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"To get free": How a Black girl's ways of being and knowing inform a literacy teacher's multimodal pedagogies in an alternative secondary context

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Introduction

Historically, Black girls' intersecting gendered and raced identities have positioned them at the margins of society. Black girls' digital literacies served as fertile ground to disrupt dominant narratives of who they are and how they see themselves (Greene, 2021). Digital literacies serve as counternarratives and are emancipatory in nature providing Black girls the freedom, creative control, autonomy, and agency to author their lives by "speaking out on misrepresentations of who they are and negotiating their identities" (Price-Dennis et al., 2017, p. 4). Given this, there is a need to create school spaces that afford Black girls opportunities to engage in critical conversations with literacy teachers as they negotiate their identities as both digital users and content creators.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how a White literacy teacher learns from and with a Black girl through her development of a digital story in an alternative learning context. It is my hope that this inquiry illustrates a Black girl's print and digital literacies and a literacy teacher's multimodal pedagogies designed to center and support her lived experiences in the urban secondary literacy context. The following research question guided this qualitative inquiry: In what ways, does a Black girl's ways of being and knowing shape a literacy teacher's multimodal pedagogies and how are they enacted?

Affordances of Black Girl Literacies in Multimodal Spaces

Black girls' digital literacies have been the area least researched in Black girl literacy research (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). This small yet growing body of scholarship has examined Black girls' affordances, specifically their use of multimodal composition to represent themselves and assume agency as both consumers and producers of knowledge. This new type of counter-storytelling allows Black girls to use digital technologies as tools of resistance to represent and rewrite images of themselves in ways that they cannot in school (Greene, 2016, 2021; Ellison, 2017; Haddix, 2018; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Price-Dennis et al., 2017). Black girls' identities as writers and digital creatives allow them to experiment and construct their identities (Greene, 2021; Horner, 2017; Kendrick et al., 2013; Price-Dennis et al., 2017).

Black girls are confronted with various forms of oppression that work in conjunction with other forms of oppression to produce social injustice and marginalization (Collins, 2000; Epstein et al., 2017). Black girls' literacies, historical traditions, and lived experiences are often silenced or pathologized in school spaces (Epstein et al., 2017; Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Gibbs-Grey & Harrison, 2020). Black girls use their literacy and language practices steeped in

activism as survival tools and resistance in a society designed to oppress them (Greene, 2021; Gibbs-Grey & Harrison, 2020; Price-Dennis et al., 2017).

Digital storytelling serves as emancipatory tools for Black girls that allow them to speak back to dominant narratives that do not accurately represent who they are (Greene, 2021; Hall, 2011; Kendrick et al., 2013). Richardson (2003) argues “storytelling remains one of the most powerful literacy and languages practices that Black girls use to convey their special knowledge,” center themselves, and humanize their experiences and their truth (p. 82). Hall (2011) and Horner (2017) examined Black girls' use of digital stories to negotiate and express their identities. Hall (2017) found Black girls negotiated their identities around instances of pain, suffering, and healing and that the interplay of linguistic styles represented multiple positionings. On the contrary, Horner (2017) found Black girls' stories of self-expression and development conveyed personal and professional aspirations, commitment to family and friends, and helping others. Both studies illustrate how digital storytelling provides Black girls with a sense of self and empowerment (Muhammad & Womack, 2015).

Black Girls' Writing

Muhammad's qualitative case study examined how Black girls illustrated representations of themselves through their out-of-school writings (Muhammad, 2015). Drawing on critical sociocultural theory, Muhammad found Black girls use “writing to represent self, resist dominant representations, and write toward social change” (Muhammad, 2015, p. 224). Writing also serves as a space for Black girls to express their multiple selves. This study found Black girls' language practices were “socially constructed and serve to counter and reclaim power through writing” (Muhammad, 2015, p. 224). In a subsequent qualitative case study, Muhammad (2012) examines and co-develops a writing institute designed to support Black girls in constructing their identities (Muhammad, 2012). The writing institute's curricula were grounded in four themes: identity, resiliency, solidarity, and advocacy (Muhammad, 2012). Drawing on a historical literacy framing, Muhammad “juxtaposes the participant's writing experiences in both the out-of-class and in-class context” (Muhammad, 2012, p. 206). Muhammad found within the classroom writing did not affirm the participant's identities, and the participant often masked herself as a writer to conform with established norms (Muhammad, 2012).

Across two studies, Muhammad and Womack's (2015) examined what representations Black girls write against and how they in turn represent self. Drawing on Multiliteracies, Muhammad and Womack (2015) examined Black girls engaging in different forms of writing to make sense of and resist ascribed representations of their identities. In Muhammad's study, Black girls used print writing to push back against representations of Eurocentric standards of beauty, sexualization and objection of Black female bodies, and lack of education and

aspirations. In Womack's study, Black girls used digital writing to create fuller, more positive representations of Black girls in digital spaces. Across both studies, Muhammad and Womack (2015) illustrate how Black girls utilize print and digital writing as tools to disrupt misrepresentations and re-write representations of self.

Multimodal Pedagogies Enacted in Support of Black Youth

A growing body of literature has highlighted teachers' integration of multimodal pedagogies in their instruction with Black youth. Teachers' multimodal pedagogies provide spaces for Black youth to author new literate identities, shift their mode of participation, and shift their roles in the literacy classroom (Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012; Vasudevan et al., 2010). Vasudevan's (2009) qualitative case study examined Black youth's composing practices and highlighted the multimodal pedagogies of a teacher at an incarceration alternative program. The teacher created spaces for students to reimagine themselves outside of deficit labels prescribed by the school environment by leveraging their funds of knowledge, specifically their interests and cultural elements of Blackness brought with them into the classroom (Vasudevan, 2009; et al., 2010). The teacher enacted multiple selves to disrupt traditional roles of teacher and student and accommodate the various needs of his students at different stages of the composing process (Vasudevan, 2009; et al., 2010).

Greene's (2021) qualitative case study examined two Black girls' experiences as digital users and content creators and highlighted the author's multimodal pedagogies. Black girls documented their journeys from journaling to podcast scriptwriting. Greene's (2021) multimodal pedagogies entailed engaging Black girls in conversations using critical prompts that allowed them to highlight their individual Black girl experiences, connect their collective experiences to broader social issues impacting their lives, and support the co-development of a collaborative podcast script. The current research project addresses the need for further research that explores literacy teachers' multimodal pedagogies designed to meet the needs of Black girls.

Theoretical Perspectives

Black Girls' Digital Literacies

Black Girls' Digital Literacies is a theoretical perspective that centers Black girls' intersecting raced and gendered identities to engage them in multimodal, equity-based pedagogies (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Muhammad & Womack, 2015; Price-Dennis, 2016). This perspective centers Black girls' ways of being and knowing (Collins, 2000; Muhammad & Haddix, 2016; Price-Dennis, 2016). Richardson (2003) argues that Black girls' ways of being and knowing entail their "cultural identities, social location, and practices" that inform how they make meaning and navigate the world (p. 329). Black girls often embed their racial and cultural identities in digital literacy projects to affirm who they are and their place

in the world (Greene, 2021). Digital literacies are “emancipatory allowing Black girls the freedom, creative control, autonomy, and agency to negotiate their identities and speak out on misrepresentations of who they are” by authoring their lives (Price-Dennis et al., 2017, p. 4). This framing informs my understanding of how a Black girl’s lived experiences, identities, and ways of being and knowing were embedded in the digital story development process and illustrated how she navigated the world and her place in it (Price-Dennis, 2016).

Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy

Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy is a theoretical perspective that incorporates identity-centered multimodal literacy practices in 21st Century teaching and learning (Miller et al., 2012; Vasudevan et al., 2010). This perspective highlights schools and teacher education programs’ transformative approach to delivering instruction by re-framing what counts as teaching, learning, knowing, and understanding and “centering students’ literacy practices and worldviews and embedding them into the development of multimodal projects” (Miller et al., 2012, p. 117).

Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy also accounts for disrupting traditional norms by shifting the role of literacy teachers and students in the digital age. The teacher does not hold authoritative knowledge. Instead, knowledge is multimodal, co-constructed, performed and represented (Vasudevan, 2006; 2011). This framework “centers the collaboration between teacher and student with the teacher providing varying levels of mediation, facilitation, and support during various stages of the multimodal composing process based on the needs of the student at each stage” (Miller et al., 2012, p. 120). Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy informs how a Black girl’s lived experiences, identities, and ways of being and knowing were instrumental in guiding a literacy teacher’s support in the development of her digital story (Vasudevan et al., 2010).

Course Design & Context of Study

I taught an Adolescent Literacies and Multimodalities course, a 15-week course offered in a graduate teacher education and preparation certification program at a research university in the Northeast region of the United States. Broadly, the course examined the relationship of literacy, equity, and youths’ creative practices to support teachers in creating inclusive secondary literacy classrooms. This course was selected for this study because it introduced literacy teachers to youths’ creative digital practices. In the first half of the semester (weeks one to six), the course grounded literacy teachers in theory and practice on youths’ creative digital practices. The second half of the semester (weeks seven to 14) allowed literacy teachers to apply acquired skills in a practicum working with youth creating digital stories.

Context of Study

This project was situated across two focal sites: (1) an on-campus Technology Media Center (TMC) (pseudonym) (2) Wade Institute (pseudonym), a residential education and job training program. The main site in this study was a technology media center (TMC) located at the university library. The TMC provided the teacher participant enrolled in the graduate course and the youth participant enrolled in the Digital Think Tank, two introductory sessions on Windows movie maker, the software used to create the digital story. Teacher participants learned with and from youth participants' digital story development in the Digital Think Tank Program (DTTP) at the TMC. The DTTP was an academic partnership between the university and Wade Institute that focused on incorporating digital literacies in an out-of-school context. Wade Institute was an alternative residential academic and job center geared towards youth between the ages of 15 and 24 who were displaced from traditional academic learning environments. The goal of the partnership between DTTP and the teacher education program was to increase collaborative efforts in literacy teaching and learning. Although TMC is a university-affiliated center, this study was framed as an out-of-school space because sessions occurred during after-school hours, youth participated on a voluntary basis and had full creative control in developing their digital stories.

Each course session was held at the TMC throughout the second half of the semester (weeks seven to 14). Week seven was when the youth and teachers participated in a meet and greet at Wade Institute. The goal was to create an opportunity for the teachers and youth to get to know each other. During week eight, the youth brought print and digital artifacts to share and discuss with their assigned teacher. The teachers worked closely with their assigned youth participant for two hours each week for eight weeks to support their digital story development. In week eight, teacher and youth brainstormed and drafted ideas for each artifact. In weeks nine to 13, the teachers worked with and learned from youths' digital story development. Week 13 entailed making final edits to the digital stories. In week 14, the youth published their digital stories on the course's YouTube Channel and presented them to the Wade Institute community.

Recruitment Criteria

Six White literacy teachers enrolled in the course: three worked as part-time substitute teachers and three worked as full-time teachers in schools in the local area. Of the six teachers enrolled in the course, one literacy teacher was selected to participate in this study. The teacher selection was based on the following criteria: (1) worked as a full-time literacy teacher (2) worked with a youth participant that identified as a Black girl (3) provided detailed accounts of their experiences working with a Black girl in their reflections (4) provided detailed plans of next steps in working with a Black girl in their planning sheets (5) worked with a Black

girl that attended regularly and participated in each digital storytelling session. Only one literacy teacher met the above criteria. Three of the literacy teachers did not meet the criteria because they did not work directly with youth that identified as a Black girl while another literacy teacher was not working as a full-time literacy teacher.

The youth participant received academic incentives from the Wade Institute academic manager in the form of monetary vouchers for their participation in the program. The teacher and youth participant had the freedom to terminate their participation in the study at any point. In order to ensure that the grade of the teacher participant was not impacted by either their involvement or refusal of involvement, I had two colleagues grade all work assigned and submitted by the teacher participant based on course rubrics.

Study Participants: Kim & Jada

Kim (pseudonym) was a first-year secondary teacher enrolled in my Adolescent Literacies and Multimodalities course. Kim's local school district had received an innovation grant to incorporate technology and literacy across content areas. Kim was selected to manage the grant, so she wanted to learn to incorporate digital literacies into the curricula. Jada (pseudonym) was a 16-year old Black female student enrolled at Wade Institute for the past two years. She was born and raised in the Bronx, New York. She enrolled at Wade Institute after several challenging educational experiences at her high school. Jada was disengaged in academics at her high school. She felt her classes were not connected to her interests as a writer, illustrator, and Tik Tok content creator. She was eager to participate in the Digital Think Tank Project (DTTP) since she enjoyed using digital platforms to create content. Jada chronicled her coming of age experiences in her digital story.

Description of Data Sources

Data were collected over the course of two months during the Spring 2021 semester (April - May 2021). The data pool is derived from a range of sources, including researcher field observations, teacher participant reflections, teacher participant planning sheets, and researcher feedback on teacher participant reflections and planning sheets.

Researcher Field Observations

I conducted field observations that entailed developing fieldnotes over the course of the study (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). My fieldnotes entailed two types of notes, including descriptive notes and reflective notes. I took fieldnotes that included my observations (descriptive notes) and my reactions or interpretations to those observations (reflective notes). My notetaking process entailed both describing and reflecting on the physical setting, activities that were occurring, and

verbal communications between Jada and Kim, as well as their body language (Creswell, 2007). Verbal communications between Jada and Kim were audio-recorded. Field observations were conducted two hours per week for a total of 16 hours over the course of the study.

Teacher Participant's Planning Sheets

The planning sheets documented Kim's next steps for upcoming sessions with Jada. I developed a planning sheet that focused on key elements of the digital story development process, including brainstorming/conceptualizing, writing, revising/editing, and publishing. The planning sheets also focused on Kim's rationale for next steps in upcoming sessions with Jada. The planning sheet was designed to guide Kim's process while providing her with the freedom and autonomy to adjust as necessary. For example, the prompts on the planning sheets focused on the following: How will you approach the next session? What adjustments might you make? Why have you chosen this approach? Kim submitted one to two-page double-spaced planning sheets per week for a total of seven planning sheets. Once Jada submitted her planning sheet for the week, I often provided feedback on Kim's planning sheet for upcoming sessions with Jada as needed. For example, my feedback focused on the following: In your conversation with Jada, how does she plan to incorporate her poetry in her digital story? How do you plan to ensure that you are providing support to Jada, yet ensuring that she has creative direction?

Teacher Participant's Reflections

Reflection is an integral component of teaching and learning (Milner, 2003). The reflection prompts documented Kim's perspective of her interactions with Jada from the previous session. This process allowed Kim to look back and reflect on each session. I developed a reflection sheet that focused on key elements of the digital story development process, including brainstorming/conceptualizing, writing, revising/editing, and publishing. The reflection focused on Kim reflecting on her previous sessions with Jada. For example, the prompts on the reflection sheets focused on the following: What went well and why? What was a challenge and why? How did you respond to the challenge in that moment? How did you build on what went well in that moment? Kim submitted one to two-page(s) double-spaced practicum reflections each week for a total of seven reflections. Once Jada submitted her reflection for the week, I often provided feedback on Kim's reflection for the previous sessions with Jada as needed. For example, my feedback focused on the following: What do you think contributed to your role shift in the digital story development process? What gave you the impression that Jada wanted space to develop her digital story?

Researcher Feedback

I provided feedback and commentary on the teacher participant planning sheets and reflections. Although Kim was actively working in the field with Jada, it was important that I supported and guided her learning along the way while working with Jada during the digital story development process. My feedback on the participant planning sheets and reflections consisted of aspects of the working relationship that Kim needed to consider as she reflected on previous session and as she looked forward towards planning for the next session. For example, my feedback on the reflections could focus on the following: “In last week’s reflection, you shared that Jada wanted to incorporate her poem “Get Free” into her digital movie; however, you reflected on slide transitions and completion of the digital story. Be certain to not focus simply on the technical aspect of Jada’s digital story (ie. slide transitions, timing).” For example, my feedback on the planning sheets could focus on the following: “You mentioned, “I don’t want to be more of the same” so how do you plan to navigate the digital storytelling process given your concerns of being viewed as teacherly? What steps are you taking to ensure that this space will be different than Jada’s previous learning spaces? How does your positioning as a White woman shape your interactions with Jada?”

My Positionality

As an activist-driven scholar who identifies as a Black woman researcher and educator, I was situated as both an insider and outsider in this research project. My insider status entailed shared racialized, gendered, classed and geographic identities with Jada. This also consisted of my teaching and learning and lived experiences. Despite my insider status, I was an outsider generationally. My insider status included a shared commitment with Kim in cultivating spaces for Black girls. As a former middle school literacy teacher and a community literacy director, I was cognizant of power structures in classrooms and the need for spaces that allowed Black girls the freedom and autonomy to be content creators.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was the method used to interpret data (Fairclough, 1989; Rogers, 2003). CDA focuses on the relationship between the textual and the social world and the linkage between talk and written word (Fairclough, 1989). Discourse is not considered neutral because it is rooted in our identities and relationships. Discourse represents one’s positionality, values, and beliefs, rooted in patterns of power and privilege (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1989; Luke, 2000; Rogers, 2003). Discourse are ways of representing and describe how knowledge is represented and from what perspective (Fairclough, 1989). In the current study, instances of discourse included communications between Jada and Kim, as well as their body language. I drew upon CDA because

it accounted for the socio-political influences embedded in Kim and Jada's discourse (Rogers, 2003).

Analysis Process

I developed a codebook to standardize the analysis process. The current study was documented through researcher field observations, teacher participant planning sheets, teacher participant reflections, and researcher feedback. The first level of analysis allowed me to take a broad look at the data, which entailed multiple data set reviews. I also conducted rough transcriptions and re-transcriptions of audio recordings. The second level of analysis entailed coding data for instances of discourse. I cross-compared the emerged codes with both theoretical frameworks: Black Girls' Digital Literacies and Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy. I then collapsed and refined the codes. I looked across the fieldnotes, planning sheets, reflections, and researcher feedback to determine how each spoke to one another. This also entailed pairing each reflection, planning sheet, and researcher feedback within the same week to examine prior interactions (reflections), steps moving forward (planning sheets), and wonderings and suggestions (researcher feedback). By doing so, I accounted for instances of alignment and conflict across the data and compared them to the body of literature, theoretical frameworks, and other data sets. The following codes emerged from this process, identity, stories, writing, conversations, teacher practice. Then, I collapsed the codes in relation to the research question that guided the study. The final codes that emerged from this process included, identity, writing, and teacher practice. Data were transcribed manually. The study was IRB approved.

Study Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. This study was conducted over an eight-week period. This study highlights Kim's perspective on her interactions with Jada; however, limits a first-person account of Jada's perspectives and interactions. This study was conducted using a case study model, so limited participant representation made generalizability challenging. Further, my role as the teacher participant's professor, as well as the practicum supervisor was a limitation in this study. Despite this, Kim's case prompts the need for broader dialogue on multimodal pedagogies designed to support Black girls in developing digital stories. Given this, I hope that future studies will employ a multiple case model around this research area.

Multimodal Pedagogies Through a Black Girl's Home, Community, & Schooling Identities

In the first practicum session, Jada was eager to develop her digital story; however, she had three topics in mind and was uncertain on which topic to choose

(Researcher Fieldnotes, March 7, 2021). Kim and Jada spent the first session getting to know each other and building a rapport.

The more we talked about ideas for the movie, the more I was able to ask questions to better understand where she comes from. For example, I asked her whether she had siblings. She said she had a little brother. So, I asked how old he was? Are you close with him? This conversation led to Jada showing me pictures of her brother. It served as a transition into talking about her grandmother. I began to understand more about her family and her life back home in NYC. She came from a large family, was adopted, and moved around a lot growing up. She mentioned that the constant travel led to feelings of isolation. She wanted to capture this in her digital movie (Teacher Participant Reflection, March 14, 2021).

Kim's reflection illustrates the importance of posing questions that center Jada's home and community identities and experiences. Jada shared intimate details about being adopted as a child and the difficulties a transient lifestyle posed on building and sustaining lasting friendships. Kim wanted to know more about Jada and cleared space for her to share her story (Richardson, 2003). Jada wanted her digital movie to capture the constant sense of traveling and feelings of isolation that she often felt. Black girls often do not feel seen in school spaces because their identities and lived experiences are not incorporated in literacy instruction (Price-Dennis et al., 2007). Interestingly, Jada seemed surprised that Kim appeared interested in learning more about her life (Fieldnotes, March, 2021). Jada's reaction is indicative of how school spaces historically do not tailor instruction to the needs of Black girls (Greene, 2021; Price-Dennis et al., 2017).

Kim's questions led Jada to reflect on her previous school identity and experiences. Jada shared her negative experiences in prior schools.

One of the things that stood out in our previous conversation was her negative school experience. She was kicked out of school and sent to various schools for being disengaged in class. Jada was often described as 'difficult,' 'looking for attention,' and 'acting out.' Teachers caused her to have negative school experiences and I don't want her impression of me to be more of the same. She never had an opportunity in her previous schools to engage in a project like this. Jada felt the digital story would provide a space to vent and tell her true story. I want us to spend our next session focusing on how Jada may account for both the 'physical places' and the 'emotional places' in her journey (Teacher Participant Planning Sheet, April 2, 2021).

In her conversations with Kim, Jada detailed her negative school experiences. Jada was expelled from school several times and instances of being disengaged resulted in teachers and administrators labeling her a “problem child” (Planning Sheet, April 2, 2021). Her teachers never inquired about experiences impacting her personal or school life to determine what could attribute to her being ‘disengaged’ (Researcher Fieldnotes, March 24, 2021). Unlike their White female counterparts, Black girls’ disengagement in the classroom often results in harsh disciplinary policies that impact their well-being and have a negative impact on their school trajectory (Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2016; National Women’s Law Center, 2014; Sperling, 2020). To this point, teachers’ deficit framing of Jada led to her being pushed out of schools and attending Wade Institute to complete high school credits.

Jada prioritizes her life experiences and school histories, prompting Kim to focus on how she may be perceived in her ‘teacherly role.’ I responded, “You mentioned your concern with being more of the same in relation to Jada’s interactions with teachers and her overall school experiences. How do you plan to navigate the digital storytelling process given these concerns? What steps are you taking to ensure that this space will be different than her experiences in previous learning spaces? (Researcher Feedback on Planning Sheet, April 2, 2021). It prompts Kim to understand her social positioning in relation to Jada’s former teachers and how schooling structures and teacher practices work in tandem to silence, misunderstand, and pathologize the Black girls’ experiences. Kim seems aware of her social positioning in relation to Jada’s former teachers; however, my feedback encouraged her to take steps to push back against school norms and teacher practices that silenced and pathologized Jada’s experiences. In her interactions with Jada, Kim seems to be intentional in creating a learning space that is accommodating to Jada’s needs at different points in the project (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 15, 2021).

Multimodal Pedagogies Through a Black Girl’s Organization of Content & Communication of Ideas

In session three, Kim gauges Jada’s content organization and communication of ideas.

Jada had a wide range of ideas during the brainstorming stage, but when I began to ask her how she planned to incorporate all of it into a final piece, she wasn’t certain. With so many ideas, Jada seemed open to my support in organizing content and sketching out which tools would best communicate her ideas. I suggested that Jada use storyboarding to do so. Jada mentioned she wanted to “draw them in” to her triumphs and challenges. I suggested she layer her media

content in ways that didn't cause them to compete for the viewers' attention, but together created a vivid picture for her audience. Jada mentioned that she would have her content organized and her modalities selected and layered for our next session (Teacher Participant Reflection, April 9, 2021).

Kim probes Jada's plan to organize content and incorporate ideas into her digital story. Jada was uncertain about how she planned to incorporate her ideas into a cohesive digital story. Kim suggests Jada organize her ideas into manageable parts by using digital story strategies including storyboard sketch sheets and slide layouts. Kim's approach focuses on supporting Jada in organizing her ideas into manageable parts and determining ways to layer her content to draw her audience into her experiences (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 1, 2021). This includes Jada layering her digital story by incorporating multiple modalities for each frame (Miller et al., 2012). Jada's focus on drawing her audience into her digital story illustrates how it is important for the audience to understand her personal journey. To this point, deficit labels have defined who and what she is and drawing her audience into her story disrupts these misrepresentations (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 16, 2021). Digital tools provide Black girls with the opportunity to assume agency while authoring their lives on their terms.

Kim encourages Jada to layer multimodalities, including narration, visual, and music in ways that paint a rich picture to the audience.

Jada came back this week with a revised organization of her content. Jada showed me charts that laid out what images she would use to represent each milestone she detailed in her journey. After our conversation last week, she seemed to have a clearer sense of representing her ideas by layering audio and visuals. For example, Jada plans to narrate a spoken word poem she wrote entitled "Get Free" while visual images of her schooling experiences are displayed. Next week, I want to encourage Jada to focus on slide transitions and other edits to make her movie seamless (Teacher Participant Planning Sheet, April 16, 2021).

In my feedback to Kim, I mentioned "You shared that Jada wanted to incorporate her poem "Get Free" into her digital movie; however, you seem to be prepared to focus on slide transitions and completion of the digital story. Be certain to not focus simply on the technical aspect of Jada's digital story. There is so much "Get Free" may offer Jada emotionally that you want to give attention to" (Researcher Feedback on Teacher Planning Sheet, April 16, 2021). Kim planned to focus the next session technical aspects of the digital story. Given what I knew

about Jada's school histories and lived experiences and the title of the poem, for the next session, I wanted to encourage Kim to place emphasis on the contents of the poem and not solely on the technical aspect of the digital story.

Kim began the next session inquiring about Jada's poem (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 20, 2021). Jada recited her poem "Get Free" that illustrated a raw, honest, and personal account of how her experiences made her feel. For example, Jada wrote and narrated her spoken word poem, "Get Free" that could be heard in the background while images of a Black girl crouched down in the corner of a dimly lit classroom, behind prison bars, and confined to a straitjacket represented her own negative school experiences (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 20, 2021). Kim asked Jada, "What were your thoughts and feelings at the time that you wrote "Get Free?" (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 20, 2021). Jada mentioned that she feels unseen and unheard and school felt like prison. Jada then mentioned that she wanted to draw parallels between school and prison since both confine and constrain the accused.

Get Free by Ms. Jada (Excerpt)

I'm a prisoner
Bound to
the expectations of others.
Misrepresentations.
Forced to please with
fake smiles.
school chains
confine me.
What are my future academic goals?!
To 'graduate'
from bondage.
To get free.

By narrating "Get Free" and layering the poem with images of confinement, Jada expresses being a prisoner of other people's expectations of her and misrepresentations of who she is. Through a play on words, Jada further details that her future goals were to 'graduate' from the chains that bound her. She depicts how school chains confined, silenced, isolated, and traumatized her.

Multimodal Pedagogies Through a Black Girl's Varied Work Styles

Jada's varied work styles shaped the type of support and the level of support Kim provided. Kim often adjusted her level of support based on Jada's varied work styles. This included serving in both an autonomous and collaborative role at different stages of the process depending on Jada's working style and comfort level.

Multimodal Pedagogies Through a Collaborative Support Role

Kim's reflection entry highlighted her efforts to disrupt the traditional teacher-student model by engaging in a collaborative facilitation approach in the digital story process (Miller et al., 2012).

As we talked, I began jotting down short, bulleted notes. I realized she began to watch me write as we talked and told me to add something extra to one slide on the storyboard or take something out. Throughout, Jada and I worked as a team; I supported her ideas by helping her to clarify and offered suggestions to move her movie forward. By shifting the way the task is delivered, I allowed Jada to take the lead role in the class and I was able to act as the support in her creative process (Teacher Participant Reflection, April 23, 2021).

Kim's collaborative role consisted of serving as a scribe. Kim jotted down Jada's ideas and posed clarifying questions to expand and refine ideas. Kim provided support in the development stage, while ensuring that Jada maintained the lead role and assumed creative control of the digital story process (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 25, 2021). Kim provided support in the form of "suggestions" only after Jada shared her ideas and vision for the digital story. In one interaction Kim encouraged Jada to provide more details about her prior school experiences, so that she painted a full picture for your audience (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 21, 2021). This illustrates Kim's awareness of the importance of redistributing power in her working relationship with Jada.

Multimodal Pedagogies Through an Autonomous Support Role

Kim assumed a collaborative role as Jada sought more autonomy at certain points in the digital story process.

The part of the final workshops I did not expect was her tendency to want to work alone. I would not say that she refused my help rather she kept to herself and did not engage when I offered assistance. Jada came to the workshop session needing to finish writing her narration. I wanted to jump in and help her to ensure she completed it so we would have time to record, adjust it in moviemaker, and then add all of the finishing touches to her video. When I tried to help her out, she said she would be done in a few minutes and worked alone. So, I gave her some space to complete her narration (Teacher Participant Reflection, May 5, 2021).

Jada's desire for more of an autonomous working experience appeared unexpected to Kim since she was able to be more collaborative in previous course sessions. Kim's attempt at revisiting a more collaborative approach was met with Jada's resistance as she asserted herself. In my feedback to Kim, I asked, "How do you plan to make adjustments in the moment that are most suitable to Jada? How will you gauge what she may need?" (Researcher Feedback on Reflection, May 5, 2021). Jada tended to be open to a collaborative approach with Kim regarding technical aspects, including slide transitions and panning in and panning out of shots. I shared with Kim that "Jada appears to seek autonomy in stages of the project that require her to tap into and incorporate emotions into her digital story, including practicing the flow and cadence for the narration of both the poem and images" (Researcher Feedback on Reflection, May 5, 2021). Kim responded, "I try to be certain to listen to what she says not just about her digital story, but in general. I plan to do more asking and less assuming on what she may need at a particular time. Jada's creative content also gives me a sense of who she is and what she may need at certain points."

Although in stark contrast from previous interactions with Kim, Jada's positioning was in alignment with both the title and words in her poem, "Get Free" (Researcher Fieldnotes, May 5, 2021). This indicates how body language served as central markers in Jada asserting herself and determining Kim's role (Rogers, 2003). This consisted of Jada positioning herself in the far end of the multimedia center displaying closed body language (hunched over and her back facing Kim) with earbuds (Researcher Fieldnotes, April 25, 2021). Although Kim was mindful of her positioning, Jada's body language was liberating as she "Gets Free" and creates the type of work environment and support that suits her (Researcher Fieldnotes, May 7, 2021). Jada's "graduation" was a political act as she evolved and sought an emancipatory experience (Researcher Fieldnotes, May 7, 2021).

In her planning sheet, Kim addresses both her collaborative and autonomous role and adjusting to both roles based on Jada's work style and comfort level.

I have learned so much from working with Jada. About her lived experiences, her journey, and creating spaces that allow her to BE. Jada has determined my level of participation at different points. Moving forward I plan to come prepared to be both fully hands on and less hands on and provide the level of support based on what Jada needs at that moment. She determines my level of participation and the level of support I provide (Teacher Participant Planning Sheet, May 10, 2021).

Kim's planning sheet highlighted how working with Jada gave her an understanding of who Jada was and the importance of creating spaces that allow Black girls to "Be." Jada's ways of being and knowing allowed her to assert herself, center her needs, and navigate the digital story process on her terms (Price-Dennis, 2017; Richardson, 2003). Kim was self-reflective and highlighted how she would be prepared to provide the level of support Jada found to be most suitable at different stages of the digital story process.

Discussion

This study examined how a White literacy teacher (Kim) learns from and with a Black girl (Jada) through her development of a digital story. Jada positions and repositions Kim's role, which entailed (1) tapping into home, community, and school identities (2) supporting content organization and communication of ideas (3) adjusting to varied work styles. Kim built a rapport by posing questions that focused on Jada's home, community, and school identities. Jada shared her feelings of loneliness and despair while living a transient lifestyle as an adopted child. This process allowed Jada to incorporate her lived experiences into the digital story. Jada's negative schooling experiences were cautionary in nature and served as a mirror for Kim, as Kim reflected on her social positioning while working with Jada.

Kim supported Jada in organizing ideas into manageable parts through storyboarding. Kim highlighted the importance of layering content and embedding multiple representations into the digital story that captured Jada's vision to draw her audience in. Jada layered the narration of her spoken word poem, "Get Free" with digital images of a Black girl experiencing various forms of isolation and confinement. This represented how previous schooling experiences were confining and how "graduating" freed her from bondage.

Jada's varied workstyle required Kim to adjust her role. This ranged from serving in both a collaborative and autonomous role at different stages of the project. In response to Jada's needs, Kim's varied approaches highlighted the redistribution of power and shifted the teacher-student social dynamic. Jada desired more autonomy while tapping into emotional elements and desired more collaboration on technical elements of the digital story. Jada's body language and proximity to Kim served as markers of Jada centering her needs and asserting herself. In these moments, Jada's body language was liberating as it mirrored the message in her poem, "Get Free."

Cultivating Multimodal Pedagogies in Support of Black Girls

Implications for Literacy Instruction

Moving forward, it is imperative that educators center and honor the academic and socio-emotional experiences of Black girls who have been pushed out of traditional schools and pushed into alternative school spaces (Epstein et al., 2017). This entails

understanding how Black girls' negative academic experiences shape their broader perspectives on schooling and self-perception. It is important to learn their schooling experiences and how schools have framed who they are. Cultivating multimodal pedagogies for Black girls is dire and there are steps literacy teachers can implement to support Black girls in the classroom.

Literacy teachers must build rapport with Black girls to learn more about their triumphs and challenges. This allows literacy teachers to create opportunities in multimodal pedagogies for Black girls to showcase their artistic expressions through writing, drawing, and music. Black girls' artistic expressions can be outlets for them to chronicle their experiences and navigate adversities in constructive ways. It is also important that literacy teachers engage in reflective practice accounting for how their positionalities shape their instructional role in working with Black girls. This entails gauging aspects of the instruction that have gone well or needs modifications.

Literacy teachers may provide opportunities for Black girls to communicate the level of support needed at different stages of the digital story process. Given this, literacy teachers need to model various support styles including, collaborative and autonomous role to Black girls. This also allows both the literacy teacher and Black girls to gauge the support needed over the course of the project. By modeling the collaborative and autonomous role and introducing digital story resources, Black girls assert which level of interactions and support are most suitable at various stages of the digital story process. Black girls' experiences will continue to reposition the role of literacy teachers. It is important for literacy teachers to incorporate multimodal pedagogies that allow Black girls to (re)tell their stories in ways that disrupt deficit perceptions of who they are on their terms.

Implications for Research

The current study examines how a White literacy teacher learns from and with a Black girl through her development of a digital story in an alternative learning context. Black girls' digital literacies have been the area least researched in Black girlhood studies (Muhammad & Haddix, 2016). Further scholarly research is needed that examines how Black girls' digital literacies shape multimodal pedagogies in the secondary literacy context. From a methodology standpoint, a more expansive research study is needed that employs a multi-case study model. This would illustrate the nuanced and layered ways that Black girls create digitally and literacy teachers teach multimodally. Further, a more expansive research study is needed that includes a first-hand perspective of Black girls' experiences, identities, and creative influences through journaling and interviews. Lastly, a research study is needed that is conducted over three months or more. This would illustrate the ways that Black girls create digitally and literacy teachers teach multimodally over time.

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