[Bankhole]: “[T]hose two know how to be quiet,” Bankhole said. “They’re little rabbits, fast and silent. That’s why they’re still alive.”

- Octavia E. Butler, The Parable of the Sower
Lauren makes her way north with several companions whose lives have been disrupted by climate chaos, economic instability, and other events that prompt displacement. Some of her companions and their families have escaped from debt enslavement, which is a regular practice on US farms exacerbated by big agribusiness. In the events leading up to the conversation between Lauren and Bankhole (pp. 292-293), it becomes clear that particular people are targeted for slavery and capture including agriculture workers, the children of current agriculture workers, young girls, and those who have hyperempathy or those who feel the physical sensations of another person when near them or looking at them (Butler, 1993; Silva, 2014). Although it is not clear whether debt slavery is justified by current legislation or not, it is clear that this system has taken on the economic, ethical, racialized, and legal performances that previously constituted enslavement in the US. While this outcome seems like an exaggerated possibility (yet we know that slavery has indeed existed and those enslaved have always found way to escape), Butler alludes to the idea that this legally, economically, and ethically sanctioned system is actively returning—or perhaps never left.

**Undermining Raciality with Student Feedback**

Taking Lauren and Bankhole’s conversation as well as the ideas that Chakravartty and Silva (2012) offer in their discussion of the racial logic of global capitalism (pp. 370 – 371), this chapter focuses on further exposing and undermining the dangerous design of educational equity. That is, I show how the ethical, juridical, and economic axes through which an institution like enslavement was made possible continue to colonially choreograph (ife, 2021) how we pursue justice, more specifically educational equity. In
the previous chapter, I traced racialogy in text that outlines how educational equity is pursued in school districts that are “low performing” and targeted for support. The lowest performance designation allows the district to partner with T4C to offer a service (academic program) that claims to reverse summer learning loss. I demonstrated how decades of accumulating laws and policies write “the educationally disadvantaged” in double affectability, or as subject to others’ power and what others think they know about racialized low-income youth, their families, and their likelihood of being on the failing side of the achievement gap. As noted by Silva (2007), writing students in double affectability is informed by the ethical axis of post-Enlightenment thought, as it depends on assumptions of a “transparent I” and “affectable I” or constructing “Man” and the “others of Europe” to maintain a frontier between them (p. 262). I showed how the documents defend writing students in double affectability by promoting the worthy outcomes of educational equity efforts: closed achievement gaps, becoming a high performing district, and ending racial disparity in education. By emphasizing these outcomes, the assumptions described above are sustained. The documents also redeploy the transparency thesis through legislation (juridical axis) that monitors academic achievement on high-stakes tests. ESSA sanctions structures that monitor, identify, and differentiate districts according to academic performance. T4C and the LEA (economic axis) also deploys the transparency thesis in the way that they work to demonstrate how particular interventions support “the educationally disadvantaged” in low performing districts to show academic growth. Taken together, these actions demonstrate that the pursuit of educational equity works hand-and-hand with racialogy. Again, in this work,
raciality refers to a social scientific arsenal that “transforms human bodily and social configurations into signifiers of the mind” (Silva, 2007, p. 166).

While veiled in actual policy, tracing raciality offers a different view of educational equity and shows that its efforts are problematically designed. The pursuit of educational equity, as informed by raciality in educational text, is meant to obliterate mental and moral deficiencies that students cannot help but inherit from their families, and which obstruct college and career readiness. Additionally, when tracing raciality, educational equity does not seem as innocent an effort as corporations, nonprofits, SEAs, LEAs and the US Department of Education would make it seem. The pursuit of educational equity depends on carrying methods, classifications, legal justifications, economic structures, and interventions that were created in service of colonial conquest. That is, educational equity depends on raciality’s creation of the educationally disadvantaged, a modern subject whose registers “refer to the three main axes of modern thought: the economic, the juridical, and the ethical” (Chakravartty & Silva, 2012, p. 362). In this chapter, I will undermine raciality in an out-of-school context, T4C, by returning to feedback that was generated through my work with four youth in 2018. I ask, how are educational and sociopolitical entanglements designed to promote educational equity? How do educational and sociopolitical entanglements of pursuing educational equity shape student feedback in an out-of-school-context? In response, I re-turn students’ feedback to highlight moments that opened up further consideration of raciality through the economic, juridical (legal), and ethical (moral) registers that constitute the main axes of modern thought, as proposed by Silva (2007) and Chakravartty and Silva (2012).
In this chapter, my analytical engagement breaks with traditional conceptions and analyses of voice. My engagement with students’ feedback is meant to complicate the ease with which youth are often considered to be coherent or fixed educational and racial subjects in youth-informed research and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects that pursue liberatory education aims. That is, their voices are often made to be authentically expressive of their needs as students who suffer inequitable learning conditions and disadvantages. As I previously stated in Chapter 2, the danger in uncritically using racial categorization and educational designations to justify including student feedback in strategies for educational change is that “there is very little complicating of how the policies themselves are designed to make us [researchers] look at youth in ways that justify intervening into their educational and community environments, even with liberatory aims” (p. 58). Therefore, I do not work with students’ comments for the purpose of making them representative. I do not neatly translate their comments for adding to the arsenal of racial facts with lessons about academic achievement for the disadvantaged. I do not work with their comments to add to a long list of possible strategies for addressing educational inequities. Taking insights from Chapter 4, I consider students’ comments to be entangled in the neoliberal education context, the problematic design of equity, and raciality. By considering that students’ comments are caught up in these entanglements, I am able to disentangle them, open them up as well as further expose how raciality informs educational equity’s problematic design at T4C.
Moves to Undermine Raciality

Considering insights from Chapter 4, there are several moves I make to undermine raciality in out-of-school contexts. One is familiar in that I treat all documents generated through our inquiry as text, which allows me to situate myself in the inquiry rather than as a distant, all-knowing researcher. Another move I make is to engage in the feminist practice of turning the lens on myself, I consider how my comments, questions, and dialogue with the students contributed to raciality’s hold of the knowledge making process (Madison, 2005). Further, I bring in previous analyses of student feedback to deform them, or make them unrecognizable as they have statically lived in the past (Foucault, 1980; Jackson & Mazzei, 2013). Additionally, I denaturalize the idea that students are authentic or racial and educational subjects by delinking their physical characteristics from mental and moral traits. That is, I do not excessively describe them as if their comments are authentic expressions of raced and classed students or those who are the intended beneficiaries of ESSA. I also denaturalize the idea that student voice is authentic in the research setting, by staying mindful about power dynamics given my role as director. Moreover, I expand the frame of photos or moments in the inquiry texts to provide greater context and speculate on how raciality is performing its role in pursuing educational equity at T4C (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

In the sections that follow, I share several moments that open up a consideration of how raciality is playing out in the social processes and context of subjection (Silva, 2007) at T4C through various assemblages i.e., the ethical-economic, the economic-juridical, the ethical-juridical and the economic-ethical-juridical (Chakrabarty & Silva, 2012). I offer a previous analysis of each moment or related moments that went
unnoticed, then I expand the frame to share more context about the action, event, or encounter. I unfix the previous analysis, and offer a new analysis, by demonstrating how the expanded frame implicates raciciality in its economic-ethical-juridical-assemblage.

**The Economic-Juridical Assemblage:**

**Protecting Property During Summer Learning Activities**

In this section, the racial logic expressed in an economic-juridical assemblage is considered through the partnership between the LEA, or school district, and T4C. The LEA is an economic-juridical body that contracts services for meeting educational equity goals. T4C and the LEA enter into a contract where T4C delivers educational equity services (economic) in the school building in accordance with education policy measures (juridical, legal) and other agreed upon terms of the contractual agreement. As a reminder, the program is known and contracted with for its ability to support academic growth according to the rules of the ESSA and space is afforded through the district for this purpose. As the director of the site, one of my responsibilities was to work with the school’s principal to negotiate summer space for faculty, materials, academic class time, lunch and recess time, elective class time, and evening events. I was also to be very gracious for any space afforded. In the following engagements with the data, I share how the economic-juridical assemblage became evident in discussions about conflicts while playing basketball. The following engagements illustrate how property rights take precedence in producing T4C’s summer achievement program. I depart from CRTE discussions of “property rights over human rights,” (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 58) in that I problematize an inclusive gaze of rights. That is, I do not consider students’
comments as wanting “in” on particular rights; I consider them to be openings for engaging the productive effects of rights, or how they structure students’ possible actions and encounters at the program.

**Staying in our Lanes to Protect Property at T4C**

In a previous interpretation of the students’ feedback, I argued that Ana, Angelo, Elijah, and Matthew had brought up various moments of “doing what you love.” In my previous analysis, the category was divided into “doing it and loving it” and “doing it and not loving it” to show that there were times when students did and did not enjoy aspects of the program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Doing what you love</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Doing what you love</em> is an in vivo code from Angelo, and grew more significant as analysis uncovered students’ preferences for spending their time doing what they enjoy at T4C… On the other hand, “Doing it and not loving it” was characterized by: not having ownership over an activity or project, no choice in an activity, experiencing boredom, experiencing conflict with others, and having to go along with some aspect of the program they did not enjoy.</td>
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Although the following photo and conversation did not feature in my previous discussion of the data, my interpretations took into account moments when students described how basketball games were often interrupted. For example, the students shared that their shots were interrupted by those who shot multiple basketballs at the same time:

**Angelo:** Yeah ah. So I took this. Because I don’t know why…. I really. I just took that…because I wanted to show how like look. Do you see another basketball in that picture anywhere?

**All:** No.

**Angelo:** But so you know like in this class … people … shoot one at a time. You don’t even see another basketball in the picture. And the shot is there. ... Shows that people are like being kind to each other and shooting one at a time like. Like I said before with his [points to Matthew] … you don’t want another basketball
right before it goes in someone else to just shoot it and knock it right out. So… that’s why I took it. Thank you very much.

**Chalais:** Okay. Yeah. So how does this speak to the rest of you?

**Elijah:** I feel like as I agree with Angelo. And ah sometimes people be like stealing the ball and it be annoying. And like you’ll be in the middle of a game, a SQUID game like everybody’s playing fair and then someone takes the ball and starts shooting more aims like bro, come one we’re playing a game. You gotta be more respectful to others.

**Chalais:** Mm. Umhm. Umhm.

**Angelo:** Yeah and like. Do you see anybody at the bot- at the hoop waiting for it? Or any like look. Nobody’s even trying to knock it out or take it after like.

**Chalais:** umhm

**Angelo:** And after this like the person who shot it would’ve grabbed it and passed it to someone else. So this shows like hey this class…

**Elijah:** Good Sportsmanship.

**Angelo:** Yeah, it shows that this class knows how to be nice.

**Chalais:** Mm. Anybody else? What would you want the people of T4C to know if they saw this photo?

**Angelo:** I want them to know that there are some of those kids who like run up and go and just snag it or shoot another basketball and knock it out, but …there are not those kids everywhere.

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**Figure 5-1: Angelo’s Photo in Response to “My class experience”**
While this was indeed a regular occurrence during elective class or recess, expanding the frame of this photo provides greater insight into the economic-juridical assemblage that is informed by racial logic at the program. If one was to exit through the door featured in the photo, they would enter the hallway that leads to the large gym, which includes at least four more hoops than the small gym featured in this photo. While 115 students consistently attended the T4C program for 5 weeks, the large gymnasium was closed off for our use. I was told that having space in the large gym was non-negotiable given that it would be closed for the summer due to repainting. While the court was repainted during the 4th week of the program, the large gym was in use during the first couple weeks for a basketball camp. The camp was held during the morning, making the gym available during afternoon elective classes. Many of our electives included sports games and activities. However, the large gymnasium was always locked after the basketball camp’s use. While the point is not that conflicts would not have happened if students had access to the larger gym, the space negotiations happened in a way that was not about meeting the space and play needs of 115 children, but rather about the economic interest of protecting property. For example, when I asked to use the school’s supply of basketballs, I was often intentionally supplied with balls that had little air, and little bounce for fear of losing the best materials for use during the school year.

In using the school building as a host for T4C’s educational equity program, the students and I encountered racial logic that prioritized limited use of grounds and basketball materials. Students’ movements were to be limited. While securing the needed classroom space was relatively easy for meeting the program’s academic space needs, securing more space for running, playing, jumping, hooping, game-playing, and
spreading out was limited to the small gymnasium and the athletic field—which was an expansive space yet, at times, too hot or too rainy to enjoy. Through the racial logic of the economic-juridical assemblage, students were made to inhabit and engage with space in certain ways. In expanding the frame of this moment, it is clear how “the association of criminality and material (economic) dispossession has become the new signifier of the affectability of the racial subaltern” (Silva, 2007, p. 265). Materials and space were not loaned to us on the explicit assumption that space would be vandalized or materials would turn up missing. What we had access to was good enough, given the educational equity purpose of the program. Another instance also highlights students’ knowing that they should engage with space by being mindful of others’ property, because it is not their space:

Figure 5-2: Elijah’s Photo in Response to “My class experience”

Ana: …was that like on the actual wall? From like the school? Elijah: No. It was sheet paper. No that would be bad.
Angelo: That would be bad. That would be bad…exact- I would be like oh you’re in trouble. [laughs]
Chalais: [laughs]
Ana: I was wondering. How are you gonna get that off?
Chalais: No. It’s… [all laughing]
Elijah: As soon as you walk in the classroom. Who did this to my classroom?

While this was a moment where we were all laughing in response to the exchange about whether the students had made a collage on the actual school wall, students were aware of property logics (economic) and how they should engage with the school’s loaned space. They understood that they are meant to be there as attendees of the learning program and that there could be consequences (juridical) for engaging outside of their expressed purpose for being there.

The Ethical-Juridical Assemblage at T4C:

Interrupting the Endless Play of Expression

In this section, the racial logic expressed in an ethical-juridical axis is considered through the relationship between how the ESSA constitutes the properly educated student, or the difference between low and high achievement, and the measures in place to improve achievement. The SEA is the ethical-juridical body that follows the rules of the ESSA with regard to monitoring educational equity in LEAs across the state. For example, the partnering LEA in this study contracted T4C in response to being designated a “chronically underperforming” school district or being classified in the bottom five percent of academic performance across the state. The SEA also assigned a “receiver” for the LEA, or a person or education entity who:
reports directly to the [SEA] commissioner and is held accountable for improving the education in every school in the district for the benefit of the students. [SEA website]

According to ESEA and ESSA—the ethical (moral) domain in which the proper student is constructed according to indicators of academic achievement as well as college and career readiness—schools and students who are targeted for academic support must show academic progress enough to eventually exit such a designation (juridical, legal). T4C plays an important role in adhering to the ethical-juridical axes by supporting the LEA to be in compliance with an SEA certified academic support plan, which includes strategies for raising academic achievement. At T4C, the ethical-juridical body, or SEA, is present in the program’s incentives to do well on the end-of-summer assessment where T4C is able to show a reversal of summer learning loss through math and reading growth scores. As a hallmark feature of the program and student incentive to do well on the test, students receive a can of soda to crush, indicating that they “crushed” the exam. Beyond this ritual, the students’ feedback highlights how students’ play of expression is continuously stunted when encountering the overbearing presence of the ethical-juridical assemblage of racial logic at T4C. Before exploring this further, explanation from Chakravartty and Silva (2012) is helpful in further outlining the ethical axis of modern thought:

In the post Enlightenment era, once universality and historicity became ethical descriptors of the properly human, then the task of justifying how rights such as life (security) and freedom had not been ensured for all human beings required that human difference—which could be registered only as mental difference—become irresolvable. Expropriating or killing the native or the slave would not be morally tenable if they could claim the same self-productive (mental) capacity as conquerors, settlers, and masters. (pp. 369-370)
The authors argue, as extended from Silva (2007), that the writers of modern reason could justify coloniality, enslavement, and other systems of death and torture only by writing the “others” of Europe and their social configurations as unable to fulfil the destiny of Sprit, which made the transparent I of the European social configuration a favored thing. That is, because those who were not part of Europe’s social configuration and did not operate just as the transparent I—the figure at the center of modern thought—were assumed to be mentally deficient and in need of the transparent I’s tools to lift them up from their unfavored position, even if it amounted to obliteration. According to Silva (2007), this logic has been consistently transported into the ethical domain, or what becomes morally right and acceptable in the construction and design of law and rights (ethics, morality). Below, I demonstrate how the ethical-juridical axes—which design educational equity’s racial logic—show in up T4C. My analytical engagements illustrate how students’ and teachers’ actions are shaped by the imperative to obliterate disadvantage through distinct practices that tightly manage time, class schedules, academic content, and pedagogy for the oppressed. The moments I discuss illustrate how many actions and encounters are foreclosed in the pursuit of equity at T4C or where the play of expression is interrupted by the pursuit of educational equity.

**Students’ Interrupted Plays of Expression**

In my original analysis of the moments below, I interpreted Ana’s comments as addressing the student role for maintaining a supportive learning environment:

**Ana:** Yeah… I know teachers are like strict. But there will be… I don’t know how to say it but … people should be like more

**Elijah:** Calm? Or patient
Ana: Yeah. Like the kids need to be … more patient. Say like when I was in Engineering someone was telling someone to hurry up. And…in my head I was thinking ‘Maybe you should just give them…more time to think about what they’re going to do.’

In this exchange, the participants make it clear that students have a role in expressing their needs and interests while maintaining a supportive learning environment for one another. For the participants, fellow students are to follow directions and be patient with their peers as they learn. For the students, discussion about the role of students, also brought up discussion about the role of teachers in enforcing the rules.

Ana’s comments, however, provide an opening to consider how racial logic is expressed through the ethical-juridical axis. Raciality primarily structures the learning environment toward the educational equity goals of ESSA. When expanding the frame of this moment, and considering the summer schedule, students and teachers came together for seven 45-minute class time blocks with 5 minutes of passing time in between. While 45-minute blocks can be standard teaching blocks in some schools, the time periods can feel rushed. Additionally, when in-person, T4C is a full day program, allowing students to be on a similar schedule as parents who work. There was minimum down or open time with 7 classes a day (4 academic courses and 3 elective courses), a 45-min block for recess and lunch, and a 30 min end of day block. However, the intent to provide 4 academic classes per day (except Fun Friday’s where electives occurred in the morning followed by a program-wide activity or field trip) is less in service of students and more in service of T4C meeting academic growth goals for the LEA and its goal to diversify the teaching force by apprenticing high school and college aged teachers of color. While the program updated the 45-minute block for recess and lunch to an hour in the summer of 2019, the program is still largely based on academic subjects. When Ana proposes that students should be allowed the space to think about what they want to do, she is breaching the
racial logic of T4C by acknowledging that students move at different paces. Her comment complicates the idea of a low achieving student who needs to get with the program and follow the schedule as intended. Her comments invite a consideration of having more time to creatively express learning in Engineering class. However, the strictness of the schedule does not allow for learning to be considered this way or without proving academic growth on a test, for that matter.

One moment that did not feature in previous interpretations of student feedback was a photo Elijah took in response to “I will never forget.” In the photo, a student is drawing an image of “Green Arrow,” and the following exchange happens:

**Elijah:** I took a picture of [him] making Green Arrow. Making a green arrow... I took the picture because I realized how good he is at drawing. He’s very good.

**Chalais:** Okay. Cool. And how does this picture speak to the rest of you? What do you think?

**Ana:** I think he like feels like he likes to draw

**Chalais:** Okay yup. He like to draw…

**Angelo:** That he’ll never forget his buddy there that is such a great artist.

**Chalais:** Nice. And so what does this tell you all or tell us about the ways that students experience T4C?

**Angelo:** So T4C has a variety of different kids. From kids who are great at art…And also from kids that are good at reading and bad at math to kids who are good at math and bad at reading.

**Figure 5-3: Elijah’s Photo in Response to “I will never forget”**
At the top of the exchange, Elijah, Matthew, Ana and Angelo are admiring the student’s artistry, and leaning in closer to look at the photo. It is a beautiful moment where students were able to briefly admire the student’s play of expression through drawing without reference to any educational equity goals. It is also a moment that is interrupted by my questions related to the project. In asking students to share what this photo represents about the student experience, the ethical-juridical axes—which inscribe raciability into educational equity efforts—are exposed. Angelo’s response highlights that there are multiple plays of expression at T4C, yet the primary purpose of being at T4C is defined by pursuing the district’s educational equity goals. This is evident in Angelo’s comments about students either being good or bad at reading in math. I do not take Angelo’s comments as authentic to his own beliefs about students, but rather as an indicator that conversations about achievement are incessant academic settings. The idea that some kids happen to be bad at any academic subject defends the frontier between the transparent I and affectable I—in education, the academically advantaged vs. the academically disadvantaged student. It is a logic that is transported into our conversation given my focus group interview question and the discourse within academic contexts for the “educationally disadvantaged.” Additionally, the specific mention of reading and math subjects maps on to ESSA equity efforts. Testing data for reading and math set off the entire statewide accountability system, allowing SEAs and LEAs to monitor achievement of “subgroups” as well as identify and target school districts, schools, and students for extra support through programs like T4C. In both Engineering and Arts and Crafts classes, students’ plays of expression get interrupted by students’ supposed disadvantage and the mechanisms in place to eradicate it. I also interrupted students’ play of
expression, or play of admiration, in tightly keeping to the ethnographic script. To extend this analysis, I now turn to a discussion of how the students’ comments indicate similar interruptions for teachers.

**Teachers’ Interrupted Plays of Expression**

Matthew and Angelo’s comments in the exchanges below highlight how the play of expression is interrupted for teachers given how ethical-juridical axes inform racial logic at T4C. In both comments, and in Matthew’s cognitive map, they express what they think the role of a teacher is supposed to be. In Matthew’s map, the teacher and students are constructed as static:

Matthew also commented about the role of teachers while describing his cognitive map. His map prominently features a teacher whose desk reads, “teacher” and has a stack of items on it. The teacher is pointing to the board and there are three students sitting at their desks. Of the photo, Matthew said that it depicted his social studies or math class, where the “teacher is teaching like they are supposed to.” From the drawing, it seems the teacher is pointing to the board and actively attempting to engage students. While Matthew did not expound much on his drawing, from his perspective, it’s clear that the teacher plays an active role in facilitating learning for students.

Figure 5-4: Matthew’s Cognitive Map in Response to “What is your T4C experience”
The teacher is at the board and the students are drawn as sitting down. Angelo’s comments are similar to Matthew’s comments in that the teachers are supposed to be strict and impose consequences for not following directions. In my original analysis, I reported on these moments as the students’ interpretation of what a teacher is supposed to be like and do to properly facilitate learning for students. While a previous analysis also took into account Elijah and Ana’s comments about teachers facilitating learning for students in less static ways, it is of note that their examples addressed teacher actions in elective courses. Matthew and Angelo’s comments about academic courses also open a consideration of how the ethical-juridical inscribes raciality into T4C’s program. In the morning’s academic courses, teachers are purposely present to contribute to academic achievement, which is in alignment with the goals set forth by the SEA for this particular school district. My point in returning to these moments is to show how even I represented students as fully and authentically on board with how raciality shapes the aims of the program by sharing what they need for learning. However, when considering that there is more to what they are sharing, I examined how the students’ comments illustrate that even the teachers’ plays of expression are stunted by the educational equity goals of the program.

Using his cognitive map to continue describing his vision of the teacher role for stepping in to address conflict, Angelo and I had the following exchange:

**Chalais:** Ok. Is there anything you think we can do differently then next time so that that’s maybe a better culture?

**Angelo:** Um yeah, … the [teachers] here, they could like be more strict. … Like Mr. [Teacher] the engineering teacher…so he said no phones today, and then everyone had phones. He could have been more strict and took away all the phones.

**Chalais:** Um okay.

**Angelo:** You have to learn to be strict, otherwise they’ll never learn.

**Chalais:** Okay. Anything else?

**Angelo:** No that’s about it.
While Angelo’s comments do not indicate the best practices for teachers to build relationships and trust with their students, he seems to be speaking to a need for less distraction in the classroom, and this being facilitated by greater teacher enforcement of the expectations that are stated in class. While the high school and college-aged teachers are not the focus of this study, their age and limited experience may clarify some of the reason Angelo thinks they need to be stricter. The summer learning program does have rules about keeping cell phones away unless using them with an adult to get in touch with guardians, however Angelo’s comments indicate that this has been a difficult rule for teachers to enforce. This instance may also indicate that teachers could be facing difficulties when addressing other issues and attempting to facilitate students’ needs and interests in the program.

In expanding the frame of these images and comments, I consider how there was a two-week training program that supported teachers to project their voices, take a physically authoritative stance, and speak clearly. While these seem like obvious ways in which someone is able to lead a larger group of people, these ways of being are structured by the need to show academic growth by the end of the summer. One is only considered able to teach well, in their earliest days of teaching, if they can take command of the room. At T4C, teachers are also in place to mirror—for the students—those who have successfully become college and career ready as a majority of teaching staff are people of color. While, again, this doesn’t immediately seem problematic, I further consider how the ethical axis works through ESSA, as outlined by Chapter 4. Based on my analysis in Chapter 4, raciality’s design in the educational text suggests that students, who are destined for low achievement and are designated for services like T4C, should overcome the mark of their families. Their educational disadvantage should be obliterated and they should be active in this self-obliteration. Therefore, in addition to learning and testing, role models are an important static feature of any program that is designed to obliterate disadvantage. Role models (especially teachers of color) are made to serve as the example that overcoming educational disadvantage is indeed possible. This analysis is
not meant to suggest that people of color should not be teachers. Rather, I am complicating the ways in which teachers of color become positioned to root out disadvantage at T4C. Their roles are specifically shaped by educational equity’s problematic design. A double-edged sword, at best, in this set up.

**The Economic-Ethical Assemblage: “I don’t want them to know nothing”**

In this section, the racial logic expressed in an economic-ethical assemblage is discussed through my actions as the director and researcher. This project was originally designed to extend the education field’s methods for liberatory education by working with students to collect data about what is working well and not at T4C in service of improving the program for youth. In an expanded frame, there is more to consider about my roles. In playing the role as Director, and head-educator-of-color, I was to be a role model for the students and teachers. My role was also to support other staff members, ensure that the program was running smoothly and ensure that the services contracted were delivered each day (economic). In playing the role of researcher, I took a liberal humanist approach to qualitative research. I considered students to be fixed, raced, classed, and learning subjects with authentic voices and experiences at T4C. I considered T4C as a unique program when compared to other educational programs, given their specific goal to contribute to racial and educational justice and their focus on intentional relationship building with students. I also considered my role as T4C director and researcher unique in that I would be able facilitate change with intervention from students’ feedback and as a program insider. However, these assumptions were loyal to a particular way of thinking about the role of participatory and ethnographic research in intervening for liberatory
education; the role of participants as informants of an authentic experience; and the role of T4C as an educational service provider that could intervene in new and meaningful ways, especially for students who attended from a “low performing school district.” I could have stayed within the assumptions but that too would have been reproductive without getting to a deeper understanding. In the moments below, I demonstrate how the economic-ethical axes are made more visible in a moment that I had not considered in previous analyses and interpretations of student feedback. My analytical engagements illustrate how the imperative to obliterate educational disadvantage becomes evident in students’ regular encounters with knowledge as property. That is, students are routinely asked to provide information as evidence of an intervention’s effectiveness, shaping funding for future invasive interventions.

In response to the prompt “My class experience,” Elijah took a photo of a chart paper with drawings from students in his Arts and Crafts class. As a parting ritual, the students drew one doodle per day on the chart paper, eventually filling the paper. The exchange below was another moment to engage with the playful expression of students at T4C. The students enjoyed the photo and were immediately drawn in, examining the collective doodles on the chart paper. During the focus group interview, after each student displayed their photo, I followed up by asking 4 stock questions to draw out nuances in students’ feedback. The last was always, “If the people in charge of T4C were to look at this picture, what would you want them to know?” When I posed this question in response to his photo, Elijah whispered “I don’t want them to know nothing.”
Figure 5-5: Elijah’s Photo in Response to “My class experience”

Elijah: Oh yeah. I took a picture of um the scribble wall...It was arts and crafts....Before we leave the classroom she let us draw on the board like one picture. [Someone] drew that one the Spiderman. Yeah. It’s just a lot of doodles.
Angelo: That’s a good one
Ana: I didn’t even notice it, it was so good.
Angelo: That looks like a pizza. That looks like a pizza.
Matthew: Oh, I drew the little stick figure with the little, oh yeah what’s that, mustache?
Elijah: Oh, your the little beard. Right here. Right here. [all laughing]

During the actual conversation, I did not hear Elijah’s comment; I heard it when transcribing this interview from voice to written text. There were also moments, when Elijah said “I don’t know how to say it” or “I don’t have anything to say” in response to the interview questions.

Thinking with Keguro Macharia’s essay titled, On Being Area Studied (2020), I asked how Macharia’s discussion of an “indifferent native” might be in conversation with Elijah’s comments. Of the indifferent native, Macharia writes:

increasingly, I have been interested in the indifferent native. This native haunts colonial archives, and if you check, recent NGO reports. This native fails to speak
in the correct way. Chooses not to answer questions. Rarely shows up. Shows up when not expected. Offers banal observations...Perhaps the indifferent native understands that the scorpion does not really care about conversation. Perhaps the indifferent native never has to say no. (p. 76)

In this quote, Macharia makes a point about how those who are considered to be natives, informants, participants, and research subjects are situated as authentic knowers. In a field like Anthropology, researchers use ethnographic methods similar to the ones used in this project as a means to tap into the native’s knowledge. A goal is to make knowledge that is authentically representative of culture, social configurations, and ways of being that are always different from the researcher. The researcher then uses this authentic knowledge to come up with interventions that take the native’s never-before-known perspective into account. It is a very Western way of addressing issues through research. However, Elijah’s comment, “I don’t want them to know nothing” provides an opening to consider how the economic-ethical axes are rendered more visible given how their racial logic informs T4C’s pursuit of equity and my actions as a researcher. What is it that he is actually refusing when I ask? Silva (2007) is helpful for expanding the frame:

The never-before-known could become relevant, however, only because postmodern anthropology writes the others of Europe as things with interiority (ones whose particular consciousness is immediately actualized in what they say and do) and because the new tools of scientific reason can reveal how whatever they say and do actualizes a transparent (interior-temporal) subaltern I… Like other products of scientific signification, they [current writings of the global subaltern] have become “nature” itself, objects and subjects of critical projects that, holding on to the desire to “discover” and “control” a yet-to-be-uncovered “truth” or “essence” refuse to engage their own effect. (p. 169-170)

Elijah’s comments indicate an active stance in responding to my researcher questions. Thinking with Elijah’s silence and the “indifferent native,” I ask what kind of refusal or knowing Elijah is staging about this youth voice project, the larger aims of T4C, and his participation in both? When thinking with Macharia, I also figure myself as the director-
researcher-becoming-scorpion given my role as a regulator of T4C and Western science’s racial and political-economic aims. In his moments of silence, speaking-silence, and passing the proverbial mic, Elijah may be aware of something that I am not aware of, but am participating in. Therefore, it is possible that Elijah understands the contrived-ness of the research setting better than I as a novice researcher in 2018.

Reading Elijah’s comment, “I don’t want them to know nothing,” I also turn to Silva’s (2005) discussion of Bloco Olodum, a Black Brazilian cultural group who struggles against legal and economic subjection. She writes:

Olodum’s lyrics institute a kind of subaltern self-consciousness, a black subject, which is necessarily situated, a spatial thing which inhabits a subaltern region it shares with all peoples who have engaged in political struggle against juridical and economic subjection. (p. 337)

When considering her reading of Bloco Olodum’s political struggle alongside Elijah’s comment, his words figure as a response to his (and all T4C students’) constant positioning as objects of study in this project and T4C’s larger, neoliberal educational project and my ethnographic project. The organization exists to “fix” students’ summer learning loss through standardizing the learning curriculum and monitoring academic achievement. Elijah understands that attempts to fix student achievement undermine more liberatory practices. He knows that the current expressions of educational equity derive from strategies which depend on racial and economic exploitation of students’ mental labor and social space to regulate and improve academic achievement. Perhaps he knows that he shares this subjection with the other students in the interview room and building. Perhaps Elijah’s comment holds me and neoliberal education reform strategies in contention. When he whispers, “I don’t want them to know nothing,” perhaps his comment indicates a larger struggle against racial, educational, legal, and political-
economic subjection. A critical choice to refuse being just another piece of evidence for the arsenal of raciality and the problematic pursuit of educational equity as designed by raciality.

The Economic-Ethical-Juridical Assemblage: Rewards and Consequences

In this section, the racial logic of educational equity—as expressed through T4C’s program—is discussed through how the economic-ethical-juridical axes are rendered more visible in two moments of students’ feedback. My analytical engagements illustrate how educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic informs T4C’s approach to rewarding and issuing consequences for students. The rewards and consequences inform how students are made to participate in the program’s equity interventions. My engagement also illustrates how students can be put in harm’s way by participating in a program that is designed according to raciality’s tools for educational equity.

Matthew, Place, and Silence

I intentionally re-turned the data and chose to work with Matthew’s comments after reflecting on and puzzling over his participation. Matthew did not want to be recorded when discussing certain pieces of the project, but was willing to be recorded with the full group for our focus group interview. When I asked Matthew to share, he spoke minimally. I found myself asking more follow up questions to get him to explain more, but many of his verbal contributions were concise. I also noticed that at least two of Matthew’s photos were about following rules and reporting bullying. Below is my exchange with him as we discussed one of his photos. The photo, a folder on the school
wall that read “bullying policy and reporting form,” was in response to the prompt “This is missing.” When I displayed the photo for our focus group discussion, the following exchange ensued:

**Chalais:** This is missing. Matthew. So how come you took this picture?
**Matthew:** Because, I took this picture because…People sometimes in T4C like to bother other kids and yeah I took this picture because of that…
**Chalais:** And why did you say this is missing?
**Matthew:** Oh this is missing because it’s something…like you never know, something could happen bad and you could get kicked out. So, I just took a picture of this…Bullying is not cool.

**Figure 5-6: Matthew’s Photo in Response to “This is missing”**

![Bullying Policy and Reporting Form](image)

**Expanding the Frame: In and Out at T4C**

Before pivoting in my consideration of students’ feedback, one of the categories I created through data analysis was “playing the program role.” I defined this category as student comments that expressed the program’s responsibility for meeting students’ needs and interests. I interpreted a discussion about bullying as one that illustrated students’ concerns regarding peer-to-peer conflict in the program and the desire for a better reporting system that would hopefully reduce conflict:
Matthew: People sometimes in T4C like to bother other kids and yeah I took this picture because of that.
Chalais: And why did you say this is missing?
Matthew: Oh this is missing because it’s something… like you never know, something could happen bad and you could get kicked out. So, I just took a picture of this….
Elijah: Oh! you can put this in the [class]room this is missing …

In the conversation above, Matthew is addressing what he views as a programmatic concern and suggests a solution based on a procedure that is used in the school building during the academic year. Elijah immediately acknowledges the future potential of this suggestion by stating that these forms could be located in each classroom. This represents the role of the program in addressing student conflict by providing an avenue for the students to express their needs. In this case, the system would allow students to share more about instances of bullying in hopes of reducing conflict. It is notable that when talking about conflict, the students did not mention the program’s restorative justice circle practice for mediating student conflict. Perhaps they did not know about it because they never participated in a restorative circle. In any case, the students are speaking to a need for the program to address conflict between students by making it easier for students to report and participate in addressing conflict.

When focused on students’ authentic experiences and feedback, I had chosen to tell the story that the program needed to better address student conflict. Then, in reflection of this feedback and while reporting it to the CEO, I argued that restorative practices and the use of them be made clearer to students whether they had gotten in trouble or not. Since restorative justice was not a component of the student orientation, one would have to get in trouble or be close to conflict to learn about the restorative circle process. In reflection of my feedback, the CEO agreed. I also imagined that if students knew more about the restorative practices, then maybe they could also participate in de-escalating problems with their peers.

However, when returning to his comments and considering what about the space could have been contributing to Matthew’s silence, I complicated the ease with which I suggested a solution for less conflict. A solution I thought would allow the program to
better pursue its educational equity goals. Instead, I asked, how is his voice further complicated by the interview room? How might Matthew’s request for a bullying reporting system demonstrate racial logic being made more visible through an economic-ethical-juridical assemblage? Expanding the frame, I considered more about the place and moment we were in during the interview. I considered how the location of our interview and a previous incident might have been shaping Matthew’s comments and atypical silence. A few days prior, Matthew and a number of other students witnessed a fight between two T4C students on the bus. The bus driver was unable to intervene to stop the fight and called the local police. Upon getting notification of this incident, I and the Assistant Director left a staff meeting immediately to drive over to the location where some students had been detained and were waiting for their parents to pick them up. While each student was able to go home with their parents that night, I can remember the sheer terror I felt, hoping that police intervention would not result in actions that would make the situation even more dire—this was true for the most part. It is important to note that the police were called to resolve this matter on the bus, making clear how the economic-juridical comes to its sense in contracting private educational service providers to operate the summer achievement program. The school district partners with a private bus company who supports school transport operations across the country (economic axis). As a national and private educational service provider, the bus company can protect its property and cargo by deputizing bus drivers to contact the local police for incidents that might put the driver in harm’s way and increase the bus company’s liability (juridical axis). Breaking up a fight between students is one such incident. Additionally, the bus company is no stranger to supporting the needs of police departments, as it has worked
with police in a different town to offer commercial driver license training. In considering how the racial logic of the economic axis comes to its sense, this is another moment where the neoliberal wave of using privately contracted education services animates policing. Police came into contact with students for the protection of property and private liability.

After the fight on the bus, the district’s Summer Program Coordinator obtained surveillance video of the incident and asked me to review it to help discern who started the altercation (juridical axis). Upon reviewing the video, the coordinator suggested we gather students from the video to learn more about what happened prior to the incident. A deputy request I wish I had refused. Upon gathering students, we congregated in an empty classroom off to the side of the main program’s happenings. This was the same room I used as a quiet space for our focus group interview just days later. Matthew was part of both student groups. I had not previously considered how the space of the focus group interview might have been reminiscent of the bus fight and resultant questioning of students. Matthew might have held on to this memory, perhaps prompting him to be limited in his comments and to, at times, refuse being recorded during our research project. A critical choice that demonstrated how the juridical axis of racial logic was coming to its sense at T4C and in our project. This moment with the district coordinator animated policing at T4C well beyond the evening of the bus fight.

Matthew’s comment about getting “kicked out” compels me to ask how racial logic expressed through economic-ethical-juridical assemblage underwrites the program and district’s decision-making regarding who is disciplined “in” and who is disciplined “out.” The ethical axis of racial logic comes to its sense because the school district
educates a majority of Latinx students and the program makes clear its commitment to educational equity for “educationally disadvantaged” students of color. On the economic axis, T4C advertises who they want “in” on the opportunity to reduce summer learning loss by partnering with school districts across the country, primarily serving Latinx students. While the program, staff, and I did not pride ourselves on kicking students “out,” we and the school district made clear that there is an “out” for students if the program’s restorative practices didn’t resolve the conflict (juridical axis). In this comment, Matthew opens a discussion of racial logic at T4C by highlighting the potential to be “in” and/or “out.” His request for the bullying reporting system illuminates how raciality is enlivened through the program to regulate student social life—conflicts get you “out” and the appearance of no conflict keeps you “in.” Additionally, this racial logic regulates T4C’s theory of change connected to the program’s funding—conflicts mean students are “in” for the majority of the program’s academic days. Thus, they can potentially show growth on the program’s summative test, proving the program’s utility for educational equity (juridical-economic axes). However, they are “out” during the program’s Fun Days, which theoretically have no impact on summative testing. These programmatic gestures enliven raciality in how they seek to regulate the social space dedicated to the obliteration of disadvantage, and continue to produce facts about how to get students to academically achieve (ethical-juridical axes).

Further, racial logic’s economic-ethical-juridical assemblage comes to its sense in the following exchange about a pizza reward for high attendance. In response to the prompt “My class experience,” Elijah took a photo of a pizza box in the cafeteria. He tells
the group about a weekly incentive that student clubs (homerooms) receive for high attendance:

Elijah: This is when … I took a picture of the pizza … last Friday when Matthew didn’t come the pizza was good. We had cheese, pepperoni pizza.
Ana: Which class were you in?
Elijah: Club [10]
Ana: How did you get that?
Elijah: ‘Cause. For Attendance. 2nd time.
Angelo: Geeze
Matthew: Ah for real yall didn’t tell me this?
Angelo: Exactly…
Elijah: I told you this. You shoulda came… It was supposed to be his birthday the next day anyway so.
Chalais: So what does this picture tell you about the way students experience T4C?
Angelo: Life is Cheesy Goodness.
[all laughing]
Chalais: Cheesy Goodness. Yes. What about you Elijah?
Elijah: That we’re rewarded for the for all of the good things that we do here.
Matthew: Come here every day.

Figure 5-7: Elijah’s Photo in Response to “My class experience”
As program staff we made clear that students must not have more than five absences over the entire summer and our operations manager called families each morning to check on whether absent students would be attending for the day. Attendance is also prioritized by the ESSA as an academic indicator that states can incorporate in their statewide accountability systems for meaningful differentiation between schools’ performance.

When the SEA or LEA contracts with an external organization to improve academic performance, program attendance is also collected as evidence that the program contributes to students’ academic success and improvement (economic-juridical axes).

ESSA guidelines routinely highlight student attendance as an appropriate data point to monitor as schools and/or external programs work to improve student performance:

**Sec.1111** (vii) in accordance with subparagraph (D), at the State’s discretion, may also include other academic indicators, as determined by the State for all public school students, measured separately for each group described in clause (v), such as achievement on additional State or locally administered assessments, decreases in grade-to-grade retention rates, attendance rates, and changes in the percentages of students completing gifted and talented, advanced placement, and college preparatory courses.

**PART B—21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS**

SEC. 4201. 20 U.S.C. 7171 PURPOSE; DEFINITIONS.

(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this part is to provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that—(1) provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet the challenging State academic standards;

(1) COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER.—The term “community learning center” means an entity that—(A) assists students to meet the challenging State academic standards by providing the students with academic enrichment activities and a broad array of other activities (such as programs and activities described in subsection (a)(2)) during nonschool hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess) that—(i) reinforce and complement the regular academic programs of the schools attended by the students served; and (ii) are targeted to the students’ academic needs and aligned with the instruction students receive during the school day; and
(4) EXTERNAL ORGANIZATION.—The term “external organization” means— (A) a nonprofit organization with a record of success in running or working with before and after school (or summer recess) programs and activities; or this part, which shall include, at a minimum— (A) a description of the performance indicators and performance measures that will be used to evaluate programs and activities with emphasis on alignment with the regular academic program of the school and the academic needs of participating students, including performance indicators and measures that— (i) are able to track student success and improvement over time; (ii) include State assessment results and other indicators of student success and improvement, such as improved attendance during the school day, better classroom grades, regular (or consistent) program attendance, and on-time advancement to the next grade level.

In my previous interpretation of this moment, I suggested that this photo was a jumping off point for the students to consider what they enjoyed about the program and also what could be improved about it. I highlighted Ana and Matthew’s assertion that an overnight camp could be a fun and “return worthy” experiences for the students:

After Elijah shares his photo of a pizza box his class won for high attendance, Ana mentions that she enjoys the program and suggests that her peers should attend more often and shares an idea for expanding the role of the program to meet her interest [in the photo, a pizza box is shown with a backpack]:

**Ana:** People should come more often to a program that is like really, really good and makes you feel like you’re at home, you’re comfortable, you have more friends, you can hang out… I wish this was a camp like you can stay at …and then go back home on the weekends and stuff.

**Chalais:** That’s cool. I would like that idea too.

**Ana:** That would be really dope.

**Matthew:** We should do that next year.

**Chalais:** Ohh! Yeah. Somebody else said that too.

The above exchange, signals aspects of the program that offer a return-worthy experience for Ana and Matthew. They also share their interest in a future iteration of the program as an overnight camp (rather than more academic time); their camp idea would prompt them to enjoy time with friends next year.

However, when considering this interpretation alongside the initial exchange the students had, I noticed Matthew said “come here every day” to my question “what does this picture tell you about the way students experience T4C?” This comment stands out
because it is different from Matthew’s feedback during one of our research activities, where the students reviewed and completed the 2017 T4C student survey (see figure 4-1). In addition to completing the survey, I asked them to give feedback on what they liked about the survey, what should change about the survey, and what was missing from the survey. In the actual survey, Matthew and Elijah responded “neutral” to the following question: “If I am eligible, I plan to return to T4C next year.” However, the differences in responses invite a consideration of how racial logic becomes evident at T4C through an economic-ethical-juridical assemblage. T4C has a goal to provide a service and keep operations open from year to year (economic axis). Their data about attendance and improved performance allows them to prove that they will contribute to SEA’s and LEA’s education efforts in compliance with ESSA (juridical axis). Further, the pizza incentive informs how T4C uses incentives to entice student attendance and keep its operations running from year to year. Yet this incentive gets discussed as a reward for demonstrating good behaviors/actions (ethical axis). Again—like my previous engagement with Angelo’s comments—I do not take Elijah and Matthew’s comments as an authentic expression of their enjoying this incentive and therefore the program, but rather as an opening for considering how conceptions of a good student are created through rewarding—always and only—according to how ESSA constructs proper interventions for the “educationally disadvantaged.”

**What Can be Justified in the Name of Equity and Justice?**

In this chapter, my analysis highlights how students’ comments make the racial logic of educational equity at T4C more visible. I demonstrate how attention to students’
comments and attention to material-discursive forces that shape T4C’s pursuit of educational equity in the Milltown school district unsettle what is readily visible. The economic-ethical-juridical axes that inscribe raciality into educational equity are critical to my analytical engagements. Chakravartty and Silva (2012) discuss these major axes as stemming from modern thought. Their discussion of the axes as the registers of the modern subject also inform how the conception and pursuit of educational equity depends on raciality’s creation and maintenance of the educationally disadvantaged. Through my analysis in Chapter 4, the creation of the educationally disadvantaged is evident in tracing how raciality designs equity through educational text. In this chapter’s analysis, the maintenance of this educational subject is evident in my unsettling of students as fixed educational and racial subjects. Instead of treating students as fixed subjects with fixed worldviews that propose more inclusive strategies for educational equity, I consider how their comments are entangled in the neoliberal education context, the problematic design of equity, and the productive effects of raciality. I disentangle this web to expose how raciality informs educational equity’s problematic design at T4C.

Through expanding the frame to offer greater material-discursive context, I illustrate how students’ comments opened further consideration of how various axes meet up and produce a program that aims to obliterate the low performance of the “educationally disadvantaged.” Such obliteration, I argue, manifests through the ESSA. I undermine raciality by making clear its productive effects, which play out through the program’s adherence to local, state, and federal policies for educational equity. These compliance measures, informed by raciality, were entangled with my actions as well as students’ comments and actions. By demonstrating how educational equity’s racial logic
can be rendered more visible at T4C, I unsettle the ease with which any equity effort is considered to be morally good. That is, I unravel the idea that equity efforts solely produce positive academic and social outcomes for students. I also complicate the idea that educational equity is a worthy justice project in its current iteration. The same principles that ESEA and ESSA use to construct mechanisms of identifying the “educationally disadvantaged” and monitoring educational equity illustrate, on a smaller scale, a “moral text[ethical], in which the principles of universality and historicity also sustain the writing of the ‘others of Europe’ (both colonial and racial other) as entities facing certain and necessary (self-inflicted) obliteration” (Chakravartty & Silva, 2012, pp. 370-371). This moral/ethical text (ESSA) and the ways in which it is juridically administered (through the SEA and LEA) depend on T4C (and others) as educational service providers (economic axis). In contracting service providers students are not only made to be in compliance with educational equity policies, they could also face additional policing due to efforts that protect property while conducting business. If these logics are animated and acceptable through the pursuit of educational equity, under the auspices of raciality, what else can be justified in the name of equity and justice?

The moving pieces that must align to demonstrate improved academic performance for the so-called educationally disadvantaged require raciality. Enslavement in the US was also a social and legal system that was said to be better for the enslaved than living in the social configurations they had been literally shipped from. At the beginning of this chapter, Lauren and Bankhole’s discussion of slavery indicates how lawful logic can often result in siding with enslavers. It also shows how young people are meant to work off debts their parents cannot pay. If our equity efforts are to avoid
backsliding into systems that justify violence (or proximity to it) in the name of justice, then we must reconsider what we are demanding to be included in and whether concepts of inclusion, equity, and justice, as designed by raciality, should be the basis of our demands. How might we be answerable to liberatory learning that does not depend on current manifestations of educational equity in school systems?
CHAPTER 6
THE ONLY LASTING TRUTH IS CHANGE

From: *Earthseed: The Books of the Living*

“All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
Is Change.”

- Octavia E. Butler,
*Parable of the Sower*

[T]ransversability assumes the existence of lines that run parallel but which can be transversed by another line—which might as well be an indentation in the fabric Space-time—through which the “Play of Express” efflux; …Note that these descriptors are not meant to name or determine something, which would be nothing more than a rehearsal of the moves of the philosophers of universal reason, in its historical and scientific stages.

They are guides for the imagination. When virtuality guides our imaging of political existence, then the only significant political demand is Reconstruction: the end of state capital is the demand for the restoration of total value expropriated through the violent appropriated of the productive capacity of native lands and slave labor.

-Denise Ferreira da Silva,
*Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World*

At a retreat for women writers in 1988, Octavia E. Butler said that she never wanted the title of being the solitary Black female sci-fi writer. She wanted to be one of many Black female sci-fi writers. She wanted to be one of thousands of folks writing themselves into the present and into the future. We believe in that right Butler claimed for each of us—the right to dream as ourselves, individually and collectively. But we also think it is a responsibility she handed down: are we brave enough to imagine beyond the boundaries of ‘the real’ and then do the hard work of sculpting reality from our dreams?

-Walidah Imarisha,
I opened this dissertation study by sharing Octavia E. Butler’s (1993) Black Feminist Sci-Fi/Speculative fiction story about Lauren, a young Sower whose thoughts, feelings, doubts, fears, desires, dreams, and courage left deep impressions on me. I witnessed her story as she managed to live through major events that sparked societal change throughout the majority of her life. Events that are similar to our current world’s encounter with a global pandemic, economic collapse, climate chaos, anti-Blackness, and the rise of fascism. Not only does she live, she works with her companions to build another life in the aftermath of collapse. Faithful to Earthseed, a communal and spiritual way of life that she and her companions forge into existence, Lauren teaches that change is the only constant. With Change as her guide, she stays in the practice of making room for the not yet, provoking readers to do the same. Lauren’s story speaks to the incredible societal changes and events Ana, Angelo, Elijah, Matthew and many youth are witnessing today. This project outlines my intention to be answerable to them and the pursuit of liberatory learning that does not depend on current manifestations of educational equity in school systems.

**Demanding Change**

This project demands change. In turning the lens on myself, I argue for complicating practices of representation, racial categorization, and educational designation in our work with youth given the impulse and precedent to treat student voice as fixed. When treating students as authentic educational and racial subjects, liberatory aims can become entangled with raciality’s insidious design of educational equity. Students are held prisoner to transcendental aims. I echo other scholars who urge us to pay attention to
material-discursive forces that shape how and what we interpret as readily visible in educational contexts. This project also suggests that Black Feminism is a site of ontoepistemological alternatives for educational study, which is capable of guiding the liberatory aims we want to pursue in education.

For example, in Toward a Black Feminist Poetics Silva (2014) reads Lauren’s ability to share, or feel what others feel, as transversability. That is, Lauren can be with her companions, as in being next to them. Through being next to them or seeing them, she can also feel the flow of multiple expressions of pain and pleasure in their bodies. While Lauren has an experience that feels impossible in this world, Silva offers that transversability is “a guide for the imagination” which defies “nam[ing] or determin[ing] anything” (p. 94). As an imaginative gesture, transversability acknowledges ways of being that are often swallowed and postponed (though not altered) by the post-Enlightenment European imagination. Yet Butler’s sci-fi novels open up the imagination beyond Western ways of knowing. Her sci-fi novels call forth those (im)possible ways of being and knowing that remind us that our imaginations are capable of “guide[ing] our imaging of political existence… toward a “political demand” for “Reconstruction.”

Walidah Imarisha (2015) also reminds that Butler imagined many more Black sci-fi writers “writing themselves into the present and future” (p. 4). This cue to write ourselves into the future is akin to demanding and making thinkable “the restoration of total value expropriated through the violent appropriated of the productive capacity of native lands and slave labor” (Silva, 2014, p. 94). Making and living through such a demand will help us make space for many more sci-fi writers and activists whose visions of justice start with the social, political, and economic lives of those who refuse to be “objects,”
“commodities,” and “others” for the survival of the global capital machine. Therefore, I join scholars like Toliver (2021), whose engagement with speculative literacies regularly reminds us that it is possible to take “a step toward emancipating the imagination from the clutches of dominant ideals” (p. 146). This possibility can inform the plots of the stories we read, and it can inform our plot for liberatory learning that does not depend on racially’s problematic design of equity.

Speculative books, such as Parable of the Sower, also remind us that our fugitive planning can be further informed by understanding that there is a limit to which we can extract from each other and the Earth. We would be wise to heed that “the only lasting truth is Change” (p. 195) as we pursue liberatory projects that undermine racially.

According to Silva’s (2007) argument, Hegel’s contributions to post-Enlightenment European philosophy assert that Europe is home to the favored social and bodily configurations of the world. He assumes that if this were not true, other regions of the world would stand out, making obvious that they house the best expressions of ethical or moral life. In this assumption, Hegel also makes the case that the things and “others” of the world exist to serve Europe’s moral dominance. In his writings, Hegel provides the philosophical and ethical grounds for extractive acts, which always require the reinforcement of a frontier between Europe and everyone else. Those acts—be they enslavement, colonization or something else—were (and continue to be) a perpetual effort for Europe to bring everyone else into their highest expression of self. According to Hegel, Europe’s intentions can only be morally right. On the part of the “others,” to refuse such transformation is to refuse the highest form of self. It is to be written outside of the narrative of progress. It is to be made to be (un)justifiably punished. We are still
living in the wake of this several centuries long terror plot facilitated by Hegel’s pen. Yet, as demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5, there are tools for pausing and noticing how such a pervasive logic repeats at various scales. We can undermine and disrupt the master’s plan.

**Seeing and Reading Differently**

In the chapters that have brought me to this discussion, I illustrated how the logics of othering, extracting, and transcending continue to inform how equity is promoted in the US. I started by asking, *how are educational and sociopolitical entanglements designed to promote educational equity? How do educational and sociopolitical entanglements shape the pursuit of educational equity in an out-of-school summer achievement program? How do educational and sociopolitical entanglements of pursuing educational equity shape student feedback in an out-of-school-context?* In response, I took a critical Black Feminist position as a site for educational study. I took this position given the lessons it has taught me about illuminating hidden designs and seeing what is before and around me differently. Black Feminism created openings in my thinking that breach a fixed, colonial gaze of educational equity. Through Black Feminism, I have learned to illuminate education’s assemblage of racial logic, or how the racial capitalist design comes together, protects, and preserves itself through the pursuit of educational equity.

By engaging education as assemblage, I have come to understand that equity, as we currently know and pursue it, is but a tool of the colonizer. A tool for othering, extracting, and transcending. In this chapter, I return to this dissertation’s central questions to pull
together how I have answered them, however partially. I also consider lessons from my conceptual, methodological, and analytical engagements.

**The Design of Educational Equity and its Pursuit in an Out-of-School Context**

Through this critical Black Feminist inquiry, I drew on Silva’s theorization of the analytics of raciality as a method for illuminating educational and sociopolitical entanglements that are often hidden in the back rooms of educational equity efforts.

Raciality is a social scientific apparatus, created by the post-Enlightenment European thought, which “transforms human bodily and social configurations into signifiers of the mind” (p. 166). In Chapters 3 and 4 I outlined how raciality can be traced by highlighting three moves: rewriting the racial subaltern subject in affectability; excusing the violent effects of this rewriting; and redeploying the transparency thesis. In chapter four, I applied the critical strategy of tracing raciality to examine how the three moves design the concept and pursuit of equity as defined by US educational text. I also examined how raciality, as expressed in educational law and policy, informs the programmatic goals Teaching for the 21st Century (T4C) must pursue as an educational equity service provider.

In Chapter 4, I illustrated how the three moves of raciality are expressed in the educational text to conceptualize and pursue educational equity. Further, I illustrated educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic through a figure that shows how the ethical, juridical, and economic axes of modern thought function together to design educational equity’s racial logic.
**Ethical Axis**

The educational text outlines a moral duty to educate the children of the nation. It doubles down on its moral commitment to students’ intellectual achievement by specifically classifying and describing the physical traits of students that it intends to monitor and support (i.e., students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, English learners, and students living in poverty). The articulation of subgroups, defined by physical traits, is key in understanding how the educational text is through and through an instrument of raciality. The need for equity efforts is first and foremost conceptualized through bodily traits that are said to express or impact the likelihood of low performance. Through subgroup designations students—especially students of color—are made to be the objects of equity, or those whose academic achievement is extra-measured and tracked in efforts that monitor whether equity is taking place or not.

**Juridical Axis**

The educational text outlines its juridical, or legal, commitment to promoting equity by tasking SEAs with administering equity through a state-wide accountability system. This system is designed to monitor academic achievement by assessing students’ academic capabilities and ranking schools according to students’ assessment performance. In turn, the monitoring apparatus facilitates academic support by supplying the SEA with data about academic performance across the state. Using this data, the SEA identifies and intervenes to support the lowest performing school districts. Many more designations follow. Through this monitoring apparatus Milltown, a district that primarily serves Latinx children whose families speak Spanish at home, was labeled a “chronically
underperforming” school district and qualified for “Additional Targeted Support and Instruction.” The district has three years to show academic progress in order to exit this designation. To lift themselves and the district out of this designation, students must exhibit better performance on the state assessment.

**Economic Axis**

The educational text plays an economic function by allowing public-private partnerships to facilitate additional school time in service of higher academic performance. LEAs have permission to contract private and nonprofit educational service providers that support equity efforts. To improve student achievement, Milltown contracts outside support. T4C, the educational service provider featured in this study, was contracted by Milltown and must demonstrate that it offers an intervention capable of supporting the intellectual development of students who participate. If it cannot provide evidence of students’ academic improvements, its contract with the district is in jeopardy. Thus, it implements a program that can measure and track achievement. It is notable that each T4C site is housed in school districts that primarily serve Latinx students. It is also notable that school districts consider the program to be a proven model for getting students to achieve. Further, it is notable that T4C markets a program that hires a majority of teachers of color, arguing that teachers of color are additionally positioned to help address educational equity, despite the fact that they are high school and college aged teachers. Again, I am not arguing that people of color should not be teachers. What concerns me is how teachers are strategically (implicitly) positioned through the axes of racial logic to address “educational disadvantage.”
Reading Educational Equity’s Design Differently

A Black Feminist study of raciality in educational and sociopolitical entanglements exposes the ease with which racial logic in US education law prescribes “educational disadvantage” as fact. It also exposes the ease with which a program like T4C is celebrated for its specific approach to educational equity. Disadvantage is affixed to what we think we know about students’ intellectual capacities using instruments, interventions, and programs that confirm and root out “disadvantage,” rather than open up other ways of knowing about learning. Donovan (2018) makes a similar critique of the World Bank’s use of Randomized Control Trials (RCTs). These RCTs are often used as an objective measure for indicating the success of a foreign aid intervention. However, the measures of success are solely about the efficacy of the intervention to determine whether the money is worth spending:

Within the justificatory regime of development aid, credible knowledge is highly valued by funders, implementers and the public at large. RCTs are presented as a methodology that determines whether or not knowledge about aid is accurate. In this case, their targets for denunciation have been other ways of knowing. …They are not oriented towards critique for its own sake, and they do not cast suspicion on the very possibility of development nor the feasibility of aid writ large. They are reformists, not radicals. (Donovan, 2018, p. 37) (emphasis in original)

The justificatory regime of development aid is concerned about whether interventions are credible or not. The SEA’s and LEA’s role is to be concerned with whether an intervention is credible or not. To prove its credibility, an educational service provider must show evidence of students’ academic improvement or socio-emotional development. This is a logic I ran into when the CEO of T4C told me that the student survey would become an externally validated state survey, which measured the impacts of the program on students. The student survey, whether T4C’s iteration or the state’s,
was always intended for T4C to prove that the program had made an academic and socio-emotional difference for students. Given that T4C (and many other educational service providers’) efforts are funneled toward proving their program’s utility to students, there is an uncritical embracing of program outcomes. Supposed academic growth is not the only outcome of this program. The productive effect of establishing credibility in our equity efforts makes students appear as if they need this particular intervention. Another productive effect is that the interveners from the federal level to the programmatic level are made to appear morally good. There is little suspicion of harm being done. Or the harm is justified as a necessary evil on the road to equity. While the program is optional, it is made to appear as if it is a good summer option that couldn’t hurt, especially for kids of color in a low-performing school district. Students in “low-performing” school districts become the racial and educational material that allows capital to flow.

That racial and educational material is also used to entice a majority of high school and college-aged teachers to try out the educator profession. What starts as an intervention for reversing summer learning loss also becomes a way to circulate the idea that those who look like, or are mirrors, for students have all they need to make an impact. When considering raciality’s logic of obliteration, these claims deserve further attention. Can first time educators really be credited with making an academic difference in students’ lives in just 5 weeks? Or is this expression based on the logic of transcendentality? Who could better model that obliteration of disadvantage is possible if not those who look like disadvantage yet have escaped its fate? Is it just an innocent and morally good claim? A marketing claim? What has concerned me in this dissertation is the stuff that has to be true for such a claim to be intelligible to us. What concerns me
further is the way that youth and educators of color are tightly managed toward equity
goals that steal their plays of expression in learning. In responding to the first two inquiry
questions, I have shown that US education law and interventions for equity rely on a
racial logic that I am not willing to repeat. There is more that shapes equity efforts than
what is readily visible. There is a dangerous logic that has, for centuries, carved a way for
justifying unspeakable horrors that constitute the life and blood of global capital.

How the Pursuit of Equity Shapes Student Feedback

Through tracing raciality in this study, I have made visible how students’ feedback
pointed to educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic, which functions through the
ethical, juridical, and economic axes of the modern subject. Attention to raciality
transformed what I thought I heard students saying about T4C and what I thought I read
in their photos and comments. Greater attention to raciality also transformed the ways in
which I found students to be engaged with the colonial research process I had imposed. In
Chapter 5, my analytical engagement with students’ feedback illustrates that education
equity efforts and youth-informed research efforts can exploit the appearance of inclusion
without exploring the design of the educational context. I undermine raciality by treating
students’ comments as openings for exposing the ethical, juridical, and economic axes
that inform educational equity’s problematic design at T4C. It was important to
destabilize a fixed notion of students’ voices, and consider how their comments were
openings for exposing raciality’s problematic design of educational equity. By engaging
with students’ comments as openings that could expose raciality’s traps, I argued that
there was more to what students said than what was illuminated by my original
interpretations of students’ feedback. Re-turning students’ feedback, I expanded the frame in various moments of the focus group conversation to provide greater context about T4C’s operations, its schedule, its programmatic space, and its expression of raciality’s design of equity.

Reading their comments anew, I heard them differently from a critical Black Feminist position that considered what they said as shaped by a program that is designed to protect and uphold racial knowledge. That seemingly innocent query from Ana that led to Elijah’s enactment of an imagined teacher whose classroom walls had been destroyed by the kids over the summer was not just a joke. The moments Angelo, Ana, Elijah, and Matthew talked about good sporting behavior or following the sporting rules were not just about good lessons for fair game play. These were moments to consider the productive effects of property logics that structure students’ possible actions and encounters in the program. The moment I didn’t write Matthew’s silence off as just not having much to say led me to consider more about how the program rewarded and policed students’ participation in the program, conspiring with raciality’s tools for pursuing educational equity. That moment when Ana honors the effort of gathering one’s thoughts in response to the Engineering task at hand invited me to consider how time moved. Time was always moving according to raciality’s design of equity, severely limiting the time afforded for creative expression. When I interrupted Elijah, Matthew, Ana, and Angelo as they admired another student’s artwork, this was an opportunity to contemplate how my time as director was shaped by taking an authoritative role and moving at a quick pace. My job as an ethnographic researcher was also to “get” an
authentic response to the question for analysis. No. It is not just what it is. There is more to make visible than meets the Western gaze.

While this project does not demonstrate all the ways I would re-enter a research site, it does illustrate the entanglements that can’t help but be reproduced in a research project. It is a project taking place in a neoliberal educational context that is designed by raciality. Representing or even including youth voice does not fundamentally disrupt the status quo; our actions and demands for equity are tied up in raciality. The arsenal of raciality actually thirsts for these kinds of research engagements. It is thirsty for data that can improve, yet never disrupt its racial logic. In pivoting to trace racial logic I have demonstrated how and why, despite our greatest intentions and persistence in including youth voice, we cannot prevent neoliberal educational settings from doing harm without breaking free of the racial logics that inform an insidious design. With these nuances, it is my hope that we can do more work of exposing raciality’s hold on educational equity. I know this work to expose educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic is imperfect, but it has generated much to consider.

Lessons from Pivoting as a Methodological Stance

Turning the Research Lens on Myself

Madison’s (2005) *Critical Ethnography* and Patel’s (2016) *Decolonizing Educational Research* taught me to actively turn the research lens on myself. Turning the lens on myself, for this project, I am thinking with Silva (2014) to allow radical vulnerability and agility or the flow of consistent movement guide my imagination for what I think is possible in education. In doing this work, I am seeking to propel a type of thinking or
imagination that can address manifoldness, or the many different elements related to how we engage with youth for imagining just alternatives about education. Pivoting serves as a stance for shifting practices, a stance that seeks out the manifolds, a stance to unmake categories, and a stance that invites us to engage what puzzles or haunts us about our work. It is a critical stance that encourages one to go in the direction of new learning, knowing that there is always more to consider about how to engage in ethical research. Pivoting while pausing has allowed me to play in theory long enough to see clearly what I need to “reach beyond” (Patel, 2016, p. 88). I reach beyond the constraint of the category, beyond which Blackness gains productive power allowing it to undo colonial and racially violent logics that are sustained by modern reason. Joining up with Silva, pivoting demands reconstruction and “the restoration of the total power expropriated” (Silva, 2014, p. 94). When Blackness’s productive capacity is free to roam and disrupt problematic logics, it takes us out of the Western gaze and invites a critical or, as Silva might say, poethical contemplation of how to end the education system as we know it and live as if another one has arrived.

**Black Feminism as a Site for Educational Study**

Methodologically, I have sought to reach beyond the practice of interpretation associated with conventional humanist research. I have gone beyond seeking to capture voice as evidence for an authentic T4C student experience. I have also gone beyond Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) suggestion to pay attention to the “other” of an authentic voice, seeking more than just to describe the minoritarian (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Taguchi, 2012). I hesitate to illuminate the “other” of authentic voice because, from the critical Black
Feminist position I have assumed throughout this study, there is no authentic “other” experience. Originally, I pivoted to post qualitative inquiry as a way to free this study from conventional humanist qualitative research, but this move was not able to comprehend Blackness beyond the constraint of the category. Continuing to pivot, then, I found the need to take insurgent ground with the thing itself. The thing that modern reason has always needed to be a thing, commodity, object or else the transparent I and the transparency thesis would not be sustained. Silva’s work, and Black Feminist thought in general, betrays modern reason’s move to pin Blackness down and project the political project of Man over/onto it. Black Feminist thought’s refusal to live by the terms of Man point to otherwise ways researchers might reconsider their attention to voice, subjectivity, and representation where youth of color are concerned. Through my analytical engagements, I found that listening to youth requires us to suspend considering them as authentic educational and racial subjects. To assume their racial and educational authenticity—or the real students of color who suffer from educational inequity—as a means to a more inclusive equity project is to work to establish them as subjects that only serve the logics of racial capital and raciality. It is to be caught up in the logics of making them intelligible to a system that is not interested in their freedom and playful expression.

I pivoted with Black Feminist thought to examine the youth’s and T4C’s entanglement in the assemblage of racial logic guided by the ethical, juridical, and economic axes. I made this move to re-politicize education and learning, which Michalinos Zembylas (2017) describes as “a practice of refusing the demand to learn according to the rules of neoliberal market” (p. 1411). By pausing then pivoting, I also have learned how I have been complicit. Through this dissertation, I unsettled my
complicity by refusing to follow the same logics that fill, fill, and fill the arsenal of raciality with facts about how students, particularly youth of color, achieve. These facts belie the point of a Black Feminist inquiry, which is to illuminate the ways in which we might reconsider what education does, can do, and could do in the future beyond its carceral and racist logics. To be clear, I do not wish to make light of how to suspend ourselves from the reality of our complicity. Yet, I do wish to demonstrate how pausing and pivoting stimulate the search for otherwise and stimulate the compulsion to demand and practice otherwise in educational knowledge making. Taking on practices of pausing and pivoting might prompt us to turn the research lens onto ourselves. Shifting our gaze invites us to do our work more critically by exploring how political-economic, racial, and gendered entanglements shape practices of and demands for equity. Pausing and pivoting might also prepare us for nimbly navigating the struggles we will encounter as we approach, demand, and practice otherwise. When I imagine an end to this education system, I dream about the arrival of learning and living practices that center the endless plays of expression. That is, the limitless expressions we may take up to undermine raciality’s hold, or any hold, on our studies, bodies, and actions.

Lessons from Tracing Raciality

Problematizing “Educational Disadvantage”

The critical strategy of tracing raciality has supported this inquiry to outline how educational texts have shaped the dominant ways we think about educational disadvantage. While educational researchers have highlighted that disadvantage plays within the mode of damage and deficit, my tracing of raciality highlights that the term
“disadvantage” draws on more than just deficit ideas about students. Deficit ideas are harmful, as they make the case for what Freire (1970) calls a banking education, or pouring knowledge into student’s heads in order to get them to achieve. What my reading exposes about the term *educationally disadvantaged* is that it is designed and maintained by raciality. It is worth repeating Spiller’s words:

> Under the Moynihan rule, ‘ethnicity’ itself identifies a total objectification of human and cultural motives-the ‘white’ family, by implication, and the ‘Negro Family,’ by outright assertion, in a constant opposition of binary meanings... Moynihan’s ‘Families’ are pure present and always tense. ‘Ethnicity’ in this case freezes in meaning, takes on constancy, assumes the look and the affects of the Eternal. (p. 66)

Running with Spillers’ observations of how the Moynihan report puts “ethnicity” to work to fix meaning and take on constancy, the term *educationally disadvantaged* also works through the same logics. That is, *educationally disadvantaged* locks poor youth of color in a perpetual state of failure.

Youth are considered at an educational disadvantage not solely because they lack money or don’t have parents who are well versed in competing on the educational market. To allow this argument to stand alone after tracing raciality in educational text, would be to resolve this entire situation into the logics of capital. Youth who are marked by the term disadvantaged, especially those who fall into the ESSA’s so-called subgroups, are considered to be at a disadvantage because of their familial origins. They are locked into an ethical-juridal-economic moment that allows description and classification of one’s physical traits to prove their moral and intellectual disadvantage. Maintaining this practice and frontier was to the benefit of the slaveholder and his property. Locking students and their families into this moment provides for other moments where poor mothers of color and their children become the objects of public
policy. That is, those who are meant to be changed by education policy, indeed obliterated as they know themselves, are recognized and specifically (excessively) included in public policy implementation as objects of study and analysis. To be clear, what I am suggesting here is that the *educationally disadvantaged* relies on the logics of raciality in ways that ensure that an ethical crisis does not ensue because the term has been used for seeking inclusion (Silva, 2007). In doing so, it has allowed the so-called disadvantaged to become objects of educational manipulation. Because youth of color are written into affectability and this rewriting is excused to make way for the transparency thesis. An explicit focus on promoting educational equity depends on the idea that the *educationally disadvantaged*’s inclusion into this effort would finally allow them to exhibit the educational advantage of the transparent I. This current strategy for delivering a high-quality and equitable education for all, I argue, is fundamentally tied to raciality’s political symbolic logics. The logic of obliteration thrives in the educational text. Students’ so-called disadvantage can only be addressed in a way that attempts to obliterate the mark of their mothers and their families. Spillers continues:

> These undecipherable markings on the captive body render a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh whose severe disjunctures come to be hidden to the cultural seeing by skin color. We might well ask if this phenomenon of marking and branding actually "transfers" from one generation to another, finding its various symbolic substitutions in an efficacy of meanings that repeat the initiating moments? ... This body whose flesh carries the female and the male to the frontiers of survival bears in person the marks of a cultural text whose inside has been turned outside. (p. 67)

What is seemingly outside justifies the pursuit of obliteration through educational equity. Not only is raciality informing the educational law of the land, it also takes after colonial pursuits when Europeans dislocated across the globe engulfing indigenous peoples and productive capacity of indigenous lands. Given that the ESSA provisions for private and
private like forces to dislocate from the private to the public sphere with the practice of neoliberalism, whole regions of school districts and communities are similarly being engulfed by the insatiable desires of private entities. School buildings are routinely shut down, teacher contracts are consistently nonrenewed, ELL and special education students are perpetually pushed out as a result of how private forces have dislocated from the private sector to the public education sector under the banner of standardization and accountability (Burch, 2009; Hursh, 2007; Picower & Mayorga, 2015). Federal education is leaving more and more to the local level. This shift potentially allows more injustice to proliferate as the feds ramp up the coercive forces of standardization and accountability and shirk their responsibility for addressing racial injustices and over policing that takes place at the local level.

The Limits of Educational Equity

Tracing raciality in the educational text has allowed me to consider the grounds and reach of educational equity. Its grounds only pledge to ensure that all students have the opportunity to receive a fair and high-quality education. Its reach only goes so far as supporting students to achieve highly on standardized assessments. I problematize these grounds and limits because they cannot comprehend how students are put in harm’s way for the sake of reaching the goals of a high-quality education. For example, in 2020, consider how there was a priority to return back to school under the mandate of assessing pandemic learning loss. Vaccines were not yet available. And at the time of this writing, vaccines were not yet available for children under 5. This logic puts academic achievement over students’ health and well-being. Furthermore, the federal government
has not addressed school shootings with plans as aggressive as the plan to get all public
education students back in school post school shutdowns in March 2020. In the context of
this study, students were made to attend a program that supposedly reduced their summer
learning loss. Yet, to be transported to and from the program was to be at the mercy and
discretion of a bus driver whose privately held employer had provisioned for the city
police to intervene in any altercations that transpired during transportation. There are
many more moments that I can and cannot name, in which the children were considered
to be criminals while also being key to T4C’s programmatic outcomes. My point is that it
seems as if educational equity is pursued without attention to the viral and violent
contexts that have shifted schooling, learning, and the productive effects of raciality. The
intensive focus on gathering data to intervene into students’ learning is another indicator
that raciality is alive and well, shaping the pursuit of educational equity without
interruption. As illustrated in this study, more tracing of raciality in school systems would
allow us to undermine its logics for our liberatory projects. Tracing raciality can inform
and propel our fugitive planning (Harney & Moten, 2013).

Undermining Raciality

Undermining raciality has opened a set of methodological and ethical questions. For
example, how might we think and pursue an educational and learning agenda beyond thin
conceptions of educational equity and inclusion? How do we make space for learning as
becoming and unbecoming (Patel, 2016)? How might we shift our practices to allow such
a messy process? Can there be an ethical engagement with youth voice and feedback
inside of educational research? What is pedagogy with/out discipline? What is learning
with/out discipline? How might we spend our time differently in schools? Does school need to exist in the same way it always has? Most importantly, how do we ethically sow seeds for fugitive flight beyond a federal, corporate, and non-profit approach to the education system? How can we ensure that seeds for emancipation propagate through space and time? These questions warrant further discussion. While they don’t have neat answers, these questions—and the openings in this study—do gesture toward the possibilities of accepting educational response-ability and struggling together to end an education system dominated by racial and neoliberal logics.

**Paying Attention to Raciality**

In the practice of cultivating equitable education systems for the 21st century and beyond, educational researchers should be wary of how the arsenal of raciality is always ready to construct empirical knowledge about students of color and their achievement in deficit and carceral ways. When reading student feedback, we should also consider how their comments exceed what can be captured through thematic coding and take seriously how attention to raciality can dispel narratives that attempt to fix them according to race, language, and achievement, which is always in service of the neoliberal learning agenda. Our work in education is deeply implicated in political-economic, racial, and gendered entanglements. When we pause to study these entanglements—rather than robotically understanding our work as attempting to get students to pass tests—we might be better attuned to how inequity plays out in the US public education system and how the pursuit of equity relies on raciality. If we have a better understanding of the nature and persistence of political, economic, and racial entanglements in education, then we might
be able to reimagine these entanglements toward an education system beyond its current state, one that might be answerable to the endless play of creative expression in learning. In the wake of COVID-19, we will benefit from multiple expressions of study and answerability that expand and alter our current conceptions of learning and critical knowledge-making with youth (Harney & Moten, 2013). In the final section that follows, I call attention to the important issues of educational equity and write directly to researchers, educators, policymakers and youth to echo the implications of this study. I write with the reminder that we must sculpt a more liberatory reality from our dreams.

**Implications and Future Possibilities**

**Openings for Researchers**

Like researchers who have worked with youth before me, I had originally conceived this project as an opportunity for students to shape T4C’s operations. I wanted them to shape the project with me and I wanted to center their voices and solutions for greater equity. In doing so, I made an assumption that they were positioned to make an impact through this project. My assumption was based on asserting that they had the most to gain from more equitable learning conditions. They were the ones in the classrooms, and it was obvious to me that we should ask them what they want and need. As discussed in Chapter 2, many other researchers have backed me up on this point. However, in reconsidering my project and through pivoting in the study, Silva’s (2007) many warnings about thorny racial logic stood out. My project relied on including youth voice and making youth transparent subjects. It was a project that could only operate within the bounds of racial representations constituted by the modern subject of post-Enlightenment European
thought. Therefore, the goal of inclusion falls short of decolonial aims. Rinaldo Walcott (2021) makes a similar point in *The Long Emancipation* and explicates on the need to break with the logics of the modern subject if one wants to pursue Black Freedom:

> The use of the term *emancipation* as a synonym for *freedom* can only continue to make sense because it is through legislative and juridical practices and regimes that Black people come into a state that is other than that of being the enslaved. In other words, this logic can only hold if freedom, as far as the Black is concerned, is legislative and conferred. What emancipation does not do is to make a sharp and necessary break with the social relations that underpin slavery. That this break has not yet happened is why we are still in the period of emancipation. We recognize this as it plays out in our present times in the ways that other modes of the legislative and the juridical come into play through social proscriptions around Black dress and movements, from baseball caps and saggin’ pants to stop-and-frisk and carding to what Frank Wilderson identifies as the ongoing ‘ipso facto’ deputization of white people. These proscriptions are, in effect, the legacies of a juridical emancipated Black status that remains tied to the social relations and former conditions of enslavement. (p. 3)

Walcott’s words highlight what I aim to expose and undermine in my analysis of student feedback through the ethical-juridical-economic axes in Chapter 5. Pursuing equity, whether through research or educational efforts, depends on tools that cannot comprehend freedom. Thus, in pursuit of something more than equity, my analysis pivots to position students’ comments and feedback as critical openings for examining educational equity’s assemblage of racial logic. This discussion has illuminated how the design of the educational text that constitutes T4C’s operations “remains tied to the social relations and former conditions of enslavement.”

To examine and move our learning efforts beyond a neoliberal learning agenda that remains tied to enslavement, I invite educational researchers to take up Black Feminism as a site of educational study. As a site for study, Black Feminism provides critical tools for demanding the end of racial capital. For instance, this project offers an example of how raciality is manipulating the pursuit of educational equity. This study can
serve as a model for tracing raciality in other facets of our work. Additionally, there are many more critical methodologies that Black Feminists use to expose the racialized design of the systems we work in. I encourage us to study and apply critical Black Feminist methodologies as a way of being answerable to today’s youth and youth 200 years from now. This project also illustrates an engagement with youth that moves beyond holding them prisoner to Hegel’s notion of a transcendental subject or its other. Instead, I have shared a possible approach for examining the material-discursive forces that design and uphold an insidious design of equity. It is a speculative engagement, which complements tracing raciality.

**Openings for Educators**

Educators, I hope that this dissertation study affirms you. I hope it affirms any desire you have to explore more playful and creative expressions of your work in the classroom despite the neoliberal learning machine. I hope this dissertation can be an occasion for studying and disrupting logics that may be stifling your work in school buildings. I hope that I have provided a sense of radical vulnerability for your work with youth. I also hope it affirms any plans you have for engaging anticapitalist and antiracist ideas in the classroom. Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable* series and all of her novels can be occasions for study in the classroom. I hope the ways that I have used the *Parable* text as a guide can support you to have discussions with youth about their visions for the future. I hope that your classroom can become a space for fugitive planning, or rehearsing the world in ways that notice the signs of collapse and actively make room for the not-yet of education (Harney & Moten, 2013).
Openings for Policy-Makers and Educational Service Providers

In this dissertation study, I have illustrated that educational equity is severely compromised. There is still time and plenty of room to rethink learning in the US. This dissertation study provides an occasion for considering how the root of inequity is buried in the foundations of the US. This dissertation study also provides an occasion for youth of the future to demand Reconstruction of or the “end of state capital” and “the restoration of total value expropriated through the violent appropriated of the productive capacity of native lands and slave labor” (Silva, 2014, p. 84). As a result of decision-making logics that are solely concerned with justificatory aims, youth have routinely been put in harm’s way. My hope is that you will refuse your seats to join youth in their struggles for a society and future that invites multiple plays of expression without the fear of detainment, policing, racial violence, and climate chaos. My hope is that you will betray those who fund your organizations, salaries, and services to initiate the demise of the colonial racial terror plot that structures so many lives in the US and across the globe. My hope is that you will step out of the way, making space for youth to continue that radical effort. More and more youth are taking to the streets to demand safer learning and to challenge societal conditions that you have not addressed. Listen to and heed their demands.

Openings for Youth

This dissertation study is an attempt to be answerable to your future. I anticipate that you will have much more to contribute to the thinking presented here. I understand that my work is not perfect, though I offer it as an opening for you. Please take what applies and
leave what does not. I invite you to take up this work, and make it better than I ever could. I imagine that there is more to consider based on the changes you have experienced and witnessed in the past 2 years. I imagine that your analytical groundwork will push the limits of what I have examined and discussed in this project. You are the brilliant leaders of our future. I am in awe of your courage. Know that reality can be sculpted from your dreams. Know that Change is on your side and the struggle always continues. Know that you are already someone’s ancestor, a beautiful and complicated role. Know that this work is dedicated to you and the future struggles we will be engaged in together. Know that you deserve rest. Know that Change is the only lasting truth. I look forward to a more radical existence under your leadership and brilliance. I look forward to the societies and worlds and revolutions you will forge into existence. I look forward to how you will move the task forward. I look forward to seeing you learn on your own time and terms without fear of what the future holds. I cannot wait to witness you reap the liberatory seeds that you sow.

From: Earthseed: The Books of the Living

“All that you touch
You Change.

All that you Change
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
Is Change.”

- Octavia E. Butler,
  Parable of the Sower
APPENDIX A
PHOTO-ELICITATION PROMPTS

The following instructions and prompts were printed on a worksheet for students to take photos. Students and I created the final list of prompts together.

Youth Informed Evaluation, Day 4

Today, we will start taking photos with the prompts we created yesterday. We will take at least 5 photos for each participant, that’s you! Let’s look at the prompts:

PROMPTS

I want to give a shout out to…

I will never forget…

My class experience…

This is missing….

My experience with teachers at T4C…

One grow/One that that could be better…

My friends and I like to….

Students should choose…

I feel like my voice is heard when…
APPENDIX B
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I used the following questions to guide the photo elicitation interview with the students.

(To the Photographer): Tell us about this picture – why did you choose this picture to illustrate this theme?

How does this picture speak to the rest of you? [not to challenge the experience of the photographer but to build out from it and get a sense of the range in this group]?

What does this picture tell us about the way students experience Teaching for the 21st Century STEAM Academy?

If the people in charge of Teaching for the 21st Century were to look at this photo, what message would you like to get across?
APPENDIX C
ANA, MATTHEW, ANGELO, AND ELIJAH’S COGNITIVE MAPS

When creating the cognitive map, students were given the following prompt: “You will have 6 minutes to make a map of your [T4C] experience. You have two color markers. After 2 minutes, I will ask you to switch the marker you are using. After another 2 minutes, I will ask you to switch back to the other color. We will switch markers until the 6 minutes is up.”

Figure C-1. Ana’s Cognitive map.
Figure C-2. Matthews cognitive map.

Figure C-3. Angelo’s cognitive map.
Figure C-4. Elijah’s cognitive map.
**APPENDIX D**

**T4C END-OF-SUMMER STUDENT SURVEYS**

Figure D-1. 2017 T4C End-of-Summer Student Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate your response (Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I would recommend T4C to other students.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rate your agreement with the following statements [If I am eligible, I plan to return to T4C next year.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I met role models this summer.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I learned new things this summer.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I am more confident in my academic abilities because of T4C.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rate your agreement with the following statements [My teachers made me more confident I will go to college.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I had teachers with whom I could connect.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I made new friends this summer.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure D-2. T4C 2018 End-of-Summer Student Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate your response (Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I would recommend T4C to other students.]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I met role models this summer.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rate your agreement with the following statements [My teachers made me more confident I will go to college.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I had a chance to share my thinking this summer.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I learned more about my community/culture this summer than I do during the school year.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I grew my ability to help others belong this summer.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I felt like my teachers were happy to see me every day.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I learned new things at T4C.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Rate your agreement with the following statements [My teacher made me feel like I belonged at T4C.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I made new friends.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I feel better prepared to go back to school.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I felt challenged this summer.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I had teachers with whom I could connect.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Rate your agreement with the following statements [I am more confident in my academic abilities because of T4C.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Open response:**
- What did you like most about T4C? Why?
- What could we change to better support you or future T4C students?
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