Emotions at Play: A Critical Exploration into the Everyday Social and Emotional Lives of Elementary Aged Black Students

By

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Abstract

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Drawing on an integrative framework of emotions, my dissertation grapples with the social and emotional development–specifically well-being–of Black children amid anti-Black violence within educational spaces (e.g., playgrounds, classrooms, wellness centers). To do so, this dissertation explores the affective dimensions or social function of emotions among Black students ages 4 to 10 within educational spaces– that is, how emotions shape their social interactions and how social interactions shape their emotions. There is limited scholarship on the everyday and multifaceted relationship between emotions and social interactions among Black students in educational spaces (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Legette, Rogers, & Warren, 2022). A vital component of this study includes deep and rich descriptions of Black students' emotional well-being, which has implications for their mental health by capturing the social function of emotions across educational spaces.

By bringing together insights from emotion science with Black placemaking, this dissertation (a) How do emotions shape social interactions, and how do social interactions shape emotions? (b) in what ways are Black students exploring and processing the relationship between their emotions and social interactions, (c) how are emotions moving through and sticking to the everydayness of Black student's social environments (objects, spaces/places, language, tone, memory, body movements, cultures, environments, identity, and events) and construct the ways they build relationships (Ahmed, 2004, 2015; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), and (d) considers how Black children's emotions can provide crucial insight into promoting and protecting their emotional well-being in educational spaces. This dissertation leverages insights from, responds to limitations of, and builds upon research in psychology, sociology, Black studies, child studies, and education on the topic of emotions. This dissertation utilized three qualitative methods—participant observations, semi-structured, in-depth, and open-ended interviews, and sociological video analysis. Findings shed new light on how emotions play a central role in the processes and factors that (re)produce and reduce inequality in the emotional everyday lives of Black students in educational settings, ultimately shaping their emotional well-being and mental health. Findings also articulate the multidimensionality of emotions, which contribute to the crucial and urgent work to improve the mental health and well-being of Black students. The study results have critical implications for understanding and supporting Black students' healthy social and emotional development in education spaces.

Forever in my Heart

Cara & Samuel Chones Sr.
Raymond Chones
Samuel Chones Jr.
Aunt Bee
Konner Rush
Kevin Rush Sr.
Edward James Hill

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Cara Chones, my grandma, thank you for dreaming of this moment. I did it. Just like you said I would.

Chapter One: Introduction

The refusal to feel takes a heavy toll. Not only is there an impoverishment of our emotional and sensory life . . . but this psychic numbing also impedes our capacity to process and respond to information. The energy expended in pushing down [emotions] is diverted from more creative uses, depleting the resilience and imagination needed for fresh visions and strategies.

-Joanna Macy, Excerpt from *Despair Work*

Within a vibrant and, at times, daunting social world, children typically utilize the power of curiosity, discovery, exploration, and dreaming to make sense of their social environments. Most children make sense of the world by actively engaging with various social actors within their ecosystem, such as parents, family members, teachers, and friends, to name a few. The freedom to fully experience the joy of being a child and the protection that the social construction of childhood affords our youngest human beings to flourish. It is widely known across many countries and cultures that it is children's right to be joyous, free, loved, protected, and, most importantly, playful without having to ponder or navigate the potential consequences. Children should have the right to scream with joy, laugh hysterically, whine and cry, be filled with anger and rage, lose themselves in their imagination, and love and be loved unconditionally. However, the human right for 'all' children to experience the joy of childhood is not honored or protected by social actors throughout the world around them. Unfortunately, many of our most marginalized children, especially Black children, are not extended the same right to a childhood, nor are their childhoods protected.

Specifically, many of our Black children are treated with harm that often squanders their ability to experience their full emotions, express their full emotions, feel the social world around them, or *just be*. Black children are subject to harsh discrimination and treatment, as well as various forms of gratuitous violence. Black children are being removed from schools and forced to cut their hair due to policies defining certain styles as unusual, slammed and tasered for spraying perfume or cologne, and murdered just for playing in public (Bryan, 2020; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Harris, 2014). Despite what feels like an endless list of inequalities and oppression that marginalized children, especially Black children, experience and its noticeable impact on their sense of self (Harris-Britt et al., 2007), Black children's brilliance and beauty continue to shine despite various oppressive forces. While holding the realities of our unjust society, children create spaces and processes to flourish (Bryan, 2020; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Harris, 2014). In the creative modes of flourishing, children convey their emotions, feelings, and dreams to the world. However, adults tend to dismiss children's emotions, feelings, and dreams, often referring to their emotions, feelings, and dreams as naive, incomprehensible, or unrealistic. Instead, adults attempt to control how children experience, express, and manage their emotions, explicitly and implicitly socializing children and youth about which emotions are appropriate or inappropriate. Adults often, advertently and inadvertently, socialize children to suppress various emotions, constraining the possibilities various emotions can bring to one's life (Bryan, 2020; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Harris, 2014). This dissertation captures Black children's emotions and feelings. This project is a journey into their social worlds to honor their perspectives. Children's emotions remain understudied, and this study aims to expand our understanding of Black children's emotions within a broader ecological and social context. Discovering the emotional lives of Black children requires a critical and nuanced understanding of their everyday experiences within and outside of educational settings. This exploration transcends conventional narratives, revealing the intricate interplay between societal, structural, cultural, and familial factors that shape the emotional lives of Black childhoods.

Inspiration derives from the not-so-visible but hyper-visible emotions and feelings that structure, float around, stick to, and move through every nook and cranny of the world around us. I pondered the question: How do we know something without knowing it? As I studied the everydayness of children, I found my answer: because we feel it. Through my scholarly search, I found an excerpt from a dialogue between Dr. W.E.B. Dubois and scholars at Clark University in Massachusetts in 1905. Alvin Borgquest[1], a psychology graduate student at the time, requested the expertise of W.E.B Dubois on the topic of Black people and emotions. Borgquest sought to understand the crying expressions among Black people. Awkwardly, wrapped in the anti-Black rhetoric that leaves a strange aura, Alvin Borgquest wrote a letter to W.E.B Dubois stating:

> We are pursuing an investigation here on the subject of crying as an expression of the emotions and should like very much to learn about its peculiarities among [Black people]. We have been referred to you as a person competent to give us information on the subject. We desire especially to know about the following salient aspects: Whether the negro sheds tears… (Quashie, 2021, p. 2).

From research to stories from lived experiences to popular culture, the importance of emotions in our lives became apparent. Tamir rice, Kaia rolle, and the countless stories of Black children motivated me to discover and document the emotions and feelings that structure, float around, stick to, and move through the everydayness of their lives. The search for documenting the everyday emotional lives of Black children led me on a hunt for art, beauty, and raw authenticity across film and scholarship. Particularly, I found the brilliant works of Kevin Quashie (2021) and his concept of 'aliveness,' along with Sara Ahmed's theorization of affective contagion in her article Happy Objects (2010), synced gracefully. Most importantly, films like Fresh (1994), Crooklyn (1994), the Corner (2000), the Wire – Season Four (2006), and the Pixar movie Inside Out (2015) collectively ignited an honest vision for my research. Each of the films, in tandem with critical emotion scholars, encompass and covey the richly complex and multifaceted social function of emotions in the lives of Black children. Studying Black life in its fullness, rooted in lived experiences, captures not only the suffering and struggles but also the aliveness, joy, creativity, and love that define it. This approach challenges stereotypes portraying marginalized children as inherently vulnerable, instead highlighting their agency in managing emotions and seeking support. By examining Black children's emotional understanding, expression, and resilience, this research counters paternalistic views and emphasizes their complexity and strength. The subsequent section explores the impact of various factors on these children's emotional development, revealing the compounding challenges they face and the significant emotional labor required to navigate their daily lives while dealing with experiences that affect their mental health and well-being. For example, *Fresh, a 1994 film about a 12-year-old Black boy,* provides the viewer insight into the provoking exploration of morality, survival, power, trust, and emotionality within the complex socio-cultural landscape of urban Brooklyn. The film weaves together a rich tapestry of emotions and feelings such as love, hope, and hope deferred, empathy, guilt, shame, belonging, anger, fear, anxiety, compassion, and sadness. All of which are cinematically described as structuring the experiences and interactions of the central and supporting characters. *Crooklyn,* a 1994 semi-autobiographical film, travels through the perspective of a 9-year-old Black girl and her four brothers. The aesthetic beauty, vibrant visuals, and playfulness transports the viewer to the rich complexities of Black childhood. Emotions and feelings such as love, belonging, joy, silliness, humor, anger, empathy, pride, and grief are artistically displayed to reflect Black children's emotional development authentically. *The Wire* (2006), season four, delves into the lives of a group

[1] Alvin Borgquest is the world's first in-depth psychological study on crying.

of Black middle school-aged youth navigating the Baltimore education system. In a raw and immersive form, *The Wire* is a powerful exploration of the authentic emotionality of Black youth. Emotions and feelings such as anger, frustration, empathy, compassion, humor, guilt, shame, joy, and belonging create a nuanced portrayal of Black youth's everyday emotional lives and emotional well-being within Baltimore's public education system. Lastly, the Pixar film *Inside Out* (2015) explores the intricate workings of an 11-year-old girl's emotions and their impact on her life. Although the film focused on five emotions, it showcased how empathy, desire, alienation, shame, guilt, and love intersect to shape a child's experiences. Each of the films and television shows offers a unique lens into the everyday emotional lives of children and youth, painting a profound picture of the interplay between emotions, feelings, and societal influences on young minds that shape their emotional landscapes. Capturing the emotional richness, beauty, and rawness of children's everyday lives structures the design and execution of this dissertation. I intentionally weave—rooted in storytelling—the insights from Black students with conventional and critical developmental literature. Anchored in storytelling that centers the voices of Black students, this study simply examines the following questions: (a) *What do Black children know about emotions?* (b) *How do Black children feel?* (c) *Why do they feel the ways they do?* and (d) *What makes Black children feel joy, freedom, and belonging in schools?*

This study, by centering their voices and humanizing their experiences, captures the everyday emotional lives of Black children in schools to better understand their emotional well-being and mental health in an everchanging anti-Black society. Additionally, this dissertation critically examines the affective dimensions and social functions of Black children's emotions by integrating Deborah Lupton's comprehensive framework on emotions with theories of Black placemaking, highlighting the socio-spatial dynamics that shape these children's emotional experiences in educational environments.

Black Students' Emotions, Well-Being, and Mental Health across Educational Spaces

Black children encounter daily ecological obstacles that disrupt and challenge their understanding of themselves, their families, and their communities (Baldridge, 2014; Crenshaw, 2015; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Dunbar et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2000; Goff, 2014; Ginwright, 2010; Harris, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Youngblood, 2015). Often, these various obstacles take a tremendous toll on the everyday emotional lives of Black children, especially their emotional well-being and mental health (i.e., how they see themselves, how they feel, how they build relationships, the quality of their relationships with adults, and how they contribute to their communities). Amid the beauty, joy, and power of Black children, there remains significant concern about the impact of social and racial inequality on the overall well-being of Black children (i.e., social, mental, physical, and emotional) as well as their mental health (Anderson & Stevenson, 2019; Jernigan & Daniel, 2011; Jones et al., 2020). Mental health concerns such as anxiety disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, depression, and other mood disorders, eating disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are prevalent among children and youth (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). Nearly 1 in 5 children and youth between the ages of two and eight have diagnosable mental, behavioral, developmental, and emotional conditions (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). Estimates indicate that less than 20% of children and youth have adequate access to mental health services (American Psychological Association, 2022; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). With the rise in mental health concerns among children and youth, politicians and scholars have declared these recent trends as a growing crisis and are demanding policies to address the mental health needs as well as burdens of marginalized students (American Psychological

Association, 2022; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). As a result, schools are compelled to address the mental health of students.

Education scholarship and practice have long been engaged in understanding the social dynamics, behaviors, and academic trajectories of Black students, predominantly adopting a deficit-based lens (Baldridge, 2014; Dumas, 2016; Dumas & ross, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2009, 2011; Tuck, 2009). With the growing concern regarding mental health globally, stakeholders—educators, behavioral experts, school administrators, legal guardians, and researchers across diverse fields— are compelled to focus on and navigate the intricate terrains of students' well-being and how to promote their well-being in schools. The persistence of a plethora of barriers that result in a lackluster or absence of a clear political agenda or an allocation of necessary resources to address the rise in mental health among our youngest minds remains a formidable structural constraint.

Scholars have primarily promoted and supported implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) curricula and programs in educational settings to address the growing concern for students' emotional well-being and mental health. However, the emotional expressions and behaviors of Black students often find themselves ensnared in stereotypes and misconceptions, with emotions perceived as potential threats to both physical safety and academic excellence (Dumas, 2014, 2016; Dunbar et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2010). Recent research illuminates the pervasive emotional stereotyping and suppression experienced by Black individuals, especially children, who often confront labels laden with negative connotations such as anger, aggression, and danger (Callanan, 2012; Durik et al., 2006; Lozada et al., 2022). This emotional stereotyping, suppression, and exploitation not only curtail individual growth but also perpetuate systemic harm and oppression (Callanan, 2012; Durik et al., 2006).

The multifaceted development of Black students, influenced by factors ranging from adultification (Ferguson, 2000) and racial discrimination to anti-Black violence, underscores the urgency of addressing their social and emotional well-being (Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Dunbar et al., 2017; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Goff, 2014). Such adversities correlate with detrimental outcomes, including social alienation, anxiety, and depression among Black children (Dumas, 2014; Davis & Stevenson, 2006; Garbarino, 1995; Harris, 2014). Though laudable, the emphasis on SEL as a panacea for these challenges is fraught with concerns. The current SEL paradigm often grapples with cultural relevance, inadvertently reinforcing dominant cultural norms and overlooking marginalized communities' lived realities, particularly those of Black children (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Youngblood, 2015). Scholars increasingly voice apprehensions regarding the potential harms of SEL, underscoring its inadequacies in capturing the nuanced emotional development of Black students (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Legette et al., 2022). Despite the popularity of social and emotional learning as a scholarly and programmatic approach (i.e., schools, afterschool programs, community centers, research) to support students' emotional well-being and mental health, many have raised some concerns regarding social and emotional learning practices (SEL). Scholars, practitioners, parents or guardians, and even students have raised concerns around SEL's (1) lack of culturally relevant approaches, (2) the reinforcement of whiteness, (3) deficit-based framing and standardization of emotions (4) implementation of social and emotional curriculum, and (5) the exclusion of marginalized communities (especially, Black children) everyday realities (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Clark et al., 2022; Hoffman, 2009; Legette et al., 2022; Youngblood, 2015). A growing number of scholars are skeptical that such programming will benefit Black children and youth; many believe social-emotional learning can be harmful to Black students (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Legette et al., 2022). Camangian & Cariaga (2022) structural critique argues that SEL programming often obscures structural oppression, treating emotions as though they emerge in a vacuum, disconnected from systemic inequities and historical contexts. The overarching concern is that social and emotional learning, while widely accepted as a scholarly and programmatic approach, may not

effectively address Black students' emotional needs. Social and emotional learning has its shortcomings that lead to inconsistencies with the implementation of curriculum, oversimplification of emotions and feelings, limited cultural relevance, limited centering of Black children's everyday lives, and lack of tools to build authentic relationships (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Clark et al., 2022; Dumas, 2014; Legette et al., 2022; Youngblood, 2015). Many existing studies have not adequately centered Black students' everyday lives from an asset-based and humanizing perspective. There remains a limited understanding of Black children's everyday emotional lives, especially research that centers emotions within a critical framework that accounts for racialized, sociocultural, and structural processes (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Legette et al., 2022). While it is evident that schools are the most important and influential to the mental health of Black students, schools are also the earliest sites of anti-Black racism that Black students experience. Critical scholars have considered that traditional schooling spaces and pedagogies operate as sites of suffering, both psychological and physical, for Black students (Dumas, 2016). Studying Black students' emotional well-being and mental health is crucial for understanding their unique challenges and ensuring that educational programs and practices effectively support their holistic development. By addressing the gaps in current social and emotional learning approaches and centering research within a critical framework, we can work towards fostering authentic relationships, promoting cultural relevance, and creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for Black students.

Purpose of the Study and Guiding Questions

This study explores the complex affective dimensions and social function of emotions among Black students (ages 4 to 10 years old) to deeply understand Black students' emotional well-being and mental health across educational spaces within a school setting. This study is motivated to understand the following: (a) How do emotions shape social interactions, and how do social interactions shape emotions? (b) in what ways are Black students exploring and processing the relationship between their emotions and social interactions, and (c) how are emotions moving through and sticking to the everydayness of Black students social environments (objects, spaces/places, language, tone, memory, body movements, cultures, environments, identity, and events) and construct the ways they build relationships (Ahmed, 2004, 2015; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). Grounded in these wonderings, this study is anchored by three goals: (a) to describe the affective dimensions and social function of emotions among students, (b) to capture the ways various social factors shape how Black students understand, experience, express, and manage emotions in schools, and (c) to lovingly listen to Black students experiences in order to provide crucial insight into supporting their emotional well-being and mental health in schools. This dissertation intentionally focuses on Black students to understand the role emotions play in how inequalities and processes of othering and belonging are (re)produced, maintained, and reduced. Knowing the plethora of obstacles Black students face and their negative impact on their well-being and mental health, their stories remain largely ignored and, at times, absent from policy, practice, and scholarly discourse. As a result, well-intentioned initiatives are developed and implemented without adequately considering the lived experiences of marginalized communities, especially children. As Black students navigate an everchanging world that offers many opportunities for promoting and constraining their emotional well-being and mental health, their everyday emotional lives must be centered. Three specific questions are explored in this dissertation study:

1. How do Black students experience emotions and feelings in educational spaces?
2. What shapes how Black students experience emotions and feelings in educational spaces?

3. How do Black students use play or playfulness to navigate their feelings and emotions across educational spaces?

Each motivation, goal, and research question work together to create a dissertation that adds texture, depth, and richness to extant research. Using an integrative theoretical framework on emotions (Keltner et al., 2014; Lupton, 1998; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010) as well as theory on Black Placemaking (McKittrick, 2011; Hunter et al., 2016), I explore how Black students' everyday experiences across space and place simultaneously shape their experiences with emotions and feelings. Additionally, I utilize both theoretical frameworks to grasp the emotionality of Black students throughout educational spaces within the school context. Structural inequality throughout our society naturally seeps into the day-to-day of schools across the United States, ultimately influencing the social and emotional development, emotional well-being, and mental health of Black students. The realities of oppression and inequality and its impact on the everyday lives of Black people, especially Black children and youth, are apparent throughout research as well as popular culture. Often, this lends to scholarship-centering deficit and damaged-centered approaches to researching Black students and describing the everyday lives of Black children and youth. Therefore, my study is grounded in an asset-based, humanizing, and liberatory approach to research, which requires that this study (a) centralizes and celebrates participants as complex and as sources of knowledge and pride, (b) debunks negative perceptions about racially/ethnically minoritized communities and populations, (c) recognizes human agency and reveals the strengths of communities and populations, (d) engages participants in its research design, implementation, and analyses, and (4) engenders feelings of celebration, affirmation, beingness and belongingness, that can lead to positive mental, emotional, and physical well-being (Paris & Winn, 2014; Tuck, 2009; Savage et al., 2021). As such, these approaches are designed to illuminate how Black students utilize creativity, imagination, and beauty within their play or playfulness to navigate their everyday experiences and use play and playfulness to disrupt hegemonic practices within schools.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

Chapter 2 provides a historical and contemporary overview of discourse on the mental health of Black students in schools and the points of tension within policy-driven school-based mental health initiatives and pedagogical practices that attempt to support Black students' mental health and emotional well-being. I show the evolution of school-based mental health initiatives and pedagogical practices that attempt to address the concerns regarding students' well-being. I also show how school-based mental health initiatives and pedagogical practices ignore the everyday experiences of Black students and simultaneously perpetuate deficit-oriented narratives about Black students and their communities. Chapter 2 also explicates the theoretical framework that guided this study. I explore two theoretical frameworks that provide the necessary insight into understanding the complex and multifaceted relationship between emotions/feelings, Black childhood, emotional well-being and mental health, social interactions and relationships, space and place, and the manifestations of play and playfulness within the school context. I use an integrative theoretical framework on emotions and theories on Black Placemaking to understand Black students' everyday experiences with emotions and feelings, the emotionality of Black students, and how play and playfulness are used by Black students across educational spaces within the school context. Chapter 3 explores the relevant literature on developing children's emotions and feelings from early to middle childhood. This section provides, in chronological order, the development of children from birth to 10 years old. I also explore relevant literature that explains how emotions are socially, culturally, and racially contextualized. I do so by mapping the experiences of Black students in

schools and the ways their experiences intersect with various social, cultural, racial, and political forces. I also review relevant literature on Black children and youth's emotions, emotional well-being, and mental health. This section provides insight into the concerns regarding Black students' emotional well-being and mental health in schools. Lastly, I cover relevant literature on school-based mental health initiatives and services to support children and youth's emotional well-being and mental health. I cover social and emotional learning literature, focusing on literature that engages with Black students and social and emotional learning. I also cover play and play therapy as alternative school-based mental health initiatives and services. The lack of understanding of Black student's emotions, emotional well-being, and mental health, as well as the ways their everyday experiences shape their mental health, is an apparent theme across the scholarship.

Chapter 4 explains the methods and methodological approach employed for this study. I utilized a critical qualitative research design consisting of multiple data sources such as participant observations, semi-structured, in-depth, open-ended interviews, video recordings, and documents/artifacts. In this section, I provide my reasoning for a critical qualitative methodological rooted in a storytelling approach and why the approach was necessary for understanding and capturing the everyday emotional lives of Black students in schools. I also provide contextual background for the neighborhood and school, introduce the study participants, and explain the methods and strategies used for data collection. In Chapters 5-7, I present the significant findings from the study. In Chapter 5, I emphasize the need for a deeper understanding of how Black students comprehend, articulate, and regulate their emotions. By exploring the personal perspectives of Black students, the students provided crucial and profound insights into their emotional experiences in schools—understanding, expression, and management of emotions, as well as various factors shaping their everyday emotional lives. Each student contributes to a nuanced comprehension of the complex social and emotional development within school settings. In Chapter 6, I delve into the intricate emotional labor experienced by Black students. This chapter illustrates various dimensions, including the impact of family socialization, violence, and school interactions on shaping the emotional lives of Black childhoods. Using observations, sociological video analysis, and interviews, I map the persistence and challenges encapsulated in the "stickiness" of emotions in Black childhood emotional labor, shedding light on the enduring nature of "ugly feelings" associated with emotional labor, unraveling the less-discussed, challenging facets of emotional experiences for Black children.

Additionally, I examine the emotional labor embedded in the school and classroom environment by investigating the rules and norms that shape the classroom. These findings underscore the complexity of emotional labor in Black childhoods and how it intersects with various social, familial, and educational factors. In Chapter 7, I explore the nuanced aspects of disruptions and distractions within Black students' educational experiences by examining how play and forms of playfulness function across educational spaces in schools. Additionally, I investigate how feelings of inclusion or exclusion shape disruptions and distractions for Black students. This chapter highlights the importance of fostering a sense of belonging to mitigate disruptions and shed light on other factors contributing to distractions within educational settings. Finally, chapter 8 further discusses the interplay between emotions, Black childhood, social dynamics, and educational environments. This chapter will cover the study's implications and the need for future research on Black students' mental health and emotional well-being in educational settings. Lastly, this section will highlight the importance of policy analyses for addressing structural barriers to mental health services access and advocating for equitable practices in schools, ultimately emphasizing the importance of centering Black students' voices for holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating support in educational settings.

Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

Understanding the complexity of Black children's emotions and their relationship to their social and emotional well-being amid the pervasiveness of anti-Black racism in educational spaces requires the insights of a transdisciplinary perspective. Specifically, I will leverage insights from, respond to limitations of, and build upon research in psychology, sociology of emotions, Black studies, child development, and education. Below, I will summarize relevant findings, debates, and unresolved questions from the following areas of study: (a) research that grapples with children and emotions, specifically how children understand, experience, express, and regulate emotions, focusing on the relationship between emotions and well-being, (b) research on Black children's experiences in educational spaces, specifically research on anti-Black racism in education, (c) research on the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students in schools, and (d) research on the mental health interventions utilized by schools to address the emotional well-being and mental health of students. I begin this chapter by delving into psychological and child development literature on the emotional development of children and youth between the ages of birth to twelve years old.

Emotions and Early to Middle Childhood Developmental Considerations

Across the world, children are central to the progression and well-being of society. An overwhelming focus is on ensuring children develop appropriately and are prepared to participate actively. Attention has been paid to children's well-being, especially how children learn, experience, express, understand, and manage their emotions. Literature on the emotional development of children and youths can be sorted into two theoretical traditions: structural and functionalist perspectives on emotions (Keltner et al., 2014; Halle, 2003; Hoemann et al., 2019). Structuralist perspectives on children's and youth's emotional development are rooted in the conventional understanding of human evolutionary biology, which characterizes emotions–happiness, sadness, and anger–as innate and biologically hardwired. Emotions are "discrete, coherent constellations of physiological, subjective, and expressive activity." (Halle, 2003; Thompson, 1993, p. 374). Each distinct emotion (e.g., happiness, sadness, and anger) has specific behavioral patterns with neural, expressive, and subjective characteristics (Keltner et al., 2014; Halle, 2003). These distinct emotions are innately expressed in response to interactions, situations, and environments (Keltner et al., 2014a).

Emotion researchers applying a structuralist approach to understand emotions among children find two emotion states–negativity/distress and positivity/pleasure–during infancy, structured by biological maturation and social environment (Campos, 1984; Goldsmith, 2002; Izard, 1991; Keltner et al., 2014a). Under this approach, researchers use measurement techniques believed to capture the "specific, discrete physiological and behavioral elements that signify emotions" (Halle, 2003, p. 374). To capture the physiological and behavioral elements that makeup emotions, scholars of structuralist perspectives on emotions develop sophisticated–but invasive–measurement techniques. These techniques allow for measuring brain electrical, electrodermal, respiratory, and cardiovascular activity. They have also developed coding systems such as the facial action coding system and the maximally discriminative facial movement coding system to identify and categorize the specific movements of facial muscles involved in expressing emotions (Ekman, 1992a). Although these measurement techniques have been widely used throughout research on emotions, there remain concerns related to ethics, measurements, validity, and the potential for the measurements to elicit physiological emotion responses (Ekman, 1992b; Gross & Levenson, 1995;

Halle, 2003; Larsen & Fredrickson, 1999; Mauss & Robinson, 2009). Such measurement techniques that emotion researchers utilize inadequately consider the individual differences and heterogeneity of responses among individuals within a social world. As a result, scholars have shifted away from a biological understanding of emotions and argued for a functionalist perspective on emotions.

Given these limitations, functionalist perspectives on childhood and youth emotional development center the individual within a dynamic social context using an ecological systems framework (Campos et al., 2004; Izard & Malatesta, 1987). These scholars argue that emotions are "processes of establishing, maintaining, or disrupting the relations between the person and the internal or external environment when such relations are significant to the individual." (Halle, 2003, p. 127). They also suggest that the individuals within their everyday social environment will experience shifts in their emotional development, particularly in terms of how they understand, experience, express, and regulate emotions (Keltner et al., 2014a; Halle, 2003; Hoemann et al., 2019; Larsen & Fredrickson, 1999).

A functionalist approach lends insight into the vital relationship between children and emotions (Shiota, & Kalat, 2018; Van Kleef, 2009). When considering child development, emotions are "relational processes in which children establish, alter, and maintain their relationship with the environment, especially the environment of caregivers, siblings, and other people" (Keltner et al., 2014a, p. 187). Scholars encourage an understanding that the emotional development of a child is not simply determined by their biological make-up but highly structured and organized by their larger social ecosystem (e.g., parents, community, environment, school, friends, TV shows, siblings). Most studies that take a functionalist utilize measurement techniques that gather both social (e.g., subjective opinions on emotions such as self-reporting and observer rating) and biological (e.g., physiological responses such as monitoring heart rate and multi-item checklist) nature of emotions (Keltner et al., 2014a; Halle, 2003; Hoemann et al., 2019; Larsen & Fredrickson, 1999). Using similar measurement techniques, scholars found that social environments like schools alter the child's relationship with that environment (Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Saarni et al., 1998). They also discuss research on early social referencing abilities, which involve using others' emotional cues to guide their behavior and responses to the environment. The individual-environment relationship is correlated to the emotional development of children, especially the way they socially engage with others and in the context of spaces structured by larger social ecology. In the sections below, I detail the emotional development of children and youth between the ages of birth to 10 years old.

The Social and the Magnifying of the Social: Early to Middle Childhood

As children progress into preschool and elementary school years (ages 2-10), the social context broadens to include peers and educators. Social psychology research, notably the work of Eisenberg and Fabes (1992), highlights the emergence of empathy and the role of peer relationships in emotional development (Dunn, 1988). Peer interactions become crucial in understanding social norms, cooperation, and diverse emotional experiences. Studies have found that children as young as two years old can understand and respond appropriately to events or circumstances. Specifically, one study found that at the age of two years old, children begin to understand the intentions, wants, and needs of others emotionally (Saarni et al., 1998). Within two years, at the ages of three and four, children's emotional development advances as they can demonstrate the ability to connect beliefs, thoughts, and knowledge to individuals (Keltner et al., 2014a; Kramer & Lagattuta, 2022; Lagattuta, 2014; Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997; Wellman et al., 2001). By the age of five and six, children can understand how an individual's beliefs, values, and knowledge shape their feelings or emotional state

(Keltner et al., 2014a; de Rosnay & Harris, 2002). It is believed that the shift in children's understanding and recognition of emotions stems from their growth in participating in social interactions. Keltner et al. (2014a) note that as children's use of language develops, "emotions become part of the negotiation of relationships and enables the development of shared meaning about internal states." (p. 194). As children talk about their emotions, learn to identify the cause of their feelings, and demonstrate the ability to regulate their emotions–within their social context– there is a complex development of their evaluative, reflective, and analytical skills. Children's social interactions and social-emotional development are intrinsically intertwined.

For example, through play, elementary school-aged children "extend their knowledge about social roles and expectations, and practice communication, emotion regulation, and social problem-solving skills, thereby benefiting [them] emotionally and [socially]" (Bierman & Motamedi, 2015, p.140). Relationships become increasingly significant in shaping children's developmental trajectories through various socializing agents such as parents, teachers, and peers. Studies have demonstrated the importance of families and peer interactions in shaping children's emotional responses to social situations (Bierman & Motamedi, 2015, p.140). During these crucial developmental years, children as early as two years old are becoming more adept at recognizing and labeling their emotions related to their social environment. Children can express a wide range of feelings, such as happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, and joy. Much of this is due to the process of socialization that occurs within the home and school environment. As children's social interactions increase, they simultaneously develop social skills and develop their emotional sense of self. Children between the ages of four and six begin to form opinions of themselves based on their experiences and social interactions with others. This is when students are hyper-conscious of moments of being singled out or included by parents, teachers, and peers (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Elias et al., 2003; Ladd et al., 1999; Ladd et al., 1996). As friendships become more complex, the development of emotion regulation weaves together with the moral development of children. It is during their social interactions with peers that children develop coping mechanisms to deal with various social situations. The development of coping skills may differ as children grasp the difference between what is socially understood as right or wrong within social interactions. The rules and social expectations that are conceptualized as emotion scripts are passed on through social interactions with various social actors and begin to weigh heavily on children's consciousness at this developmental stage. As children become more socially aware (e.g., social media), they begin to internalize the perspectives of their families, communities, and culture (Keltner et al., 2014a). As children transition into middle childhood, emotional development focuses on complex emotions such as empathy, guilt, and shame (Tangney et al., 2002; Tracy et al., 2007; Lewis, 1995). During increased social interactions, children struggle to express their internal state. Scholars suggest that children who have difficulty talking about emotions, identifying emotions and their causes, and regulating their emotions are more likely to associate negative feelings with school, have higher behavioral incidents, perform poorly academically, develop unhealthy relationships, and have a negative sense of self (e.g., self-esteem) (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Elias et al., 2003; Ladd et al., 1999; Ladd et al., 1996).

In all, literature on children's emotional development has outlined various factors that contribute to the development of emotions, such as language, social context, socialization, and geographical location, to name a few. Although a significant amount of research has tended to the emotions of children, there remain shortcomings regarding measurement techniques appropriate for children, theoretical and philosophical considerations from critical and Black scholarly perspectives, limited sampling of people who identify as Black or African American, and consideration of different research and social contexts (e.g., schools, racially segregated neighborhoods, racial inequality, and anti-Black violence). There remains limited research on emotional development that centers on the experiences of Black children and youth, especially using an asset-based approach

(Dunbar, 2022; Lozada et al., 2022; Legette et al., 2022). While there is a growing interest in the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students, there remains a limited understanding of the experiences Black students are having in schools and, most importantly, the impact their experiences are having on their emotional well-being and mental health (Bowman & Bean, **2021;** Jones & Cross**,** 2020). Below, I will provide an overview of research that grapples with the experiences of Black children and youth in schools, as well as the concerns regarding the mental health of Black students.

Black Students Emotion Experiences: Understanding Anti-Black Racism across Educational Spaces

Black children experience immense social, structural, cultural, and political oppression across a variety of educational spaces, including community centers, schools, and youth programs. Across urban communities, Black children are routinely navigating poverty-stricken neighborhoods, drug activity, police harassment and brutality, environmental injustices, and various other forms of violence (Dumas, 2014; Grant et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2010; Harris, 2014; Hunter et al., 2016; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Rios, 2011). In the context of schooling, additionally, Black students must routinely navigate educators who reproduce anti-Black racism in their pedagogical practices, hyper-sexualize their bodies, adultify and criminalize their actions, emotions, and behaviors, enforce oppressive policies, and reinforce racist stereotypes throughout school curricula (Baldridge, 2014, 2017; Burton, 2007; Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Epstein et al., 2017; Ferguson, 2000; Ginwright et al., 2006; Rios, 2011). Ultimately, these experiences negatively impact the social and emotional development, mental health, and academic success of Black children (Dumas, 2014; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Dumas & ross, 2016; Ginwright, 2010; Harris, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lozada et al., 2021; Rios, 2011; ross, 2019, 2021). Black children and youth who are exposed to trauma and violence are at a greater risk for developing later-life mental health issues. Black children experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide at higher rates than their non-Black peers (Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Davis & Stevenson, 2006; Garbarino, 1995; Ginwright, 2010; Kwate & Goodman, 2015; Pachter & Coll, 2009). For example, the Emergency Taskforce for Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health (2019) found that Black children who are younger than 13 years old are twice more likely to die by suicide than their non-Black peers. Many scholars attribute the increased rate of Black children and youth suicide to a variety of detrimental factors (e.g., trauma, racial violence, adultification) and circumstances (e.g., racial inequality, poverty, gentrification, displacement, underfunded and overpoliced school) that negatively impact the social and emotional well-being of Black communities (Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Ferguson, 2000; Hartman, 1997; ross, 2019, 2021; Willderson III, 2020). Therefore, there is a pressing need for heightened attention to address mental health disparities affecting Black children and youth.

Anti-Black racism or Anti-Black violence has been utilized as a theoretical and analytical tool to extensively map the specificity of the historical and contemporary harm, violence, and oppression that Black people and its pervasiveness experience throughout every facet of society (Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Ferguson, 2000; Hartman, 1997; ross, 2019, 2021; Willderson III, 2020). Several education scholars utilize anti-Black racism as an analytical tool to identify, examine, and address the experiences of Black children and youth in schools (Dumas, 2016; Grant et al., 2020; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Rios, 2011; ross, 2019, 2021) more effectively. Scholars assert that utilizing an anti-Black racism as a theoretical and analytical perspective in education sheds vital light on the ways (1) anti-Black racism is pervasive throughout the educational system, (2) schools are sights of anti-Black harm, violence, and oppression, and (3) the impact of anti-Black racism has on the

holistic development of Black children in schools. Within the context of schools, educational spaces and educators implement or enforce anti-Black practices, ideologies, and policies (Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Noguera, 1995; ross, 2019, 2021). Black children are routinely experienced educators who reproduce anti-Black racism in their pedagogical practices, hyper-sexualize their bodies, adultify them (Ferguson, 2000), enforce oppressive policies, and reinforce racist stereotypes throughout school curricula (Baldridge, 2014; Burton, 2007; Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Epstein et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2010; Rios, 2011). Black children are being removed from schools and forced to cut their hair due to policies that define certain styles as unusual (Harris, 2014). Black children are being slammed and tasered for spraying perfume or cologne (Chappell & León, 2019). Black children disproportionately receive disciplinary infractions or are expelled for minor incidents (Ladson-Billings, 2006), and Black children are being deprived of their history and culture in the school curriculum and program designs (Dumas, 2014; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Dumas & ross, 2016; Ginwright, 2010; Harris, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Rios, 2011). As a result, Black children are experiencing an educational system that does not award them the same fundamental aspects of childhood or protect their childhood in comparison to their non-Black peers (Baldridge, 2014; Burton, 2007; Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Epstein et al., 2017; Ginwright, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Rios, 2011).

The anti-Black racism that Black children experience within the school context at an academic, physical, and emotional level warrants concerns regarding their social and emotional development into adulthood. Jeffery Duncan-Andrade (2009) notes that "there has been an assault on hope, particularly in our nation's urban centers. This attack has occurred on numerous fronts, including disinvestment in schools and overinvestment in a prison industrial complex." (p.182) Much of this has to do with the reality that Black children are often recognized–via their thinking, behavior, and emotions–as a concerning threat to the lives and structures of whiteness. For example, Shawn Ginwright (2010) argues that Black children and youth are labeled as threats to society, and this labeling is maintained by public policies (Ginwright, 2010). Take, for example, the term Super predators–a myth–that was used often by scholars (e.g., Dr. John J. DiIulio Jr), politicians (e.g., Bill and Hillary Clinton), T.V. personalities (e.g., Oprah Winfrey) and even educators to create a sense of fear towards Black children. Many identified Black children as violent, delinquent, and criminal and associated Black children and youth with the increase in crime during the 1990s in the United States. The term ignited the expansion of the incarceration of young Black people and set forth a wave of fear, anxiety, and violence that impacted the trajectory of Black children and youth. The term has led to the "process of allowing [society] to suspend our feelings of empathy towards young people of color" (Bogert & Hancock, 2020).

Black children are constantly seen as subjects to be research and controlled. Scholarship about Black children tend to employ anti-black rhetoric when seeking to explain the problems of Black children in the education system (Baldridge, 2014; Dumas, 2014; Dumas & ross, 2016; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Ginwright, 2010). For example, Black students are disproportionately framed as inherently more prone to misbehavior or demonstrating violent tendencies rather than considering how school policies and practices contribute to disproportionate disciplinary actions against Black students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Schools across the United States have made commitments to address the harm that is caused within schools by producing, enforcing, and protecting anti-Black practices. Schools are creating social and emotional programs that try to build "socially acceptable" leaders and give extra attention to Black children who are "at-risk," "hopeless," and "lost" to reduce the psychological and physical harm Black children experience (Baldridge, 2014; Ginwright, 2010; Tuck, 2009). These efforts by teachers, staff, and administrators— though well intended— ineffectively address the root causes of the harm, violence, and oppression that Black children face and do little to humanize their experience throughout educational spaces. As noted by Dumas

(2016), to intentionally change the educational system, it first must "…grapple with cultural disregard for and disgust with Blackness." (Dumas, 2016, p. 12). Anti-Black racism that is ever so prevalent throughout educational spaces depletes the numerous opportunities for children to belong, thrive, and develop into healthy adults. Whether Black children and youth are experiencing anti-Black racism directly or vicariously, the effects lead to an increased sense of feeling othered. The exposure to anti-Black racism (i.e., discriminatory practices, policies, and dehumanizing interactions with educators) in and outside of schools is linked to heightened mental health problems as well as other health-related concerns, all of which undermine educational participation and achievement (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Dunbar, 2022; Lozada et al., 2022; Legette et al., 2022). This ultimately can lead to Black children and youth viewing themselves through an oppressive, distorted, and dehumanizing perspective. As a result, schools can operate as hostile learning environments and hinder opportunities for flourishing among Black students (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Dunbar, 2022; Lozada et al., 2022; Legette et al., 2022).

Given that various forms of anti-Black racism in schools take a tremendous toll on the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students, there needs to be an immediate response to oppressive conditions that Black children experience in educational spaces to address the growing concerns regarding their emotional well-being and mental health. Often, schools rely on social and emotional learning and other therapeutic practices to address Black students' mental health. However, the literature posits that social and emotional learning, as well as other therapeutic practices, have not intentionally tended to the everyday experiences of Black students, especially using an asset-based approach. Instead, literature tends to take a pathologizing and deficit-based approach to understanding their everyday lives in schools and focus on controlling Black students' 'problem' behaviors and improving prosocial behavior among Black students (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Clonan-Roy et al., 2021; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Legette et al., 2022; Gross, 2022). To address the mental health concerns based on the unique experiences of Black children and youth, mental health services must adopt a healing-centered and liberatory approach to address their mental health needs effectively.

There remains limited research and practice that explicitly centers Black students' experiences, emotions, and feelings in the development of interventions and addressing the inequalities that significantly impact them (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Legette et al., 2022). Although the scholarship that documents Black children's experience in schools tends to focus on the harm or inequalities, it does not mean it defines who they are, and nor does it capture their full experience (e.g., joy, imagination, dreams). An asset-based approach is a liberatory and humanizing practice, as it requires an acknowledgment of structural oppression like violent school disciplinary practices, housing instability, racial stereotyping, and poverty that shape the lives of Black children (Baldridge, 2014; Hunter et al., 2016; Tuck, 2009). This research study situates the experiences of Black children within an anti-Black context to motivate a larger discourse regarding their emotional well-being and mental health in schools. Below, I will provide an overview of research grappling with school-based mental health interventions that emphasize developing and implementing social and emotional learning in schools.

"What are schools' doing?": An Overview of School-Based Mental Health Services

Education and health are intricately connected, with schools playing a crucial role in children's and youth's social and emotional development. Schools are essential to the formative developmental years of children and youth, and as a result, significantly shape and impact their emotional well-being and mental health (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Dalsgaard et al., 2020; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Legette et al., 2022). With the increasing rise of mental

health concerns across schools in the United States, these educational institutions have been identified as vital to addressing mental health by providing adequate mental health services for all children and youth. Nadeem and scholars (2016), in their study on urban school-based mental health services, found that students are six times more likely to receive mental health services in schools than in the greater community (Nadeem et al., 2016). School-based mental health services are defined as the development and implementation of mental health interventions within the context of schools to improve students' social and emotional well-being (National Center for School Mental Health, 2023; Dalsgaard et al., 2020; Kern et al., 2017). Rones and Hoagwood (2000) state that "any program, intervention, or strategy applied in a school setting that was specifically designed to influence students' emotional, behavioral, and/or social functioning" is to be considered a school-based mental health service (p. 224). Typically outsourcing, schools partner with health services such as school psychologists, applied behavior analysis (ABA), or educational consultations to create formats and approaches to improve students' mental health. Although definitions, approaches, and practices may differ across scholarly traditions, the overarching goals remain the same across school-based mental health services, such as providing mental health assessments and ensuring there are prevention as well as intervention strategies that address mental health concerns among students (National Center for School Mental Health, 2023; Dalsgaard et al., 2020; Kern et al., 2017). As a result of differing definitions, approaches, and practices, there exist concerns regarding the staff capacity, equitable access, and quality of services provided within schools set to improve students' social and emotional well-being (National Center for School Mental Health, 2023; Dalsgaard et al., 2020; Kern et al., 2017). These programs may also consist of, but are not limited to, mentorship groups (e.g., My Brother's Keeper), identity-based groups (e.g., Black Girl Magic), and various other behavioral support groups. Notably, social and emotional learning has emerged as a prominent school-based mental health approach to improving students' emotional well-being and mental health. Social-emotional learning (SEL) responds to societal and political concerns around students' emotional well-being and mental health (Youngblood, 2015). Often, SEL serves as an overarching term encompassing various approaches to cultivating an extensive array of inter and intra-cognitive, social, and emotional skills. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a nationally recognized organization, has defined SEL as:

> "The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (CASEL, 2013; Elias et al., 1997).

SEL developed from understanding "the nature of biology, emotions, and intelligence and their relation to success and happiness" (Stern, 2007; Hoffman, 2009). This literature asserts that due to SEL, children's "…emotional intelligence (EI) is bolstered, giving them an enormous edge in their personal and professional futures." (Goleman, 1995; Hoffman, 2009; Stern, 2007). Elias (2006) added that "social-emotional and life skills must be taught explicitly at the elementary and secondary levels. Like reading or math, if social-emotional skills are not taught systematically, they will not be internalized" (Elias, 2006). Existing research has pointed to the various definitions and overlaps with various terms used about SEL, such as character education, emotional literacy, whole child education, grit, and resilience (Elias, 2013).

Scholars have identified five core interrelated competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Hoffman, 2009). First is self-awareness, which is defined as "the ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior (CASEL, 2015). Second, social awareness is defined as

"the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures (CASEL, 2015). Third, self-management is defined as "the ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations (CASEL, 2015). Fourth, relationship skills are defined as "the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups (CASEL, 2015). Lastly, responsible decision-making is "the ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. (CASEL, 2015).

Since the 1990s, CASEL has documented over 200 different "types of classrooms based SEL programs that are used in U.S. schools" (CASEL, 2003). The growing body of literature links SEL curriculum and programming to the improvement of the students' outcomes in various areas, such as academic performance (Brigman et al., 2011; Cohen, 2001; Durlak et al., 2011; Reyes et al., 2012; Wang et al., 1997; Zins et al., 2004), antisocial and aggressive behavior (Losel & Beelman, 2003; Wang et al., 2009; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007), depressive symptoms (Horowitz & Garber, 2006), drug use (Domitrovich et al., 2007), mental health (Domitrovich et al., 2007; Durlak & Wells, 1997; Greenberg et al., 2001), problem behaviors (Domitrovich et al., 2007), and positive child development (Durlak et al., 2011; Catalano et al., 2002). Furthermore, a study published by Durlak et al. (2011) analyzed evaluations of more than 233,000 students nationwide and discovered that social-emotional learning helps students in various ways. Much of the findings revealed that students showed enhancements across all facets of positive conduct, including classroom demeanor, attendance, and increased engagement with learning (Durlak et al., 2011). Additionally, scholars have directly associated SEL with improving students' emotional well-being and mental health, especially in preventing the later development of mental health concerns among students (Clarke, 2020). SEL is linked to reducing short- and long-term emotional distress, 'problem' behavior, and criminal behavior (Clarke et al., 2015).

Durlak and scholars (2011) revealed that students who participated in social and emotional learning activities saw a reduction in anti-social behavior like bullying, violence, and substance abuse (Durlak et al., 2011; Elias, 2013; Hoffman, 2009). SEL programs have developed and implemented various "techniques and strategies for teaching [children] emotional control" such as "such as thinking out loud to solve their problem," "expressing one's feelings in words," as well as "the use of breathing and counting exercises and visual and tactile aids" that promote the increase of children's emotional intelligence" (Charney, 2002; Duffell et al., 2006). Perhaps for visualization, a few examples of SEL strategies are "stop light posters," "calming toys," and "freeze bell or chime which signals to children to stop what they are doing immediately and pay attention" (Charney, 2002). Scholars have found that children in SEL programs benefit from the consistency in the facilitation of curricula by trained facilitators, oftentimes teachers (Hoffman, 2009).

When the five core competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making) are taught, practiced, and reinforced with consistency SEL has the potential to contribute to a range of personal, social, and academic achievements, fostering a transformation from external influences to behaviors that embody internalized values such as empathy, improved decision-making, and personal accountability (CASEL, 2022; Durlak et al., 2011; Elias et al., 1997; Youngblood, 2015). SEL advocates believe that "individual performance can be measured, deficiencies can be assessed and remediated, and in the end, all [children] can be taught the appropriate skills and behaviors" (Goleman, 1995; Hoffman, 2006, p. 538). The central argument of SEL is the belief that "having EI skills leads to greater social, academic, and life success, or in a larger sense, EI skills help students become better or "happier" citizens who can contribute to a democratic society" (Cohen, 2006; Hoffman, 2006, p. 538). However, despite the emergence of SEL's important "thematic and programmatic" approach in many school districts, schools, and community centers, there is a growing concern around the

development of programs, effectiveness of programs, pedagogical practices employed in programs, white hegemonic and criminalizing attributes, the lack of attention on identities and culture, and disregard for the everyday experiences of Black children and youth (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). Below, I will overview major SEL critiques and the shift toward transformative social and emotional learning.

Critiques of Social and Emotional Learning: A Call for a Black Radical Shift in the Gaze

Literature underscores emotional regulation as a crucial aspect of skill development, highlighting SEL's primary focus on managing negative and disruptive emotions (Gross & Thompson, 2007; Tronick, 1989). It places significant importance on calming or diffusing emotions that might lead individuals to act impulsively (Hoffman, 2009). Furthermore, while SEL prioritizes skills, measurement, and outcomes, there is a risk that it might overlook the less quantifiable but possibly more authentic elements of emotional experience within schooling inherent in human relationships (Hoffman, 2009). Cohen (2006) argues that within the context of SEL,

> "All SEL programmatic efforts promote students' social and emotional competencies. Moreover, because of the significant impact of risk-prevention and health-promotion research, they all have tended to deal with behavior and skills that can be operationally defined. Many leaders in the field underscore the importance of skills-based teaching and learning, along with the value of ongoing and systematic evaluation. SEL is often associated with social-skills training programs." (p. 206)

In addition, critics of SEL recognize the theoretical framework of emotional intelligence (EI) as unclear and confusing as they have noted a few systematic concerns about the sustainability of SEL programs and the effectiveness of the SEL teacher (Qualter et al., 2007; Hoffman, 2009). Critics of SEL contend that social-emotional learning is more than teaching students topics and skills associated with SEL, and the success of SEL is situated in the action as well as attitude of the teacher (Noddings, 2006). Nodding (2006) states, "perhaps we have become too dependent on rules, strategies, and recipes" and "it may be that thinkers who advocate SEL are allowing themselves to be co-opted by the dominant crowd of "evidence-based," data-driven researchers…Some of this work is useful, even necessary…But much of it moves us away from the heart of our concern…" (Noddings, 2006). She contends that rules, strategies, and evidence-based research in social-emotional learning (SEL) divert from true educational and emotional development. Instead, she emphasizes nurturing genuine caring relationships and ethical engagement as essential for fostering emotional intelligence and holistic student development.

Youngblood (2015) noted that "successful implementation of SEL curriculum is dependent on the teacher's ability to function as a positive role model, facilitate interpersonal problem solving, and foster classroom environments that promote social and emotional learning" (Jennings, 2007; Riggs et al., 2006; Youngblood, 2015, p. 22). SEL literature not only portrays the benefits of social-emotional learning for students but also discusses the benefits to teachers. Scholars note that teachers who promote SEL activities in the classroom can expect to see benefits, such as diminished student frustration, improved interpersonal relationships and behavior, and an environment that supports academic achievement (Jennings, 2007; Riggs et al., 2006; Youngblood, 2015). Although a wealth of research supports the positive outcomes of SEL programming, research notes that many educators feel overstressed and poorly equipped to implement SEL programming with fidelity (Bierman et al., 2008). In a 2008 Head Start Impact Study, teachers advocated for a "well-specified curriculum, along with a year of mentoring in implementing the curriculum and teaching practices"

(Youngblood, 2015, p. 23). As stated in the Head Start Impact Study, educators benefitted from the goals of SEL as they were "able to lessen their students' frustrations, helping them to get their needs met in positive, healthy ways; they will also make classroom time more productive, prevent behavioral problems, build students of character, and increase academic prowess." (Lewkowicz, 2007, p. 3). Furthermore, scholars have challenged teachers "to be aware of their own cultural learning and how they fit—or do not fit—with their student's cultural beliefs and behaviors." (CASEL, 2007).

However, there are growing questions regarding the cultural relevance of SEL in students' lives across various educational spaces. Dr. James Comer, a child psychiatrist from the Yale Child Study Center, who was a significant contributor to the development of SEL, believed that "minority students from low-income families were not successful because they lack pre-school, out of school experiences and were underdeveloped socially (Comer, 1988, p. 2). James Comer's comments acted as the foundation for the SEL curriculum, training, and programming as its deficit frames minorized children, specifically Black children, within SEL programs and classrooms.

Hoffman (2009) observed, "the literature on SEL paints, for some, a diverse, positive picture of how focusing on social and emotional competencies can benefit students and schools, whereas, for others, it is rife with confusion and lack of empirical and evaluative rigor" (Hoffman, 2009, p. 537). Hoffman (2009) mentioned that "from a cultural perspective, the kinds of skills identified with SEL appear to draw on a model of emotions that sees them as internal, individual states that require active managerial control to be channeled in socially positive, healthy ways." (Hoffman, 2009, p. 540). Moreover, how emotions are expressed, experienced, and regulated varies depending on the cultural contexts of each student and educator (Briggs, 1998; Lutz, 1986, 1988). The ways various cultures and races express, experience, and regulate those emotions differ; they do not "assign the same kinds of regulatory or expressive responses commonly shared by the white, American middle class" (Hoffman, 2009, p. 540). Wierzbicka (1994) states that for middle-class white Americans, "there is a strong emphasis on behavioral control…combined with a belief that proper expression means talking about one's emotions" (p. 178). In addition, Saarni (1997) adds that SEL skills and emotional competencies "reflect Western societies" notions of "how emotion works…. other non-western cultures do not necessarily view unexpressed emotions as accumulative or as explosive" (Saarni, 1997, p. 47). For example, expressing emotions is a product of and reflects society's preferences for the white middle class, which is informed by establishing values, beliefs, and practices (Tobin, 1995). Hoffman (2009) explains that SEL is typically "described at such a high level of abstraction (e.g., "being aware of other feelings" or "knowing how to make friends") that they seem universally relevant, obscuring the degree to which basic concepts (what is a friend, for example? Or a feeling, for that matter?) may mean very different things in different cultures." (Hoffman, 2009). Later in her argument, she contends for a dedication to tailoring SEL to accommodate diverse cultural beliefs and values. This involves delving deeply into the myriad ways cultures interpret and implement concepts like "universal developmental needs" or "positive relationships." (Hoffman, 2009).

Throughout the literature, it is apparent that SEL can lead to positive improvements in the lives of students, teachers, and the greater community. However, it is also apparent in the literature that the construction, development, and implementation of SEL "evolved by and large through a Eurocentric lens at both the research and program development levels" (CASEL, 2015). Once one applies a cultural lens upon SEL and understands that "when it comes to understanding the play of emotion and its interrelationship with complex cultural domains of significance such as experiences and understandings of self and others, the difficulties of encoding such understanding into "teachable SEL competencies" for "all children" become evident. (Hoffman, 2009). Furthermore,

applying a cultural lens to the five SEL competencies exposes the overt deficit-based, middle-class Eurocentric values, beliefs, practices, and expectations or outcomes (CASEL, 2015; Hoffman, 2009).

In response to growing critiques of SEL, scholars have brought forth a reconceptualization of SEL, shifting from the conventional approach to a transformative approach (Jager et al., 2019). Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (tSEL) aims to address growing concerns regarding systemic oppression, racial inequality, and structural violence by promoting equity and social justice (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). As a result, tSEL adds a new set of competencies, such as agency, belonging, acceptance, respect, curiosity, discovery, connectedness, and inclusion. Ultimately, tSEL shifts from a deficit-based individualistic approach to improving emotional well-being and mental health to an asset-based collective or community approach among students (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). Although underutilized across educational spaces, the power of tSEL is in the core mission to center the everyday experiences of students, especially students of marginalized backgrounds. By entering the everyday experiences of marginalized students, culturally relevant promotive outcomes are achieved, such as healing, liberation, and human flourishing amid structural inequality. Today's educational institutions face the challenge of serving students from increasingly diverse cultures and with varied abilities and motivations for learning. Many students lack the social-emotional support necessary to thrive within the education system, especially Black students. The mental health needs of Black students across major urban cities are often underdiagnosed, misdiagnosed, over-diagnosed, or ignored despite the growing trends in Black students' anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). For example, studies have found that Black children and youth, particularly girls in urban areas, experience heightened anxiety levels, while Black boys with depression or anxiety may exhibit behaviors misinterpreted as conduct problems (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022; Opara et al., 2021).

Given that early to middle childhood is a period of ongoing changes in emotional development, in tandem with constant exposure to structural inequality such as anti-Black racism (e.g., teacher bias and harsh disciplinary practices), there is an intensification of Black students' exposure to experiences that can impact their mental health and emotional well-being (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022; Opara et al., 2021). Additionally, the various traumatic events Black children and youth are exposed to due to structural inequality and anti-Black racism further complicate their emotional well-being and mental health. Although there is a plethora of evidence that highlights the immediate need to address the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students, there remains a low number of quality mental health supports that Black children and youth have access to. Black students who are afforded the opportunity to receive mental health services report continued experiences of emotional well-being and mental health concerns due to representation of providers, affordability, and lack of culturally relevant therapeutic practices (Cummings & Druss, 2011; Lindsey et al., 2013; Maura & de Mamani, 2017; Merikangas et al., 2011; Rose et al., 2011). At times, Black students experience a reinforcement of racial stereotypes, discrimination, criminalization of their behaviors, and biased perspectives at the hands of school-based mental health providers (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). Students' emotional well-being and mental health are positively affected when the implementation is culturally relevant and imbedded into evidence-based prevention and intervention school-based social-emotional programs (Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg et al., 2001; Zins & Elias, 2007). However, conventional SEL scholarship insufficiently engages with how the social world informs the emotions and experiences among marginalized populations such as Black children and youth (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). Critical SEL scholars raise concerns regarding conventional SEL's disregard for the

experiences of Black students who navigate a plethora of anti-Black racism (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022).

For example, Camangian and Cariaga (2022) problematize SEL for the way it's used devoid of recognition of the structural violence that shapes young people's lives. They argue that traditional SEL frameworks often fail to address the broader social and historical contexts that shape students' lives, particularly those from marginalized communities. Their primary critique is that SEL, as commonly implemented, tends to be ahistorical and insufficiently critical of the systemic forces that contribute to the social and emotional challenges faced by students of color. By not addressing the colonial and oppressive structures that impact these communities, SEL inadvertently upholds existing power dynamics and fails to promote genuine equity and justice in education. They identify racism, xenophobia, and other interconnected forms of structural violence that perpetuate inequities and undermine the true potential of SEL by failing to address the root causes of emotional and social challenges faced by marginalized youth. They advocate for a shift from SEL to what they call "humanization." This approach emphasizes teaching students to understand and reclaim their emotions and relationships as tools for political inquiry, radical healing, and social transformation.

They believe that SEL's current model often prioritizes compliance and the management of emotions in ways that align with dominant cultural norms, rather than fostering critical consciousness and empowering students to challenge and change oppressive systems. They believe that SEL can move beyond merely helping students adapt to existing systems and instead become a transformative force that promotes self-awareness, belonging, and social change (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022). More specifically, critical SEL scholars document thoroughly how school-based mental health services such as SEL programs tend to focus on problem behaviors, rely heavily on adult perspectives on mental health, and lack a foundation grounded in critical, humanizing, and liberatory theories, especially Black theoretical traditions (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). Moreover, school-based mental health centers or wellness centers have been considered to operate as informal school suspensions or as disciplinary scapegoats. With the rise in mental health concerns among Black students, critical SEL scholars are advocating for a shift to a transformative approach to the development of school-based mental health services that radically improve the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students by centering healing, liberation, and human flourishing amid anti-Black racism.

The literature covered in this dissertation is essential to advancing scholarship on children's and youth's mental health. This literature brings to the forefront the developmental trajectories of children and youth, as well as the various barriers that warrant great concern regarding marginalized children and youths' mental health, especially Black children and youth. My intentions for synthesizing these bodies of literature are to map a comprehensive overview of children's emotional development and provide insight into the barriers and challenges Black students navigate. Scholars have highlighted the importance of centering Black students' brilliance, power, imagination, and creativity in developing school-based mental health services such as social and emotional learning. Specifically, the literature reviewed brings to light the importance of shifting from deficit-based individualistic perspectives of mental health to collective asset-based perspectives of mental health. This literature provides insight into the humanizing approaches that have the potential to promote healing, liberation, and human flourishing despite racial inequalities. Given the deficit-based perspectives about Black students, it is crucial to center their everyday experiences, especially how they feel. As a result, this dissertation is well-positioned to contribute to the literature on Black childhood development, social and emotional learning, emotional well-being, mental health, and school-based mental health services.

Summary of Chapter

This section highlights scholarship that reveals the intricate connection between experiences in educational settings, well-being, and mental health, emphasizing the crucial role schools play in children's social and emotional development. It highlights the rise of mental health concerns in U.S. schools and the recognition of schools as essential in addressing these issues through school-based mental health services. Literature in this section highlights social and emotional learning (SEL) as a prominent school-based mental health service that positively impacts students' emotional well-being and mental health. However, a growing number of critical SEL scholars discuss the various pitfalls of SEL, emphasizing concerns about lack of a culturally relevant approach, limited centering of student voice, racial oppression, and potential neglect of students' everyday experiences in schooling. In response to these critiques, literature calls for a transformative shift towards centering the realities of systemic oppression, racial inequality, and structural violence in the lives of students (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette et al., 2022). Literature on transformative social and emotional learning (tSEL) introduces additional competencies and shifts from a deficit-based individualistic to an asset-based community-based approach. More research is needed to explore Black students' emotional well-being and mental health, especially the social function of emotions in their everyday school experiences. To date, little to no empirical studies explore the emotions among Black students, especially utilizing an asset-based lens. More specifically, while recent scholarship on emotions focuses primarily on psychological perspectives and recently scholarship has engaged with social aspects or social function of emotions, there continues to be a lack of focus on children, especially elementary-aged Black children. Scholars have also noted the need for more empirical emotion science literature across SEL. The lack of scholarship on Black children's emotions is supported by an in-depth examination of major databases such as PsycINFO, which store peer-reviewed scholarly articles.

My current search on Psychinfo using the keywords "children and emotions" presented 21,229 results, but only 414 results when using the keywords "African American children and emotions" and 378 results when using the keywords "Black children and emotions." With a specific examination, the number of results for both keywords "African American children and emotions" and "Black children and emotions" shrinks once results on parents' or teachers' perspectives on Black children's emotions are removed. In addition, once deficit-based perspectives on Black children and their emotions are removed, there is a significant drop in the number of results appearing. Across databases focused on psychology, sociology, Black studies, child studies, and education on emotions, zero results were found. As a result, it is safe to say that this dissertation is one of the first (if not the first) to focus solely on Black children's emotions and their understanding, experience, expression, and management of emotions. This study provides a necessary in-depth look inside the everyday emotions, in particular the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students between the ages of 4 and 10 years old in a historically disadvantaged urban city. This dissertation positions the experiences of Black children and youth as counter-stories to the conventional perspectives of emotional well-being and mental health. As Solorzano and Yosso (2002) mention, counter-stories are a critical method for disrupting deficit-based and pathologizing research that tends to overlook or minimize the lived experiences of Black children and youth's mental health. Moreover, this dissertation is grounded in the everyday experiences of Black children. It is committed to authentically capturing the everyday stories of Black children's emotional experiences, conveyed in a rich narrative inquiry format. This dissertation employed participant observations, semi-structured interviews, sociological video analysis, and document/artifacts analysis. The next chapter captures the historical and contemporary context of the point neighborhoods and the Academy of M.F. Nelson Elementary School. This section also covers an overview of the study participants, the methodology framework, and strategies utilized in this study.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

Studying the affective dimensions and/or social function of Black children's emotions requires a critical and in-depth conceptualization of emotions that considers but does not center conventional or pathologizing understandings of emotions, especially for Black children. In this dissertation, I draw on an integrative framework of emotions conceptualized by critical emotions scholars and Black placemaking conceptualized by critical Black scholars. In this dissertation, I utilize an integrative framework of emotions proposed by Deborah Lupton (1998), which encompasses eight perspectives on emotions. This framework is invaluable for its comprehensive approach to understanding emotions, allowing for nuanced exploration beyond conventional or pathologizing viewpoints. Additionally, I draw upon critical perspectives on emotions from scholars focusing on affect theory, racialization, and Blackness, enriching the analysis with insights into the social and racial processes that shape Black children's emotional experiences. This approach allows researchers to explore the complexities of emotional experiences, particularly important when studying marginalized communities such as Black children, whose emotions are often overlooked or misunderstood. Furthermore, I incorporate theories of Black placemaking, particularly those articulated by McKittrick (2011) and Hunter et al. (2016), to illuminate the emotionality of space and place for Black people, offering a holistic understanding of the emotional lives of Black children in educational environments. Black placemaking offers insight into the socio-spatial dynamics that influence emotional experiences within Black communities. Understanding how emotions are shaped by and embedded within specific places enriches research on emotions by highlighting the interconnectedness between social, cultural, and environmental factors, thereby providing a more humanizing understanding of emotional phenomena. Given the dehumanization, adultification, and deficit-based perspective of Black children in American society (Baldridge, 2014; Dumas, 2016; Ferguson, 2001; Ginwright, 2010; Tuck, 2009), the myriad social and racial processes that constrain Black childhoods (Dumas, 2016, 2016b), and under-examined ways racialized, sociocultural, and structural factors and processes shape Black children emotions (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Clonan-Roy, Gross, & Jacobs, 2021; Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Legette, Rogers, and Warren, 2022; Gross, 2022), the aforementioned theories alone do not provide conceptual guidance necessary to examine the complex nature of Black children's emotions, social and emotional development, and mental health. Taken together, however, these theories offer important insight into the everyday emotional lives of Black children within educational spaces.

Inside out, Outside in: An Integrative Framework on Emotions

Emotions are widely considered vital to the human experience. Terms such as emotions, feelings, and mood are often used interchangeably in our everyday language. Although we all have experiences with emotions and may, to a degree, know what emotions are, it remains difficult to develop a consensus on an appropriate definition. For some, defining emotions is difficult due to the influence of varied disciplines and associated epistemological and theoretical orientations. Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins (2014) define emotions as a "psychological state or process that mediates between our concerns (or goals) and events of our world." (p. 4). Often, scholars discuss emotions as internal feelings or states that are universally identifiable across humanity and essential to human survival (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998; Lench et al., 2011).

Debatably, six emotions–anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise–are widely considered universally identifiable and inherent in all humans regardless of identity, culture, or

geographical location (Ekman, 1992; Keltner, Oatley & Jenkins, 2014). Paul Ekman (1992) argued that anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise are universally identifiable emotions in individuals' facial and physiological expressions. He claimed that emotions are pre-existing in our biological makeup rather than a tool that provides the information needed to respond to our everyday experiences. Traditionally, scholarship on emotions has focused on emotions as they relate to their functionality within the mind and body, rarely taking into consideration social factors such as socialization, lived experiences, and race-ethnicity. Specifically, scholars have been concerned with identifying the relationship between specific emotions and how they relate to physiological responses such as anger, increased heart rates, sadness, and tears. Keltner et al. (in press) noted that most studies on emotions occur within controlled laboratories that involve "single individuals, alone, rating emotional stimuli with self-report items, recounting emotional experiences, or responding to emotion elicitors." (Keltner et al., in press, p. 1; Lench et al., 2011). The overemphasis of emotions as static, inherent, and universal has led to major departures regarding emotions and their wider purposes for human life. This has led to scholars calling for a reconceptualization of how we understand and research emotions. As a result, a growing body of literature has begun to understand emotions as intertwined with the ways in which humans engage with the world around them. Like the evolution of humanity, scholars across disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, and education have evolved our understanding of emotions by expanding upon various theoretical perspectives. Therefore, this study will cover a broad scope of the literature and characterize the state of the literature by synthesizing it across long-standing areas of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives and debates most relevant to the aim of this paper. The following sections will briefly cover the three most common disciplinary perspectives on emotions: psychological, sociological, and critical. Psychological perspectives consist of five domains: physiological, neurophysiological, psycho-evolutionary, psychotherapeutic, and cognitive. Sociological perspectives consist of six domains: structuralist, poststructuralist, phenomenological, psychodynamic, sociocultural, and embodiment. Lastly, critical perspectives consist of three domains: affect theory, affect and racialization, and affect and Blackness.

Psychological Perspectives of Emotions

A conventional psychological perspective on emotions widely classifies emotions as universal and biological, and many argue that the physiological responses triggered by emotions are automatic and essential to the evolution of humanity. Moreover, this perspective views emotions as physiological responses to stimuli, and a common example of this is one's flight or fight response to various situations (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998). Within this frame, emotions are directly associated with other physiological responses to stimuli such as grinding of the teeth, sweating, rapid breathing, fainting, and clenching of the fist, to name a few. Deborah Lupton (1998) argued that conventional psychological perspectives on emotions understand the foundation of emotions "as part of the animalistic legacy in human development, subject less to thought and reason than to impulse." (p. 11). Although there is consensus in conventional psychology regarding emotions as genetically inscribed, inherited, and universal, there are scholarly departures. Psychological perspectives on emotions are often split into domains: physiological, neurophysiological, psychotherapeutic, psycho-evolutionary, and cognitive.

Physiological perspectives on emotions, developed by William James (1890), argued that humans do not feel happiness, anger, or fear, but instead, feels their heart racing or their body tense up. To make sense of those physiological responses, we created terminology to categorize what we felt internally (James, 1890; Lupton, 1998). James was concerned with highlighting the biological

relationship between emotions and the body, asserting that one's bodily response is at the core of all emotions. For example, he noted, "If we fancy some strong emotion and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind." (James, 1890, p. 451). Moreover, William James and Carl Lange (1884/1885) developed a theory on emotions (James-Lange theory) that posits that emotions arise from physiological reactions to environmental stimuli. This theory was developed to challenge traditional perspectives on emotions of the time by suggesting that our emotional experiences result from our perception of bodily responses to external events rather than vice versa (Lange & James, 1922). According to James-Lange theory, when an individual encounters a stimulus, the body reacts first by initiating a physiological response. For example, encountering a bear in the woods might increase heart rate, sweating, and trembling. Following the physiological response, the individual perceives these bodily changes and interprets them as emotions. When encountering the bear, the individual might interpret the rapid heartbeat and trembling as fear. The emotion experienced is thus a direct result of the bodily changes rather than being caused by the stimulus itself (e.g., We feel fear because we find ourselves trembling, sweating, running from the bear). This suggests that different emotions arise from different physiological responses. For instance, excitement might be associated with increased heart rate and heightened arousal, while sadness might be linked to decreased energy levels and drooping posture. James' core contributions include (a) mapping the connection between physiology and emotions, (b) explaining how the experience of emotions affects an individual's autonomic nervous system and physical movement, and (c) explicating that the physiological responses breathe life into the meaning behind an emotion (James, 1890; Lupton, 1998).

Neurophysiological perspectives on emotions primarily focus on the human anatomy of emotions by assuming emotions are individualistic and biological (Lupton, 1998). In response, researchers began to focus on the brain with the goal of explicating physiological responses in human beings by studying and dissecting animals (e.g., monkeys, rats, and cats) (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998). Scholars have mapped brain parts to different types of emotions (e.g., the limbic system stores fear or disgust, and the frontal cortex for thinking emotions such as trust) (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998). As noted by Deborah Lupton (1998), neurophysiological perspectives on emotions tend to focus solely on "…identifying the pathways by which the chemicals involved in transmitting impulses to various parts of the brain work to incite emotional response (p. 12). Emotions are thus described as either the cause or interchangeable to physical bodily sensations or bodily responses to one's environment (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998).

Psycho-evolutionary perspectives on emotions view emotions as biological, functional, and a response to different stimuli salient for survival. In 1872, Charles Darwin—a central figure on emotions—developed a theory on emotions in his book, The Expression of the Emotions of Man and Animals, asserting that humans are closely related to animals. Using observations, he proposed that "emotional expressions derived largely from habits that in our evolutionary or individual past had once been useful [for survival]" (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014, p. 6). Furthermore, Darwin's theory on emotions (1872) claims that emotions, especially expressions of emotions, are (1) human's animal instincts, (2) linked to evolutionary processes, (3) biological inherent and universal, and (4) essential to survival. This claim still guides research on emotions. Plutchik (1982) evolved Darwin's theory by defining emotions as "an inferred complex sequence of reactions to a stimulus [that included] cognitive evaluation, subjective chances, autonomic and neural arousal, impulses to action, and behavior designed to have an effect upon the stimulus that initiated the complex sequence" (p. 548). Additionally, he argued that there are eight basic adaptive responses to all emotions: incorporation, rejection, protection, destruction, reproduction, reintegration, orientation, and exploration (Lupton, 1998; Plutchik, 1982). For Plutchik, a set of primary emotions corresponds to

the adaptive behavioral patterns essential to survival and human evolution (Lupton, 1998; Plutchik, 1982).

Psychotherapeutic perspectives on emotions emphasize their central alignment with mental health. Sigmund Freud (1895) understood emotions as directly associated with the past, specifically, how an individual's early childhood experiences can shape the ways in which one understands their feelings and impact their overall well-being. Therefore, unlike positivist views on emotions, psychotherapeutic perspectives regard emotion as an important human motivator (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998). Utilizing emotions to promote healing became an important tool for therapists and researchers (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014). Although Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory has been widely critiqued, the importance of emotions in the process of healing from negative lived experiences remains central in the field of psychology.

Cognitive perspectives on emotions are more interested in "the interrelationship between bodily responses, context, and the individual's recognition of emotions" (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014). Scholars utilizing cognitive theories of emotions are greatly concerned with the role emotions play in mediating behavior through assessing one's environment (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014). Specifically, within this framework, it is argued that the physical sensations one feels construct an individual's judgment of a person, situation, or environment. Lupton (1998) noted that the focus was on how "environmental conditions are appraised, leading to an emotional reaction, but may also be regulated (controlled or voluntarily enhanced) in response to the individual's experience and the sociocultural systems of norms about emotional expression in which an individual is located" (Lupton, 1998, p. 32). Therefore, the cognitive perspectives believe that physiological responses come before emotion and are often "interpreted in certain ways based on the judgment of the situation." (p. 13). Cognitive perspectives on emotion continue to conceive of emotions as biological, inherent, and universal, but ultimately, one's social context will alter the social meaning of emotions (Keltner, Oatley, & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998). However, this perspective is often criticized for its overemphasis on cognitive appraisal processes, limited cultural validity, underemphasis on biological and evolutionary factors, homogenization of emotions, and neglect of the greater social context (Keltner, Oatley & Jenkins, 2014; Lupton, 1998). In contrast to psychological scholarship focusing on the relationship between emotions and physiological responses, there is a growing recognition of the need to incorporate sociological perspectives into our understanding of emotions beyond the psychological realm. The subsequent section will delve into sociological theories of emotions, particularly emphasizing structuralist, poststructuralist, phenomenological, and psychodynamic perspectives.

Sociological Perspectives of Emotions

Emotions emerged as a topical area of interest among numerous sociologists during the early 1980s as scholars began considering the role emotions play in human motivation and social dynamics. As Barbalet (1998) noted, a sociological perspective is important in studying emotions as it acknowledges emotions as a social phenomenon and centers emotions as foundational to social dynamics. Sociologists raised important critiques of the conventional treatment of emotions and developed definitions that responded to sociological inquiries and questions. Sociologist Norman Denzin (1984) begins to explore the sociological factors of emotions and later defines emotions as,

> "a lived, believed-in, situated, temporally embodied experience that radiates through a person's stream of consciousness, is felt in and runs through his body, and, in the process of

> being lived, plunges the person and his associates into a wholly new and transformed reality – the reality of a world that is being constituted by the emotional experience." (p. 66).

Sociological perspectives on emotions argue for a more complex understanding of emotions and a departure from considering emotions as solely inherited, fixed, and universally biological responses to stimuli. Rather, sociological perspectives view emotions as central to the structure and function of society, asserting that "emotions are viewed as dynamic, changeable according to the historical, social, and political contexts in which they are generated, reproduced, and expressed." (Lupton, 1998, p. 16). As a result, sociologists assert that overemphasizing a psychological perspective on emotion has limited our full understanding of emotions, particularly how their meaning, purpose, and ways of expression differ across cultures (Lutz, 1988; Lupton, 1998). Instead, scholars are concerned with studying the social nature of emotions and the emotional nature of social reality. Bericat (2016) asserts that "any description, explanation or sociological understanding of a social phenomenon is incomplete, and therefore false, if it does not incorporate the feeling subject into its study of structures and social processes" (p. 495). Sociological perspectives on emotions are often split into various domains: structuralist, poststructuralist, phenomenological, psychodynamic, sociocultural, and embodiment.

Structuralist perspective on emotions is considered to be the most dominant perspective on emotions within the field of sociology. It is a perspective that recognizes emotions' biological aspects while focusing on social structures, power dynamics, and identity. Structuralists understand emotions as a vital sense that allows individuals to assess their relationship with the world around them (Hochschild, 1983). Scholars have noted that a structuralist perspective on emotions shifts from a psychological perspective as it concerns the macro social contexts that influence one's experiences, expressions, and understandings of emotions. Lupton (1998) argues that emotion scholars who use a structuralist approach "explore the ways in which social structures, power dynamics, and membership of social groups shape the expression and experience of emotional states and how feeling rules, in turn, operate to shape emotional expression." (Lupton, 1998, p. 38). Moreover, this perspective suggests that emotions—intertwined with gender, social class, and power dynamics—play an important role in the perpetuation of order, which, in turn, informs how emotions are performed in the social world. Although a structuralist perspective offers insight into the way emotions function at the macro level, it is critiqued for its overemphasis on structural processes, limited consideration of diversity and agency, limited consideration of micro-level dynamics, and limited consideration of the role emotions play in mobilizing social movements and challenging power dynamics.

Poststructuralist perspectives on emotions focus on the relationship between cultural artifacts such as language and emotions, specifically, the role cultural artifacts play in constructing one's emotions. Lupton (1998) notes that a poststructuralist perspective on emotions "explores the discursive construction of emotional experience and how individuals participate in this process by adopting or resisting dominant discourse." (Lupton, 1998, p. 38). Further, poststructuralists argue that to understand the complexities of emotions within the social world, there needs to be a shift away from a monolithic understanding of emotions (Lutz & Abu-Lughod, 1990). A monolithic approach to emotions neglects other facets of humanity (e.g., culture, skin color, values, and belief systems). As a result, poststructuralists reframe the conversation by recognizing the ability of individuals to make a conscious decision to participate or resist dominant ways of being.

Phenomenological perspectives on emotions define emotions as necessary in developing the self and making meaning of one's identity. This micro-level perspective views emotions as more than physiological responses but as phenomena that can explain social dynamics. Scholars assert that one's physiological responses, particularly how a human interprets physiological responses, are

emotional. Lupton (1998) summarizes that a phenomenological perspective "explores the sociocultural meanings of emotions at the micro-level, including their importance for the ontology of self-hood and personal biography and in the construction of moral judgment." (Lupton, 1998, p. 38). Through emotions, one begins to engage with the world and becomes a being in the world. As a result, emotions explain the structures.

Psychodynamic perspectives on emotions main scholarly concern is providing insight into how the unconscious is directly related to one's emotional self. Scholars argue that emotions are typically understood at the conscious level and, in doing so, neglect emotions at the unconscious level. Therefore, a psychodynamic perspective suggests that emotions are experienced at the level of dreams and fantasies. It is argued that "the unconscious is a potent source of emotional response, particularly for those emotions that we may find unpredictable or for which it is difficult to construct a rational explanation when we experience them." (Lupton, 1998, p. 38). Moreover, this perspective acknowledges the role of individuals' early lived experiences in engaging with social relationships and institutions. This perspective explores "the extra-discursive and extra-rational dimensions of emotional experience by addressing how the emotions underpin human motivation and action in ways of which we are often not consciously aware." (Lupton, 1998, p. 38).

Sociocultural perspectives on emotions define emotions as a learned social phenomenon while also considering the conventional understanding of emotions as innate and/or biological. Specifically, sociocultural scholars acknowledge human emotions at the individual and community level as shaped by social and cultural processes. The literature argues that one social and cultural ecosystem structures how an individual is experienced, expressed, understood, and regulated. Lupton (1998) mentions that within a sociocultural frame, "emotions is an irreducibly sociocultural product, while learned and constructed through acculturation." (p. 15). Scholars who utilize a sociocultural frame are, oftentimes, interested in social and cultural aspects of emotions, especially the experience and understanding of emotions across non-Western cultures, often emphasizing that emotions are dynamic, intrinsically shaped by the "historical, social, and political contexts in which they are generated, reproduced, and expressed. Nevertheless, these mixed-method and cross-cultural comparison studies that characterize social and cultural aspects of emotions rarely focus on the social and cultural aspects of racialized communities such as Black or African Americans and rarely interrogate cultural relativism. From a cultural, historical perspective, "This means that feelings and emotions – as we refer to them today in Western culture – are every bit as much a cultural and historical product as our forms of cognition and social concepts. They are created in the history of the social relations of a society and are a product of its cultural heritage, forming in symbolically mediated activities and through culture artifacts, such as literature and music" (Burkitt, 2021, p. 798).

Embodiment perspectives on emotions critique the overemphasis on language as the main source of identifying emotions, neglecting the role of the body. As noted, "naming and describing interprets a constellation of bodily feelings as particular emotions." However, the body's role in experiencing, constructing, expressing, and controlling one's emotions is important. It is argued that language alone falls short of fully articulating one's feelings or the feelings of others. As a result, scholars center physical bodily signs such as facial expressions, hand gestures, and body posture as "better indicators of a person's emotional state than words" (Lupton, 1998, p. 32). This perspective attends to bodily capacities to store and express nonverbal emotions, feelings, moods, and sensations. While these capacities occur within a social and cultural context, this perspective considers how the body's senses–smell, taste, sound, touch, and sight– produce emotional states. Each bodily sense articulates a range of emotions and their central role in relationships or social interactions. Scholars suggest that,

> "There is a range of embodied sensations, sounds, and moments–tears, increased heart rate, clenched stomach, sweating, dry palms, elation, smiling, laughing, frowning, staring, shouting, and so on–that all humans have the capacity to experience and express as emotional states. It will depend on the acculturation and personal life experiences of individuals in what ways these sensations, sounds, and movements are understood and experienced as emotions, or as other phenomena." (Lupton, 1998, p. 34).

This perspective underscores that the interpretation of one's bodily expression and movement is highly influenced by and dependent on the sociocultural context in which they occur. This means an individual's smile, laughter, or body language will be understood differently based on the timing, setting, and community. What occurs in these moments is based on how one understands, experiences, expresses, and regulates emotions within a particular sociocultural context, including dynamics of inclusion or exclusions. This strongly links the connection between emotions and social interactions as it can lead to understanding the dynamics of othering and belonging.

Though there is literature on emotions that takes up different theoretical perspectives, scholarship tends to be limited in the area of racialization, Blackness, and power, specifically understanding emotions as shaped by racialization and Blackness. Specifically, conventional scholarship on emotions, as reviewed above, tends to overlook the integral role emotions play in the processes of racialization and racial inequality. Growing scholarship has emerged to address the scholarly gap and offer crucial insight that can expand our understanding of emotions. In the next section, I describe the scholarly contributions that have been made by scholars focused on racialization, Blackness, and power. Below will unpack important aspects of the scholarship on affect theory, such as racialized affect, to understand the affective dimensions of the Black experience. This is such an important and needed area of study.

Critical Perspectives on Emotions: Affect Theory

As reviewed above, Sociological and other perspectives on emotions (e.g., cultural histrocial) suggest a keen interest in understanding emotions beyond the individual, which led to the emergence of affect theory as a way to think deeper about and beyond subjectivity. Although no one definition encapsulates the numerous theories of affect, Clough (2008) states that "affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, and to connect" (p. 2). Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworths in The Affect Theory Reader (2010) set the stage for engaging with the multiple iterations of how affect is understood, theorized, and applied. Theories on affect or forces of encounter attempt to make sense of the body's ongoing and complicated relationship to all facets of the world, expanding the intricacy of one becoming and belonging to the world. Moving beyond the individual experience, affect provides a lens to identify what often cannot be seen within our everyday lives. Specifically, Seigworth & Gregg (2010) states that affect gives name to the "...visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion–that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward through an extension…" (p. 1). Affect is considered to have a sticky-like element to it. Therefore, emotions and/or feelings can stick to surfaces, objects, subjects, places, and spaces, informing the ways in which an individual behaves and thinks. Within affect theory, there are five pillars upon which theorists build but are not limited to Force, Relationality, Assemblage, Encounter, and Event (Ashley & Billies, 2017; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Scholars argue that affect is relational, intersubjective, and deeply embedded in the process of racialization, dynamics of belonging, and othering. By understanding the various encounters with forces and passages of

intensity that structure an individual's everyday life, the process of becoming, belonging, and/or othering will emerge, leading to important insights across scholarship. These insights offer an opportunity for the theorization of Black life to be included within scholarship on emotions. Below, I will outline three bodies of work that have begun to engage with racialization, Blackness, and emotions critically.

Centering Racialization and Blackness in Affect Theory

An integrative framework on emotions, emphasizing critical perspectives, facilitates a comprehensive and dynamic exploration of emotions' role in Black students' daily social interactions at school and beyond. While affect theory suggests a connection between emotions and space, research that deliberately examines racialization and Blackness is still scarce. Erin Austin Dwyer, in Mastering Emotions (2021), highlights how emotions and affective norms are shaped by our historical and political contexts. By focusing on the institution of slavery in the Antebellum South, he argues that to understand emotions as a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon, there was an engagement with how the institution of slavery shapes and structures emotions is crucial. In understanding emotions as socially and culturally constructed and historically and culturally contingent, Dwyer (2021) was able to detail the affective dimensions and/or social function of emotions within Black enslaved people's social interactions as well as the usage of emotions in practices of survival and resistance amid gratuitous violence (Dwyer, 2021). Ironically, amid the growth in the enslavement of Black people during the nineteenth century, there was a rise in sentimentalism–an era of openly reflecting upon and expressing one's feelings– which excluded the experiences and voices of enslaved Black people. He centers on the experiences of enslaved Black people and their emotions to explore the emotional politics of slavery. For this study, I prioritize his emphasis on the childhoods of enslaved and freed Black people in the Antebellum South.

He argues that enslaved Black people, during their childhood, learned how to understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions by observing their immediate environment or teachings from their community–even slaveholders. Black children, through affective norms that were tied to dehumanization, were taught to master emotions as it was central to survival amidst immense violence and harm. At an early age, Black enslaved people had to learn to suppress certain emotions, emotionally perform, prepare for loss and suffering, and utilize emotions to build relationships that would act as a form of protection and support. The mastery of emotions, specifically the way Black communities understood, experienced, expressed, and regulated emotions, was crucial to their survival and resistance to dehumanization. Through the examination of enslaved peoples' autobiographies, Erin Austin Dwyer (2021), using the concept of emotional oppression, details how emotions such as but not limited to trust, love, fear, jealousy, happiness, and grief were central to the maintenance of an oppressive system and structuring interactions. Enslaved people who experienced and expressed emotions outside of the affective norms of slavery were subjected to corporeal disciplining. It was common for slaveholders to emotionally dehumanize enslaved people and "compel specific feelings in enslaved people" by separating families, public flogging, and other forms of violence (Dwyer, 2021, p. 139). Emotions or feelings, sitting in between the constant flow of negotiations and contestations, function within a larger historical, social, cultural, and racial context that has implications at the inter and intrapersonal level. Mastering Emotions (2021) provides the necessary historical framework to situate my understanding of emotions—as constructed by and constructing history, social systems, upbringing within a particular context, dynamics of dehumanization, power, Blackness, and politics. Although largely absent from

conventional scholarship on emotions, few scholars have begun to seriously grapple with the relationship between race, emotions, and power, especially for Black children.

Often centered around the question, "How does it feel to be the problem?" there is an emergence of research on emotions shifting conventional thinking. Scholarship has begun to unpack the complex relationships between racialization, Blackness, and affect to interrogate the conventional understandings of the affective dimension and/or social function of emotions (Ashley & Billies, 2017; Palmer, 2017). Scholars argue that emotions operate and function within a highly racialized society–both historical and contemporary. This shapes one's understanding, experiences, and expressions of emotions and society at large (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). This work is commonly referred to as racialized affect and is defined as the examination of the intersection between affective processes and processes of racialization (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). Within a racialized society, an individual's emotional habitus is formed, which "schools them on how to feel and react to bodies" (Gould, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2019, p. 7). Teaching, learning, and practicing within a particular context encourages an understanding of emotions beyond the innate, biological, and even interactionist conceptions. Emotions are embedded within the socio-racial-political landscape that normalizes the emotions–or bodies–of the dominant (e.g., whiteness) while rendering the emotions of the subordinate (e.g., racialized and/or Blackness) as dangerous, irrational, and incomprehensible (Bonilla-Silva, 2019). Berg and Ramos-Zayas (2015) acknowledge affect as a "vital set of dynamic registers of everyday life, practices, and experiences" while highlighting the ways affect and racialization are interconnected (p. 655).

By centering racialized affect as a critical lens, scholars inquire about what feeling's structure rather than what structures feelings (Ahmed, 2010, 2015; Ashley & Billies, 2017; Berg & Ramos-Zayas, 2015; Bonilla-Silva, 2019; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). However, I argue that centering what feeling's structure and what structures feelings allows for a richer understanding of emotions' affective dimensions and/or social function in Black people's everyday lives. These scholars suggest that the theorization of racialized affect provides a more robust framework for scholars to interrogate (1) how racial systems create inequitable structures of feelings and (2) how racial systems normalize the feeling rules and emotional work of the dominant and criminalize the feeling rules and emotional work of the oppressed (Berg and Ramos-Zayas, 2015). Berg and Ramos-Zayas (2015) also note that racialized affect is "endemic to social practices that are decidedly historical, rational, and in some instances, intention while also being sustained through embodied practices that are phenomenological reflective and self-reflective, and visceral" (p. 655). Racialized affect provides two important concepts–labile affect and empowering affect–to scholarship on emotions. First, Labile affect is central to the construction of marginalized groups and "serves to racialize affective dispositions and practices associated with vulnerability and marginalization and to essentialize them in public discourse." (Berg and Ramos-Zayas, 2015, p. 670). However, marginalized groups utilize labile affect to resist and survive amidst a violent racialized society via affective dispositions and practices. Second, empowering affects privilege, the affective dispositions, practices, and norms of the status quo and/or whiteness. As a result, individuals and communities can become "strategically devoted to learning the 'appropriate' affective demeanor for interactions and situations." (Berg and Ramos-Zayas, 2015, p. 670). Liable and empowering affect clarify how emotions and/or feelings produce and reproduce dynamics of othering and belonging across social interactions. This is a necessary theoretical advancement as it encourages an ethnographical and empirical examination that maps emotions' affective dimension and/or social function within racialized social interactions in schools. An integrative framework on emotions emphasizing critical perspectives allows for a multifaceted and dynamic examination of emotion's function within and beyond Black children's everyday social interactions in school. This framework considers how power dynamics, racial identities, and social structures shape and are shaped by emotional experiences. When applied to

Black children in school settings, this framework can reveal how their emotional experiences are influenced by racialization processes and how these emotions, in turn, affect their social interactions and educational outcomes. As noted above, racialization refers to the process by which racial identities are constructed and attributed to individuals or groups, often resulting in differential treatment and social positioning. Blackness, in this context, is not just a racial identity but a lived experience shaped by historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. The emotions of Black children in school are not only personal but are also responses to the broader societal context that racializes them. For Black children, schools can be the space of both inclusion and exclusion, safety and danger, opportunity and limitation. At school, feelings of othering, resistance, and belonging among Black children can be seen as emotional responses to the racial dynamics they navigate daily. Although affect theory hints at the relationship between emotions and space, there remains limited research that intentionally maps the way emotions and space are related. For example, examining how Black children feel in different across educational spaces (e.g., classrooms, playgrounds, administrative offices) can reveal patterns of othering and belonging. It can also uncover how certain spaces may be sites of healing and flourishing, where Black children find belonging in schools. Theoretically, mapping how emotions and space interact, we can gain a deeper understanding of how Black children navigate their school environments and how these environments can be transformed to better support their emotional and educational well-being. Therefore, in the next section, I describe the scholarly contributions from Black Placemaking within discourse in K-12 education.

Black Placemaking in Education

Educational spaces for Black children are not simply spaces where children play games, receive additional resources, or pass time. For many, these spaces should be a source of freedom and home. Bell Hooks (1990) stresses that Black people are constantly creating spaces that resist the oppression that occurs within an overtly white supremacist society (hooks, 1990). Furthermore, in most cases, the surrounding community is essential to life at home, across community space, and in the classroom. Many of these classroom spaces are filled with relatives, siblings, and lifelong friends whom the students and educators have grown to know deeply over the years. Although policies and funding requirements are steeped in anti-Black racism, many use the classroom space as a place to combat harm, develop critically conscious students, and offer space for Blackness to exist. kihana miraya ross (2016) adds that "Black space in education commits to the arduous process of reimagining blackness, of working collectively to develop radical Black subjectivities" (ross, 2016). The construction of a world within a classroom space by Black students and education professionals amid oppression, redlining, and economic despair has influenced my fascination with McKittrick's theory of Black place-making (McKittrick, 2011).

Black placemaking grapples with the "…ways that urban black Americans create sites of endurance, belonging and resistance through social interaction in the black digital commons, black public housing reunions, black lesbian and gay nightlife, and black little league baseball" (Hunter et al., 2016). According to the literature on Black placemaking, Black people within a space actively attempt to construct alternative spaces in which Black people—and specifically Black children—can exist amid inhuman oppression (Hunter et al., 2016; McKittrick, 2011; hooks, 1990; ross, 2016). To understand the affective dimensions of social interaction among Black children within educational spaces and cataloging their everyday socio-emotional lives, it is essential to consider the importance of culture and identity. Black placemaking occurs within communities in which each participant shares similarities in ideologies, culture, or experiences as Black in America. In her study on middle-class Black people's understanding of obtaining social and economic mobility in a white world, Lacy

(2004) found that many middle-class Black communities "prefer the distinction and separation of the classes, regardless of a shared racial group" (Lacy, 2004). Furthermore, the array of ideologies, beliefs, and perceptions across educators are informed by the individuals' social identities, socioeconomic status, and geographical upbringing, which ultimately influences their agenda and approach to creating space for Black children. Black placemaking theorists suggest that amid naming the obstacles that prevent placemaking, there remains a need to acknowledge the ways in which Black communities are creating as well as sustaining spaces across time, place, and life (Hunter et al., 2016; McKittrick, 2011; ross, 2016).

For Black placemaking, scholars point to emotions as important in constructing and preserving Black spaces and Black life by linking spaces to emotions (Gammerl, 2012; Hunter et al., 2016; Pernau, 2014). For example, Pernau (2014) provides three ways the body, space, and emotions intersect within the social world. First is through an individual's experience with space over a period of time, which results in the development of emotional knowledge. Scholars suggest that space and objects within space can affect an individual at the intra and interpersonal levels (Ahmed, 2010, 2015; Anderson, 2014; Gammerl, 2012; Pernau, 2014). Second, human practices (e.g., emotions and feelings) and the social meaning of those practices (e.g., I am not wanted in this space) contribute to creating space at the interpretive and material levels. Lastly, Pearnau (2014) argues that space can be associated with emotional valence via individual and social groups lived experiences, and those experiences can be "transmitted over generations through knowledge and narratives" (Ahmed, 2010, 2015; Anderson, 2014; Erll, 2011; Gammerl, 2012; Pernau, 2014). These findings are important to furthering Black placemaking; however, more research is needed, especially on how Black people, especially children's emotions, are shaped, informed, and central to racial inequality.

Summary of Chapter

Scholarship ignores the vital contributions of an integrative framework on emotions that centers on Black placemaking or worldmaking. For this study, I argue that it is important for scholars to interrogate the ways that Black space and Black placemaking shape emotions. The complexities of childhood, especially in Black childhoods, require an integrative framework for emotions. Within the field of emotions, it is important to understand the affective dimensions and/or social function of emotions in the day-to-day lives of Black children in order to (a) capture the ways various factors in schools shape how Black students understand, experience, express, and regulate emotions, (b) consider how critical Black theories can provide crucial insight into supporting emotional well-being and mental health of Black students in educational spaces, and (c) center students voice in the development more responsive programs, interventions, preventions, and/or support that lead to equitable and joyful learning environments that center collective well-being. An integrative framework on emotions and Black place-making offers an opportunity to understand the everyday lives of Black children, specifically what they see, hear, think, and feel, what they are up against, and how they are actively creating on a day-to-day basis.

Combining Black placemaking and an integrative theory on emotions emerges as a potent and nuanced approach to understanding the everyday emotional lives of Black children across spaces such as school, home, and the greater community. To grasp the significance, I delve into each theory and examine how they complement each other in shedding light on the intricate dynamics of emotions within social contexts among Black children. At its core, Black placemaking embodies the essence of reclaiming space and asserting agency within historically marginalized or oppressed communities. It encapsulates the multifaceted efforts of Black communities to cultivate spaces that foster a sense of belonging, empowerment, and cultural affirmation. In the context of schools, Black placemaking manifests as initiatives to transform educational settings into nurturing environments

that honor and validate Black students' identities, experiences, and humanity. Black placemaking theory provides a lens through which to understand the socio-cultural context in which Black children's emotional experiences unfold. It acknowledges the significance of space, place, and community in shaping emotional experiences, particularly within educational environments that may be fraught with systemic inequalities and anti-Black violence. By integrating this theory with an integrative theory on emotions, researchers can explore how the specific contexts of educational spaces impact Black children's emotional development and well-being. This includes examining how racialization and Blackness intersect with affective processes to shape their emotional responses and social interactions. Black placemaking emphasizes the agency and resilience of Black communities in creating and transforming their own spaces. By centering this theory in this dissertation, I can highlight how Black children actively navigate and negotiate their emotional landscapes within educational settings, even in the face of challenges they face. This perspective can illuminate strategies of empowerment and resistance that contribute to their emotional well-being and counter the prevailing damage-centered narratives.

Simultaneously, an integrative theory on emotions draws from disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and affect theory to offer a holistic understanding of how emotions operate within social frameworks. This approach acknowledges the intricate interplay between individual experiences, societal structures, and cultural norms in shaping emotional responses and expressions. By examining emotions through a multidisciplinary lens, this theory unveils the underlying power dynamics, inequalities, and systemic injustices that influence emotional experiences, particularly for marginalized groups like Black children. An integrative theory on emotions recognizes that children's emotional lives are shaped not only by individual psychological processes but also by broader social, cultural, and racial dynamics, especially for Black children. This approach enables an exploration of how multiple factors intersect to influence emotional development and well-being. Moreover, by integrating various disciplinary perspectives on emotions, I can develop a more holistic understanding of emotions among Black children. This approach moves beyond simplistic or reductionist explanations and considers the complex interplay between individual experiences, social structures, and cultural contexts. An integrative theory of emotions encourages a critical reflection of my positionalities and biases, particularly within the context of studying marginalized communities like Black children. This reflexivity can lead to more ethical and socially responsible research practices and may inform actionable recommendations for promoting the emotional well-being of Black children in educational spaces.

When an integrative theory on emotions and Black placemaking theories converge, a rich insight emerges, illuminating the complex interrelationships between space, identity, and emotions within educational settings. When combined, the theories of Black placemaking and an integrative framework on emotions offer profound insights into the interplay between space, identity, and emotions in educational settings, highlighting how inclusive and culturally affirming environments, alongside an understanding of racialization and power dynamics, can enhance the emotional well-being and academic success of Black children, and inform policies and practices that address systemic inequities in education.

Chapter Four: Research Method and Methodology

Black students experience a plethora of systemic and social barriers that impact their emotional well-being and mental health. Despite the growing concerns regarding Black children and youth's mental health, urban schools often struggle to provide non-medicalized, consistent, adequate, and culturally relevant mental health services that promote healing, liberation, and flourishing among Black students (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022; Fantasy et al., 2021; Jager et al., 2019; Legette, Rogers, and Warren, 2022).

Centering the voices and experiences of Black students offers unprecedented opportunities to better understand their everyday emotional lives, the barriers they face, and the creative ways in which they navigate their interactions with their social environment. This dissertation delves deeply into the social function of emotions among Black children and the impact of their social world on their emotional well-being and mental health. By recognizing the array of systemic inequality that Black children and youth routinely navigate in schools, this dissertation—by centering the youth voice—maps the everyday emotional lives of Black children in schools. Specifically, this study aims to capture (a) how Black students understand emotions, (b) how do emotions shape social interactions and how do social interactions shape emotions, (c) the ways Black students explore and process the relationship between their emotions and social interactions, and (d) how are emotions moving through and sticking to the everydayness of Black students social environments (objects, spaces/places, language, tone, memory, body movements, cultures, environments, identity, and events) and construct the ways they build relationships (Ahmed, 2004, 2015; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). Additionally, this study provides insights on school-based mental health services and the impact of school-based mental health services on the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students. This study focuses on the day-to-day emotional experiences of Black children, placing their narratives at the forefront to provide a valuable understanding of their emotional well-being and mental health. By centering the voices and experiences of Black children, this research aims to shed light on their challenges and identify effective strategies to support their mental health within educational settings. The guiding questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do Black children experience emotions and feelings in educational spaces?
2. What shapes how Black children experience emotions and feelings in educational spaces?
3. How do Black children use play or playfulness to navigate their feelings and emotions across educational spaces?

Setting the Context: The Point Neighborhood and the Academy of M.F. Nelson[2]

San Francisco, California, is a metropolitan city covering 47 square miles and comprised of 36 official neighborhoods. These neighborhoods encompass smaller, culturally rich communities contributing to the city's dynamic and vibrant character. Often referred to as one of the most culturally rich, racially, and ethnically diverse cities in the United States, it is home to roughly 850,000 people, making it the second most densely populated city right behind New York City. A city bubbling with an active social scene, Michelin-star restaurants, and surrounded by naturally beautiful scenery/attractions, it continues to be a popular destination for newcomers. The city demographics roughly consist of 42% white, 35% Asian, 15.5% Hispanic or Latinx, 9.5% two or more races, 5.2% Black or African American, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.4%

[2] Pseudonym – the schools original name was changed.

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Despite the diversity, cultural richness, and popularity, there has been a major decrease in residents as concerns regarding extremely high living costs, crime, and safety continue to rise. Popular media has depicted San Francisco as a dystopian city struggling to survive the increasing disparities and inequalities marginalized communities as well as privileged communities are experiencing. San Francisco is considered one of the most expensive cities to live in, right behind New York City. The average annual household income is roughly $180,000, and the median household is 126,187 annually. The average rent in the area is approximately $4,000, with the median asking price for a one-bedroom rental being $2,500 (San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey, 2022). However, rental prices can vary considerably depending on the specific location within the city. High housing as well as rental prices follow one of the biggest challenges the city faces, which is homelessness. As reported by the city of San Francisco point-in-time report, nearly 8,000 people are experiencing homelessness, with 3,357 living in shelters. The San Francisco Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing reported that more than 20,000 people are experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, data identified that although Black or African Americans make up 5.2% of the total population in San Francisco, roughly 35% are experiencing homelessness in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups. It is important to note that the reported 8,000 individuals experiencing homelessness do not consider the inadequacies in the point-in-time method, as well as the large number of individuals who experience hidden homelessness. These estimates do not account for hidden homelessness, defined as people who live temporarily with family members or friends without the security of permanent housing. Over 80% of unhoused individuals in San Francisco live outdoors, either on the streets, in parks, or in encampments throughout the city. Not only is it difficult to find a place of residence, but it is also even harder to keep housing due to an array of obstacles to secure housing, such as high rent, lack of jobs or income that is steady, and difficulty in obtaining or finding safe and adequate housing (San Francisco Homeless Count and Survey, 2022).

Black San Franciscans not only make up a large portion of individuals experiencing homelessness, but they also experience poverty at three times the population average. Individuals who identify as Black and/or African Americans experience a plethora of stark inequalities more often than other racial and ethnic groups. Moreover, individuals who identify as Black or African American, with most of the populations living in two prominent neighborhoods: Fillmore District and Bayview-Hunters Point. During the Great Migration, especially the second wave, millions of Black Southerners relocated to various cities, such as San Francisco. Before the Great Migration, the San Francisco population consisted of 1,200 Black or African Americans, with the majority working in the gold mines or enslaved. However, by the second wave of the great migration, San Francisco's Black or African American population had increased to nearly 40,000 by the early to mid-1940s. San Francisco became popular due to the many job opportunities in the United States naval shipyards in Bayview-Hunters Point (Jargowsky, 1997; Wilson, 1996). Although Bayview-Hunters Point was home to many newly Black residents, the Fillmore district became the center of Black life. Fillmore became a prominent location due to the large number of Japanese residents who were forced into internment camps in 1942. The forceful removal left many homes and businesses unoccupied. A second factor was the rise in the wartime economy, especially the shipbuilding industry during World War II. As a vibrant neighborhood steeped in jazz, art, and Black cultural traditions, it is frequented by renowned artists such as Miles Davis, Etta James, Duke Ellington, and many others (Jackson & Jones, 2012). Often referred to as the "Harlem of the West," despite the growth of Black residents in the Fillmore district, numerous barriers prevented the opportunities for housing via discriminatory housing policy and redlining (Jackson & Jones, 2012). The rise of Black residents triggered a fear response in white residents across San Francisco that removed, destroyed, and redeveloped the Fillmore district. Many Black residents found housing in neighborhoods like

Bayview Hunters Point and cities like Oakland, CA. As noted by Jackson and Jones (2012), Fillmore residents experienced increased poverty, crime, defunded schools, and rampant violence. Black residents sought out housing in Bayview-Hunters Points, known as the most isolated neighborhood in San Francisco, where both the naval shipyard and PG&E main facilities operated. Before Black residents increased, Bayview-Hunters Point was populated by Chinese immigrants who operated shrimping companies during the late 1800s. To make space for the naval shipyard, the homes of Chinese shrimpers were burned down and destroyed. It was not until the 1940s to the 1950s that a significant increase in residence was noticeable, as the naval shipyard employed over 17,000 people. In 1942, the federal government built 5,500 temporary housing units in Bayview-Hunters points to keep Black residents from residing in other neighborhoods. With the shipyard jobs available and the newly developed temporary housing, Bayview-Hunters Point became a prominent location for displaced, marginalized communities, especially Black communities. However, one of the major functions of the naval shipyard was to build or produce the parts that made up the atomic weapon used in the bombing of Hiroshima. The "little boy," when docked at the naval shipyard, contained half of the United States' available uranium-235. The constant undoubtedly affected the environment and all living organisms, causing asthma, physical mutations, and, at times, death. With the departure of the naval shipyard and PG&E plant, it left Bayview-Hunters points an industrial toxic wasteland, leaving the area undesirable and enclosing marginalized communities, especially Black communities, to the neighborhood.

As a result, the naval shipyard and PG&E plant left a mark of anti-Black racism as Bayview-Hunters points continue to deal with radioactive pollution. The city's disregard for Bayview-Hunter's point resulted in the neighborhood becoming synonymous with poverty, crime, prostitution, violence, overt police presence, and environmental injustice. However, Bayview-Hunters has a rich history of resistance and activism, leading to the major campaign to clean up the area and restore the community to proper living conditions. Also, in 1966, Bayview-Hunters Point residents had a 128-hour standoff with the National Guard and Highway Patrol because of the brutal murder of a sixteen-year-old Black teenager by a white police officer for allegedly stealing a car. Historically and contemporarily, Bayview-Hunters points have been grounds for a tremendous amount of racial inequality that has put the lives of thousands of Black Americans at risk. Today, Bayview-Hunters Point remains plagued by poverty, violence, and crime. As an environment with limited play spaces, nature, and lack of access to quality food, it continues to be a delipidated neighborhood home to predominately but not exclusively Black Americans, a community that has experienced since the settlement of the first group of Black migrants' immense oppression and anti-Black racism. The Point neighborhood is a historically rich Black community with five elementary schools. Across the racially segregated San Francisco Unified School District, Black students make up less than 6% of the 49,000 PK-12 student population, with three elementary schools having an enrollment of 50% or more of those Black students. Each of those three schools is in a predominantly low-income Black neighborhood on the southeast side of the city known as Bayview-Hunters Point. Each school is experiencing concerns regarding school funding, staffing, and quality staff, as well as gun violence. San Francisco Unified School District has a long history of perpetuating racial inequality. The school district has been legally sanctioned by the California Department of Education for the overrepresentation of Black students across a wide range of behavioral and disciplinary outcomes. such as formal and informal referrals to special education, behavioral services, suspension, and expulsion. Oftentimes, Black students are labeled emotionally disturbed or experiencing considerable mental health concerns that limit their ability to learn within the traditional classroom setting and are considered disruptive to the learning experience of classmates and educators. Across the San Francisco Unified School District, 64 elementary schools and Black students make up 6% of the SFUSD PK-12 population but make up 40% of the formal

and informal referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. The perpetuation of anti-Black racism across the school district has resulted in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires the district to allocate 15% of the federal IDEA annual grants to invest in general education to address the educational inequalities and the disproportionate representation of Black or African American students in Special Education under emotional disturbance, and other Health Impaired and for discipline. With more than 50% of the Black student population attending school in the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood, elementary schools have been identified as sites to address the disproportionate representation of Black or African American students.

The high concentration of Black students in the Bayview-Hunters Point area, coupled with their overrepresentation among those classified as emotionally disturbed and suspended, reflects the pervasive influence of anti-Black racism that profoundly affects the community. As a result of the state sanction, the school was required to develop a comprehensive social, emotional, and behavioral program to support the mental health of Black students. Therefore, I selected the Academy of M.F. Nelson, one of the three elementary schools identified as a site to receive a state sanction. Bayview-Hunters points and the Academy of M.F. Nelson are important contexts and sites for a study on the emotional well-being and mental health of Black students due to the historical and contemporary challenges that structure Black children's everyday living environments. Black students at the Academy of M.F. Nelson are caught in the middle of stark inequalities throughout their community and, at times, dehumanizing treatment within their schools. With the high concentration of poverty, rise in gentrification, and a lack of space for children to thrive, as a scholar, I am compelled to detail the rich emotion stories of 25 Black children between the ages of 4 and 10 years old, as well as 10 educational professionals (teachers, staff, and principal). Specifically, I detail the emotion stories of Black children as they navigate the world around them, and the impact everyday experiences have on their emotional well-being and mental health.

Inside the M.F. Nelson Academy

The Academy of M.F. Nelson, located in the middle of the Point neighborhood, is led by Dr. Ruby (pseudonym). The Academy of M.F. Nelson operates as both an early education site and elementary school for students across grade levels PreK, TK, K, and 1st to 5th, tucked within a predominantly low-income Black neighborhood on the southeast side of the city referred to as the point neighborhoods. The Academy of M.F. Nelson has an enrollment of 160 students, with more than 50% being Black and/or African American. In addition, a small population of students who identify as Asian, Hispanic, or Latinx attend the school site. Across the 160 students, more than 57% are girls, with 43% being boys, with nearly 75% experiencing immense poverty or being economically disadvantaged. The Academy of M.F. Nelson prides itself on upholding rigorous academic goals and providing a comprehensive education by providing students across learning styles and development with a rich range of academic opportunities. Additionally, the school seeks to provide students with a curriculum that inspires a passion for learning, collaboration, and community engagement. Furthermore, the school is committed to positively impacting the educational experience of its students and developing active community members. The Academy of M.F. Nelson is a modeled preparatory school that requires all students who attend the school to comply with a strict uniform policy. Boys must wear specific-colored pants (no jeans), collared shirts/polos, belts, sweaters or vests, and shoes that match the school color scheme. Girls must wear specific-colored skirts, jumpers or pants, collared shirts or polos, sweaters or vests, and shoes. The school is divided into three floors, with the first for PreK and TK classrooms, which is split into five classrooms with about a ratio set at 24:1. The second floor is considered the main floor for the older elementary grades from kindergarten to fifth grade. The younger students (K-2nd) are located on the

far opposite side of the schools, split into five classrooms (e.g., K has two classrooms, 1st has two classrooms, and 2nd has one classroom) with a ratio set at 24:1. On the other end of the school are the older students (3rd-5th) split into one classroom for each grade. Entering the front gates of the school, there are a number of modern rooms where various staff are housed, including the principal, two office clerks, a cafeteria, and behavioral staff or school security. To your right of the main building, there are hidden doors that provide staff quick access to the two different classrooms and the third floor. The third floor is dedicated to social workers, reading team members, and a science experiment room. Space is also dedicated to a large number of supplies and books. From the beginning of the day (7:00 am) until dismissal (2:05 pm), the school is flooded with students running, screaming, dancing, and playing throughout the hallways into the classrooms. Occasionally, the hall consists of the loud shouting of adults as they attempt to round unattended students. Often, there is no moment of silence in the hallways as students regularly roam the building and sometimes find their way outside onto the playground area.

Because of the schools' location and the stigma often associated with the neighborhood, various programs, especially reading and social-emotional learning programs, are offered to students throughout the week. At M.F. Nelson Academy, rooms are assigned randomly to various programs, many operating sporadically, ranging from once a week to not at all. Throughout the building, rooms serve as storage for the different individuals and programs that cycle in and out each school year. Students are assigned to different programs during the school year based on referrals regarding their academics, behaviors, or well-being. The school structure is consistent with schools across San Francisco, with operating hours starting as early as 7:00 am and ending as late as 5:30 pm. When students are released from school, there are two main options: parent pick-up or after-school programming. Four after-school programming options exist for the Academy of M.F. Nelson at four different sites: a play gymnasium, out-of-school time (OST) at a neighboring school, OST at a neighboring school, and OST at the Academy of M.F. Nelson. However, nearly half the student population attends the after-school programming at the Academy of M.F. Nelson, run by an outsourced group of adults from the neighborhood. After-school programming supervises students from TK to 5th grade as they participate in study hall, free play, and dinner until 5:30 pm. Nearly half of the student population spends about ten hours at school daily. With major concerns from teachers, parents, and students regarding the behaviors of adults and the continuous harmful behavior of students, many are removing their students from the Academy of M.F. Nelson. I learned that concerns around safety and mental health have been a major deciding factor for non-Black parents as well as a growing number of Black or African American parents. However, due to the convenience of the school's location, many parents have difficulty finding other options for their children. In addition, the school is managing a large number of issues. However, there is a major emphasis on the concerns regarding students academically. Across the school, students are severely underperforming in math and reading, with only 3% scoring proficient or higher in math and 12% being proficient or higher in reading. Although many students identify as Black and/or African American, there is a small number of staff across a diverse range of racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Participants at the Academy of M.F. Nelson: Sampling and Recruitment Process

Teacher Participants. The school benefits from 9 full-time equivalent teachers and 10 educational staff consisting of the principal, social worker, nurse, clerks, behavioral staff or security guards, and interns. Each of the full-time teachers (N=8) were interviewed individually throughout the period of data collection. Each of the teachers was identified based on a criterion-based selection process, which consisted of direct support for focal students older than 18. 4 participants identified as Asian or Asian Descent, 3 as White, and 2 as Black or African American. Other educational staff,

like the principals and social workers (N=2), were identified based on the same criterion-based selection process, with all three identifying as Black or African American. However, I did not include various interns as their availability was restricted, and at times, they did not work directly with the students participating in the study. Interviews were conducted either over the phone or in person. Staff were interviewed for 40-60 minutes and audiotaped. In addition, I informally observed the teachers' interactions with the student participants over the course of a full academic school year. As noted above, it was a crucial requirement that the teachers and educational staff selected to participate in the study have worked in some capacity with the student participants of this study. Therefore, it is important that this study grapples with a wide range of concepts, ideas, and thoughts of teachers and other educational staff. It is important to include deep engagement in how teachers understand their own emotional lives and the emotional lives of their students in this study. Teachers and educational staff dug deeply into their childhoods, teaching history, styles, approaches, major challenges in and outside of the classroom, teacher and student mental health, and dreams for the future of education.

Parent Participants. Each of the parents and/or guardians of the student participants (N=20) was individually interviewed throughout the period of data collection. All of the parents identified as Black or African American. All of the parents identified as having a high school education, GED, or completed trade school, with less than half having some college education but did not finish, and two having obtained a two-year community college degree. 15 out of the 20 parent participants live in the point neighborhoods or neighboring neighborhoods, with the others living as far as 45 minutes to an hour away. Interviews with parents and/or guardians lasted 40-60 minutes, with a handful reaching 90 minutes. The interviews were audiotaped and conducted over the phone, with 8 in person. Parents' insights on their children's emotional lives, especially their emotional well-being and mental health, were essential to this study. Parents and/or guardians also revealed rich details about their childhoods, parenting styles and approaches, major challenges to parenthood, their own mental health, and their dreams for their child's future. The stories of the parents and guardians provide the necessary context as well as depth needed to understand the everydayness of Black students' emotional lives.

Student Participants: The student participants were between the ages of 4 and 10 years old (N=20) and were interviewed individually and observed throughout the period of data collection. Some student participants were selected to be interviewed and observed in focus groups within the school's school-based mental health room. Each of the student participants was referred to receive school-based mental health services due to their behaviors in and outside of the classroom. School site staff identified students, and shortly after, parents were sent home an informational pamphlet on the research describing (a) the purpose of the study, (b) the role of the researcher, both as support staff on behalf of the school, and (c) research methods used which includes classroom and playground observations, interviews of their child, and interviews with parents and educators. Some students were also referred to receive support due to exposure to traumatic events or a history of mental health concerns such as hyperactivity, anxiety, social isolation, stress, and depression. All of the student participants identified as Black or African American. Student participants spanned across the grade levels TK to 4th grade, consisting of 2 students in transitional kindergarten, 3 in kindergarten, 6 in 1st grade, 1 in 2nd grade, 5 in 3rd grade, and 3 in 4th grade. 11 identified as girls, and 9 identified as boys. Each student's participation in the study was approved by their parents or guardian. All of the signed participation forms are stored on an encrypted database to ensure the protection of the students' identities. Student participant's data consisted of participant observations three days a week for no longer than 90 minutes over the course of a full academic school year,

interviews for no longer than 30 minutes over the course of a full academic school year, and an analysis of artifacts as well as video recording of student participants. Most important is the in-depth examination of the emotional lives of Black students, which draws on their own voices. It is important to the foundation of this study to allow Black students to tell their own stories while actively observing their emotions within and interactions with their social environments to better understand their emotional well-being and mental health. For this dissertation, I focus on student participants and intend to use the teacher and parent data for future research. The teacher and parent data used in this study provides contextual insight into the emotional lives of the Black student participants. As I discuss my findings later, I will describe the backgrounds of the Black student participants, the social function of emotions among the Black student participants (e.g., understand, express, and manage emotions), and the ways in which the Black student participants navigate their school environment. More detailed information about participants is shown in Tables 1 & 2.

Table 1 provides more detail about the student participants for this study.

# of Students	Participant (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Grade Level	Race/Ethnicity
1	Jade M.	F	4-5	TK	Black or African American
2	Ree T.	F	4-5	TK	Black or African American
3	Zeal L.	M	5-6	K	Black or African American
4	Thomas G.	M	5-6	K	Black or African American
5	Leah L.	F	5-6	K	Black or African American
6	Zeke L.	M	6-7	1st	Black or African American
7	Royal S.	M	6-7	1st	Black or African American
8	Tiffany S.	F	6-7	1st	Black or African American
9	Dre B.	M	6-7	1st	Black or African American
10	Neenah T.	F	6-7	1st	Black or African American
11	Dante D.	M	6-7	1st	Black or African American
12	Kimberly J.	F	7-8	2nd	Black or African American
13	Mac O.	M	8-9	3rd	Black or African American
14	Stoney W.	M	8-9	3rd	Black or African American
15	D'Angelo M.	M	8-9	3rd	Black or African American
16	Jakari J.	F	8-9	3rd	Black or African American
17	Tasha S.	F	8-9	3rd	Black or African American
18	Navi B.	F	9-10	4th	Black and Latinx
19	Sachi P.	F	9-10	4th	Black or African American
20	Surae T.	F	9-10	4th	Black and Samoan

Table 2 provides more detail about the parent or guardian participants for this study.

# of Students	Gender	Grade Level of Student	Race/Ethnicity
1	F	TK	Black or African American
2	F	TK	Black or African American
3	F	K	Black or African American

4	F	K	Black or African American
5	F	K	Black or African American
6	F	1st	Black or African American
7	F	1st	Black or African American
8	F	1st	Black or African American
9	F	1st	Black or African American
10	F	1st	Black or African American
11	F	1st	Black or African American
12	F	2nd	Black or African American
13	F	3rd	Black or African American
14	F	3rd	Black or African American
15	F	3rd	Black or African American
16	F	3rd	Black or African American
17	F	3rd	Black or African American
18	F	4th	Latinx
19	F	4th	Black or African American
20	F	4th	Samoan

Table 3 provides more detail about the teacher and staff participants for this study.

# of Teacher	**Participant (Pseudonyms)**	**Gender**	**Grade Level**	**Race/Ethnicity**
1	Ms. Liz	F	TK	Black or African American
2	Ms. Mary	F	K	Black or African American
3	Ms. Nicole	F	K	Black or African American
4	Ms. Blue	F	1st	Black or African American
5	Ms. Skyler	F	1st	Black or African American
6	Ms. Megan	F	2nd	Black or African American
7	Ms. Sue	F	3rd	Black or African American
8	Mr. Jay	M	4th	Black or African American
9	Ms. Janet	F	Social Worker	Black or African American
10	Ms. Rochelle	F	Principal	Black or African American

Methodological & Research Design: Qualitative Social Science Method

As this study seeks to understand the detailed emotional lives of Black children, especially the affective dimensions/social function of emotions among Black students in a historically disadvantaged Black or African American neighborhood, building authentic relationships with the participants was essential to the project. Therefore, I spent a year and a half before the study actively engaging with students, staff, and the community to build an authentic relationship. Once I was able to build relationships with students, teachers, and the community, it was imperative that I employ a qualitative research method that is humanizing and rooted in storytelling. So, to fully present the

lived experiences of each participant, this project uses critical qualitative and ethnographic methods. Specifically, this study utilizes narrative inquiry, which focuses on understanding human experiences through storytelling. Scholars have defined narrative inquiry as a methodological process that captures the experiences of individuals and phenomena through storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, 2013; Gomez, 2014; Gomez, 2018). Specifically, narrative inquiry attempts to understand how and why stories are developed in particular ways (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, 2013; Gomez, 2014). Ultimately, narrative inquiry serves an important purpose because it can dive deep into the participants' lives through in-depth and authentic conversations (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, 2013; Gomez, 2014; Gomez, 2018). Narrative inquiry, in tandem with the development of authentic relationships, I was allowed to practice humanizing practices that built "[build] relationships of care, dignity, and dialogic consciousness raising" throughout my research design and data collection process (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin, D. J., & Huber, J, 2010; Paris & Winn, 2013, xvi). Too often, Black children's stories go unheard in decisions to transform education broadly (Baldridge, 2018). However, as explained by a number of scholars, narrative inquiry is essential to this study as we learn and better understand the world around us the best through the narratives or stories of others (Clandinin, 2013).

Furthermore, in coding each transcribed interview line-by-line, I was forced to not only pay close attention to what was said by the participants, but I also had to continue to reflect on the interviews, observations, and video recording to pick up on emotions, body language, or gestures (Winn & Paris, 2013). Diving deep into the daily emotional lives of Black children through a narrative approach is important for psychology, sociology, Black studies, child studies, and education on emotional well-being and mental health. The stories of Black children are important as they offer relevant insights through their rich experiences with the world around them. To summarize, this study includes 55 subjects of 20 Black students between the ages of 4 and 9, 20 parents or guardians, and 10 educational professionals (e.g., principal, social worker, school psychologist, and other behavioral support specialists). I centered a qualitative inquiry by utilizing various qualitative data sources to center the lived experiences of study participants in understanding social phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). My qualitative research design and approach are important to this study because they allow for a deep exploration of the everydayness of Black children's emotional well-being and mental health. Specifically, this study draws from a series of data sources: (1) participant observations, (2) semi-structured, in-depth, and open-ended narrative interviews; (3) focus groups; (4) video analysis of students, and (5) student, teacher, and school produced document/artifacts. This study utilized a five-phase process that consisted of (1) simultaneous qualitative data collection using participant observations, focus groups, and narrative interviews, (2) collecting and analyzing weekly journals, diaries, social and emotional surveys, and documents of students, (3) reading all of the data, memoing, and developing preliminary themes, (4) comparing, contrasting, and merging the preliminary results across the data, and (5) conducting a systematic analysis and writing of the data. As a result of the qualitative data sources, I spent three days a week for eight hours a day over the course of one academic year–2023-2024– collecting original data at a predominantly Black and/or African American elementary school.

Research Instruments: Strategies & Techniques for Data Collection

Participant Observations. This is central to the study as it requires the researcher to immerse themselves into the everyday lives of their participants. Specifically, participant observations have been defined as a "method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002; p.1; Musante &

DeWalt, 2010). As a researcher deeply interested in the everyday lives of their participants, it is important to integrate me into the study by observing how children interact with themselves, peers, adults, and physical environments. Specifically, I observed sets of my focal students across four important contexts: classroom, playground, lunchroom, and after-school programs. I argue that emotions, or how children feel, construct relationships with people, places, and things, creating a pattern of feelings, interactions, and behavior. I observed the behaviors of each focal student, specifically facial expressions, gestures, tone, and mannerisms. Each observation consisted of non-focal students' interactions with focal and non-focal students, emotional experiences, expressions, and responses within interactions, various activities, discussion and dialogue amongst participants, in-service meetings, and more. Field notes are a primary tool to document and describe the focal student's day-to-day emotions, experiences, social interactions, behaviors, and conversations/dialogue (Musante & DeWalt, 2010; Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). I observed the students identified as focal students for three days a week for no longer than 90 minutes over the course of a full academic school year.

Semi-structured, in-depth, and open-ended interviews. As this study seeks to deeply understand and describe Black children's emotions and to probe deeper into the participants' lives, I employed interviews as a foundational tool. Interviews offer insight that could potentially be hidden due to participants' reservations about telling personal stories among groups. For this study, it is important to provide children an opportunity to tell their own stories as a way of practicing humanizing research practices. In addition, interviews are important in understanding the perspectives of Black parents and guardians and educational professionals' perspectives on Black children's social and emotional well-being. Interviews are important as they provide the necessary in-depth understanding of each participant's emotional stories via authentic conversations. Therefore, I utilized semi-structured, in-depth, and open-ended narrative interviews, utilizing general and episodic narrative interview questions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Maxwell, 2013; Mueller, 2019). I asked a mix of Experience, Knowledge, Feeling, Sensory, and Background questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Knowledge questions will be used to understand how participants, in their own words, think about emotions, how they connect to social interactions in schools, and how they understand the connection between emotions, race, and power. Sensory questions will allow me to collect important information on what students see and/or see, hear and/or hear, feel and/or feel, and how they see emotions shaping social interactions and social interactions shaping emotions. Experience questions will allow me to ask questions regarding their experiences in and outside of schools and how their experiences shape the way they understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions, as well as shape social interactions in schools. Feeling questions will be central to this study as they will allow for the data collection on the affective dimensions of school and its relationships to processes of othering and belonging. Each frame for the questions will allow for a thorough examination of my research questions and agenda (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Using this frame for the interview questions, I explored important aspects of their lives that inform their emotions, social interactions, and behavior. This work is important as Black students' stories, specifically Black children's stories, often go unheard of in developing and implementing programs that focus on social and emotional development. However, as a scholar concerned with improving the educational experiences for Black children, I believe that storytelling provides important knowledge to improve the educational experiences for Black children (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin, 2013). Specifically, each of the student participants was interviewed once during the school year, where we will discuss areas related to their emotions, social interactions, and behavior. The individual interview session will last no longer than 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted in person.

Sociological Video Analysis. Video analysis is another essential component of this study. A growing number of researchers have begun to interrogate the difficulties of capturing the everyday social interactions of our participants as they relate to social phenomena due to natural human error. I used sociological video analysis as a video ethnographer to deeply engage with each participant and capture important moments and events to address these concerns. As a researcher, capturing every social interaction or moment is difficult. However, a sociological video analysis "allows for a much finer and more precise observation of processes than would be possible with non-technical observation only. In contrast to other research data, such as interviews, which are used to reconstruct events indirectly, video is therefore referred to as the registration-conserving medium" (Grimshaw, 1982; p. 122). Unlike previous generations, this generation is very familiar with and comfortable with the presence of cameras, videos, and tablets, to name a few. To accurately describe the student participants, I only video-record them to capture their interactions, behavior, body movements, tone, and emotional dynamics. The video recording of the student participants will only occur on the playground and in the wellness classroom. I recorded focal students during each wellness program session (i.e., one session a day on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). Video recording lasted the full duration (i.e., 20-30 minutes) of the wellness program activities and allotted time on the playground (i.e., 30 minutes). One type of video recording will occur, which is child centered. Child-centered recording will allow focal students to capture their expressions, perspectives, and points of view. In cases where non-focal student participants are captured in video recordings (i.e., on the playground), I blurred out their faces using video editing to protect individuals' identities. Upon request, focal student participants face will be blurred out to protect their identity. These video recordings did not directly record school-affiliated adults or parents of the focal student participants. The video recording was on a tablet. I set up a tablet to focus on the focal students and their social interactions. I coded and analyzed materials to understand emotions, sensations, moods, tones, body movements, events, interactions, patterns, and more to better understand emotions among Black children in educational spaces.

Document/Artifacts Analysis. What are the different ways to capture one's emotional self? To document a full picture of the relationship between Black children's emotions, social interactions, and behavior, I employed document analysis as a tool for this study. Document analysis allows the researcher to "elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (Bowen, 2009, p. 9). I collected focal participants' journals and/or diaries and drawings, their academic and disciplinary records, demographic information from the schools and the district, and school policies, including but not limited to the student handbook. I reviewed the documents and artifacts to ensure they aligned with my research questions and the emerging themes from my theoretical framework. Specifically, I collected data from drawings, daily journals, contact information, and behavioral reports (e.g., adult reports on student's behaviors over the duration of their time at the school). Analyzing documents and artifacts offers insight into social and emotional development and well-being (Burgess & Hartman, 1993; Di Leo, 2013; Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011; Loureiro et al., 2020). For example, focal participants created mind and emotion maps, collages representing their personalities, experiences, and emotions, and daily journaling. These documents provide additional data relevant to focal children's emotional understandings and experiences.

The data were analyzed to address the research questions. The interviews will allow the child to present their emotional experiences directly. The participant observations and sociological videos will allow me to collect verbal and nonverbal behavioral observations across various school settings. I will connect the responses from each focal student's interviews to their verbal and non-verbal social and emotional interactions across educational spaces such as classrooms, playgrounds, and

therapeutic rooms. I collected documents to gain additional perspectives on focal students' identification, behavioral history, history outside of the school context, and non-verbal communication of their emotions and experiences in their educational environment. Parent and teacher interviews will primarily be used to contextualize and identify factors that shape focal children's emotional understandings, expressions, and regulation. Focal students are the only students who will be audio and visually recorded over the course of the study. Focal students are only audio and visually recorded during specific times and spaces. Focal students are audio and visually recorded during interviews and participant observations in private spaces. When non-focal students were inadvertently captured on video or audio recording, Adobe software was used to blur out their faces, and any identifying information would be removed from audio recordings.

Data Collection & Analysis: Inside the Analytical Process

This study shows how participants' everyday experiences shape their emotional lives in schools or the social function of emotions. To analyze the data, it is important to link the emotion stories of the Black students to the greater structures that shape their experiences and ways of being in schools (Weis & Fine, 2012). Analyzing the participants' stories on a macro and micro level helps explain their realities and how larger structures, such as anti-Black racism, play a role in their daily lives. This study uses theoretical frameworks on interdisciplinary perspectives on emotion science and Black placemaking to assist in analyzing interview transcripts and developing codes and themes, along with larger phenomena throughout the data. After collecting participants' narratives, observations, and video recordings, the first draft of codes was done by hand to develop familiarity with the data and make any necessary corrections. However, Dedoose was used to code and analyze the remaining transcripts. I analyzed themes that were present in the literature on childhood emotional development, Black Children's Emotion Experiences, and School-based Mental Health. Interviews were reordered along with video recordings, all of which were immediately stored in a box. After the interview was completed, all recordings and documentation were permanently deleted from the tape recorder and transferred to Box. To ensure that data was accurate, each participant was offered the option to check over the final versions of their own transcripts from the in-depth interviews. I employed a member-check strategy (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) to ensure that data wasn't glossed over, neglected, or intentionally manipulated for the purpose of the study. The study integrates analytical frameworks on emotion science and Black placemaking to analyze the emotional experiences of Black students. This suggests a focus on understanding emotions within the specific cultural and social contexts of Black students' lives in schools. The analysis aims to connect individual emotion stories (micro level) to broader societal structures (macro level), such as anti-Black racism. This dual-level analysis helps to explain how larger social phenomena influence daily experiences and emotional lives.

Between Emotional Worlds: Navigating Inner Childhood Memories as a Researcher and Practitioner

As a young Black child, I grew up hyper-aware and unaware of my emotions, feelings, moods, and sensations. I felt a lot and, at times (or I thought), felt nothing. At a young age, I was taught and developed the skills necessary to navigate a grossly oppressive society that I was not fully aware impacted my social and emotional development and well-being. Reflecting on my childhood, I see that my introspective tendencies and everyday interactions with others led to various challenges and opportunities. However, I, like many other children, am hyper-aware or unaware of the structural and sociocultural forces that shape our emotional selves and impact our social and

emotional development and well-being. As a Black adult cis-gender man working in the mental health field, I have grown to become aware of how Black adults' emotional selves–understandings, experiences, expressions, and regulations–continue to be impacted by various contextual factors and processes. Oftentimes, this causes major determinants to an individual's mental health and well-being, such as but not limited to anxiety, depression, difficulty expressing their emotions, difficulty building healthy relationships, and difficulty self-regulating. For everyone, especially young hyper-marginalized children, our emotions are at the forefront of everything that we think and do. Although emotions are central to our lives, concerns remain regarding the teaching and protecting of emotions within and outside educational spaces such as schools, homes, and after-school programs. This led to my journey in improving Black children's social and emotional lives as a healing adult, educator, mental health practitioner, and researcher in the K-12 educational context.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to note the four ways my positionality, personality, and lived experiences shape my research approach and identity as I seek to inquire about the affective dimensions and/or social function of Black children's emotions in educational spaces and perceptions of Black guardians or parents and educational professions on Black children's social and emotional development. First, due to my prior roles as an educator and mental health practitioner for the research site chosen for this study, I have developed relationships with students, families, and educational professionals to support Black students' social and emotional development. This is important to mention as I may have a perspective or assumption regarding certain children, families, and educational professionals that could not represent their full truth. Due to my relationship with students, families, and educational professionals, participants may be willing to express their thoughts and opinions about their experiences. Secondly, although I am the oldest of ten, with the youngest being a four-year-old Black girl, I do not have kids of my own. This may result in perspectives and assumptions about students and how children think, feel, and act within the educational setting that might not be accurate in the opinions of parents and teachers. To address my perspectives and assumptions, I checked my assumptions and interrogated them in collaboration with my student and adult participants, especially regarding my interview questions, observations, and interpretations of their artifacts. Third, as a mental health and education practitioner in K-12 educational spaces, I have much expertise and experience working with children in a mental health capacity. Although I have taught at the middle and high school levels, I do not have experience as an elementary school teacher. Within the pre-K to 5th-grade context, I have served as a mental health practitioner, a behavioral interventionist, and a social and emotional well-being interventionist. In non-traditional educational settings such as community-based educational spaces, I have served as the lead teacher for elementary-aged students across different geographical locations in and outside of the U.S. context. In each role, I have curated a variety of social and emotional learning curricula to support the improvement of children's social and emotional development. Lastly, my position as a researcher or academic must be taken into consideration for the purpose of this study. It is important to discuss the power dynamics that exist within the position of a researcher and a Black cis-gender male researcher who once lived in a similar community as the participants. Student participants may be confused about my role, the questions I intend to ask, and my behavior or responses towards situations that may occur in the classroom and playground. Educational professionals and guardians may be worried about disclosing thoughts, opinions, or experiences because of how they may be used in the final version of the study. To address this concern, study participants will be allowed the opportunity to opt out of the study and request that certain information be excluded from the study at any time. There are privileges that I hold that inform my perspectives on Black children's social and emotional development, the way I see dynamics within and outside of the classroom, how adults perceive Black children's emotions, and how I envision a

better educational system. I conducted this research with the power and privilege that lies within my gender and sexual identity.

Within the traditional K-5 classroom context, my positionality informed how I understand the affective dimensions of Black children's social interaction and the contextual factors and processes that shape Black children's emotional lives. Ultimately, my lived experiences growing up as a Black child, combined with my experiences working in various roles with Black children, families, and educational professionals, and as a Black academic, will greatly inform the data collection process and final version of the study. As someone who racially, culturally, and socially identifies as Black, I come to this research with knowledge of Black history and share similar values and cultural beliefs with my participants. Biases are always embedded in the research process; this assumption is reasonable as scholars have suggested that it is in our nature as human beings to gravitate toward those with whom they share some level of commonality. As a result, I take the biases seriously and will ensure that I check my biases and the biases of others throughout the study.

My complex positionality greatly strengthens this study as there remain unanswered questions regarding the social and emotional development as well as the well-being of Black children in educational spaces. As a result, scholars and practitioners lack the necessary knowledge to address the growing concerns regarding Black children's mental health. My deeply personal and intellectual curiosity leads me to deeply grappling with the complexities of emotions within the everyday lives of Black children amid a plethora of oppressive conditions. Therefore, I have designed this study to illuminate new and urgent knowledge that can help cultivate and promote Black children's social and emotional development and well-being within and across the contexts within which Black childhood unfolds. With that being said, I ensure that the knowledge gained is not a manifestation of what I want to see and understand but rather knowledge gained from rigorous research methods and analyses informed by a personal understanding of the implications of this research study. To ensure that the data gained is accurate, each participant will be offered the option to check over the final versions of their own transcripts from the in-depth interviews and analysis of participant observations. I employed a member-check strategy (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) to ensure that data wasn't glossed over, neglected, or intentionally manipulated for the purpose of the study.

Protection of Participants

Due to the study being centered around Black children, it is important for the results to be verified by each participant rather than for their experiences to be taken for granted by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). First, I allowed the study's participants (adults and children) to actively revise the original interview questions and add unthought-of questions alongside mental health expertise throughout the community. Therefore, I offered each of my participants ample time to read their transcribed notes, and I offered them their perspectives on the findings that emerged from their transcribed notes. This is an important step in conducting research with students of all ages, as children have opinions and concerns about their stories being used for research. Ultimately, this will build trust among the students, resulting in strong relationships that will benefit the research project and beyond. This will help ensure that data wasn't glossed over, neglected, or intentionally manipulated for the purpose of the study. The goal is to provide a better understanding of Black children's emotions, social interactions, and behavior by centering them in the process of understanding their emotional lives and everyday experiences within educational settings.

Moreover, this study is concerned with telling rich, beautiful, and honest stories of Black children regarding their emotions and well-being within the educational system. Therefore, this study is not concerned with generalizing, conveying the truth, or speaking on behalf of other Black children's emotions worldwide. This study aims to spark the audience's interests, perspectives, and

inner and collective feelings to initiate change necessary within the educational system. The interviews of the participants are stored and secured on a credible platform to ensure that interviews are not used outside of the study. Participants have the opportunity at any time to opt out of the study or request that information be withheld from the study. Lastly, each participant and the student's guardian can opt-in to receive a final copy of the study.

Limitations of Study Design

There were several limitations to this study. First, emotions and their social functions can vary significantly across developmental stages, and extending the findings to older or younger age groups may not be straightforward. Second is the cultural diversity within the Black community, as this study focuses on the experience of U.S.-born Black students between the ages of 4 and 9 in one neighborhood within the context of one school. Black children come from various cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and their emotional experiences may differ. The study would benefit from a more nuanced exploration of these variations to avoid oversimplification. Third, this study provides a snapshot of emotions and social interactions, but emotions can be dynamic and change over time across space and place. While this study focuses on emotions and feelings within the context of schools, a longitudinal approach could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how emotions evolve within educational spaces and how external factors contribute to these changes. Fourth, while the study focuses on the intersection of race, gender, sociocultural factors, and more, I do not fully explore other intersecting identities, such as students with disabilities. Fifth, emotions are subjective experiences, and interpretations of emotional expressions may vary. My identity, relationship with the students, cultural background, and personal biases could influence the interpretation of Black students' emotions. Ensuring reflexivity and employing diverse perspectives in the research team could address potential biases. Sixth, studying the emotions of young children involves ethical considerations, including informed consent and the potential impact of research on participants. Ensuring that ethical guidelines are rigorously followed is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the study. Lastly, while qualitative methods provide rich descriptions, the absence of quantitative data limits the ability to establish statistical relationships between variables. Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional experiences of Black children. By acknowledging these potential limitations, I can enhance the robustness and applicability of the study's findings in the future, contributing to a more holistic understanding of Black children's social and emotional development within educational spaces.

Chapter Five

Social and Emotional Literacy: Black Students' Experiences of Emotions and Feelings

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This chapter provides an in-depth and nuanced overview of 4 out of 20 Black students (transitional kindergarten, 1st grade, 3rd grade, and 4th grade) in the format of student profiles at the Academy of M.F. Nelson reveals intriguing perspectives on the understanding, expression, and management of emotions. There are several reasons for focusing on 4 out of the 20 Black student participants. First, selecting four students allows for a detailed and nuanced exploration of students' unique experiences and perspectives. This depth provides a richer, more comprehensive understanding of how each student understands, expresses, and manages emotions. Second, I am able to capture a range of developmental stages and experiences that illustrate how emotional understanding, expression, and management may evolve with age and educational progression. Third, by focusing on 4 students, the study ensures a balanced representation of genders, allowing for an understanding of the potential gender differences in understanding, expressing, and managing emotions, adding another layer of depth to the findings. Lastly, detailed student profiles highlight in a storytelling format the key themes and patterns. This approach enhances the overall quality and impact of the dissertation's findings. Analyzing how students understand, express, and manage their emotions and feelings becomes vital for comprehending the larger social function of emotions among Black students across educational spaces.

Often, scholarship has a lackluster understanding of how children, especially Black children, understand, express, and manage emotions. Focusing on their personal perspectives on how they understand, express, and manage emotions is vital to the unfolding of this study, providing in-depth insight into the emotional minds of Black children. Furthermore, by focusing my analysis on the central theme of how Black students understand, express, and manage their emotions, I provide insight into Black students' complex social and emotional development in schools. This chapter delves into the critical perspectives of 4 out of 20 Black students regarding their emotions. The student participants in this study conveyed insight into emotion labels, definitions of emotions, emotions as a social signal, number of emotions, health and emotions, and complex emotions such as empathy. Student participants demonstrated a strong perspective regarding teaching emotions in and outside of the context of school. While holding critical perspectives of the ways public schools' function and their impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of Black students, the perspective of Black children on their emotions and feelings derails the idea that children or youth are incapable of explaining or understanding such complex concepts.

This chapter argues that there is a significant gap in scholarly understanding regarding how children, particularly Black children, comprehend, express, and manage emotions. By focusing on the personal perspectives of Black students in understanding, expressing, and managing emotions, this study provides valuable insights into the emotional development of Black children. This study argues that through the personal perspectives of Black students, emotions are better understood as

multifaceted, deeply nuanced, and culturally as well as socially complex. This argument challenges longstanding notions that children cannot clearly communicate their understanding, expression, and management of emotions. Both scholarly research and society perceive that children, especially young children, may be unable to clearly communicate their understanding, expression, and management of emotions. This notion is often rooted in developmental psychology theories that suggest children's emotional development is less sophisticated compared to adults. Additionally, societal beliefs about childhood innocence and naivety contribute to the perception that children may not have the vocabulary or cognitive abilities to articulate their emotions effectively. However, contemporary developmental psychology, education, and sociology research have challenged this notion by highlighting the complexity and depth of children's emotional experiences and expressions. Studies have shown that children as young as preschool age can recognize and label a wide range of emotions, understand social cues related to emotions, and develop strategies to manage their emotions effectively (Bierman & Motamedi, 2015; Keltner et al., 2014a; de Rosnay & Harris, 2002; Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997; Wellman et al., 2001). Research on emotional intelligence in children has demonstrated that emotional awareness and regulation skills can be taught and cultivated from a young age (Keltner et al., 2014a).

Despite this growing body of research, there still exists a tendency to underestimate children's emotional capabilities, particularly among certain demographics such as Black children (Dunbar, 2022; Lozada et al., 2022; Legette et al., 2022). Stereotypes and biases about race, gender, and socioeconomic status may further contribute to misconceptions about the emotional competence of children from marginalized communities (Dunbar, 2022; Lozada et al., 2022; Legette et al., 2022). Therefore, this study challenges these longstanding notions and recognizes Black children's rich emotional lives, including their ability to understand, express, and manage their emotions in nuanced ways (Dunbar, 2022; Lozada et al., 2022; Legette et al., 2022). Through an analysis of their perspectives on emotion labels, definitions, social signals, and the teaching of emotions, this chapter aims to shed light on the complexities of emotional development among Black students in school settings. Additionally, it challenges assumptions about the emotional capacity of children, particularly Black students, and highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of their emotional experiences. This chapter contributes to a deeper comprehension of Black students' social and emotional development within educational spaces by presenting student profiles and analyzing their perspectives on emotions.

Emotional Development of a Transitional Kindergartener: Insight into Understanding, Expressing, and Managing Emotions

Jade, a gentle-talking and sweet-spirited 4-year-old, is the youngest of her family. As joyous and sweet-spirited Jade can be, she is not afraid to allow her true feelings to be felt, seen, and heard throughout the school. Jade is a deeply compassionate and emotionally perceptive child who is naturally curious and wonders about herself and the world around her. She overflows with a loving nature and kindness. Her presence radiated warmth and joy that seemed to light up the room as she could not hide her true feelings, whether it was a burst of laughter echoing through the classroom or anger during activities. With her soft, melodic voice and eyes that sparkled with curiosity, Jade was a beacon of joy in her classroom. She was known for her infectious laughter, which could warm the room even on the dreariest days. But beneath her cheerful demeanor lay a tender soul, yearning for connection and understanding. More than anything, Jade deeply seeks relationships with adults, especially Black males, drawn to their strength and kindness in her father's absence. The absence of her father due to incarceration contributes to her fear and discomfort with building relationships with others, highlighting the importance of positive relationships in providing the emotional

foundation necessary for a child to flourish socially, mentally, and emotionally despite the pervasive challenges. She sought guidance, love, and support from adults and peers, craving the possibilities of security and belongingness. Jade's yearning to connect with Black male figures speaks to the impact of familial relationships and societal influences on her emotional development. As Jade navigates a precarious world, she embraces her own playfulness through curiosity and wonder, infusing every moment with compassion, kindness, and boundless curiosity. Jade embodies the transformative power of love and the courageous strength of a child's spirit. In the end, Jade's narrative is not just one of a gentle-talking, sweet-spirited child but a testament to the enduring beauty of the human soul during the in-depth interview.

Understanding Emotions: A Journey of Self-Discovery and Connection

Jade described herself as Happy, Love, and Silly, setting the tone for a positive self-perception. Jade's belief in the existence of "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20" types of emotions indicate an advanced understanding of the complexity and diversity of human feelings, underscoring her cognitive maturity and emotional intelligence beyond her years. The subsequent exploration of the intensity of specific emotions unveiled a nuanced emotional understanding with varying degrees of excitement, happiness, love, safety, anger, loneliness, sadness, and worry. Specifically, she noted that she feels excited, happy, loved, safe, and worried often while feeling lonely and sad sometimes throughout her day-to-day interactions. When asked about what makes her worried, she noted, "Um, mm, when I see myself." Jade demonstrates a keen awareness of the impact of emotions on her body and well-being, acknowledging the importance of positive emotions for overall health. Her ability to articulate her emotional experiences and the significance of relationships in shaping her emotional landscape highlights her depth of insight into the interconnectedness of emotions and interpersonal connections. Interestingly, Jade noted that she was not directly taught about emotions by her family members, in particular her mother, but she articulated that her teachers have taught her about different emotions. The revelation that Jade's mother did not teach her about emotions, juxtaposed with her affirmation that teachers did, offers insight into the process of learning about emotions among young children. When encouraged to describe emotions, Jade could not provide a clear or standardized definition of emotions but instead provided a list of emotion terms that are most common across social and emotional literature, such as happy, sad, and mad. Nevertheless, Jades demonstrated a desire to learn about emotions due to the limited opportunities to learn about emotions both in her classroom and at home. Her desire to learn about emotions echoed children's natural curiosity and desire for learning. This eagerness to understand and navigate the complexities of feelings hinted at a blossoming emotional understanding fueled by a desire to learn more about emotions and feelings both in school and at home. These emotions formed the cornerstone of her identity, creating a foundation for exploring her relationships with school and home environments.

Expressing Emotions: Pathways of Joy, Vulnerability, and Connection

Jade's "Good" feeling association with school unveiled a positive connection with education. She associates positive emotions with school, particularly her opportunities to play with her friends and supportive teachers. This positive school experience likely contributed to her overall emotional well-being and sense of security. Her positive connection with school or individuals within the context of schooling (e.g., teachers, peers, support staff), characterized by feelings of happiness and security, illustrates the role of social interactions and environmental factors in shaping emotional

experiences. As described by Keltner and colleagues (2014a), positive social interactions within the school environment contribute to a sense of belonging and emotional security, ultimately enhancing overall well-being. Jade described her love for playing with her cousin and sister at the park and the emotional richness she derived from her bonds. Her inclination to play and experience joy with the interviewer, teachers, and sister underscored the importance of positive social interactions in fostering emotional well-being. Similarly, a bubbling smile on her face associates "Super Good" feelings with home and portrays a playful and loving home environment where she is surrounded by her family members. Jade's positive feelings associated with home indicate a loving and playful family environment. Her emotional richness derived from bonds with family members underscores familial relationships' significance in shaping childhood emotional experiences. Research emphasizes the role of social contexts, such as family dynamics, in influencing emotional expression and regulation.

Sadness entered Jade's emotional display through interactions with her little cousin. The narrative unfolded with a playground dispute, revealing the intricacies of childhood friendships and the potential for emotional distress in peer interactions. Jade's sadness, stemming from perceived unfair play, showcased a vulnerability integral to emotional development. Whether it's the infectious laughter that fills the air when she plays with her friends or the quiet sadness that clouds her eyes when faced with injustice, Jade expresses herself with honesty and authenticity. When asked to describe how she expresses her emotions, she communicates a complex and multifaceted expression. Specifically, she noted a comfort with expressing her strong emotions, such as anger, frustration, and sadness, through physical bodily reactions such as crying, hitting, pushing, and sometimes screaming or yelling. Moreover, Jade could clearly communicate how others express emotions and feelings, such as happy, sad, and mad, by identifying common facial and bodily expressions. She associated emotions such as extreme excitement, silliness, and joy with the playground and playing with her peers. Her body becomes a mirror of her emotions, and she located strong emotions in her stomach as she feels a fluttering sensation when excited and her head heavy with worry. Jade would sometimes shut down verbally and physically isolating herself when feeling singled out by teachers for various behaviors that are in opposition to the classroom expectations (e.g., not cleaning up a mess right away, not remaining quiet during hallway transitions, and not sitting still during carpet time) or when feeling a strong sense of being disrespect or othered by her peers during play (e.g., lack of sharing, lack of listening to each other, peers not playing with her in the ways she prefers). Jade's ability to be aware of her emotional expressions and the situations that lend to more expressive behaviors indicate young children's complex and sophisticated emotional knowledge, especially regarding their sense of self. The thematic recurrence of play and references to specific toys or items underscored the significance of play in Jade's emotional expression. Jade demonstrates a profound understanding of the importance of positive relationships and the power of play in navigating her feelings. Play acted as a canvas for her emotions, a realm where she could navigate and articulate her feelings, often punctuated with requests for one-on-one playtime. In her journey of self-discovery, Jade embodies the emotional essence of Black childhoods, weaving together a story of joy, curiosity, and unwavering strength. As she continues to explore the depths of her emotions and relationships, Jade's narrative offers invaluable insights into the early foundations of emotional development, highlighting the universal language of play and the transformative power of love.

Management of Emotions: Self-Awareness, Coping Mechanisms, and Communication Styles

With her tender heart and perceptive mind, Jade navigates the ebb and flow of emotions with a blend of resilience and vulnerability. While she embodies happiness and love, she also grapples with the weight of sadness and anger. When the waves of these intense feelings crash upon her, Jade is aware that her reactions are visceral and unfiltered – tears may flow, voices may rise, and objects may scatter. Further, she noted that anger and sadness are the emotions she has the hardest time managing and explained that during the moments that she feels angry or sad, she cries, hits, yells, or throws items. Jade conveyed that she had difficulty managing her emotions but believed that emotions are important to people. Through her interactions with others and her keen awareness of their emotional cues, Jade learns to navigate the complexities of human feelings. Her inner world spills into the open in these moments, a raw and unadulterated expression of her deepest emotions. When asked about emotions and feelings in relation to her body, Jade demonstrated a high awareness of how emotions and feelings affect her body. She acknowledged feeling emotions in her head and stomach, which suggested an understanding of the mind-body connection in relation to her everyday interactions.

Moreover, Jade clearly communicated her understanding of positive emotions being vital to the health and well-being of people. This awareness aligns with developmental milestones of emotional development, where children begin to grasp the somatic components of feelings. Her consistent desire to play highlighted the importance of play as a medium for emotional exploration, communication, and connection. On the playground, she discovers a sanctuary where she can freely express herself, forging bonds that transcend words and barriers. Jade's journey through the world of emotions is a testament to the everyday emotional experiences of Black childhoods – a journey marked by love, curiosity, and the unwavering pursuit of joy. As she continues to explore the depths of her own emotional world, her story illuminates the path toward understanding, connection, and self-discovery. In essence, Jade's revealed a child navigating the intricate landscape of emotions, relationships, and self-perception. Jade provided a unique and nuanced insight into understanding, expressing, and managing emotions. Jade demonstrates the emotional essence of Black childhoods. Her story, woven with positivity, curiosity, vulnerability, and the universal language of play, offers valuable insights into the early foundations of emotional development.

Emotional Development of a First Grader: Insight into Understanding, Expressing, and Managing Emotions

Dre, an expressive, silly, and emotionally perceptive 6-year-old, is a small but big presence that is felt throughout the school environment. Despite his tough exterior, Dre has a gentle way of being and strong compassion. His life experiences have created the foundation for his deep understanding of emotions and his desire for connection. Dre is a young Black boy with a sharp mind, a strong sense of self, and an unwavering determination to overcome and create for himself despite the many issues throughout his life. With his firm but gentle demeanor and indomitable spirit, he embodies the power and strength of the human spirit. He has been exposed to the harsh realities of urban life. Growing up in a neighborhood plagued by violence and poverty, he has learned to navigate the intricate web of emotions that are evoked by community dynamics and that define his world. His personality is shaped by the bonds he shares with his family and close friends. He is protective of his loved ones and committed to ensuring that no one crosses his or those he loves boundaries. It is simple for Dre; he is loyal to those who stand by him unconditionally. He embodies a boundless sense of optimism and resilience. Whether shooting hoops at the local park or running around his neighborhood, Dre attempts to imagine and create a healthy environment. He embodies the spirit of possibilities and transformation with his infectious enthusiasm, boundless creativity, and unwavering resilience.

Understanding Emotions: Defining, Counting, and Learning

Dre can identify and label basic emotions such as happy, sad, angry, and excited. He describes himself as "silly, angry, and excited" which shows that the student has a range of emotional experiences and is aware of his own different emotional states. Dre linked silliness to his desire for playfulness and goofiness, especially during class, where he often engages in rough play, making jokes, dancing, and making silly noises. He linked anger to his various moments of frustration, irritation, and, at times, rage, and he was able to shed light on the situation or triggers that lead to these emotional states. He linked excitement to his capacity for fun and connection with his peers. Dre indicates an advanced emotional awareness and a willingness to articulate his feelings, essential components of emotional intelligence and self-understanding. He can identify and label basic emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, and excitement, indicating a foundational understanding of emotional states. He believes that there are "hundreds of thousands" of emotions in the whole world that can be felt together all at once or separately. Dre believes that emotions are important because they help the brain contend with confusing thoughts. He states that he taught himself emotions and describes emotions as things that he feels inside his body that help him think. In particular, he associates positive emotions with specific activities, such as feeling happy when hydrated, showcasing a unique perspective on emotional well-being. His explanation that he taught himself emotions and describes them as feelings inside his body that help him think reflects a unique perspective on emotional awareness and its cognitive aspects. However, he identifies his mom as teaching him about emotions, highlighting the influence of family in shaping emotional understanding.

Interestingly enough, Dre's father is absent from his life for a variety of personal reasons that prevent him from being an active parent. Dre's emotions are noticeably affected when discussing his father, expressing a sense of missing him and a desire to reconnect. This highlights the emotional impact of an absent parental figure on a child's well-being. Through conversation, he was able to convey the harsh feelings associated with rarely ever having the chance to see his father. However, Dre notes that he has learned about emotions from his father even though his absence is felt but that absence has taught him about emotions and feelings. This aligns with research emphasizing the role of social interactions in acquiring knowledge and behaviors. Dre's ability to identify and articulate his emotions at a young age demonstrates a level of emotional intelligence. His awareness of emotional triggers and coping strategies contributes to a well-rounded emotional skill set. This suggests that Dre has developed an internalized understanding of emotions as physiological responses that influence his thoughts and behaviors. This suggests a nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to emotional well-being, including physical needs and environmental stimuli. His awareness of emotional triggers is evident, acknowledging that feeling loved is associated with calmness, safety, and refraining from physical aggression. He also connects specific experiences, such as feeling comfortable at home and excited on his birthday, to his emotions. His ability to link emotions to specific experiences, like feeling comfortable at home or excited on his birthday, highlights a sophisticated understanding of the sources of emotions and the situational factors that influence them. Dre is aware of the factors that trigger specific emotions in him. Feeling loved is associated with being calm, safe, and avoiding physical aggression, highlighting his awareness of the conditions that contribute to positive emotions. He connects excitement with celebratory events like birthdays, indicating an understanding of situational triggers. Dre attributes his feelings of love to a sense of calmness and safety, emphasizing the importance of a secure environment. He links emotions to specific experiences, such as feeling comfortable at home and

excited on his birthday, reflecting a nuanced understanding of the sources of emotions. He noted not feeling emotionally comfortable in his neighborhood describing:

Interviewee:	Because they be shootin' out there.
Interviewer:	You don't wanna be on Third?
Interviewee:	Uh-huh. Last time when I was out there getting' me some McDonald's there was 1,000 polices.
Interviewer:	Really.
Interviewee:	On-on Third. They be like [makes noise].
Interviewer:	They be shootin'?
Interviewee:	Uh-huh.
Interviewer:	It's scary?
Interviewee:	Uh-huh. [slowly drawn out]

Third Street is a space and place where the rhythm of life pulses with an energy all its own, but beneath the surface, there's a tension that hangs heavy in the air. He explains the emotional impact of navigating an environment plagued by violence and law enforcement presence. He conveys a degree of fear and danger that permeates the streets of Third, suggesting a community besieged by shootings. He is able to clearly identify the impact of community violence on the emotional development and well-being of children, especially Black children with pervasive effects on their psychological, emotional, and social functioning. Despite growing recognition of the impact of violence on children, there remains a need for a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of individuals navigating these environments. Dre uncovers the multifaceted dimensions of the impact of violence on children's lives, informing holistic approaches to intervention and support. Dre's understanding of emotions is multifaceted and demonstrates a deep level of self-awareness and emotional intelligence. His emotional journey unveils a multifaceted understanding of emotions, deeply intertwined with his personal experiences and environmental influences. His ability to identify and articulate emotions reflects a foundational understanding of emotional states, augmented by his unique perspective on emotional awareness as a cognitive process. Despite his father's absence, Dre acknowledges the lessons learned from his father's absence, underscoring the role of social interactions in shaping emotional understanding. His nuanced perception of emotions as physiological responses and his recognition of environmental triggers highlight a sophisticated emotional skill set. Moreover, Dre's depiction of navigating a neighborhood marked by violence offers a poignant insight into the complex interplay between community dynamics and emotional development, particularly for marginalized youth. By shedding light on the pervasive effects of violence on children's psychological and emotional well-being, Dre calls for a deeper understanding and more holistic approaches to intervention and support. Ultimately, Dre's narrative serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience and emotional intelligence inherent in individuals navigating challenging environments, urging for greater empathy and compassion in fostering emotional well-being within communities.

Dre's perspective on the emotional experiences of Black people offers a unique lens through which to explore the intersection of racial identity, emotional understanding, and expression. His belief that Black people understand, express, and possess different emotions is rooted in the sense of strength and association with the statement of "Black power." His association of specific gestures with "Black power" signifies an early awareness of racial identity and its emotional connotations, highlighting the social construction of emotions within the Black community. Dre's perspective provides a captivating entry point for examining Black communities' strength and sense of self. This assertion hints at Dre's ability to contextualize individual emotions within broader societal narratives

of inequality, underscoring the influence of cultural and societal factors on emotional development. In understanding Dre's perception, it becomes evident that the notion of strength as a defining emotional characteristic for Black people may be deeply ingrained in historical and societal narratives celebrating Blackness. His recognition of emotions as not solely individual but also deeply embedded in collective consciousness underscores the importance of community support in shaping emotional experiences. The gesture representing "Black power" becomes a symbolic expression of shared emotions and a call to uplift the community, aligning with research on the impact of collective identity on emotional responses. The concept of "Black Power" introduces the idea that emotions, such as strength and empowerment, are not only individual but also deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of the Black community. His recognition of the importance of community support and collective identity highlights the social construction of emotional experiences within marginalized groups. Dre's perspective underscores the impact of social structures and community dynamics on emotional responses, emphasizing the need for inclusive and supportive environments that respect diverse emotional expressions. His narrative sheds light on the complexities of racialized emotions and their perception within both individual and collective contexts. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering cross-cultural empathy and dismantling stereotypes that may limit the recognition of diverse emotional expressions within different cultural and racial contexts. Dre's narrative exemplifies a profound understanding and expression of emotions influenced by his racial identity and community dynamics. His capacity to articulate feelings and recognize social influences on emotions speaks to the complexity and richness of his emotional development.

Expressing Emotions: Types, Characteristics, and Influences

Dre eloquently expresses a range of emotions during the interview, demonstrating his ability to articulate a wide range of feelings of happiness, sadness, anger, and excitement. Dre's emotional expression is multifaceted and nuanced, showcasing an impressive ability to identify, articulate, and manage a wide range of emotions. He emphasized his feelings of lonely stating,

Interviewer: You feel lonely a lot. Why? 'Cause you—
Interviewee: Because some people don't support me right.

Dre's statement suggests that he feels disconnected and isolated due to a perceived lack of support from people around him. Dre's expression of loneliness highlights his emotional awareness and ability to articulate his feelings. He acknowledges feeling disconnected and isolated due to a perceived lack of support from others, emphasizing the importance of supportive relationships for emotional well-being. His perspective reflects a foundational aspect of emotional intelligence – the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions. Loneliness can often stem from a sense of social isolation or feeling misunderstood or unsupported by others. Dre's acknowledgment of this feeling indicates that he values supportive relationships and feels their absence. He provides insight into the emotional awareness and ability to articulate his feelings. He demonstrates a clear understanding of the factors contributing to his loneliness, which is an important aspect of emotional intelligence. By identifying the source of his emotions, Dre may be better equipped to address and cope with his feelings and emotions like loneliness. He describes feeling excited, happy, loved, lonely, and angry often. He emphasized his feelings of loneliness, associating them with specific experiences and physiological sensations. Dre is adept at verbal expression, openly sharing his feelings of happiness, sadness, anger, and excitement during the interview. He described feeling

joy and sad sometimes under certain conditions such as being with his mother, being with preferred friends, and being in "safe" spaces like the wellness room. Complementing his verbal expressions, Dre utilizes non-verbal cues such as laughter, tone of voice, and facial expressions. Dre's verbal and non-verbal expressions of emotions, including his use of humor and playful language, indicate a play-based approach to emotional expression and potential coping mechanisms. His willingness to openly share his feelings, even difficult ones like loneliness or frustration, demonstrates a level of emotional vulnerability and authenticity. Dre exhibits an acute awareness of emotional triggers, acknowledging the importance of feeling loved for maintaining calmness and safety. He adeptly links specific experiences, such as feeling comfortable at home or excited on his birthday, to his emotional states, showcasing a nuanced understanding of the sources of emotions. However, Dre's emotional landscape is not devoid of challenges, as evidenced by his description of feeling lonely and frustrated, particularly when he perceives a lack of support from others. These cues enhance the richness of his emotional expression, providing a more holistic understanding of his feelings. In his interactions, Dre displays self-regulation by refraining from talking back to his mother when frustrated, indicating a form of emotional self-control. He also utilizes playful interactions and humor as potential coping mechanisms, allowing him to express and manage emotions more lightheartedly. However, Dre acknowledges emotional regulation challenges, particularly when he feels overwhelmed or provoked. Dre employs self-regulation by not talking back to his mother when frustrated, suggesting a form of emotional self-control.

In conclusion, Dre's emotional journey, as expressed in the interview, showcases a remarkable level of emotional intelligence and self-awareness, particularly for someone his age. His ability to articulate various emotions, including happiness, sadness, anger, and loneliness, reflects a multifaceted and nuanced understanding of his emotional landscape. One of the standout aspects of Dre's emotional expression is his acknowledgment of certain emotions like loneliness and its underlying causes. By recognizing and articulating his feelings of disconnect and isolation due to a perceived lack of support from others, Dre demonstrates a foundational aspect of emotional intelligence – the ability to understand and identify one's emotions. His willingness to openly discuss these feelings, even when difficult, underscores his emotional vulnerability and authenticity. Dre's awareness of his usage of both verbal and non-verbal cues and his ability to link specific experiences to his emotional states highlights a nuanced form of emotional expression. Dre's narrative provides valuable insights into the complexity and richness of emotional expression and management, underscoring the importance of fostering emotional awareness and resilience from a young age. His ability to navigate and articulate his emotional experiences is a testament to his emotional maturity and growth.

Managing Emotions: Self-Awareness, Coping Mechanisms, and Communication Styles

Dre's perspective on managing emotions and coping mechanisms in various contexts, particularly within the school environment, is explored in depth. Dre discusses his difficult feelings related to school, the classroom, and interactions with his teacher, especially when managing challenging emotions like anger and sadness. He described difficult feelings with school, the classroom, and his teacher, especially when managing difficult emotions such as anger and sadness. Specifically, Dre stated:

Interviewer: Why'd you—can you tell me why you had hit the teacher?

Interviewee: Because I didn't want to be bothered. I said, "Can you please leave me alone," and then she wouldn't. that's why I just hit her. Because I didn't hit her that hard. I just said [makes noise].
Interviewer: You just, like, pop-popped her and moved her out the way?
Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I just [crosstalk 20:49]—
Interviewer: Yeah. Do you feel bad after you did it or?
Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I said—I was pullin' away from them because there was two people pullin' on me. And then I just didn't like it.
Interviewer: Yeah. they didn't listen to you when you told 'em to stop.
Interviewee: Yes. No, they did not.
Interviewer: Who was the-who was the teacher that was pullin' on you?
Interviewee: Miss R and Miss Y.
Interviewer: Oh, so both of them were pullin' on you? Who'd you hit?
Interviewee: They was tryna take me to the office but I said I do not want to. Just let me be.
Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Which teacher did you had hit?
Interviewee: Miss O.
Interviewer: You hit Miss O?
Interviewee: Because she was the-she was the one that was, like, was holdin' my hand tight. And then I just hit it. Because I told her to stop, can you please leave me alone. She wouldn't. So that's why I just hit her because that's what you get. you shoulda never did that when I told you to please leave me alone.
Interviewer: Yeah. How'd you feel after?
Interviewee: Felt sad.

Dre recounted an incident where he had a dispute with a teacher, which resulted in him hitting her. He explained that he felt bothered and repeatedly asked her to leave him alone, but she persisted. He describes his emotional state during the incident, highlighting frustration and discomfort. Despite expressing sadness afterward, Dre also asserts a sense of justification for his actions, indicating a complex mix of emotions and perceptions surrounding the event. These cues enhance the richness of his expression and management of emotions, providing a more holistic understanding of his feelings. When asked if controlling your emotions is important, Dre stated:

Interviewer: So [Dre], is it important to control your emotions.
Interviewee: It is. It is, like, how you—like how I feel. I don't, like, really feel emotions inside my body.
Interviewer: Where do you feel 'em?
Interviewee: Like right now I feel emotions, like, in my head. I probably—I'm probably sensitive. If, like, if I'm sensitive, I just act like I'm just hittin' a person but I'm just hittin' the wind. That's really—I'm not—
Interviewee: Really my hands because I don't really feel—like right now in my stomach—
Interviewer: Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Interviewee: - I can feel stuff inside my stomach.
Interviewer: What-what can you feel inside your stomach?
Interviewee: I can feel that I'm hungry.
Interviewee: So-so it really takes time to get your emotions straight
Interviewer: How long do you think it takes to figure out your emotions?

Interviewee: Just for me it takes one minute. But soon as I start hittin', like, fast, I just stop.

Dre acknowledges the importance of controlling emotions, indicating an awareness of emotional regulation. This demonstrates emotional maturity and understanding, especially considering his age. It suggests that he recognizes the significance of managing his emotions in various situations. Dre describes feeling emotions in different parts of his body, such as his head and stomach. This highlights the somatic experience of emotions, indicating that he associates specific bodily sensations with different emotional states. For example, he mentions feeling hunger in his stomach, which could suggest a connection between physiological needs and emotional experiences. Dre mentions being sensitive and describes how he copes with intense emotions by physically acting them out, such as hitting the air. This suggests that he may use physical expression to release or manage his emotions, indicating a coping skill. However, he also acknowledges the transient nature of his emotional experiences, indicating that his emotions can change rapidly, especially when he starts hitting. Dre suggests that figuring out his emotions takes him about a minute. This indicates a relatively quick emotional processing time for him. He also notes that he stops hitting fast once he begins, which suggests that his emotional regulation may still be a work in progress. This highlights the dynamic nature of emotional experiences and the ongoing process of learning to manage them effectively. The bodily sensations Dre feels as he attempts to control his emotions and feelings in a particular situation are conveyed in his response. Dre exhibits some level of emotional regulation, especially in refraining from talking back to his mother. This reflects an early development of emotional self-control and regulation mechanisms. Despite his efforts to control emotions, Dre acknowledges the difficulty, especially when he must hold back strong emotions. Specifically, Dre states:

Interviewer: Do you try your best to hold your emotions inside?
Interviewee: Mm-hmm.
Interviewer: You do. Is it hard?
Interviewee: Like-like when my mom be tellin' me to do stuff I be holdin' my hands, like, tight.
Interviewer: Mm.
Interviewee: Like, tight like I'm rollin' a fist like-like I'm hittin' somebody but I'm not.
Interviewee: Mm-hmm.
Interviewee: I'm just fake punching.
Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.
Interviewee: Or I be, like, practicin'. She be tellin' me to hold stuff inside my had. I be like punchin'.
Interviewer: You be tryin'. You be tryina hold it but your body still punches.
Interviewee: Yeah. Mm-hmm.
Interviewee: But I be actin' like I'm just punchin' the wind.

Dre provides insights into his efforts to hold back or control his emotions, particularly when faced with challenging situations. He acknowledges that he tries his best to hold his emotions inside, indicating an awareness of the importance of emotional control. This suggests that he recognizes the need to manage his emotions, especially in response to external triggers or directives from his mother. He describes how he physically responds when attempting to hold back his emotions. He tightens his hands, mimicking rolling a fist or punching. This physical expression reflects the internal struggle he experiences when trying to suppress his emotions. Despite his efforts to contain his

feelings, his body's reaction, such as clenching his fists, reveals his difficulty in fully controlling his emotional responses. Dre employs self-regulation by not talking back to his mother when frustrated, suggesting a form of emotional self-control. Dre mentions engaging in certain actions, like practicing holding stuff inside his hand, as strategies to manage his emotions.

This suggests that he actively seeks ways to regulate his feelings, even if they are unsuccessful. His mention of "punching the wind" implies that he may redirect his emotions outwardly in a harmless manner, allowing him to release tension without causing harm to himself or others. Additionally, he highlights the ongoing nature of his emotional development and suggests that he is still learning how to manage his feelings in various situations effectively. When discussing his relationship with those in his life, Dre's feelings of forgiveness and how it is intertwined with various emotions such as frustration, dominance, and power became a main topic. He explains his perspectives on forgiveness, the time needed to heal from hurtful experiences, and his interactions with authority figures in response to conflicts. Specifically, he stated:

Interviewer:	[Dre], is it—tell me a little more about this. Is it hard for you to forget when someone hurts you? Can you forgive them?
Interviewee:	I can really forgive—like, I be havin' to shake hands, but I don't really want to. Because I'm not ready to shake hands when you be like I can't do this, I can't do it yet. Uh, I mean, I'm not ready. Can you please give me some more time.
Interviewer:	People don't respect that, do they.
Interviewee:	Mm-mmm. So they be like sayin', "You gon' owe me time at recess."
Interviewee:	Uh-huh. I be sayin', "Can you give me some time, please? Can you please give me some time? I'm-I'm frustrated. Can y'all please give me some time?" like when I be goin' to my afterschool program I be like [sighs]. [Crosstalk 31:28]—
Interviewee:	I mean-I mean, like, they be tellin' me to do stuff but I don't really like it.
Interviewee:	Because they be tellin' me to do this, do that. I be s—when I be gettin' in-gettin' in trouble they be sayin', "Go have a seat, Semere." For five minutes.
Interviewer:	When stuff like that happens do the adults ask you, like, who hit who first? Or do they just-they just assume?
Interviewee:	No. they just—no. They just be sayin' it quick. They be sayin', "Bye. Bye. Get outta my face."
Interviewee:	But y'all not gon' be tellin' me what I can't do. You not my mother. You not my father or somethin'. Can't be tellin' what I have to do.
Interviewer:	What-what do you think should happen if you hit somebody?
Interviewee:	[Unintelligible 32:56] I just should go apologize and just go say sorry. Then I can just go sit down for—they be makin' me—be makin' other people sit for five minutes. Soon as my five minutes is over my parents can come. Really? Y'all want my parents to come? For these five minutes and not two minutes? [Unintelligible 33:24] make sense. Y'all grown ass ladies and stuff.

Dre expresses a nuanced relationship with forgiveness, highlighting the intricate nature of this emotional process. He acknowledges his capacity to forgive but emphasizes the importance of being emotionally ready. This reflects his awareness of the complexity of forgiveness and the need for personal readiness before extending it to others. He acknowledges the societal expectation to forgive quickly, as demonstrated by the pressure to shake hands immediately after a conflict with his teachers. However, his reluctance to do so reveals the internal struggle he faces in reconciling with

the hurt caused by others. This aspect aligns with research on forgiveness, emphasizing that individuals may need time to process their emotions and come to terms with the hurt before extending forgiveness. His pleas for more time reflect the importance of acknowledging the temporal dimension in emotional healing. Rushing individuals to forgive may lead to superficial reconciliation but allowing them the necessary time can foster genuine emotional healing. He explains his frustration with the lack of respect for his emotional needs as he highlights moments where others, such as teachers, pressure him to forgive quickly or dismiss his requests for more time. Dre highlights the glaring double standard in how he is disciplined compared to his peers, articulating his frustration with the lack of regard for his emotional well-being. He vividly illustrates instances where teachers expect him to swiftly forgive or disregard his pleas for additional time to process his emotions. This disparity illuminates the pervasive systemic inequities in disciplinary practices, revealing a dismissive attitude towards his emotional needs compared to those of his classmates. This highlights the importance of empathy and understanding in acknowledging and respecting individual emotional processes. He also sheds light on power dynamics and authority within his social environment, particularly in adult interactions. Dre asserts his autonomy and challenges the authority of adults disregarding his emotional needs or imposing disciplinary consequences without actively listening. His resistance to teacher authority reveals a struggle for autonomy and agency, suggesting that imposing rules and consequences without considering individual circumstances may lead to resistance and frustration. He criticizes the unequal treatment of individuals involved in conflicts, highlighting discrepancies in enforcing consequences. This reflects Dre's sense of fairness and justice and his frustration with perceived injustices in the disciplinary process. This aligns with sociological theories on the role of power in shaping emotional responses within societal structures (Hochschild, 1979). His experiences underscore the need for a more empathetic and understanding approach in social interventions, particularly within educational and afterschool programs that allow for sufficient time and understanding before expecting student forgiveness or compliance. Dre's narrative provides valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of forgiveness, time, and authority within social interactions. In conclusion, Dre's emotional journey showcases a remarkable understanding, expression, and management of emotions for his age. His capacity to articulate feelings, employ coping mechanisms, and recognize social influences on emotions speaks to the complexity and richness of his emotional development. The interplay of family, social interactions, and personal experiences shapes Dre's emotional world, providing a glimpse into the early foundations of emotional intelligence. His insight highlights the complexities of racialized emotional experiences, which requires an understanding of these dynamics, which is essential for promoting a more inclusive and empathetic society that recognizes the diversity and richness of emotional expressions within different cultural and racial contexts.

Emotional Development of a Third Grader: Insight into Understanding, Expressing, and Managing Emotions

D'Angelo, an 8-year-old boy, possesses strong wisdom and charm that are neatly mixed with mischief, which triggers the frustration of his teachers. His days were filled with adventures that took him from the playgrounds to his local convenience store. He possesses a quick wit and a sharp tongue, always ready with a clever comeback or a sly grin. Despite his tough exterior, D'Angelo harbors a deep love for his family and will do anything to protect them. He is deeply curious about who he is and how others see him. He keenly observes his own emotions, recognizing the subtle shifts and nuances within himself. His introspection isn't merely surface level; it's a journey into the core of his young life, where he sorts through his fears, desires, dreams, and strengths with unflinching honesty. This young child is not afraid to confront uncomfortable truths about himself,

acknowledging his imperfections and embracing them as essential parts of his identity. As he mentions, he spends much time listening intently to his mother's stories and soaking up every word like a sponge. At school, D'Angelo's charisma and expressiveness shine brightly, drawing both irritation and curiosity from his classmates and teachers alike. He had a knack for understanding, recognizing, and articulating emotions with clarity that surprised even the adults around him. In his voice and in his body language, it is easy to see the weight he is carrying as he understands and feels the judgmental eyes of some adults who do not understand him or his occasional struggles to control his emotions. In D'Angelo, we see a shining example of the power of awareness of himself and the world around him, in particular, his ability to look inward and connect with his feelings. In the following section, D'Angelo guides us through his nuanced understanding, artful expression, and adept management of emotions, illuminating the intricate tapestry of human experience and the profound impact of emotional intelligence on navigating life's complexities.

Understanding Emotions: Awareness, Social Influences, and Social Context

D'Angelo, an 8-year-old charismatic and expressive student, exhibits a broad awareness of emotions, recognizing and articulating various states such as happiness, sadness, anger, and excitement. Defining himself as happy, grumpy, mad, silly, and sad. He believes emotions are an instrument of one's feelings based on social interactions with people, spaces, and places. Furthermore, he believes that emotions are not inherently bad, but the following behaviors can lead to one getting into trouble. In these instances, he believes he can forgive himself and others when a negative behavior matches a negative emotional state. He credits his teachers with teaching them about emotions, indicating the importance of external guidance in understanding and navigating emotions and feelings. When asked how often he feels various emotions, he stated feelings of love, safety, worry, boredom, and frustration, often while feeling excited and happy sometimes and rarely lonely. He recalled the emotional expressions of anger, sadness, happiness, and joy. D'Angelo's recognition that younger children need to be taught about emotions underscores the developmental nature of emotional understanding. He believes that there are 100 emotions in the world and that he can feel each of them all at once, depending on the situation or environment. As he mentions,

Interviewer:	Can you be all of [the emotions]at once?
Interviewee:	It just—yeah, it just—it just like start—like they keep goin'. Like every—like when—like, you know, like with those—probably like those things my teacher told me about.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm.
Interviewee:	They keep—they go in your ear, and they're like—they like—like they're, um, mostly in the room, and they—like the class—your class. He like make you mad.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm.
Interviewee:	Like make you mad, and then it's like a, um—and then—and then it's another one, like in—like may make you like—make you say like bad words.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm.
Interviewee:	Like words you're not 'posed to say.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm.
Interviewee:	And then another one is like he - he wanna do what he wanna do.
Interviewer:	Hmm. Like something controlling you.
Interviewee:	Yeah, like he tryin' to be a boss, like make people [do stuff]—

He describes a phenomenon where emotions seem to cascade and intensify, suggesting a form of emotional contagion within the classroom setting. Social psychology research posits that emotional contagion occurs when one person's emotions and related behaviors influence others in a social environment. D'Angelo's description aligns with this concept, indicating that emotions, possibly negative ones, can spread within the class. As mentioned by the annoyance of a teacher's request, the reference to things going into the ear resonates with the idea that emotions are communicable and can be transmitted through non-verbal cues, expressions, and interpersonal interactions. Emotional contagion is a powerful social phenomenon, and his account sheds light on its manifestation in the classroom context, where emotions seem to influence individuals collectively. D'Angelo's narrative extends beyond emotional contagion to encompass the influence of external factors on emotional experiences. The idea that these invisible entities can affect individuals and evoke specific emotions introduces a sociological dimension to the discussion. Sociology of emotions research emphasizes that societal norms, values, and structures shape how individuals interpret and express emotions. In this context, D'Angelo describes entities that, through their influence, make individuals feel angry or compelled to use inappropriate language. The reference to someone wanting to assert control and be a boss introduces a power dynamic that may or may not be in a material form. This narrative reflects how societal dynamics, even in a classroom setting, contribute to emotional experiences and interpersonal relationships. D'Angelo's account highlights the societal implications of emotional dynamics, particularly in the context of authority and control.

The mention of someone trying to be a boss and making people do certain things suggests a potential connection to broader societal structures where power dynamics and authority influence emotional responses. His mentioning of "words you're not 'posed to say" reflects societal expectations regarding language use and the influence of authority figures in shaping those expectations. D'Angelo's belief in their ability to read emotions on people's faces and voices aligns with the concept of emotional intelligence, and his claim to read emotions reflects a level of emotional awareness that contributes to their social functioning. His understanding of emotions, which provides information about how others feel and how to navigate their feelings, demonstrates an advanced understanding of emotions. Emotional intelligence encompasses skills such as recognizing emotions, understanding their causes, and responding appropriately. D'Angelo's belief that they can read emotions suggests an awareness of non-verbal cues and emotional expressions, a crucial aspect of emotional intelligence. This aligns with the idea that emotions are often communicated through facial expressions and vocal tones, allowing individuals to navigate social interactions more effectively.

Expressing Emotions: Masculinity, Emotionality, and Societal Norms

In examining the expression of emotions through the lens of a Black child's experience, we embark on a journey through the multifaceted and complex nature of emotional expression, societal expectations, and cultural nuances. D'Angelo provides invaluable insights into the complexities of navigating emotions within the context of school and identity. Through his introspections and interactions, D'Angelo offers a poignant narrative highlighting the intersectionality of race, perception, emotion, and social dynamics. His reflections not only illuminate the universal aspects of emotional expression but also unveil the unique challenges and complexities Black children face in articulating and navigating their feelings within broader societal structures. As we delve into D'Angelo's narrative, we gain a deeper understanding of how cultural norms, societal expectations, and personal experiences intersect to shape the emotional landscape of Black childhood. His

expressions extend beyond verbal communication involving non-verbal cues like making faces, smiling, and mimicking angry sounds. Moreover, he discusses other emotions that are perceived as "bad," such as anger,

Interviewee:	Like mad, just it's bad. Mad is not that bad, but when you do somethin' while you mad, that's bad.
Interviewee:	When you mad, you can express yourself.
Interviewer:	Yes.
Interviewee:	Take a—breathe - breathe and stuff, but you can't like flick stuff around tables and stuff.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm. So then why do you do it?
Interviewee:	'Cause when I'm mad, like it's hard to control myself. Like - like I said, when I'm mad, the Devil control me, but I gotta calm it down.

D'Angelo's portrayal of anger as a complex emotion provides a gateway to understanding the multifaceted nature of emotional experiences. Social psychology research recognizes anger as a natural and often adaptive response to perceived threats or injustices. However, D'Angelo introduces a layer of complexity by suggesting that anger, while not inherently bad, can lead to negative consequences when expressed through actions. This acknowledgment underscores the importance of emotional regulation, with D'Angelo recognizing that expressing oneself when angry is acceptable, but engaging in destructive actions is not. In various cultures, anger is stigmatized or encouraged depending on contextual factors, highlighting the importance of understanding the social dimensions of emotional experiences. D'Angelo's belief that when mad, the Devil controls them introduces a cultural and possibly religious dimension to the understanding of anger. This perspective aligns with sociological theories that explore the intersection of emotions, morality, and societal norms. His recognition of the need to "calm it down" suggests an internalization of societal expectations regarding emotional control, emphasizing the societal implications of anger management. D'Angelo categorizes emotions into "good" and "bad" and introduces the concept of emotional valence, which refers to the inherent positive or negative quality of emotions. Social psychology and sociology of emotions research emphasize that societal norms are crucial in shaping individuals' perceptions of emotions and determining which emotions are socially acceptable or undesirable. D'Angelo's belief that emotions are good for one's health aligns with a growing body of research, highlighting the potential benefits of emotional well-being. His concern that persistent anger can lead to hospitalization reflects the broader understanding that chronic negative emotions may contribute to various health issues. This perspective underscores the significance of emotional regulation for overall health. D'Angelo's acknowledgment that persistent anger can manifest physically suggests an awareness of the holistic nature of emotional experiences. His perspective on the potential harm caused by strong anger or rage further underscores the societal categorization of certain emotions as detrimental. Gender dynamics and conceptions of love for boys or men became a prominent theme within D'Angelo's understanding of emotions as he expressed and reflected on his conception of love and who can love boys or men. The importance of conditional love, as mentioned in his perceptions of how others feel about him, reflects familial values. For example, D'Angelo notes:

Interviewer:	I know [school] is easy, but I think—I think you're smart in terms of - of your—of like all the math and stuff, but I think you are even more smart in terms of how you think about stuff. You - you are a super-smart boy. So, I

know people can be a little hard on you, but I want you to know Mr. D loves you for real. I really do love you, boy.

Interviewee: What kind of way?

Interviewer: What you mean what kind of way?

Interviewee: 'Cause that's sus.

Interviewer: Well, boy—men—

Interviewee: In a teacher way, or as a—

Interviewer: As my—as my little brother way. I love you like my little brother.

Interviewee: Oh.

Interviewer: Boy, calm down. What you—what's sus mean? What's sus mean?

Interviewee: You're actin' like—you're actin' like you're sus.

Interviewer: What's sus?

Interviewee: You say—you was acting like—sus mean like, you know—like you're actin' like—I don't know what sus mean.

Interviewer: [Laughs]

Interviewee: Uh, I - I know what it means. I just don't know how to like—

Interviewer: Explain it?

Interviewee: To, yeah, explain it.

Interviewer: Like does it mean—you mean I am acting gay?

Interviewee: Not like—not gay, like—I don't even know how to explain it.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: It's—you're not gay. You just—no, you're not—you're not gay. You're just actin' like, like sus. It's sus.

Interviewer: [Laughs] All right, so if another man tell he love you, he actin' sus?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: He gotta tell me what kind of way.

Interviewer: Well, but why can't—

Interviewee: It's what my dad told me when I'm acting that kind of way, as - as a son—as a - as a, um, being the dad or as being sus.

D'Angelo offers a glimpse into societal expectations surrounding masculinity and emotional expression. Research in social psychology indicates that conventional masculinity norms often discourage men from openly expressing emotions, particularly vulnerable ones such as love or affection. When I, as the researcher, reassured D'Angelo of my love, his immediate hesitation suggested a potential discomfort stemming from societal expectations surrounding male emotional expression. His use of the term "sus" (short for suspicious) adds depth to this conversation, implying a potential connection between displays of affection and perceptions of masculinity. His reluctance to accept the expressed love may be influenced by societal norms dictating how men should communicate and receive emotional expressions. In this context, the use of the term "sus" by D'Angelo could be interpreted as internalized homophobic beliefs and an adherence to toxic masculine norms. The term "sus," often associated with suspicion or distrust, may reflect societal stigmas surrounding non-heteronormative expressions of affection. D'Angelo's hesitation to accept the expressed love could stem from fear of being perceived as gay or feminine, in line with societal expectations that men should adhere to narrow definitions of masculinity. This interpretation highlights the intersectionality of gender and sexuality, underscoring the ways in which societal norms shape and constrain individuals' emotional expressions and identities. As a researcher, D'Angelo met my reassurance that I love him with an immediate hesitation, reflecting a potential

discomfort rooted in societal expectations about male emotional expression. Emotion research emphasize societal norms' role in shaping emotional expression, particularly within the context of gender. D'Angelo's struggle to articulate what "sus" means and his subsequent clarification highlights the social construction of masculinity and the perceived limitations on acceptable emotional behavior for boys. His insistence that another man expressing love could be deemed "sus" reflects societal pressures for men to conform to narrow emotional ranges. His insistence that another man expressing love could be considered "sus" reflects the societal expectations of men to conform to a narrow range of emotional expressions. This insight resonates with sociological theories on emotion management, where individuals regulate their emotions to fit cultural and social norms. As I clarify the nature of my love, categorizing it as brotherly rather than romantic or "sus," it reveals the negotiation of emotions within societal expectations.

This moment illustrates the societal pressure on boys to compartmentalize their emotional expressions within defined and socially acceptable boundaries. D'Angelo's assertion that specifying "what kind of way" love is expressed echoes traditional masculinity norms that demand explicit clarification to prevent misinterpretation, tying into broader discussions on emotional labor. This discussion challenges traditional masculinity by addressing the discomfort associated with expressing love and affection between men, advocating for a broader understanding of masculinity that embraces diverse emotional expressions and rejects rigid stereotypes. D'Angelo also offers insights into his perceptions of his teacher's and family members' emotions, emphasizing the importance of conditional love and others' care regardless of his behavior. He connects social interactions, such as going to the park with a friend or interacting with girls, to his emotional experiences, highlighting the intricate relationship between social dynamics and emotional well-being. Specific situations, like feeling frustrated when working too hard or experiencing happiness and boredom during play, provide context for understanding his emotional responses.

D'Angelo's reflections on loneliness versus boredom and uncertainty about understanding conditional love deepen his self-reflection. Research underscores the profound impact of teacher-student relationships on academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall development. The concept of love within these relationships is complex and often subject to societal expectations and professional boundaries. D'Angelo's distinction between love and care hints at the intricate interplay of emotions within the educational context. The perception that teachers might care but not love suggests an awareness of the boundaries inherent in teacher-student relationships. The complexity of love within these relationships, subject to societal expectations and professional boundaries, suggests an awareness of emotional dynamics within the educational context. Societal norms and professional ethics may temper the expression of affection to avoid potential misinterpretation or breaches of conduct. D'Angelo's differentiation between love and care resonates with societal norms regarding appropriate emotional expressions in education.

As authority figures, teachers are often expected to maintain a professional demeanor while simultaneously providing emotional support, a balance D'Angelo acknowledges. D'Angelo's observation reflects an understanding of these societal expectations, suggesting that while teachers may extend care, "love" might be reserved for more personal relationships outside the classroom. The structural aspects of education also contribute to the delineation between love and care in teacher-student relationships. Institutional norms, policies, and professional codes of conduct shape the emotional boundaries within educational settings, influencing how teachers navigate relationships with students. Teachers navigate these boundaries to provide a supportive and nurturing environment while adhering to professional standards. D'Angelo's distinction between teachers caring and loving may stem from the formal nature of these relationships within the structured educational system. The institutional framework often emphasizes the importance of care for students' academic and emotional well-being, while "love" may be reserved for more informal

and personal relationships. The perception of teachers caring, even if not expressing love, can still contribute significantly to student well-being. Acknowledging care within these relationships aligns with the understanding that emotional support is critical to effective teaching. His observation prompts reflection on teacher-student interactions' potential emotional and psychological impact. The nuanced understanding of care, separate from love, invites educators and researchers to explore how classroom emotional dynamics can be optimized to foster a positive and supportive learning environment.

D'Angelo's mention of racial differences in emotional experiences, particularly regarding racism, reflects an awareness of societal influences on emotions. His recognition of racism's emotional impact showcases a growing understanding of broader social issues and their emotional implications. In summary, D'Angelo's emotional development reflects a nuanced interplay between personal experiences, cultural influences, and social dynamics. His self-awareness, open communication, and evolving coping strategies contribute to a deeper understanding of emotions and their management.

Managing Emotions: Emotional Well-Being, Cultural Influence, and Coping Strategies

The complexities of emotional management encompass a multifaceted journey influenced by cultural, societal, and historical contexts. From early encounters with societal expectations to navigating systemic inequalities and racial discrimination, Black children often face unique challenges in understanding, expressing, and regulating their emotions. These challenges are intertwined with experiences of resilience, cultural pride, and communal support, shaping a distinct emotional life. Understanding the emotional management of Black children requires a nuanced exploration of the intersections between race, identity, and socialization processes within family, educational, and broader community contexts. D'Angelo delves into the dynamics that shape his emotional experiences and expressions. For D'Angelo, like many of the student participants, the environment plays a crucial role in shaping D'Angelo's emotional development. Interactions with classmates and teachers contribute to his emotional development. Specifically, the judgment of adults has continued to be a potentially negative self-perception. For example, D'Angelo stated:

Interviewer:	Yeah. You feel like other—you feel like adults are mean to you or that they judge you?
Interviewee:	Um, probably. I think they judge me, some of 'em.
Interviewer:	Some of 'em do? Well, why do you think they judge you?
Interviewee:	Because sometimes when I like—when I get mad, I can't control myself, and then it—then like my mom always say, if I keep gettin' mad, and I don't like tell people what happened, I'm gonna get in trouble.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm.
Interviewee:	And then—and then—and then she, uh—and people think—and then they're gonna keep tryin' to make me mad 'cause they know what I'm gonna do.
Interviewer:	Yeah?
Interviewee:	And then they're gonna think—and then they're gonna like—she said they - they're gonna think like I'm a animal.

Revealing a complex interplay of emotions and social dynamics, D'Angelo's belief that he feels judged by some adults underscores the profound impact of perceived judgment on an individual's

self-esteem, emotional well-being, and overall social experience. Particularly in the school environment, he suppresses emotions like anger due to perceived negative responses from teachers and staff, contrasting the ease of managing positive emotions like happiness. This observation aligns with research in social psychology, which delves into the relationship between emotional regulation and social evaluations, highlighting the consequences of struggling to manage emotions, especially anger. D'Angelo's reference to his mother's advice underscores the role of socialization in shaping emotional behaviors, emphasizing the societal expectation for emotional expression and open communication. As suggested by his mother, failure to adhere to these expectations may contribute to perceived judgment from others. Furthermore, D'Angelo's portrayal of potentially being viewed as an "animal" due to his difficulty expressing anger according to teachers' expectations illuminates the societal construction of emotions, particularly anger. In sociology of emotions research, the labeling and constructing negative emotions play a pivotal role in understanding how society influences our emotional experiences. D'Angelo's fear of being labeled reflects the societal tendency to attach moral and social judgments to specific emotional expressions rooted in cultural norms and societal expectations, intensifying his anxiety about adult judgment. Additionally, his acknowledgment of feeling grumpy in the morning suggests a correlation between waking experiences and emotional well-being. Anger often stigmatized as a disruptive and uncontrollable emotion, can lead to negative social evaluations by adults, especially in the context of schooling. His fear of being labeled an "animal" reflects the societal tendency to attach moral and social judgments to certain emotional expressions. This phenomenon is deeply rooted in cultural norms and societal expectations, further contributing to the interviewee's anxiety about being judged by adults. His acknowledgment of feeling grumpy in the morning suggests a link between waking experiences and emotional well-being.

For a Black child, recognizing the need to control oneself when experiencing anger holds particular significance due to the societal stereotypes and systemic biases they often face. In many social contexts, Black individuals, especially Black boys, are unfairly perceived as more threatening or aggressive than their counterparts of other racial backgrounds. This stereotype, known as the "angry Black person" trope, has deep historical roots and continues to pervade contemporary society. When a Black child displays anger, whether justified or not, they may be subject to harsher judgment, punishment, or even violence compared to their non-Black peers. This harsh treatment can occur in various settings, including schools, where disciplinary actions may be disproportionately severe for Black students exhibiting anger. Moreover, the consequences of not controlling anger can extend beyond immediate repercussions. For example, D'Angelo recognizes the need to control himself when angry, stating,

Interviewer:	Why - why is it hard for you when you're angry to—
Interviewee:	Can't control myself.
Interviewee:	When I'm angry, the Devil's inside. When I'm—when I'm good, like right now, Gods controlling me.
Interviewer:	God's controlling you? [Laughs] Who told you that?
Interviewee:	Myself.
Interviewer:	How'd you figure that out?
Interviewee:	Just said it.
Interviewer:	You—someone that you heard just said it?
Interviewee:	Yep.

D'Angelo's description of their experience with anger is encapsulated in a powerful metaphor: "When I'm angry, the Devil's inside. When I'm good, like right now, God's controlling me." This

metaphorical expression offers a unique window into his subjective experience of anger and subjective understanding of the ways adults perceive him at school, framed within a religious context. Metaphors, as studied in the sociology of emotions, play a pivotal role in shaping and communicating emotional experiences within cultural frameworks. Black children like D'Angelo may internalize negative stereotypes about their race and themselves, leading to feelings of shame, self-doubt, and low self-esteem. They may also face barriers in forming positive relationships and accessing opportunities due to biases held by authority figures or gatekeepers. By recognizing the need to control themselves when experiencing anger, Black children like D'Angelo can mitigate these risks and assert agency over their own narratives. Developing emotional regulation skills empowers them to navigate societal expectations and challenges with resilience and self-assurance. It allows them to challenge stereotypes and assert their humanity in spaces where their emotions may be unfairly scrutinized.

Research indicates that individuals frequently employ metaphors to interpret and communicate their emotional experiences, drawing upon culturally significant symbols and narratives (Keltner et al., 2014a). In this context, D'Angelo utilizes religious metaphors, referencing the Devil and God, to articulate the stark contrast between negative and positive emotional states. This illuminates his internal conflict and underscores the broader cultural and societal influences that shape his emotional narratives. His recognition of the influence of the "Devil" during moments of anger reveals a distinctive cultural lens through which he interprets his emotions. Cultural and familial elements, such as the association of anger with the "Devil," contribute to D'Angelo's emotional framework, reflecting a blend of cultural and personal beliefs regarding the origins of emotions and the necessity of self-regulation. Moreover, his assertion that "When I'm good, like right now, God's controlling me" introduces an intriguing dimension of self-perception and agency. The concept of locus of control, which refers to the extent to which individuals believe they have control over their lives, is highlighted here; attributing positive behavior to divine control suggests an external locus of control, wherein individuals perceive themselves as being influenced or guided by external forces. When the interviewer questions who conveyed the idea that God is controlling him, D'Angelo responds with "Myself," introducing an element of personal agency. The self-generated nature of this belief adds complexity to D'Angelo's understanding of his emotional experiences and may indicate an internalization of societal or cultural norms wherein religious beliefs influence emotions and behaviors. Integrating religious metaphors into D'Angelo's emotional comprehension underscores the impact of societal and cultural norms on individual emotional expression. Emotions, as studied in the sociology of emotions, are not discrete phenomena but are deeply ingrained in cultural frameworks that dictate norms and expectations concerning emotional displays. D'Angelo's assertion that the idea originated from within themselves prompts inquiries into the societal messages and cultural influences that may have shaped their emotional understanding. Research in the sociology of emotions emphasizes the role of socialization in instructing individuals on how to interpret and express emotions in culturally acceptable manners.

In this instance, the religious metaphor may reflect broader cultural narratives that intertwine morality and emotions. Despite this belief, D'Angelo maintains that he can control his emotions and derive pleasure from experiencing each of them. His belief in his capacity to control certain emotions underscores an ongoing internal struggle and highlights the intricate nature of emotional regulation. D'Angelo proposes a coping mechanism, suggesting he would question a friend experiencing anger. This response demonstrates a growing comprehension of alternative strategies for managing emotions in social settings. His acknowledgment that emotions are ubiquitous in the world aligns with the notion of emotions as fundamental to human behavior, emphasizing their pervasive influence in shaping our perceptions and interactions. Furthermore, his assertion that life devoid of emotions would be "boring" aligns with societal norms valuing emotional diversity and

richness. D'Angelo's perspective challenges the notion that emotions are undesirable or problematic, emphasizing their constructive role in enriching life and enhancing engagement. His recognition of the importance of learning about emotions from a young age corresponds with research emphasizing the societal role of adults and peers in shaping emotional competencies. He articulates a deep understanding of the significance of emotions, recognizing them as essential for personal well-being and highlighting the positive effects of happiness and excitement. This perspective resonates with social psychology research linking positive emotions to various health benefits, including enhanced mental well-being and overall life satisfaction.

Additionally, D'Angelo acknowledges that emotions, if inadequately managed, can lead to adverse outcomes, even suggesting a potential association between chronic anger and hospitalization. This aligns with both social psychology and mental health research, which highlight the link between chronic stress or negative emotions and detrimental health consequences. Engaging in activities such as football or basketball contributes to positive emotions, underscoring the correlation between preferred activities and emotional well-being. The influence of others, particularly classmates and teachers, on D'Angelo's emotions is evident. The perception of judgment from adults adds complexity to his emotional experiences, indicating sensitivity to external evaluations. D'Angelo differentiates between feeling angry and engaging in behaviors while angry, demonstrating an awareness of the potential repercussions of acting impulsively in response to emotions. His introspection regarding his own behavior and acknowledgment of the necessity to calm down during moments of heightened emotion showcase self-awareness and emotional maturity. The classroom or school environment surrounding emotions such as joy, silliness, or excitement, particularly when they deviate from teachers' expectations, highlights a nuanced understanding of emotional valence. The display of those emotions when in contention with the expectation set by the teachers is understood as disruptive, leading to unwarranted disciplinary actions. D'Angelo's assertion that excitement can have negative implications introduces a complex dimension to the perception of emotions. D'Angelo candidly discusses the nuanced understanding of emotions within the classroom environment, shedding light on the complexities of emotional regulation among students. When prompted to identify "bad" emotions, D'Angelo offers insights into the consequences of excessive excitement, emphasizing the disruptive impact of unchecked enthusiasm on classroom dynamics. This dialogue is a microcosm of broader societal norms and expectations regarding emotional expression, illustrating the intricate interplay between individual experiences and institutional environments. For example, D'Angelo states:

Interviewer:	Like what emotions are bad then?
Interviewee:	Um, like you're really excited, and then you're too excited, and you don't listen. You start screamin' or running around the classroom. That's bad right there.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm.
Interviewee:	Like running—like just running around the classroom.
Interviewer:	Mm-hmm.
Interviewee:	Um, that - that's a bad like emotion.

D'Angelo's reflections on the implications of excessive excitement within the classroom underscore the importance of emotional regulation in educational settings. D'Angelo's response highlights the complexity of emotional regulation, particularly in educational settings. He identifies excessive excitement as a "bad" emotion, indicating that emotions can be evaluated based on their inherent qualities and how they manifest behaviorally. D'Angelo's description of being "too excited" leading to behaviors like screaming or running around the classroom suggests that emotions are judged

based on their impact on social norms and expectations. This reflects a common societal belief that certain emotions can disrupt social order and hinder productive behavior when expressed inappropriately or excessively. D'Angelo's characterization of excitement as "bad" underscores the influence of societal norms and expectations on individuals' emotional experiences and expressions. In many educational settings, there is often an implicit expectation for students to exhibit behaviors that align with the classroom's structure and learning objectives. As D'Angelo describes it, excessive excitement may be perceived as disruptive because it detracts from the focus on learning and may disrupt the classroom environment. This interaction highlights the social nature of emotional regulation, where individuals' perceptions of emotions are shaped by social norms, expectations, and interactions with others. Through his candid remarks, we gain valuable insights into students' challenges in navigating societal expectations surrounding emotions. As educators and policymakers strive to create inclusive and supportive learning environments, it is imperative to heed D'Angelo's perspective and foster a culture that values emotional intelligence and self-awareness. By recognizing and addressing the diverse emotional needs of students, we can cultivate classrooms where all individuals feel empowered to thrive emotionally and academically.

D'Angelo's belief that excitement can be detrimental introduces a nuanced dimension to understanding emotional valence. Social psychology research recognizes that emotions vary in valence, with positive emotions generally associated with well-being and negative emotions potentially signaling distress. His perspective challenges a common societal notion that excitement is inherently positive. Further, his explanation of why excitement could be considered bad reveals a concern about the potential consequences of excessive excitement, particularly in a classroom setting. This perspective aligns with research on emotion regulation, suggesting that unbridled excitement may lead to impulsive behaviors, reduced attention, and disruptions in a structured environment. D'Angelo's perception of excitement as potentially negative reflects the influence of societal norms and expectations regarding emotional expression. Sociology of emotions research emphasizes that societal norms shape how individuals interpret and express emotions. In this case, D'Angelo's description suggests an awareness of the societal expectations for appropriate behavior in specific contexts, such as a classroom. Societal norms often dictate that individuals should modulate their emotional expressions to align with the demands of the situation. D'Angelo's example of running around the classroom and screaming portrays a deviation from these norms, leading to the categorization of excitement as a "bad" emotion in certain circumstances. His perspective prompts a reflection on the importance of emotional regulation, a critical aspect of social and emotional development. His concern about the negative consequences of excessive excitement suggests an early awareness of the need for emotional control in specific situations. In the classroom context, where structure and attentiveness are valued, uncontrolled excitement may disrupt the learning environment. Furthermore, mastering anger management fosters a sense of control and self-efficacy, enabling Black children to advocate for themselves effectively and pursue their goals despite systemic obstacles. It equips them with valuable life skills essential for navigating diverse social environments and achieving personal and professional success. For a Black child, recognizing the importance of controlling oneself when angry is not just about individual behavior—it's a form of resistance against unjust societal norms and a pathway to empowerment and liberation. D'Angelo's perspective aligns with sociological theories that underscore the role of societal structures in shaping emotional norms and expectations, such as educational institutions.

Emotional Development of a Fourth Grader: Insight into Understanding, Expressing, and Managing Emotions

Surae, a silly and expressive 9-year-old, offers insight into how her emotions and feelings intersect with her personal experiences, societal expectations, and family dynamics that reflect the profound impact of emotions on her well-being. Surae demonstrates high emotional awareness and can articulate and describe a wide range of emotions in herself and others. She is expressive in discussing her feelings, experiences, and observations, providing detailed insights into her emotional development. Surae exhibits a strong sense of empathy towards others, particularly those who are mistreated or vulnerable. She intervenes to protect and support others, showing a compassionate nature that extends beyond herself. Surae demonstrates resilience in the face of adversity, using humor and other coping mechanisms to navigate challenging situations. She shows resourcefulness in seeking understanding and validation, even amidst difficult circumstances. Surae displays a keen awareness of social dynamics, including gendered expectations and racial stereotypes. She reflects on societal influences on emotional expression and interpersonal interactions, highlighting her depth of insight. While Surae possesses a strong emotional vocabulary and understanding, she sometimes acknowledges difficulties in regulating her emotions. She attributes emotional control to external forces and experiences challenges in expressing certain emotions, particularly joy. Surae expresses a deep yearning for connection, validation, and understanding. She grapples with feelings of loneliness, confusion, and the fear of rejection, underscoring her need for meaningful relationships. Despite her challenges, this girl maintains a sense of hope for a better future. Surae can be characterized by emotional depth, empathy, resilience, and a quest for understanding. She navigates the complexities of her emotional landscape with honesty, humor, and a profound sense of self-awareness.

Understanding Emotions: Sense of Self, Emotional Complexities, and Relationships

Surae's emotions are deeply rooted in personal experiences, from the challenges of self-harm to the desire for attention. For Surae, she believes there are 1,000 emotions in the world, identifying her new knowledge of the emotion spite. The belief that there are 1,000 emotions in the world encapsulates a rich and expansive understanding of emotional experiences. The sheer diversity of emotions can be attributed to how individuals interpret and respond to the world around them. Surae's statement emphasizes that emotions are socially constructed, not fixed or biologically predetermined. Her belief in the existence of numerous emotions aligns with the sociological perspective that emotions are shaped by cultural, societal, and interpersonal factors. Each emotion, including spite, carries its own cultural connotations and societal norms, contributing to the vast array of emotional experiences. As one of the 1,000 emotions mentioned by Surae, Spite offers a fascinating lens through which to examine the social dynamics of emotions. Spite is often characterized by a desire to harm or hurt others, stemming from feelings of resentment or envy.

Social psychology research suggests that spiteful behavior can arise as a response to perceived injustices or threats to one's social standing. The belief in many emotions, including spite, underscores the influence of societal norms and personal experiences on emotional landscapes. Societal expectations and cultural norms shape how individuals perceive, express, and understand emotions. In the case of spite, cultural attitudes toward competition, success, and interpersonal relationships contribute to the development of this specific emotional response. Understanding and categorizing a wide range of emotions, such as spite, can be seen as a cognitive and social tool. For example, Surae notes that,

Interviewer: How many emotions are there in the whole wide world? Not on that list, but the whole wide world?

Interviewee: Probably a thousand, because I just learned one new feeling, spite. It means do something on purpose.
Interviewee: Have you done something out of spite?
Interviewee: It doesn't say Sprite or spite?
Interviewer: Spite. Have you ever done something out of spite?
Interviewee: Yes, I have.
Interviewer: You have?
Interviewee: Yes.
Interviewer: What have you done out of spite?
Interviewee: This is really mean though. My cousin, he's older than me because his birthday is in February, mine's in April, but we're the same age. He's annoying. He's really annoying. One time I had a Nerf gun in my hand, and I was acting like I was shooting something. He's like, where's the bullets, idiot? I'm like, excuse me. Then he turned around, and that was my chance. Threw it at his back on purpose, and he's like, who threw that on my back? He was almost started to cry. Then I felt like I just did that on purpose. Oh, that's my [unintelligible 33:28] excuse. He said. I said, I did on accident. Then he said, how do you do on accident? I was like, I was meant to throw it at the floor. He was like, how do you mean to throw it at the floor, idiot? I'm like, stop calling me idiot, [laughter] [unintelligible 33:48].

In this instance, her cousin's taunts and dismissive behavior triggered Surae's retaliatory response. She offers a fascinating exploration of emotions, particularly the concept of spite, and provides insights into the complexity of human behavior and interpersonal dynamics. The inquiry about the number of emotions in the world promoted Surae to reflect on her own emotional experiences, leading to the acknowledgment of spite as a newly discovered emotion. Her response to the cousin's taunts exemplifies a form of emotional expression where spite becomes a tool for asserting boundaries or retaliating against perceived provocations. The act of throwing the Nerf gun at the cousin's back reflects a momentary release of frustration, albeit through a spiteful gesture. Spite is portrayed as a catalyst for intentional harm or mischief, highlighting its potentially negative implications. Surae admitting to having acted out of spite underscores the universality of such emotions and the capacity for individuals to engage in retaliatory or vindictive behavior. Surae underscores the importance of self-awareness and introspection in navigating complex emotional responses while shedding light on the social and interpersonal factors that influence emotional behavior. Sociology of emotions research underscores that emotions, including spite, are socially constructed and influenced by cultural norms. Surae's use of the term "idiot" towards her cousin and the act of throwing the Nerf gun highlights the interpersonal dynamics shaped by societal norms. Moreover, her subsequent attempt to justify the spiteful act by claiming it was accidental adds another layer to the narrative. Surae's laughter, silliness, and use of the term "idiot" may indicate a struggle between personal identity and societal expectations. Examining the exchange between her and her cousin provides insights into social influence and attribution. She attributes her understanding of emotions to herself. Specifically, her lived experiences as a young child. Surae's understanding of emotions was shaped by a combination of personal experiences, social interactions, and external influences, ultimately contributing to a nuanced comprehension of the complexities of human feelings. She reveals,

Interviewer: Who taught you about emotions?
Interviewee: Well, I didn't get taught. I just felt it because when I was younger when I

was four my mom she was in a relationship with—and she would get abused. Every time we
try to use it, leave the house he, the man would just get mad at her. He would go crazy. He was mad. He wanted her to stay, but we wanted to go home. He wouldn't try to let us go see our family. I would just get sad seeing my mom getting hurt. I would just, I realized that every time she would get hurt, she would go back. I was really confused why she did that, cuz she—it made it seem like she really liked getting hurt. I didn't like to see her get hurt. He threw a slipper at her, but then it hit me in my nose and I was knocked down. Doesn't feel great to be when you know you're in danger, but you keep on going back.

Interviewer: Why do you think she kept going back?

Interviewee Probably because she loved him.

Surae delves into a deeply personal and emotional subject: the experience of witnessing domestic abuse and its impact on her understanding of emotions, particularly in the context of their relationship with their mother. Her response reveals a profound and poignant insight into the complexities of human emotions, highlighting the intersection of love, pain, confusion, and vulnerability. Her childhood experience serves as a powerful lens through which to examine the dynamics of abuse and the profound influence it can have on one's perception of emotions and relationships. Surae's introspection on her mother's behavior sheds light on the nuanced and often conflicting emotions that individuals may experience in abusive situations, challenging simplistic interpretations and emphasizing the need for empathy and understanding in addressing such sensitive issues. Overall, she highlights the importance of exploring the intersection of personal experience and emotional understanding in navigating complex and often traumatic aspects of human relationships. Her revelation that she didn't receive explicit teachings about emotions but instead "felt" them provides a powerful insight into how emotions are learned. Research emphasizes the role of direct experiences in shaping emotional understanding, suggesting that individuals often glean insights into emotions through firsthand encounters with challenging situations. She recounts a traumatic episode from her early childhood, witnessing her mother endure abuse in a toxic relationship. This traumatic event greatly contributes to her emotional development, shaping her understanding of fear, sadness, and the complexities of love within and across relationships. Surae's observation of their mother repeatedly returning to an abusive partner raises questions about the intricate interplay of emotions in relationships. Research highlights that emotional responses to abuse are complex, often influenced by a myriad of factors such as fear, dependency, and, as the interviewee suggests, love. This dynamic illustrates the multifaceted nature of emotional reactions within interpersonal contexts. As Surae recounts the abuse, their use of language and vivid descriptions reflects a process of narrative reconstruction. She easily grapples with understanding why their mother would continue in an abusive relationship, leading to a broader reflection on the nature of love. Nevertheless, her confusion surrounding their mother's actions echoes the emotional complexities inherent in abusive relationships. Surae seems to grapple—alone—with reconciling their love for their mother with the pain caused by the abusive partner.

Her journey underscores the intricate dance between individual experiences and the emotions they evoke, highlighting how external events shape internal emotional development. Surae understands emotions as, "…. basically feelings. You're feeling something. You're filling excited, sad, depressed, scared, kind. Well, kind is not really a feeling, it's a personality." encapsulates a complex understanding of emotions that warrants an in-depth and critical analysis. Surae categorizing emotions as "basically feelings" suggests a simplistic yet intuitive conceptualization. By

framing emotions as feelings, she aligns with a common understanding that emotions are subjective experiences characterized by physiological arousal and cognitive appraisal. This perspective reflects a fundamental aspect of emotional psychology, acknowledging emotions as inherently subjective and experiential phenomena. However, her subsequent assertion that "kind is not really a feeling, it's a personality" introduces a nuanced distinction between emotions and personality traits. Here, Surae suggests that kindness is not merely a transient emotional state but a stable aspect of one's character.

This perspective challenges traditional definitions of emotions, which typically encompass fleeting feelings and enduring dispositions. By delineating kindness as a personality trait, Surae highlights the enduring nature of certain characteristics that shape individuals' behaviors and interactions over time. This distinction between emotions and personality traits prompts critical reflection on the relationship between the two constructs. While emotions are often viewed as transient and context-dependent responses to internal or external stimuli, personality traits are considered relatively stable patterns of behavior, thoughts, and feelings that characterize an individual over time. Surae's assertion raises questions about the boundary between emotions and personality, suggesting that certain qualities traditionally associated with emotions may manifest as enduring aspects of one's character. Moreover, Surae's statement implies a hierarchical relationship between emotions and personality, wherein personality traits such as kindness supersede emotions regarding significance and influence. This hierarchical view aligns with theories of personality psychology, which posit that personality traits exert a pervasive and enduring influence on behavior across diverse situations. By elevating kindness to the status of a personality trait, Surae underscores its central role in shaping her identity and guiding her actions. It is essential to critically evaluate Surae's assertion that kindness is not a feeling but a personality trait. While kindness certainly manifests through consistent patterns of behavior and interaction, it also encompasses an emotional component characterized by compassion, empathy, and altruism. Thus, kindness can be conceptualized as a personality trait and an emotional experience, highlighting the interconnectedness of emotions and personality.

Furthermore, Surae's statement underscores the importance of individual differences in emotional and personality processes. While kindness may be central to Surae's personality, other individuals may prioritize different personality traits or exhibit variations in emotional experiences. This recognition of diversity in emotional and personality profiles underscores the complexity of human behavior and the need for personalized approaches to understanding individuals' psychological makeup. Her perspective of emotions as a feeling and personality type unveils a fundamental truth embedded throughout the research. The nuanced distinction between kindness as a personality trait rather than an emotion sparks intriguing insights. Her perspective prompts contemplation on the role of certain emotions in shaping enduring aspects of personality, suggesting a dynamic interplay between transient feelings and enduring traits. The belief that emotions can be one's personality underscores the profound impact of emotional experiences on identity construction. Moreover, her perspective invites an exploration of how emotional encounters, whether fleeting or enduring, contribute to the formation of one's unique personality. For Surae, kindness transcends emotions and becomes a facet of personality. Societal influences on constructing emotional and personality constructs come to the fore. She offers a unique perspective on her emotional identity, describing herself as "brave," "cringy," and "over-protective." Surae elves into a thought-provoking exploration of self-perception and emotional dynamics. Through a series of questions and responses, she reveals insights into their own character, addressing themes of bravery, cringiness, and over-protectiveness. This exchange offers a nuanced examination of the complexities of human emotions and interpersonal relationships, shedding light on the interviewee's inner workings and external interactions. Specifically, she notes:

Interviewer: Why brave? Why cringy? Why over protective?
Interviewee: Because my jokes are cringy. [Laughter] My videos on Tic Toc, they're cringy. Why I'm brave is because? Well, I'm not brave with my family. I'm scared of everybody in my family. Gosh.
Interviewer: What about in the world you are, you're brave in the world?
Interviewee: Yes. Well, I am brave because I'm not scared to get hurt. I'm not scared for somebody to say something to me. I just don't really care.
Interviewer: Yeah, you're true to you. That's a good thing.
Interviewee: They say something, or if they push me, I don't really care. It's just whatever. I just walk away. If I get bullied, or something.
Interviewer: You did say you are scared to lose people. Is it, I don't care?
Interviewee: No.
Interviewer: Because you don't want to lose nobody, and you're just gonna let people just do what they want to, to you? Or why do you say I don't care when you do care?
Interviewee: No, not like that type of rage. I don't know how to explain.
Interviewer: Try. You're smart.
Interviewee: If somebody is messing with somebody, I would go up to them and be, hey, leave them alone. Why are you bothering them? They didn't even do nothing to you. Just because your life sucks, doesn't mean somebody else's. [Laughter]

Surae offers a rich insight into her self-perception, particularly regarding the qualities of bravery, cringiness, and over-protectiveness. Her self-identification as "cringy" sheds light on their self-awareness and ability to acknowledge perceived shortcomings. By attributing their jokes and TikTok videos as cringy, the interviewee demonstrates a level of introspection and humility, recognizing areas where they may fall short in terms of social acceptability or humor. This self-awareness is crucial for emotional intelligence, as it fosters an understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses in social interactions. Moreover, Surae's description of themselves as "brave," particularly in external settings outside their family, offers a nuanced perspective on bravery and fear. Their admission of fear within the family context highlights the complexity of familial relationships and the influence of past experiences on emotional responses. This insight suggests that bravery is not a universal trait but context-dependent, influenced by individual experiences and interpersonal dynamics. Furthermore, her assertion that they are not scared to get hurt or to face criticism in the external world reflects a certain degree of resilience and self-confidence. However, their assertion that they "just don't really care" about others' opinions or actions could suggest a defense mechanism or coping strategy to avoid emotional pain. Surae's discussion of her fear of losing people and apparent contradiction in expressing care and indifference further highlight the complexities of human emotions and defense mechanisms. Her response, expressing a desire to intervene when others are mistreated, demonstrates a sense of empathy and a willingness to stand up for others, challenging the notion that their apparent indifference translates to apathy. Overall, she underscores the multidimensional nature of emotions and the intricate interplay between self-perception, interpersonal dynamics, and protective mechanisms. This resilience may stem from a sense of self-assuredness or a willingness to embrace vulnerability in the face of adversity. However, it's important to critically examine whether this fearlessness is adaptive or if it may reflect an underlying indifference or detachment from emotional experiences. Surae is authentic and committed to truth, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness and self-acceptance in emotional well-being. Acknowledging her refusal to conform to external pressures or expectations, the

interviewer validates the interviewee's autonomy and agency in defining their identity. Her clarification that their apparent indifference or lack of care does not stem from a place of rage but rather from a desire to protect others adds another dimension to their self-perception. This distinction highlights her empathy and compassion, suggesting that their perceived indifference may be a coping mechanism or defense mechanism rather than a true reflection of their emotional state. Throughout the interview, there's a clear desire for meaningful relationships and validation. Surae's fear of rejection or loss underscores the human need for connection, is pivotal in shaping emotional experiences. For example, she states:

Interviewer:	[Laughter] Now, do you like—how do school make you feel?
Interviewee:	It's just like I feel every time when I come to this place. I just feel like something's bad is always happening. There's always something coming to me, and I can never stop it.
Interviewer:	I mean, there's a lot happening here all the time?
Interviewee:	Yes. That's really true, but it's just when I come to class, it just feels like it just, boom, something bad happens. What's up, ugly? What's up black monkey? What's up gorilla?

This perspective underscores the challenges individuals may face in seeking validation and connection. Surae's ambivalence about belonging at school reflects the nuanced ways individuals perceive and experience connection within different environments. Exploring this ambivalence becomes essential in understanding and supporting her emotional well-being. Surae acknowledges the difficulty in expressing emotions, a challenge intricately linked to fear and anticipation of negative outcomes. The laughter-laden query about her feelings towards school flows into a revealing of anxiety and worry about school. Her description of feeling like something bad is always happening suggests a pervasive emotional weight associated with the school environment. She captures a disturbing facet of the student's school experience, marked by anti-Black comments like "What's up, ugly? What's up, black monkey? What's up, gorilla?" This instance reflects her exposure to microaggressions, highlighting the emotional toll of anti-Black racism. Her description of feeling as though "something bad is always happening" when coming to class exposes the emotional impact of negative interactions. Negative encounters, especially those laden with racial undertones, can significantly contribute to a hostile emotional environment, affecting the student's overall well-being and engagement with the educational process. She also raises questions about the emotional safety and inclusivity of the educational environment. The emotional climate of schools plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions, attitudes, and academic achievements. She emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between emotions and the learning environment, where negative emotions can hinder cognitive processes and academic engagement. The societal expectations around emotional expression, particularly for marginalized communities, add complexity to this struggle. Surae's reflections on how different groups are "supposed" to express emotions underscore the impact of cultural and gendered expectations. This intersectionality emphasizes the need for cultural competence and sensitivity in addressing emotional well-being. Surae's belief that external factors control, or influence emotions provides insights into broader societal beliefs. Understanding these perspectives is crucial in developing tailored approaches considering cultural and contextual nuances in emotional support. Surae grapples with societal expectations, pondering how gender and race dictate emotional expression. This exploration delves into the broader context of societal norms and their influence on individual emotional experiences, especially for marginalized communities.

Surae's emotional range, from sadness and frustration to empathy and a desire for connection, paints a picture of emotional complexity. These emotions are deeply intertwined with

her lived experiences, highlighting the need for a holistic understanding. The struggle to reconcile perceived identity with how others perceive Surae adds a layer of complexity to her emotional journey. This internal conflict underscores the importance of fostering positive self-identity and self-esteem. Bullying and peer interactions serve as pivotal elements in Surae's life, highlighting power dynamics and the challenges of asserting oneself in social settings. Addressing these dynamics becomes crucial in fostering a supportive social environment in schools. Indications of underlying emotional struggles, such as feelings of loneliness, confusion, and potential depressive symptoms, underscore the importance of mental health awareness. Humor emerges as a significant coping mechanism for Surae, providing a means to navigate challenging situations or emotions. While humor offers a temporary escape, exploring and encouraging additional coping strategies for sustained emotional well-being is essential. Surae offers insight into the complex understanding, expression, and management of emotions as she navigates the challenges of expressing, understanding, and managing her emotions in schools.

Expressing Emotions: Navigating Vulnerabilities and Societal Expectations

Acknowledging difficulties in expressing certain emotions reveals the vulnerabilities Surae faces. These challenges may be interconnected with her cultural and familial context, emphasizing the importance of understanding the nuanced layers that impact emotional expression. Expressing emotions is a fundamental aspect of human communication, influencing interpersonal relationships and individual well-being. Her acknowledgment of difficulty in expressing emotions unveils a deeply personal struggle based on the way she will be perceived as well as treated by others. When asked about her struggles with expressing her emotions, she explained:

Interviewee:	Yes, I do. Sometimes when I want to say something, I feel like something wrong is going to happen. I just be in my head I be like, I'm gonna ask my mom if she can just drop me off home. Then I'm also like, no, it's too late. Just leave it all. Sometimes I have hard times saying something that I really want to say. Sometimes it's really hard to express my feelings, either because I'm scared, or I know something is going to happen.
Interviewer:	What emotions are the hardest for you to express?
Interviewee:	That's a good question. Probably joy, and sometimes, I'm just [too] happy…. Sometimes I get so much emotions, that I just irritate myself.

Her reluctance to express emotions is rooted in a fear of repercussions, suggesting a perceived risk associated with revealing true feelings. The impact of societal norms and expectations on shaping these fears is explored within the realm of emotional regulation. A noteworthy revelation surfaces as she identifies joy as the most challenging emotion to express. This raises intriguing questions about societal perceptions of joy and the individual's internalized beliefs about the appropriateness of expressing positive emotions in schools. She notes occasionally irritating herself as well as being irritated by other when feeling joy, opens a window into the internal struggles faced in navigating one's emotional development and their relation to others around them. The experience of internal irritation suggests a potential disconnect between emotional experiences and the ability to regulate them effectively. Understanding the intricate dynamics with peers, teachers, and family members becomes crucial in supporting her emotional well-being. Surae's observations about gendered expectations in emotional expression shed light on the broader societal issues of gender norms and their impact on

individual experiences. For example, when discussing the expression of crying in relationship to interactions with boys, she states:

> Interviewee: Then boys, not you. What I mean is that they—I hate that the fact that they think we're crying because of them. It's just that the fact that we're crying because we know if we [unintelligible 05:53] slam them, we will be wrong, and we're the one that will get in trouble. That's why we cry. I don't cry just to cry. I cry for different reasons. I'm crying because I'm sad. I'm crying because I'm mad. It just happens randomly. Sometimes I can just get frustrated out of nowhere. Even if I'm in a quiet place, it's just that I get irritated by some things. Something inside me that makes me mad, and I just don't know what.

She sheds light on a prevalent societal misconception – the assumption that girls cry solely because of boys. Surae's observations about gender expectations shed light on the broader societal issues of gender norms and expectations. Research has extensively explored gendered expectations surrounding emotional expression, often portraying crying as a sign of vulnerability in females. She challenges this stereotype by asserting that tears serve as a multifaceted expression, not confined to romantic relationships. Her declaration that crying is not exclusively prompted by external factors, such as boys, but also arises from internal emotions like sadness, anger, or frustration, underscores the multifaceted nature of tears. The fear of being perceived as crying solely for boys' attention or as a manipulative tactic unveils the societal burden placed on females to navigate emotional expression carefully. Addressing these stereotypes becomes crucial in fostering an environment where individuals can authentically express her emotions. The disclosure of feeling irritated by certain things adds a layer to the emotional complexity she experiences, and the unspoken frustration speaks to the internal struggles faced by individuals in navigating their emotional development. This reflects the importance of addressing stereotypes that limit authentic emotional expression.

Managing Emotions: Connection, Familial Dynamics, and Emotional Well-Being

Surae articulates the importance of emotions, drawing connections between emotional distress and self-harm. Her insights highlight the critical role emotions play in shaping behaviors and actions, emphasizing the need for emotions for one's health. The correlation between intense emotional distress and self-harm reveals the profound impact of emotions on one's actions as conveyed in her recalling of her cousin's successful suicide attempt. Although, she conveyed a deep understanding of the importance of emotions, she described having difficulties in managing her emotions. For example, she stated:

> Interviewer: Can you control your emotions?
> Interviewee: Nope. My emotions has its own job.
> Interviewer: Who controls your emotions?
> Interviewee: Jesus.
> Interviewer: Yeah. What else?
> Interviewee: My mom.

Her belief that emotions have their own agency or have a form of power that cannot be controlled, guided by both spiritual and maternal influences, provides a unique lens through which to examine the intricate tapestry of emotional regulation. Through her narrative, we can explore the nuanced ways in which individuals attribute the control of their emotions to external forces. Surae's claim

that their emotions possess autonomy, with a distinct "job" of their own, invites reflection on the perceived agency of emotions. This perspective challenges the conventional notion that individuals have direct control over their emotions. The attribution of emotional control to Jesus introduces a spiritual dimension to the narrative and her reliance on Jesus as a regulator of emotions aligns with the broader societal tendency to seek guidance and support from spiritual or religious sources during times of emotional distress. The simultaneous acknowledgment of Jesus and her mother as influential in emotional regulation raises intriguing questions about the interplay between spiritual beliefs and familial bonds. Her showcasing of the variability in how different societies ascribe agency to external entities in emotional experiences is clear in her narrative. Cultural nuances and individual belief systems contribute to diverse perspectives on emotional regulation, and social psychology research emphasizes the role of cultural norms in shaping emotional understanding. The intersectionality of cultural, religious, and interpersonal influence is reflected in her understanding that emotions are under the joint influence of both divine and maternal forces. Surae's complex relationship with her environment, particularly at school as well as home, reflects the intricate interplay between emotions and one's sense of belonging. The belief that external factors, including Jesus and parents, control emotions speak to Surae's perceived lack of agency. This perspective sheds light on how individuals may navigate a sense of control or lack thereof in their emotional experiences. Surae's acknowledgment of their mother as a key influence on emotional regulation resonates with research highlighting the significance of familial relationships in shaping emotional experiences. The maternal influence on emotional regulation is multifaceted, encompassing both genetic and environmental factors. The contrasting elements of bravery and vulnerability emerge as central themes. She acknowledges her fear within the family as well as peer context but embraces bravery when facing the world. This juxtaposition hints at the multifaceted nature of emotions and the intricate dance between courage and vulnerability.

Surae's recognition of the importance of emotions unveils a nuanced perspective on their role in psychological well-being. For her, emotions can act as a social tool, reflecting the intricate interplay between individual experiences and the broader socio-cultural context. For example, she states,

Interviewer:	Yeah. Then, okay. This is a good one. Is it important to control your emotions?
Interviewee:	Sometimes. Yes. Sometimes, when you're happy. Don't get your hopes up. Seriously, don't get your hopes up. Or when you're mad, do not feel like you need to just hit somebody regularly.
Interviewer:	Why are emotions important?
Interviewee:	To some kids they have emotions and they feel like they need to hurt their self. My cousin, she probably was—had too much pressure on her in college, so she probably did that. Or when people get bullied, they feel like they need to hurt their selves. Sometimes I feel that emotion. I need to hurt myself. Some kids they need attention. They need, well, not real attention. Some kids at home, they don't have attention at all. Sometimes I feel like that. I really do. Because ever since I got my dog I've been wanting to kill her so I can have my attention back. Cuz everything was just perfect before I decided to have a dog.
Interviewer:	What about happy? Why is happiness important?
Interviewee:	Happiness is important because you—because they're not depressed. They're not sad. Well, you can have your moment sometimes, you can have those moments.

Family dynamics play a pivotal role in Surae's emotional journey. The contrasting relationships with her father and stepfather underscore the profound impact of familial bonds on shaping emotional experiences and expressions. The absence of a consistent father figure and strained family relationships contribute significantly to Surae's emotional development. Her feelings of abandonment and longing underscore the familial influence on emotional well-being. Further, she attributes negative effects from the presence or absence of her father stating "[my father] just ruins my happiness in my life. I just feel like he does it on purpose." Parents, as primary caregivers, play a pivotal role in fostering emotional development and in the case of Surae her father negative impact on her happiness or perceive happiness unveils a stark emotional reality within the familial context. Happiness, a complex emotional state, becomes a fragile construct in the presence of her father. Her sentiment suggests that happiness, rather than being an autonomous emotional state, is subject to external influences, in this case, the actions and demeanor of her father. As a result, Surae employs humor, silliness, laughter, and joking as coping mechanisms, but their limitations become apparent as they can sometimes mask deeper emotions. The delicate balance between assertiveness and vulnerability in response to challenging situations reflects the complexity of navigating emotions. Surae's introspection and the quest for understanding and validation reveal a profound yearning for connection. Her experiences underscore the importance of empathy and support in navigating the complexities of emotional well-being. Surae's emotions are raw, genuine, and deeply felt. From sadness to confusion and a longing for understanding, her emotional authenticity serves as a testament to the complexities of the human experience. The impact of bullying on Surae's self-worth and self-perception highlights the profound influence of social interactions on emotional responses.

Chapter Summary

For each student, the detailed stories offered insight into the complex, multifaceted, culturally and racially contextualized understanding, expressions, and ways of managing emotions in school. Various social factors such as family, peer dynamics, teachers, relationships, home life, space, and place to name a few play a crucial role in their emotional development. For many of the students, there was no formal teaching of emotions or feelings at home or school. Black students have a robust understanding of emotions, complex expression and their consequences within various social contexts, and the ups as well as downs in managing emotions. As a result, the students highlight the limited ways schools support, perceive, and respond to the emotions of Black students. The study underscores the similarities across the narratives include the children's ability to identify and express a range of emotions, the impact of familial relationships on emotional well-being, and the significance of play in shaping emotional experiences. All four students demonstrate a significant level of emotional awareness that is present throughout all the student participants. They can recognize and articulate a wide range of emotions they experience.

The emotional experiences of Jade, Dre, D'Angelo, and Surae are all influenced by their respective environments, whether it be familial dynamics, societal expectations, or cultural factors. Jade copes with her father's absence due to incarceration, highlighting the impact of familial dynamics on her emotional development. Dre faces challenges related to violence and poverty in his neighborhood, which can impact his emotional well-being and coping strategies. D'Angelo navigates societal expectations surrounding masculinity, which may influence how he expresses and manages his emotions. Surae reflects on familial and emotional dynamics shaped by her environment, including the influence of her mother and spiritual beliefs. Each student employs coping mechanisms to manage their emotions, though these mechanisms vary. They may include seeking safety in play, expressing emotions through physical actions, or turning to spiritual beliefs for

support. Jade seeks solace in play, using it as a coping mechanism to navigate her emotions, especially in the absence of her father. Dre may resort to physical actions like hitting to cope with his emotions, reflecting his environment's influence on his coping strategies. D'Angelo turns to metaphorical expressions influenced by his cultural and religious beliefs, such as attributing his emotions to the "Devil" and "God." Surae relies on her spiritual and familial connections as coping mechanisms, indicating the importance of these relationships in her emotional regulation. Despite their unique challenges, all four students exhibit a desire for connection and relationships, whether it's seeking connection with adults, peers, or family members. Jade seeks connection with adults, particularly Black males, underscoring the significance of positive role models in her life. Dre seeks connection with adults, highlighting the importance of supportive relationships in his emotional development. D'Angelo expresses a desire for understanding and validation, particularly in navigating societal expectations surrounding masculinity and emotional expression. Surae values her connections with her mother and spiritual beliefs, emphasizing the role of familial and spiritual support in her emotional well-being.

Differences emerge in how the children learn about emotions, their understanding of gender roles in emotional expression, and the complexities they face in their social environments. Despite individual variations, each student collectively highlights the intricate interplay of familial, societal, and personal factors in shaping early childhood emotions, the advanced understanding of emotions among Black students as young as 4 and as old as 10, emotions as ever-changing and shifting, and the ways emotions as well as feelings are inseparable within their everyday experiences naturally shaping the ways they engage and navigate the world around them. This chapter, emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding of how Black children comprehend, articulate, and regulate their emotions. By exploring the personal perspectives of Black students, student provided crucial and profound insights into their emotional experiences in schools—understanding, expression, and management of emotions. By focusing on the central theme of how Black students understand, express, and manage emotions, students contribute to a nuanced comprehension of the complex social and emotional development within school settings. Moreover, this chapter highlights several critical perspectives expressed by Black student participants such as definition of emotions, emotion identity, range of emotion terms, social function of emotions, health, and emotions, as well as the ways facets of the larger world shape their understanding. The participants challenge the notion that children, particularly Black students, lack the capacity to articulate or comprehend complex emotional concepts. The study unveils critical perspectives on public school functioning and its potential impact on the mental health and emotional well-being of Black students. This challenges assumptions about the perceived incapacity of children to navigate and communicate complex emotions. In presenting student profiles, the chapter offers an in-depth and nuanced overview of the everyday social and emotional lives of Black students. The analysis of how students understand, express, and manage their emotions is deemed vital for grasping the broader social role of emotions within the educational spaces that Black students navigate. Lastly, this chapter on Black children's emotions reveals that they possess a complex understanding of emotions, often extending beyond basic feelings to encompass nuanced emotional states. This challenges the simplistic view that children, especially those from marginalized communities, have limited emotional comprehension.

Contrary to the belief that children struggle to articulate their emotions effectively, this study on Black children show that they can express their feelings with clarity and depth. This challenges the misconception that children lack the verbal or cognitive skills to communicate their emotional experiences. This study on Black children's emotions highlights the importance of cultural and contextual factors in shaping emotional experiences. By acknowledging the influence of cultural norms, racial dynamics, and social environments, such studies challenge the notion that children's emotions exist in a vacuum and are solely determined by individual factors. Despite navigating

racism, ageism, discrimination, and socioeconomic challenges, Black children often demonstrate strength in managing their emotions and navigating complexities of their emotional everyday lives.

This challenges stereotypes that portray children from marginalized communities as inherently vulnerable or lacking in emotional strength. Additionally, each participant highlights their agency and autonomy in navigating their emotional experiences. By acknowledging children's capacity to regulate their emotions, make meaning of their feelings, express their emotions, and seek support when needed, such research challenges paternalistic views that underestimate children's ability to manage their own emotional well-being. Studying Black children's understanding, expression, and management of emotions challenges outdated and limited perspectives on children's emotional capabilities, emphasizing their richness, complexity, and resilience in navigating the emotional terrain of childhood. In the next section, I explore the impact of various factors on the everyday lives and emotional development of the student participants, and the various ways the student participants navigate the factors that shape their everyday lives. Through observing Black students' interactions in and outside of the classroom, and interviewing Black students about their emotions as well as feelings, I found that the factors within the lives of the students evolves in compounding as well as complex ways that places a tremendous amount of labor onto the child. Often times, the students are left to deal with the aftermath of various experiences, incident, and events that negatively impact their mental health and emotional well-being.

Chapter Six

Complex Emotional Labor of Black Childhoods: An Exploration into the Factors that Shape Black Students Emotions and Feelings

When we do not feel emotion(s), or disclaim an emotion(s), we lose touch with how we actually link inner to outer reality.
-Hochschild 1983, p. 223

As demonstrated in Chapter Five, Black students conveyed richly and in-depth their various ways of understanding, expressing, and managing emotions within and outside of schools and the impact the unique and similar factors have on their emotional lives. Whether displayed in their words and stories, tones of voice, body movements, emotions, and feelings, or physical appearance, the emotional labor that Black children are carrying and navigating is complex, compounding, and persistent. Emotional Labor, oftentimes, is defined as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" that ultimately appeases others at the cost of their authentic feelings (Wharton, 2009, p. 149). However, for the purpose of this study, I add on to the definition to describe the literal weight or labor of dynamics, situations, interactions, and events that Black students carry with them throughout their everyday lives and the negative impact the weight or labor has on their mental health and emotional well-being. Additionally, I add to the definition of emotional labor to describe how students, especially Black students, are left to themselves to sort through, deal with, and manage the weight of various factors in their lives without the contentious support from others. Their stories offer insight into various factors that affect their understanding, expression, and management of emotions. Moreover, the stories of each Black student provide us insight into the challenges of the complex, compounding, and persistent emotional labor that stems from the various factors in the students' everyday lives. Centering youth voices, students demonstrated clearly their needs and desires for a learning environment.

While Black students exhibit a sophisticated and profound comprehension of their emotions, offering valuable insights into how their emotions influence their interactions and how their emotions influence their interactions, the study's data reveals a limitation in specificity. The data indicates that there is a restricted level of detail in the ways diverse factors contribute to shaping their emotions and interactions. Chapter five used semi-structured interviews, which rely heavily on the participant's comfort, memory, and subjective perspective; however, the narratives lay out important factors that play a role in the emotional development of the student participants. Using the storytelling to represent the dissertation offers several advantages in conveying the nuanced emotional experiences of Black students within educational settings. Firstly, storytelling provides a narrative structure that allows for a rich exploration of individual stories, capturing the complexity and depth of emotional experiences. Each story serves as a window into the lived reality of Black students, highlighting their unique challenges, triumphs, and coping strategies. Storytelling offers a

humanizing approach to research, enabling readers to connect on an emotional level with the experiences of the students portrayed. By presenting vivid and relatable stories, the profiles foster empathy and understanding, encouraging readers to reflect on the broader systemic issues at play in shaping Black students' emotional well-being. The methodological approach of using semi-structured interviews complements the vignettes by providing a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility and exploration of diverse themes and topics, ensuring that the emotional nuances captured in the vignettes are supported by the participants' voices and insights. This chapter also captures how students' relationships with peers and adults are instrumental in helping them navigate obstacles within their lives. Additionally, I dissect the interplay between individual emotions and societal structures, shedding light on the nuanced ways in which societal expectations and cultural factors intricately shape the emotional well-being of Black students. It is a venture into the intricate emotional labor, specifically, the complex, compounding, and persistent emotional labor that forms the cornerstone of their experiences. Building on the student narratives, I employ participant observations, interviews, and sociological video analysis to map various factors that shape the everyday emotional lives of Black students in schools.

First, we analyze a dark-skinned Black girl navigating her transitional kindergarten years, exploring her quest for belonging amid societal beauty standards. This sheds light on the complex interplay of identity formation and societal expectations for Black girls. Second, we unveil the early social experiences of a Black kindergartner, highlighting emotional experiences shaped by peer interactions and perceived injustice. This underscores the impact of early social experiences on young Black children's mental health, emotional well-being, and resistance. Third, we examine emotional contagion within classroom dynamics, revealing how feelings can trigger a collective emotional experience among Black second graders. This illuminates the social dynamics shaping emotional well-being. Lastly, we investigate the disciplinary function of emotions in a third-grade Black student's life, exploring how school discipline relies on emotions such as embarrassment and shame to control behaviors, shaping socio-emotional development. Through participant observations and interviews, we depict the realities of factors affecting Black students' mental health, emphasizing the complexity of their emotional labor. The concept of emotional labor as a theoretical insight can further enrich the analysis. Emotional labor, defined as the effort required to manage and regulate one's emotions in response to organizational or societal expectations, offers a lens through which to understand how Black students navigate and resist the highly emotionally societal demands imposed upon them within educational spaces. Relying on storytelling, discussing the impact of social factors across various educational spaces helps readers comprehend the multifaceted nature of Black students' everyday emotional lives and the systemic challenges they face within schools. Recognizing emotional labor in shaping the experiences Black students', the dissertation contributes to theoretical discussions on emotion, identity, and social inequality. Each story paints a vivid picture of the everyday emotional lives of Black students and the complex, compounding, and at times, persistent forms of emotional labor stemming from various factors.

Intersectionality of Emotional Labor: Self-Perception, Racialized Experiences, and Dynamics of Othering

Ree hesitated momentarily, her small fingers fidgeting with the edges of her colorful barrettes. She looked at me and said, "I am Black, Black and I don't like it…I, I do like this color." The words hung in the air, heavy with the weight of a revelation from a five-year-old. Ree did not seem to have ever been worried about her skin color as the school is made up of predominately

Black and/or African American students. I responded with a soft, saddened, but curious tone. "Tell me more about that, Ree. Why do you feel that way?" Ree sighed, her gaze fixated on her own hands. "It's too dark. I don't want to be too dark," she whispered as if confessing a secret that had been weighing on her tiny shoulders. I felt a mixture of sadness, fascination, and wonder. I personally know the importance of addressing such feelings at a young age. "Your skin color is a beautiful shade of Black, and I mean chocolate Black, baby. It's like the rich earth that helps flowers grow and the warm chocolate in your favorite cookies. It's a part of who you are and something to be proud of." Ree looked at me with uncertainty as I continued, "Do you know that everyone has different shades of Blackness? Our skin comes in many beautiful shades. Your skin is special and beautiful." She gestured at me with her eyes, with a look of innocence and yearning, and she stated, "Umm. You remind me of my dad, my dad is Black."

She continued by saying, "My dad is in jail. He is in jail because he did bad things. Mr. D I am bad. I am the bad kid. I always do bad things. Are you bad?". Immediately, I was in shock and nervous to say the wrong thing. This was a moment in which Ree needed to be reaffirmed and loved for her Blackness. I told her, "I love me, some Black people," and Ree quickly said, "What is wrong with you, Mr. D?" as she laughed and held my hand. She continued by saying, "white people are better." I prompted her to tell me why she believes that, and she followed by saying they are pretty, good, and not baldheaded. As we moved throughout the playground, I pushed harder, telling her that Black people are beautiful. Her eyes locked into mine and continued to say, "no…no…no they are better." I asked her if she thought she was pretty, and immediately with an immediate "No, cousin, say I am ugly and stupid all the time." I followed by as her, "Why do you call yourself the "bad kid" Ree?" my question broke the silence that hung in the air. With a hint of deep sadness clouding her eyes, "I told you, Mr. D, they call me ugly all the time," she admitted, "and I always getting in trouble, everywhere." Determined to uplift Ree, I countered, "You are not bad, baby. You are smart, beautiful, and so funny. You know I love you, right." She shook her head in agreement, but the tension was present. As we walked through the playground while holding her hand, she erupted and yelled, "You are my dad." During the conversation, the playground noise grew as nearly 50 students ran throughout the playground screaming, free playing, and participating in a large group football game. Her attention broke, and she radiated joy and happiness as she desired to play with her friends, all lighter-skinned and dressed neatly in name-brand clothing. As she ran off occasionally, she would slowly make her way back to the bench where I sat and express herself through hugs. Engaged in imaginative play, Ree walked over and grabbed the hula hoop from another student. The tall and skinny student grabbed and tugged the hula hoop back aggressively.

The two struggled over the toy. The noise level grows as the two begin to scream and cry. Ree snatched the hula hoop with a big tug and began taunting the other student. The student was pulled straight to the ground; she bolted up with tears boiling up in her eyes and ran away with her hands over her face. As I told Ree that was not nice, she threw all the hula hoop at me, gently swung towards me, kicked her feet at me, and attempted to grab ahold of me to push me away. She was genuinely but gently upset. I stated repeatedly, "I do not care that you are hitting me because I love you," which I repeated several times. Her body was tense, her hands were shaking, and her lips were tight, so she began to unravel. Her body fell into my arms, and she hugged me, shaking her head and down. She walked over to her friend and apologized. The student responded with no words, but it was clear in the student's body language that she did not want much of anything to do with Ree. Quickly, with a smile on her face and joy in her body, she began to play again. She ran to the opposite side of the playground, where a group of Latinx girls raced underneath the play structure. Ree embodies joy, silliness, playfulness, and lightheartedness through every situation. She has a desire to be connected and belong to her peers. Many do not play with her or engage with her. When she is playing, she often plays with Latinx girls and plays the role of the dog who is barking

and fake biting. When upset with her role, Ree would say, "Yall are ugly crybabies like your momma." And walk away. Ree, the source of many forms of blame or discomfort by students, was suddenly surrounded by teachers. Although a group of boys jumped on each other wrestling, no teachers were in sight. Four teachers were subtly surrounding Ree as she broke out into songs lost in her own world.

After a few minutes, she returned to me with a somber look on her face. She burst into an uncommendable story about how her teacher does not pay attention to her or lets her have things and is always telling her, "In a minute…in a minute… in a minute" I responded by saying, "It is okay," and she responded with "yeah, go beat her up!" and with both of us laughing and mentioned "Ree, we do not beat people up girl!" and she responded with "because you will go to jail? I do not want you to go to jail." While she fell deeply into my arms. Holding me tightly. I told her I was not going anywhere and that I loved her. She threw her hands to the floor, sticking her butt in the air, and began to shake it side to side, yelling, "I love you too." And with a blink of an eye, her teacher bolts over and pulls her towards the classroom with no words spoken; Ree, with shock in her eyes and confusion on her face, is being pulled to a line of students that awaits her. Recess is over. I felt this would set her off and cause her to have a bad rest of the day. Rage seemed to slowly fill up in her body as she began to pull away from the teacher, pushing and dropping herself to the floor. I rushed over to support. She crawled away from the teacher and snuggled herself underneath me as I bent down to comfort her. I told the teacher I would walk her to the therapeutic room to give her time to rest, talk, and settle back into herself. Once we made our way to the room, we began to talk deeply about her father and herself. Specifically, I asked her about her family. I asked her about her father and if she gets to see him often. Immediately, she froze, pointed in my face, and poked my nose "Don't talk about my dad". I apologized. I told her that I was not talking about her dad, but I was asking about him. I followed up by asking if you wanted to know about my dad. In response, she shook her head in agreement. She looked up at me as I told her about my father. She mentioned, "My dad is in jail. He is gone. My mommy doesn't like talking about my dad, but I like talking about my dad."

The sadness and seriousness faded as she finished her sentence, and the silly and excited behavior arose. She tumbled and rolled towards the calming corner where therapeutic tools and toys were. She leaned her tiny body upon the white doll house, releasing a loud crackling sound. She quickly turned to me as she pulled out one doll after another. Each doll with a Black complexation was laid flat on its stomach. She began to speak in a deep and raw tone. "All of you are going to get the worst whooping ever!" she responded back to herself. "No…no, I don't want a whooping.". Bang...Bang...Bang! Within the blink of an eye, she became increasingly upset, screaming, crying, and throwing chairs onto the floor. She screamed at the top of her lungs, "I am tired of being around y'all! Go now!". My heart fluttered as I watched the anguish rush over her face. She walked over to the couch area, kicked her shoes off, and stretched across the couch. Soon after, her eyes closed. An hour passed, and I made my way to wake Ree up. She rolled over and stretched her body. I encouraged her to get ready. We put her shoes on together and walked down the hall to transition her back to class. As we walked, she yelled, "Hold my hand, I need you." She held my hand tightly as if she knew it was time for me to leave. I told her that it was time for Mr. D to leave, and she shouted, "I do not want you to go, do not go." Ree exhibits a wide range of emotions, from bursts of happiness to moments of frustration and distress. She constantly attempts to communicate her emotions to adults and peers. For Ree, her emotional expression serves as a primary means of communication; in her own way, she seeks attention, understanding, and comfort through her actions. The adults in Ree's life, particularly her teacher, play a crucial role in recognizing and responding to her emotions. The teacher's stern and conventional approach may inadvertently contribute to Ree's feelings of isolation and frustration.

Ree's revelation about her dark skin complexion reflects the intersectionality of her experiences. The desire for belonging within her peer group, compounded by the societal constructs of beauty and acceptance, adds a layer of complexity to her emotional development. Ree's perception of her own skin color as "too dark" highlights the impact of societal standards on her self-esteem. She also touches on the racialized experiences of Ree, as she expresses a preference for lighter-skinned individuals influenced by external perceptions of beauty. Moreover, the teacher's response to Ree's behavior showcases the challenge of managing emotions in an educational setting. The teacher's strict adherence to conventional classroom expectations and what seems like passive-aggressive comments may contribute to Ree's sense of being "othered." Ree's disruptive behavior becomes a focal point, resulting in her isolation within the classroom. Self-labeling as a "bad child" can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, impacting their behavior and self-perception. Ree's longing for connection is evident. She seeks comfort and affirmation through her interactions with adults or attempts to engage with peers. The impact of her father's incarceration adds another layer to her emotional development, emphasizing the importance of stable and supportive adult-child relationships.

"What will it take to be seen?": The Emotional Labor of Peer Interactions and Perceived Injustice from the Playground to the Classroom

The students are at circle time. Three students play with each other while the class participates in an activity. One of my focal students, Zeal, is hiding underneath the table; his frustration and anger have carried from the playground into the classroom. The reason for his anger and frustration is that he was budged in line by one of his peers right in front of his main classroom teacher. Zeal, usually loud and expressive, is being mean to his peers, directing his anger at the student who bullied him. Zeal's frustration and anger stem from a perceived injustice on the playground, leading to a cascade of disruptive behaviors within the classroom. His emotional state fluctuates rapidly, from anger and frustration to moments of quiet distress and physical outbursts, culminating in an intense expression of his emotions through destructive actions. With a scrunched-up face, lips extended out, and eyebrows curled up, he yells, "I am not your friend anymore, and I am going to tell your mom on you–you cry, baby boy." The student sadly looked away. Zeal, still angry, began throwing a toy across the room. While the teacher told him to pick it up, he began discussing why he was upset. Looking away and clearly not paying attention, the teacher dismissed his frustration and anger. As he continued to talk to the teacher, she shut him down by saying, "We are done having this conversation." With defeat on his face, he sat down and started ensuring everyone in the classroom knew his anger. The escalation of Zeal's emotions mixed with the teacher's lack of attentiveness creates a chaotic environment within the classroom, with the teacher struggling to manage the situation effectively. The teacher's response is inconsistent, oscillating between dismissing his emotions and finally providing attention, albeit belatedly. He began sticking his tongue at other students, calling them crybabies and stupid. While the class started to do their wiggle exercise, he did not participate and instead started at others. Other students' playfulness, silliness, and joy did not interfere with his anger or frustration and vice versa. The duration of his anger, frustration, and disappointment lasted more than 30 minutes. It is apparently increased by the joy of the student who budged him in line. With each smile and laughter burst from the student, Zeal met it with a short but strong middle finger that he hid underneath the side of his left thigh.

His mood remains the same despite the curiosity of others. Zeal's behavior increasingly worsened with subtle spikes of physical frustration, anger, and disappointment. The waves of frustration and disassociation triggered the main teacher. It soon began to feel like a high level of emotional awareness on behalf of Zeal as he intelligently used his emotions to trigger a reaction or

response from the teacher. In a way, demonstrating an understanding of the social function of emotions is on full display based on Zeal's behavior. The teacher's body language radiated with anxiety and jittery body movements (e.g., random moments of twitching, high-pitched squeals, and erratic comments about the students). She paced through the room. Back and forth. Talking subtly to herself as she tries to hold onto the classroom or prevent the classroom from growing more and more out of control, Zeal and others display an awkward clash of anger, frustration, silliness, boredom, and even waves of tears. Structured chaos. Students continued to have high energy and were beyond excited or bubbling with a mixture of emotions. As I turned to look at where a loud and hard sound of feet stomping and growling, Zeal, in plain sight, was standing on top of a 4-foot cubby that stored supplies for the classroom. At the top of his lounges, he yells and laughs, looking directly at his teacher, breaking his gaze every few seconds to look at the reaction on my face that screamed, "Get your butt down, NOW!"

Zeal portrays a tumultuous emotional journey and its repercussions within the classroom setting. Zeal's initial outburst, triggered by a perceived injustice, serves as a catalyst for a series of disruptive behaviors, highlighting the interconnectedness of individual emotions and social dynamics. His rapid emotional fluctuations, from anger to distress, mirror the complex interplay between personal experiences and social influences, as observed in the sociology of emotions research. As my eyes locked with his, I finally shouted, "Boy, get down," and quickly Zeal barrel rolled off the top of the cubbies, thudding against the floor, popping up instantly, and running towards his work area. Throwing himself into his seat, he nagged and nagged. He continued giving his peers the middle finger more than you could count. With activities like Play-Doh on the table and Zeal triggered by students around him, frustration and anger grew. As very emotional bodies, it interests me how things can change in the blink of an eye (zero to 100 quickly). Zeal began taking off and throwing his socks and shoes within a second. He kicked down chairs and pushed baskets that were full of crayons, pencils, and scissors off the table. He threw books. He knocked over tables. He knocked over items on top of tables. He was visibly filled with anger. He was shaking. He was crying. His eyebrows curled dramatically. His lips dryly puckered down. I could not do much besides hug him. I did not know what else to do. How could such a little body be filled with so much anger for so long?

He was quiet but visibly angry (expressing himself only physically, no words). However, he slowly became more and more upset. He started to throw his backpack and the leftover food across the room. Leaning over to the student to say mean things to him set off several reactions from his peers. As the teacher intervened, with a big smack, his food spread all over the room. The space was painted with the food. Popcorn, cookies, sandwich bread, meat, and chips. The room was a disaster. The staff immediately reacted with big eyes and anxiety, filling their awkward moments with uncertainty about how to support the student. Weirdly enough, the other students were lost in play. The students completely ignored the situation. Some gave a glance, one even saying, "ouuuuu, you're going to get a whooping…" but all at one point did not pay any attention. Are they normalizing the behavior? Is this something deep that I am missing? As Zeal's emotions intensify, so does the classroom chaos. His frustration spills into more physical outbursts and expressive gestures towards his peers. The space becomes a battleground, with Zeal at the epicenter, his anger radiating outward like ripples in a pond. With seriousness, Zeal plotted his revenge. Mumbling under his voice at the joy or happiness apparent on the face of the culprit who stole his spot in line. He circled the classroom, thinking of different ways to push the buttons of the student who budged him. He grabbed a random bottle from the table in front of him. The teacher is still in disarray and attempting to reorganize her lesson for the latter half of the day. Zeal snuck behind the student and launched himself forward with all his might, tackling him to the ground in a whirlwind of arms and legs. In his hand, Zeal had a small container of liquid glue that he squeezed with all his might; within

a second, white sticky glue spread across the student's hair, face, and clothing. The shock on the student's face was palpable as he tumbled to the ground, his cries drowned out by Zeal's laughter.

The reactions from staff are not as gentle with the boys. It was more restrained as two staff swooped him effortlessly from on top of the student, stretching him across their laps while the other tried to talk to him. The Zeal was still full of anger but an anger that was joyous or relieved. The joyous anger stained his face and filled his body. He wiggled. He pulled. And he yanked himself from the grips of both teachers, causing the collar of his green shirt to stretch out of shape. With his small fingers, he started pointing at student after student, finally landing on his teacher, "I don't like you. I don't like you. I don't like you. And I do not like her. I do not care; I do not like her." With a sudden movement, he got up and walked around the classroom. One child's anger caught the adults' attention, while the other students ignored it. Anger or any emotion is supposed to transcend or affect others or the space. So, why did it happen to some and not to others? Or did it in a non-explicitly way? How can some things cause a reaction, a glance, a comment, a smile, a frown, and others not? A tiny voice rose from below, catching my attention. "Mr. D, why does he get so mad when he loses?" I looked at the student and responded, "Sometimes, some people feel very strongly. Do you?" She responded quickly, "I don't know, but he got him, right?"

Free from the grasp of his teacher, shouting from the opposite side of the classroom, Zeal screams, "I cannot take this much longer." His teacher finally provided him with the attention he requested. The emotions radiating through this little Black boy's body were at an all-time high. The teacher's attention was a little too late. Sounds of loud cries and whining could be heard from Zeal as he shouted, "I hate it here," and "Leave me alone for once." Unimpressed and unpleased with the response from the teacher or student required a level of get-back or justice from Zeal and a form of justice that deeply penetrated the teacher and only irritated the student it was slightly directed at. The rest of the room saw the opportunity and played at the highest form. While the teacher paid or lost her attention, other students got away with behaviors that would typically get caught. The standoff seems to be one that happens often, and other students thrive off or at least find their source of joy from it. The response from the teacher and peers further illuminates the intricate dynamics at play. While the teacher initially struggles to support and manage Zeal's emotions effectively, her eventual attention, albeit delayed, underscores the significance of adult intervention in shaping emotional experiences within educational environments. Conversely, the peers' varied reactions, ranging from indifference to occasional reinforcement of disruptive behavior, underscore the normalization and socialization of emotions within peer networks. From time to time, Zeal would stare at me with a look on his face that requested my support, but I tried hard to restrain from assisting today as the teacher has become dependent on my support in her classroom. Today, enough was enough. As I got up and got closer and closer to where he was located, his body loosened up. The closer I got, the more he inched away, almost as if he wanted me to just grab him. With each step, he inched away. Suddenly, like a sack of bricks, he crashed onto the ground, splitting open with his hands and legs spread wide open. He was exhausted. He was done. In his softest voice, he uttered, "Mr. D, are you mad?" and I responded, "Not at all, baby! But what is going on? Why did you do all this?" and in a sincere manner, "Can we go to our room?" which he is referring to as the therapeutic room. Without a doubt in my mind, I responded with a strong "Yes." Justice was served, or was it?

Zeal's emotional turmoil spills into the classroom, impacting the learning environment and challenging the teacher's behaviors. Stemming from a perceived injustice on the playground, Zeal's anger escalates, leading to a cascade of disruptive actions and interactions with peers and authority figures. Despite attempts at intervention, Zeal's emotional intensity persists, reflecting a complex interplay between individual emotions and social dynamics within educational settings. The teacher's inconsistent response, oscillating between dismissal and belated attention, underscores the

challenges in addressing emotional regulation in the classroom. Furthermore, the peers' varied reactions highlight the normalization of disruptive behavior within peer networks. Zeal seeks support from the narrator as the situation escalates, revealing underlying tensions in the teacher-student relationship and the need for comprehensive support structures to foster emotional well-being in educational settings. Ultimately, the resolution of the situation raises questions about the efficacy of disciplinary measures and the attainment of justice within the context of emotionally charged interactions.

"Ugh...I can't wait to go home!": The Emotional Labor of Navigating Boredom and Irritation in the Classroom

All the students are at the front of the room, collectively listening to their teacher read them a book. The teacher is relatively engaging with the students. The room is very hot. Controlled. Students were attentive and responsive to the teacher's request as she asked students to recall the main point from each page. Although a relatively good number of students were paying attention, roughly seven students displayed a sense of boredom and irritation. Out of frustration and a loss of classroom control, the teacher shot out of her seat, stood straight up, and began to yell at the top of her lungs. Control was lost. The room shifted from a weird stillness to anger. The loud and constant sound of shushing rings from her mouth. The boredom of a few students triggered a high level of irritation, anger, and frustration from the teacher and satisfaction from the students who prayed for the book's ending. Each of my focal students—Zeek, Dre, Neenah, and Tiffany—was present in the classroom today, and each of them conveyed a version of boredom and irritation. Zeek still sits in the corner of the classroom but is not responsive or engaged with the book. He stares off from moment to moment. His eyes roamed over the classroom. With spurts of wiggles, Zeek and Tiffany rocked back and forth with subtle moments of little dances. In the middle of their teacher rant about the "disrespectful behavior" of a few students as they wiggled and participated in inside conversations, Zeek slowly got out of his seat and snuck his way towards the back of the room where I sat and asked, "Mr. D can I got to our room today? Please!". Although everything in me wanted to remove my focal students from the anger of the teacher, I uttered back, "Not today. You got to go back to your seat before you get in trouble." With disappointment across his face, he dragged himself back to his seat out of sight of his teacher.

The teacher sends the students away when they are not following her expectations, "Since you do not want to participate, get away from here and go sit at your desks." One after one, she told students to "get away," with three of those students being Zeek, Neenah, and Tiffany. Students who move too much, talk too much, simply make a sound, sit in the wrong spot, or do not pay attention are told with real anger to "get away." One of my student's bodies could not stop moving or wiggling as the teacher struggled to explain the next lesson. You can see the face of one of my students covey a sense of irritation, boredom, and sadness. The stares that are locked onto me by students start to come off as "save me," but once I looked harder, I could see that more and more students conveyed the same irritation, boredom, and sadness. Students are disassociating and uncomfortably requesting a chance to be removed from the classroom. The word "look" is used as a silent reminder for students to focus, pay attention, be quiet, sit down, and, more importantly, be still. The signal of the look conveys a message that is emotional and behavioral. Students are tired and exhausted. Students are bored and irritated. Students are done. It is a feeling that isn't just apparent on the faces of most of the students, but it is felt in the environment and heard. It created an uncomfortable environment, and I sometimes felt I should no longer be in the room. Students are validated through the passing of objects. Getting the scissors, especially the colored ones, disrupted the moments of boredom or irritation with a sense of excitement or satisfaction.

At the back of the room, Tiffany slumped in her chair, her eyes wandering aimlessly around the room as she absentmindedly tapped her scissors against her desk. Beside her, her tablemate let out an audible sigh, his shoulders slumping as he struggled to focus on creating grass out of their forest-green construction paper. Meanwhile, across the room, another student—a Black girl—fidgeted in her seat, her foot tapping incessantly against the floor as she glanced longingly out the window to the school play area. In the corner, Neenah sat with a scowl etched across her face, and her brow furrowed in frustration as she wrestled with emotions and the lack of acknowledgment from her teacher. As the teacher pressed on with her expectations, the sense of boredom and irritation seemed to spread like wildfire, permeating the room with its stifling presence. One by one, the students succumbed to its insidious influence, their once-engaged minds drifting further and further away from the task at hand. Neenah slouched over and was approached by the teacher, who pointed out that she was cutting a green piece of paper, which was supposed to represent grass for the project incorrectly. As the teacher pointed out and corrected her, she immediately reacted emotionally and behaviorally. She was done, somber, and simply done. It was clear on her face and body language that she should not take any more or be in the classroom any longer. Her body sat limp, with her hand holding up her head. Her face drooped as she stared at the supposedly incorrect squiggly lines on her forest green construction paper. She is slowly disassociating. Zeek, in a playful manner, disassociated from the chaos or boredom that filled the room. You could see that he finds a sense of joy in disassociating. He began to take scissors from his table, turn to his peer beside him, and attempt to cut his nose. With spurts of soft laughter, he began to fake cut his own nose, triggering the friend to engage even more. The two went back and forth. Laughing ever so gently. The teacher did not notice, as the teacher focused on other students' behaviors. Dre, in an all-red Jordan jumpsuit, walked into the room late, radiating joy and happiness as he made his way to his table. In a way, he walked through an emotional room that consisted of boredom with a bright and joyful swagger, but that was soon weighted down by the call from his teacher as she shouted, "Dre, sit down! Since you are late, you need to hurry up and catch up with the rest of the class." Immediately, his joy was no longer visible as he sat in his seat and laid his head into his hands. As a student approached her for help, she screamed, "I am not ready to help you; get away." He was being told by the teacher to complete a 30-minute activity in roughly 10 minutes.

Whispers began to ripple through the classroom, punctuated by the occasional yawn or sigh of exasperation. Zeek, Dre, Neenah, and Tiffany all leaned over to whisper to their neighbor, their voice tinged with boredom as they collectively could be heard complaining about their teacher and the way she was treating them. Other students followed suit, conveying a variety of displays of boredom and frustration. As the minutes ticked by, the atmosphere in the classroom grew increasingly tense, the weight of boredom and irritation hanging heavy in the air. The teacher could not feel the collective energy of her students flagging. Obviously, their youthful energy was dimmed under the weight of their discontent. Desperate to help somehow, I tried to inject some energy into the students by checking in on them and validating their frustration, but my efforts fell flat, the pall of boredom and irritation stubbornly refusing to dissipate. However, some students began to open up about their feelings of frustration and restlessness, sharing their struggles and offering support to one another.

In the corner of my eye, Zeek caught my attention as he began to act as if he was going to cut the hair of his peer lying beside him. He soon stopped as one of the paraeducators reminded them of how to use the scissors, and as a common response, students' bodies slumped over and faces colored with irritation. The irritability, frustration, or boredom that is being experienced by several students in the classroom was clear through their body language, such as eye tolls and strong stares at others. Like Neenah, students placed their heads between their hands in a depressive or saddened state. The para, not the main teacher, recognized the boredom or irritation that filled the

room. It seemed as if it was the goal of students to be seen. On Neenah's face, she had a serious, irritable look as her body leaned heavily on her table. Visibly tired, bored, and fed-up, students one by one distanced themselves from the interactions that were occurring throughout the room. As time ticked, students became increasingly irritated as they waited for the end of the day bell to ring. School was almost over, but it could not come any faster. Sadly, Tiffany was nearly invisible as she stared off for nearly 30 minutes. No one bothered her. No one checked in on her. No one looked at her. Her quiet and kind nature often lends to her being left out or lost in the everydayness of the classroom. Uninterested in the activity, she just watched and observed with minor reactions. When she watched someone doing something funny or silly from afar, she would burst into small giggles and smiles from time to time as if she were in her own imaginary world. This pattern of being ignored leaves Tiffany feeling invisible, her enthusiasm dampened by the weight of being unacknowledged. As she retreated into the recesses of her mind, boredom began to gnaw at her spirit, dragging her attention away from the teacher and her classmates as she became increasingly lost in her daydreams. Although other students rarely openly engage with Tiffany, her feelings became a mirror for her classmates, reflecting a sense of disengagement that infected the very atmosphere. Some, like her tablemate, fidgeted restlessly, their attention wandering aimlessly as they sought comfort in the recesses of their own imaginations. My students were burnt out and done with the activity and the classroom. Slowly but surely, the atmosphere in the classroom began to shift, the heavy fog of boredom and irritation giving way to the sound of the bell. With a collective sigh of relief, the students cleaned their desks and rushed toward their backpacks with renewed enthusiasm. I couldn't help but reflect on the power of emotion contagion – a reminder that one's emotions can profoundly impact many. With anger and frustration present on the teacher's face and in her body language, students could feel and sense, but most importantly, the students were forced to endure her behavior. She took out her anger and frustration on the students.

My time in the classroom was coming to an end; as I began to make my way out of the room, I was drawn back as the teacher's short and stern words rang in my ears. The teacher, on numerous occasions, embarrassed and ashamed various students. For example, a student who held their hand high for nearly 7 minutes walked over to the teacher to request her attention, and within a split second, she burst with frustration and rage, shouting, "I am not going to give you anything. You never do it right or listen. Go away now." The whole room turned to look and quickly turned to look away. Her patience was wearing thin as distractions from various students persisted, her frustration simmering beneath the surface, appearing through her sour facial expressions and hurtful behavior in the classroom. With a sharp tone and a pointed finger, she singled out the students, her words dripping with disdain as she berated him for his lack of focus. The classroom fell silent as all eyes turned to and quickly turned away. The shame weighed heavy on him. Other students used the teacher's behavior as ammunition to further defy her authority. The teacher, blinded by her sense of righteousness, remained oblivious to the turmoil within her classroom. Her attempts to maintain control only exacerbated the sense of alienation felt by her students, driving a deeper wedge between teacher and students—a relationship that has been getting increasingly worse as the school year progresses. The dynamics between the teacher and students play a central role in shaping the emotional climate of the classroom. The teacher's authoritarian approach, characterized by yelling and shaming, creates an environment of fear and hostility. This authoritarian style of teaching not only fails to foster a positive learning environment but exacerbates feelings of boredom and irritation among the students.

Moreover, the power differential between the teacher and students further amplifies the impact of the teacher's emotions on the student's emotional well-being. The teacher's use of negative reinforcement, such as yelling and shaming, fails to manage student behavior effectively and instead exacerbates feelings of boredom, irritation, and frustration experienced by the students,

leading to a breakdown in trust and communication. By resorting to punitive measures, the teacher reinforces a cycle of negativity and disengagement, further eroding the trust and rapport between teachers and students. This negative reinforcement also perpetuates a sense of powerlessness among the students, who feel disempowered to voice their concerns or seek support. This scene portrays how one person's emotions can affect others' emotions, where the teacher's frustration and anger amplify the students' sense of boredom, irritation, and disengagement. The powerful impact of emotion contagion, as negative emotions spread like wildfire, infecting the entire classroom atmosphere. Emotions can spread throughout a group, affecting the collective mood and behavior.

The teacher's outburst of anger and frustration serves as a catalyst, triggering negative emotions among the students. In addition, the students did not prefer the classroom activity of making grass, trees, and sun, which triggered emotions of boredom, irritation, and frustration. As the teacher's frustration escalates, the students become increasingly disengaged and restless, manifesting behaviors of boredom, irritation, and defiance. As the bell signals the end of the day, the lingering weight of boredom and irritation underscores the urgent need for empathy and understanding in educational settings. While the teacher's actions contribute to feelings of alienation and distress, moments of solidarity and empathy among the students offer a glimmer of joy. Students rely on each other for support, sharing their struggles and frustrations as they navigate the challenging dynamics of the classroom. This sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding counterbalances the negative emotional atmosphere created by the teacher. A variety of classroom stressors—non-preferred activity, classroom noise, shouting, yelling, and laughing—contribute to the overall sense of unease and tension within the classroom, further complicating the emotional dynamics at play. In conclusion, power dynamics, emotional contagion, and the impact of negative reinforcement have an impact on student well-being. I am left with a series of questions: (1) What mechanisms are at play in the transmission of emotions among students, and how do individual differences in emotional susceptibility influence this process? (2) What role do power dynamics between the teacher and students play in shaping emotional interactions within the classroom? (3) What coping strategies do the students employ to manage feelings of boredom, irritation, and frustration in the classroom?

The classroom environment is fraught with tension and disengagement, as evidenced by the teacher's outburst of anger and frustration, which triggers negative emotions among the students. The authoritarian approach of the teacher, characterized by yelling and shaming, exacerbates feelings of boredom, irritation, and disengagement among the students. The power differential between the teacher and students amplifies the impact of the teacher's emotions on the student's emotional well-being, creating an environment of fear and hostility. Negative reinforcement perpetuates a cycle of negativity and disengagement, eroding trust and communication between teachers and students. The scene highlights the powerful impact of emotion contagion, as negative emotions spread throughout the classroom, infecting the collective mood and behavior of the students. Despite the challenging dynamics, moments of solidarity and empathy among the students offer a glimmer of hope, underscoring the importance of empathy and understanding in educational settings. Ultimately, the section prompts critical questions about the mechanisms of emotion transmission among students, the role of power dynamics in shaping emotional interactions, and the coping strategies students employ to manage negative emotions in the classroom.

The Emotional Labor of Disciplining into Submission: The Disciplinary Function of Embarrassment, Shame, and Belittling

As I walked into the building early in the morning, the mother of one of my focal students (Stoney) was heading towards the main office. As I trailed behind her, it signaled that I should head

down to my focal student's classroom to check-in. The school is three stories. The lower hall comprises four primary classrooms consisting of pre-k and TK students. The main floor is sprawling with administrative offices and student gathering areas. Finally, the third-floor housed staff spaces, including social workers and other support staff, working tirelessly to ensure the well-being of the students. I could hear a loud voice yelling as I made my way down the hallway. Sharp and discordant, the sound sent a feeling of anxiety through my body. Turning the corner, I was met with a scene that froze me in my tracks. A parent of a focal student is standing over D'Angelo. He is sitting in a chair in the corner of the hallway. The hall is entirely silent. All the classroom doors are open, full of students quietly listening to Stoney's mother erupt in a parade of insults toward D'Angelo. In a full gray lounge outfit with her hair wrapped roughly in a black hat, nails extended, pointed in the face of D'Angelo, threatening him, calling him out of his name, and repeatedly yelling "telling him about himself." She would stick her face just a few inches away from his face as she yelled. D'Angelo, to get out of the way, would turn his head so slightly to the side. Trying to look away. Each time, Stoney's parent would scream louder and louder, "I am right here. You better look at me. Look me in my face." She continued to stick her fingers and lock them in his D'Angelo face. In a futile attempt to escape the onslaught, D'Angelo would continue to turn his head slightly away, his eyes downcast. But each evasion only seemed to goad Stoney's mother further, her threats growing more pronounced with each passing moment. The atmosphere crackled with tension, and D'Angelo's emotions laid bare for all to see–rage, belittled embarrassment, shame, and hurt etched upon his face.

She referred to D'Angelo as a delinquent, a term often used to define D'Angelo's personality. She ended her prideful rant: "Do I need to call your dad, uncle, or grandpa….". D'Angelo responded with a hard stare and suddenly broke his silence with a rageful headshake, which conveyed a strong No after being roughly requested to respond multiple times: "Boy, answer me. Answer me!". She responded with, "Because if I have to, I will find someone to beat your ass." With each word, D'Angelo sunk deeper and deeper into his skin; his body was drenched in emotions of rage, embarrassment, shame, and hurt. Each emotion crawled up his body and poured ever so slightly out of the corner of his mouth and eyes. His lips shivered. His legs rocked back and forth. D'Angelo was belittled into an even smaller version of himself in front of half the school.
As the parent walked away, it left an emotional stain on the floors, walls, tables, and hearts of all who bore witness. The sour taste left me, D'Angelo, and all the other students who witnessed the situation speechless. I was hurt, he was hurt, other students were hurt, and some even smirked. With the bit of strength he had, I gave him the opportunity to come to my office and get away from the feelings and reminders. He resisted. I requested. He resisted. I requested. He accepted. So, we headed down the hall, and he had his hands in his oversized sweatshirt and crocs dragging across the ground. Defeated, his body limped. As we turn the corner, his teacher says, "To give context…". I blocked her words with an "I do not need context. We do not do that to students. Look at him, Y'all embarrassed him. This is not how schools should be." She yelled back, "What was I supposed to do. There are other teachers who could have closed their doors." And, I responded with, "You should have done your job." We all had enough. I wondered if and how he might recover from this and who would protect him.

His teacher stood there watching him be verbally abused because he was playing roughly in the bathroom, pushing and shoving his friend. Just stood there. Your job is to protect. Although the teacher's responsible for protecting their students, several issues can arise when teachers intervene in matters typically handled by parents. The question loomed heavy in the air – would D'Angelo recover from this ordeal? Would anyone step up to shield him from further harm? But I guess he wasn't worthy of it, huh? Eight years old and defeated but strong. He physically moved on. But the feeling was still there. You can see and feel it radiate off him. During our time in silence, D'Angelo

revealed the constant weight of judgment that has been placed upon him due to his perceived behaviors at school, and that seemed to mark his body as different, as warranting harsh treatment and discipline in the eyes of staff throughout the school. D'Angelo deeply feels the effects of being constantly reprimanded for the slightest infractions, his every move scrutinized under the harsh gaze of his teachers. He is deemed the "problem child," the one who never seems to obey the expectations placed upon him. And try as he might, D'Angelo couldn't shake the label. It followed him like a shadow, constantly reminding him of his shortcomings. D'Angelo noted that he struggles to keep up with his peers in the classroom. The lessons are severely boring. But instead of offering him the support he desperately needed, his teachers dismissed him as lazy and unmotivated. But it wasn't just in the classroom that D'Angelo felt the sting of discrimination. Even on the playground, he was treated differently and ostracized by his classmates, who had been conditioned to see him as the "bad kid." As a result, D'Angelo withdrew into himself, building walls around his heart to shield himself from the pain. He stopped raising his hand in class and stopped speaking up for fear of being ridiculed. Instead, he became more upset and ensured that his peers who treated him differently either heard his true thoughts or felt them through a solid punch or push. But deep down, beneath the layers of hurt and disappointment, as he mentioned, "I—I don't get why [they] can't see. Why they can't see it bothers me. Why do I always have to say it bothers me? You don't have to be super smart or nothing."

D'Angelo and I went upstairs to the main floor to chat with the principal about what happened. Instead, we were met by his mother. Mom, with a sense of regret on her face, told me as I walked up to her to recall the prior situation in which she came back to the school to apologize to him for embarrassing him earlier this morning. She yelled and grabbed him by the front of his shirt. She said, "I blew my top. As an adult, I let my emotions take over, and the least I could do was apologize as a parent. I let my job know that I am spending the rest of my day with my son. Because he would internalize and take it out on others." Me and mom are cool. So, I told her I was proud she did and could recognize that about herself and her son. I told her he was lucky to have her, and she smiled and agreed. She then pulled out her phone to show me D'Angelo's football videos. He ran over in excitement. We laughed. We moved on. I don't think we moved on. But we moved on.

In this case, the mother's aggressive behavior towards D'Angelo in front of his peers and teachers not only reflects her own emotional state but also highlights the power dynamics within the school community. Her verbal assault on D'Angelo can be seen as an expression of frustration, possibly stemming from a perceived lack of control over her son's behavior or a desire to assert dominance in a challenging situation. However, her actions have profound consequences for D'Angelo, as they subject him to humiliation, shame, and feelings of powerlessness in front of his peers and authority figures. Furthermore, the reaction of D'Angelo's teacher exemplifies the diffusion of responsibility phenomenon, a concept where individuals feel less accountable for their actions or inaction when others are present. Despite witnessing D'Angelo being verbally abused, the teacher fails to intervene effectively, citing excuses and attempting to provide context rather than addressing the immediate harm inflicted on the child. This failure to protect D'Angelo perpetuates a sense of isolation and mistrust in the school environment, exacerbating his feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability. The incident underscores the role of social norms and power structures in shaping emotional experiences and expressions. D'Angelo's emotional response – a mixture of rage, embarrassment, shame, and hurt–is not only a personal reaction but also a reflection of broader societal attitudes towards Black children and their perceived behavior. Stoney's mother's use of derogatory language and threats towards D'Angelo reinforces negative stereotypes and contributes to the stigmatization of Black youth as inherently problematic or aggressive. Moreover, D'Angelo's mother's subsequent apology and acknowledgment of her own emotional outburst highlight the social construction of emotions and the importance of emotional regulation within familial

relationships. Her recognition of the impact of her actions on D'Angelo's well-being demonstrates an understanding of the social consequences of emotional expressions and the need for empathy and accountability in interpersonal interactions. The scenario underscores the intricate interplay of social, emotional, and power dynamics within the school environment. Despite the lack of explicit awareness of the disciplinary function of embarrassment, shame, and belittling throughout the school environment, I witnessed his ability, as well as other students' ability, to recover from moments of embarrassment, shame, and belittling by relying heavily on playfulness, silliness, and humor with trusted members of their community. This example of emotions such as embarrassment, shame, and belittling as the foundation of discipline should be explored further in future research.

Finally, it is important to note that many of the students, and those who grow up in similar social and economic contexts, are exposed to practices of embarrassment, shame, and belittling that deeply impact their sense of self as well as how they perceive others who look, think, and sound similar to them. Whereas for teachers, D'Angelo's behavior, as well as the behaviors of other students or feelings based on situations that happen involving D'Angelo, warrant a certain degree of discipline as students like D'Angelo are considered "hardheaded," "disobedient," and "defiant." For many teachers, public embarrassment, shaming, and belittling squanders the child's behavior and the potential behaviors of other students, which become a normalized part of the social milieu. Though I have described the usage of embarrassment, shaming, and belittling, and the labor it causes the student within the school environment, as the stage of institutional grief that came months after a major loss shared by the entire school community, it may be more accurate to think of negative emotions as a perpetual social tool throughout the school year that is employed by teachers as well as students to perpetuate dynamics of control and othering. A distressing incident unfolds in a school hallway, where D'Angelo is subjected to verbal abuse by the mother of another student, Stoney. The mother's behavior towards D'Angelo reflects her own emotional state and highlights the power dynamics within the school community. Her actions have profound consequences for D'Angelo, subjecting him to humiliation, shame, and feelings of powerlessness in front of his peers and teachers. Furthermore, the reaction of D'Angelo's teacher exemplifies the diffusion of responsibility phenomenon, as the teacher fails to intervene effectively, perpetuating a sense of isolation and mistrust for D'Angelo. This incident underscores broader societal attitudes towards Black children and their perceived behavior, contributing to the stigmatization of Black youth as inherently problematic. However, D'Angelo's mother's subsequent apology and acknowledgment of her own emotional outburst demonstrate the importance of emotional regulation and empathy within familial relationships. The scenario underscores the intricate interplay of social, emotional, and power dynamics within the school environment and calls for further exploration of disciplinary practices and their impact on student well-being. Ultimately, the normalization of negative emotions as a means of control within the school environment perpetuates dynamics of othering and underscores the need for more compassionate and supportive approaches to discipline.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores the complex emotional labor experienced by Black children, shedding light on the various factors that shape their emotions and feelings, such as beauty, racial identity, peer interactions, classroom dynamics, discipline culture, parent, and home life. It delves into the interplay of societal, familial, and educational influences that contribute to the emotional experiences of Black students. In the case of Ree, dynamics within and across the classroom became a prominent factor in shaping her emotions and feelings. Ree's behavior fluctuates between bursts of happiness and moments of frustration and distress, which she expresses openly. The teacher's

response to Ree's behavior appears stern and conventional, potentially exacerbating Ree's feelings of isolation and frustration. Ree's revelation about her dark skin complexion adds another layer of complexity to her experiences. She expresses dissatisfaction with her skin color, feeling that it is "too dark," which reflects societal standards of beauty and acceptance. This perception influences her interactions with peers, as she prefers lighter-skinned individuals. Furthermore, Ree's longing for connection is evident throughout the narrative. She seeks attention, understanding, and comfort from adults and peers yet often feels isolated in the classroom. The impact of her father's incarceration also weighs heavily on her emotional development, highlighting the importance of stable and supportive relationships for children facing adversity. The intersectionality of Ree's experiences touches on themes of race, identity, belonging, and the impact of familial circumstances on emotional well-being. Zeal is a student experiencing frustration and perceived injustice in the classroom. His anger stems from a peer budging him in line, leading to disruptive behavior and outbursts directed at his classmates. Despite attempts to communicate his feelings, Zeal's teacher dismisses his concerns, exacerbating his frustration. As Zeal's anger escalates, so does the chaos in the classroom, culminating in a physical altercation where Zeal tackles a peer and pours glue on him. The staff intervenes, but Zeal's anger persists, manifesting as a joyous yet aggressive outburst directed at his teacher and peers. Despite the attention Zeal receives, the underlying issues of perceived injustice and the dynamics of peer interactions remain unresolved. Zeal raises questions about the effectiveness of disciplinary measures and the role of adults in addressing students' emotional needs. Zeek, Dre, Neenah, and Tiffany depict a classroom environment where boredom and irritation spread among students, triggering disruptive behavior and emotional distress. Despite the teacher's efforts to engage the students, a significant portion displays disengagement and restlessness. The teacher's authoritarian approach, characterized by yelling and shaming, exacerbates feelings of fear and hostility, further alienating the students and perpetuating a cycle of negativity. Negative reinforcement tactics, such as public humiliation, reinforce a sense of powerlessness among the students and hinder effective communication and trust between teachers and students. Emotions spread throughout the group, affecting the collective mood and behavior, with the teacher's frustration serving as a catalyst for negative emotions among the students. Despite moments of student solidarity and empathy, the classroom remains fraught with tension and unease.

This scene raises questions about the mechanisms of emotional transmission among students, the role of power dynamics in shaping classroom interactions, and the coping strategies students employ to manage their emotions. D'Angelo describes a distressing incident where a parent verbally abuses a student named D'Angelo in front of his peers and teachers, resulting in feelings of humiliation, shame, and powerlessness. The aggressive behavior of Stoney's mother reflects underlying power dynamics within the school community, highlighting societal attitudes towards Black children and their perceived behavior. Despite witnessing the abuse, D'Angelo's teacher fails to intervene effectively, contributing to a sense of isolation and mistrust in the school environment. The incident underscores the disciplinary function of embarrassment, shame, and belittling in perpetuating control and othering within the school setting. Despite the damaging impact of such practices, students like D'Angelo exhibit resilience through playfulness, silliness, and humor with trusted community members. This section emphasizes the need for further research into the emotional consequences of disciplinary practices and calls for greater empathy and accountability in interpersonal interactions within educational settings. This chapter examines how layers of factors within and outside the school impact Black students' emotional well-being, leading to an understanding of various feelings such as happiness, grief, sadness, rage, belonging, inadequacy, boredom, irritation, alienation, and frustration. Overall, the chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted factors that shape the emotional labor of Black childhoods, highlighting the need for greater understanding and support for Black students' emotional well-being.

In the next section, I delve into the manifestations and implications of disruptions and distractions within educational settings, particularly focusing on how Black students use disruptions and distractions and for what reasons in the classroom. It investigates the various forms of disruption and distractions in the classroom, ranging from physical movements (wiggles) to audible expressions (giggles) and emotional responses (jiggles). The chapter examines the underlying factors contributing to these behaviors, including cultural differences, societal expectations, and educational disparities. Furthermore, it explores how these disruptions and distractions are perceived and managed by teachers, often leading to disproportionate disciplinary actions and negative stereotyping of Black students. Additionally, the chapter discusses the potential consequences of labeling certain behaviors as disruptive, including stigmatization, disengagement from learning, and widening achievement gaps. Additionally, I will show how classroom-based feelings rules such as expectations shape the experiences students have in school. The chapter aims to shed light on the complex dynamics surrounding disruptions and distractions in educational spaces and advocates for more culturally responsive and equitable approaches to supporting Black students' academic success and emotional well-being.

Chapter Seven

Wiggles, Giggles, and Jiggles: An Exploration of Disruptions and Distractions among Black Students in the Classroom

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The classroom is not merely a space for academic instruction but a microcosm of societal dynamics, reflecting the complexities of identity, power, and agency. More specifically, based on my experience as a teacher and mental health practitioner, the classroom is a site of individual and collective well-being and wellness. Within this dynamic environment, Black students often navigate unique challenges and experiences that can impact their engagement, learning, and overall well-being. This dissertation chapter embarks on a journey to understand and unpack the concept and function of disruptions and distractions within the classroom and their meaning across Black students' interactions within educational settings. Drawing upon participant observation and sociological video analysis, this chapter delves into how disruptions manifest among Black students, encompassing overt and subtle forms of distraction. By centering the experiences of Black students, this exploration aims to shed light on the underlying factors contributing to these disruptions, ranging from systemic inequities to cultural dynamics within the classroom. By interrogating the intersections of emotions, identity, and classroom dynamics, this chapter uncovers actionable insights that can inform pedagogical practices, policy-making efforts, and broader initiatives to create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for Black students. As we embark on this exploration, we must recognize the agency, resilience, and potential inherent within Black students, challenging deficit-oriented narratives and amplifying their voices within educational discourse.

Ultimately, this chapter endeavors to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of disruptions and distractions in the classroom, paving the way for more equitable, humanizing, and healing educational experiences for Black students. The intent of this study was to highlight the rich and expansive understanding Black students have of emotions and map their everyday emotional lives. Most importantly, this study examined the social function of emotions in schools—how emotions shape students' interactions and how their interactions shape their emotions. By centering the lives of 20 Black students, we gain deeper insight into their lives, which provides us with a way of understanding their mental health and emotional well-being (i.e., how Black students feel in today's world). This chapter will delve into the two scenes, highlighting major themes regarding disruptions and distractions. Often, discourse on disruptions and distractions focuses on the student, particularly the behaviors that a student expresses in the classroom and their negative impact on the teacher or the whole classroom. However, disruptions or distractions are rarely understood as a sign of teachers' behaviors and emotions, their lack of awareness, their insensitivities, students' lack of interest in activities, students conveying a need, or the well-being of students. Therefore, I will uncover the underlying mechanisms that shape the experiences of Black students within the classroom setting. Drawing upon theories of sociology of emotions, affect

theory and Black placemaking; this exploration will shed light on the social processes that mediate classroom interactions and impact student engagement and well-being by expanding upon the emotional dimensions of disruptions and distractions among Black students. By examining the emotional responses of Black students to various classroom stimuli and interactions, this chapter will highlight how disruptions and distractions can offer us greater insight into the mental health and emotional needs of Black students. First, I descend into the realm of a first-grade classroom, which peels back the layers, exposing the impact of classroom trauma as well as classroom culture on the mental health and emotional well-being of Black first graders. The examination of this trauma unveils the emotional consequences etched by institutional structures on Black students, emphasizing the imperative of creating supportive learning environments. Second, I will focus on a third-grade classroom to highlight the usage of silliness and playfulness in the classroom during a non-preferred classroom activity and the pedagogical practice of the main teacher. Specifically, I will focus on when students use silliness and playfulness and, most importantly, why students use silliness and playfulness in the classroom. Through an interdisciplinary lens, this chapter situates the exploration within the broader context of educational equity and social justice, emphasizing the imperative to address Black students' unique needs and challenges.

"Can you come get me?": Navigating Disruptions, Distractions, and Emotional Dynamics During a Third-Grade Math Lesson

The beginning of my time was spent telling a number of students to get away from me. The room was roaring loudly as the teacher was in the hall talking to a parent who was severely upset, I walked past a clear "I am tired of my baby coming home telling me people in this class are messing with her. Are you going to move her or not?". Three students wanted to spend some time with me to talk about the death of their grandfather. In a few minutes, the students told me that their grandfather died due to a heart attack. I wonder what feelings and thoughts they are having or if the teacher has checked in with the students as each of them had a lanyard around their necks with a picture of their grandfather. The teacher stood in the front of the classroom, calling the names of students who were paying attention, stating, "They are all looking up here and they are showing me that they understand that it is time for us to do math by having their voices at a level zero." Students across the room could care less. Loud thuds, side conversations, grunts, and changing chairs, tables, and feet could be heard clearly. In a soft but stern voice, the teacher attempted to get every student on the same page so there could be a smooth transition to the math activity, but with every attempt, the student ensured that the teacher would not get through the lesson. For what felt like minutes at a time, the teacher would go silent and stare at students who she believed were causing a disruption or being a distraction to the class. Four out of my five focal students are in this classroom.
Students are constantly moving, shaking, wiggling, talking, and humming. As I sat in the back of the classroom, I watched students have difficulty concentrating on the task the teacher is handing out.

With his back towards me, one student leans all the way backward, hands stretched all the way out as if he was engaging in a big stretch, and slaps one hand on his face in annoyance. It showed the class's lack of interest in math and the teacher's difficulty teaching it. One of my focal students, Stoney, looking the completely opposite way of the teacher, moved in his seat as if he had ants in his pants, furiously rubbing his shoe. As the teacher continued through the lesson, a few students could be seen engaging as they shouted answers to the teacher's questions. Stoney danced, moved, jumped, and shacked side to side, triggering an "I am going to wait because I do not have everyone paying attention" from the teacher. However, Stoney was not the only one who was distracted or lost in their own world, as you could hear the loud tapping of hands, pencils, and feet throughout the room. The teacher ensured to call out students whom she believed to be paying

attention at any point she could. Some students sat on their bottoms in their seats while others sat in their seats on their knees. Frustrated by side conversations, the teacher ensured to let students know that they would lose their opportunity to participate in getting items from the school store. With shirts in their mouth, Stoney chewed and chewed on his shirt, uninterested in the activity. One of my focal students turned to me as the class grew louder and louder with the teacher's request to count by 5's. With anguish on her face and hands plugging her ears, she stared and stared. At the same moment, another focal student shouts to the teacher, "Can I go?" the teacher pauses briefly and continues with the lesson. My focal student stared, giving me a head shake and nod to get her out of the classroom. At any point, students would shout at the top of their lungs as they collectively counted by 5's with one student screaming, "15!!!!!" which caused a few students to turn around and look directly at where the sound came from—a student who sat right beside me tapping his fingers against the table and even at one point biting the table. The students actively disengaged during the lesson. As soon as the teacher goes into the details, students can be seen leaning in their chairs, eyes wandering, fidgeting with their hair, or heads lying flat on the table. At one moment, the teacher stated, "Do you see how you are using the factors and skip counting to the answer if you do not know…." with her fingers tapping the whiteboard, the students ignored her completely with her words going through one ear and out of the other. To regain the class's attention, she shouted, "HELLO!!!!" and was immediately met with loud shouts from the students saying, "YES!!!!" with a mixture of random sounds and noises from all over the room. Students could not help themselves as they actively moved, wiggled, and shouted through the classroom.

The student began to become so restless that one of my focal students started to sit on the very edge of her table with her feet on her seat. Annoyed and bored by the class lesson and the constant distraction, students were disengaged and lost in their own worlds or interactions with others. Every moment the teacher turned her head to write on the board, all the students became increasingly silly, laughing at one another's behavior or playing little games. The management of their frustration with other students doesn't come to an end. Jakari constantly stares at me while one of my other focal students chews through a pencil. The frustration and stress of the teacher is apparent. The teacher is obviously exhausted. This is most likely true for my students as well, who either cover their ears, hide, or simply disassociate to get through the day. Concentration, attention, and awareness are nonexistent today. At one point, the normal seats that students sat in seemed so irritating that it was increasingly hard for them to relax or simply be still as the teacher tried to get through their lesson. Not only is the lesson boring or uninteresting, but the seats are uncomfortable and do not allow students to move freely.

The teacher became incredibly upset, handing out left and right minor infractions to students, which required them to get a paper signed and say a few minutes after school. At one point, the teacher mumbled, "Is he distracting you." The student responded, "Yes, he is doing this to me," pointing at his hand that was grabbing at his table, sending the teacher's left hand to rub her forehead. Two students went back and forth over who had caused a distraction, and she was done and exhausted. With an annoyed walk, she slowly walked toward each student's table, where a piece of paper lay. She signed them and stared, "These papers are going home and getting signed, and your parents know what the X's mean." A blank look appeared on their faces as they stared, thinking and wondering what may or may not happen. The teacher could not get a word in as students talked louder and louder. Screams and random dances burst out randomly, causing disruptive laughter and silliness. A lot of emotions are permeating through the room. When expectations are not met, the teacher pulls out the timer, which causes an explosion of no's and blaming of students. Left and right, the teacher's frustration appears as constant reminders and subtle threats of plus and minus, which means students lose time and must get it signed by their parents. Despite it all, math is the center of the conversation. During the tail end of the lesson, one

of my focal students walked towards me, eager to check in and go to the therapeutic room to escape the craziness of the classroom. When I told him to wait, he asked a series of questions. The teacher standing behind him silently stared at him. His body blocked her from my eyes for a second, but as soon as I caught her eye, I encouraged him to return to his seat. As he turned around, he was met by her glare, which sent him straight to the floor. He got on his hands and knees and crawled under table after table after table until he returned to his seat. In silence, the teacher stared at all the students as they wiggled in their seats, shacked, bounced up and down, mumbled to themselves, and stared at me for support.

With the sound of "three minutes left," students exploded out of their seats but were quickly met with a "Lay your heads down on the table." One by one, students put their heads on the table, waiting patiently for their teacher to call them to line up and for the bell to send them to freedom. Math is no longer a focal point or important. If anything, the job is done. A depleted teacher, a half-taught lesson, and freedom. The classroom setting is fraught with tension and frustration, evident from the outset as the narrator navigates through a cacophony of disruptive behaviors and emotional exchanges. The teacher's interactions with a distressed parent underscore the external pressures and demands placed upon educators, setting the stage for heightened emotional responses within the classroom. Within this context, the student's behaviors reflect many emotional states, ranging from restlessness and boredom to frustration and disengagement. The disruption caused by the loss of a family member among several students adds another layer of complexity, highlighting the emotional turmoil experienced by these young learners. The teacher's attempts to regain control of the classroom are met with resistance, as students continue to exhibit disruptive behaviors and express their disinterest in the lesson. Instead of addressing the issue and providing students with an alternative lesson that could obtain their focus and support them in expressing their bodies, the teacher carried on with the lesson. This dynamic illustrates the reciprocal relationship between emotions and behavior, as students' emotional states influence their engagement with academic tasks and their interactions with peers and authority figures.

Furthermore, the classroom's physical environment, including uncomfortable seating arrangements, exacerbates students' restlessness and contributes to their disengagement. This observation aligns with sociological research on the impact of environmental factors on emotional experiences within educational settings. As the lesson progresses, the teacher's frustration mounts, reflected in her increasingly punitive responses to student misbehavior. This escalation highlights the role of power dynamics in shaping emotional interactions within the classroom, as authority figures seek to assert control in the face of perceived disobedience. Despite the teacher's efforts to maintain order, the pervasive sense of chaos and disorganization ultimately undermines the learning environment, rendering the lesson ineffective. This outcome underscores the importance of addressing emotional well-being and classroom management strategies in promoting positive student educational outcomes.

"My Heart was beating really fast; it was about to explode": The Distractions and Disruptions of Classroom Trauma among Black Students

The classroom was normal; students ran around, jumped, bumped into each other, played around, and expressed their inner silliness with the occasional loud giggles and weird eyelids folding. Two of my focal students—Royal and Dante—were present in class. 20 students sat at their tables, some distracted by tabletop interactions, and some focused on the teacher's command. The teacher calls students one by one to line up to transition to their next large group activity. Students were called one by one, and one by one, they found their spots in line. Two non-focal students—one Asian and one Black—stood up and made their way to the line. The Asian student stood up silly,

pushing his chair onto the table. As he wiggled, he found himself colliding with a peer known to have physical outbursts rather than verbal. Without hesitation, the student who was bumped snapped back with a vengeance cocking back both of his arms and, with real force shoving the Asian student.

The push propelled him backward. Students stared as they watched him fall to the ground. As he was falling, he turned his body in hopes of catching himself, but instead, his head met the corner of the cubbies that stretched across the wall of the classroom. A loud thud was instantly met with a loud yelp, which evolved into a scratching cry that sent worry and anxiety throughout the room. His screams were met with globs and spots of blood that covered his hands, forehead, eyes, nose, shirt, floor, tabletop, and some of the clothing of his peers who stood in close proximity to him. The classroom was sent into a frenzy—screams, yelling, the rushing of footsteps, and the shock that covered the faces of each student signaled my eyes to the boy who pushed and my body towards the student who was pushed. The boy who pushed his face was blank, mouth closed, face still, and eye locked onto the incident. He watched the boy as blood continued to pour from his forehead, and students rushed to support the student who was in severe pain. I watched him hyperfocus as the classroom erupted in screams, yelling, and a mixture of fear and anxiety. The teacher's attention—at the time—was focused on setting down her earpiece and microphone on her table. She did not run. Her face was not covered with anxiety. Her body did not radiate with the same sense of urgency in the students' bodies throughout the room. When she was met with the blood, she sent students to run to the office to request the support of the principal and the nurse.

On one knee, I stood by the student's side and attempted to encourage other students to find support. As three students raced out of the classroom with the command from their student in their head, three students raced back in and took it upon themselves to get support. Four adults followed—the principal, nurse, and two behavioral support staff—who were met with the severity of the situation, which naturally appeared on their faces and bodies. In an anxious manner, the principal stood beside the main teacher, requesting information on the incident and what led up to the incident. Students responded by asking no questions. Adults responded by asking too many questions. The nurse's next two meetings requested that I help him pick up the student and bring him to the nurse's office. We walked the child down to the nurse's office, where he sat. His mother was called. When we were able to get him to loosen the grip on his forehead, the appearance of a large gash triggered the calling of the ambulance. With the ambulance on the way, I returned to the classroom—nothing had changed besides where the adults and students stood. The blood remained scattered across the floor. Students had paper towels in their hands but were told not to touch the blood and sit down by the adults. The students were vividly sad, scared, anxious, and concerned for their classmates. The student who pushed the student stood side by side with the principal with a weird smirk on his face. He was face to face with one of the behavioral staff who was face-to-face with the child as he firmly yelled at the student, saying, "Why?...do you understand what you did?" and with the same blank stare on his face, he did not respond. Ten minutes go by, and no one has engaged in a meaningful restorative conversation with the students. With the classroom still in an anxious frenzy, the main teacher made her way to the front of the classroom as two police officers stood in the hallway with the parent of the student who was sent to the hospital. The principal followed out of the classroom with the student who pushed the child. As I followed, I was stopped by a staff member who pulled me aside to talk more in-depth about the incident. She stated a real concern regarding the behavior of the student, mentioning,

> "[that child] is scary to me—you know, you know all the [things] that were going on all the blood, all the police you would think something would like, you know like would have triggered him he would of felt but that little [child] was stoned like it wasn't [anything]…I

> was ease dropping and heard the momma say "well I told him if someone hit him, he has the right to defend himself" and I heard the principal say "okay well that fine on the streets…I totally dig it but when he is at school" He really hurt that little boy. He is so violent."

As time passed, the word passed. More and more people, including students, made their way to view the remanence of the spectacle. The teacher was confused. No words seemed to formulate nor flow from her mouth, just umm's, I am not sure, and I don't know. Despite the unresolved harm and unattended anguish, the room went back to its original state—chairs were pushed back in, students were sitting in their chairs, the blood was removed from the tables and floor, the adults left, and the teacher was back in the front of the classroom with her earpiece in. The students did not go back to their original state. Watching the teacher's distress, I decided to pull her aside and check in to see how she was feeling and where her mind was. When asked, how are you she quickly divulged in a calm demeanor,

> He was so upset. So, I don't know whenever he gets like escalated like I think it is hard for me to like handle the situation when he like when he is going to do what he wants to do regardless of what somebody says. He does it to other teachers and it's like his escalation is like I always have to be on guard like if someone accidently pushes him or somebody because he will like pop off and grab them like he is going to try to hit somebody and I like I have seen it so many times with him and like what do I do in those situations like it is so hard and I have to grab him because he will not stop like everything is red.

With the classroom noise growing, we shifted our focus back onto the class. The classroom is high in energy. The teacher's frustration is high and continuing to increase. With the severity of the incident with two students, the teacher is being impacted but has not taken the time to address the situation with her students. Instead, she moves forward with her intended lesson by reading a book to the students. Students looked completely disconnected. Some blankly stare while others stare off. In the middle of the teacher reading the book, Royal shouts, "There is some blood still right here."

The classroom erupted as students moved their bodies to see where with some flinching at the sight and others making sounds of "ew" from the side. One of my focal students is best friends with the student who was sent to the hospital. He seemed very calm. Calmer than usual as my other focal student was distracted. In the middle of the lesson, two adults were flirting in the back of the classroom. The history between the two is known. The para is obviously on their phone in the middle of the lesson. Students are antsy, distracted, and hurt. Many move within their seats in various ways and both of my focal students struggle. The teacher uses different tactics to gain the attention of the students. With my focal students seeming to be impacted, I took them to the mindful room to get some space. Their engagement in the classroom was very low, but once they made it to the mindful room, their true selves came out. In a somber but excited manner, Royal and Dante made their way up to the therapeutic room, following me side by side. The two boys shuffled into the room, their eyes wide with curiosity. They glanced around at the colorful posters and shelves of books, excited about the possibilities and desire for an opportunity to release the anxiety, stress, and fear that was stirred up by the incident. Recognizing the feelings, I asked each student, "So, do you both want to tell me what happened today?" Dante, the more talkative of the two, began to recount the events of the day in a hesitant voice. "So…So let me tell you what happened today [the boy who was pushed] pushed [the boy who pushed] and then [the boy who pushed] punched [the boy who was pushed] super hard and [made] bleed all right here [pointing at his forehead]" and immediately Royal jumped in shouting, "and he had to go to the hospital." Both boys were physically upset as they recalled the story. When asked how it made them feel, they both

simultaneously shouted "Sad," with Royal shouting, "And Dante is going to [hurt] him, right?" this response encouraged me to inquire more about why they felt the need to retaliate. Dante responded saying, "because [the boy who was pushed] is going to dieeeeeeee. The boy almost died." With the teachers limited response to addressing the situation and students' expectation that the adults won't address the situation causes both boys to defend others as well as themselves. Both boys mentioned the weight they were carrying due to the situation that happened in class, saying that it was difficult for them to watch what had happened. Specifically, the students' blood left a lasting effect on them. Dante stated, "It was on the carpet, on the table. Everywhere, but we cleaned it up." Royal could connect his lack of focus in class to the lasting effects of the situation and how sadness impacted their learning. When asked how other students would respond to the student who pushed them when he returned to school, both of the boys erupted in a rageful "No," following it up with, "Everyone is going to hate him. Everyone has hated him since he was a baby." I could not help but listen intently to both of the boys who had witnessed such a traumatic event. I could sense the worry and anxiety in their voices but see the silliness and playfulness in their behaviors. and he knew that they needed his guidance now more than ever. The boys expressed their behaviors at the moment, stating how they cried and screamed while Royal named how he was about to scream but instead put his hand over his mouth in shock at what happened. The boys used the time in the room to converse with one another about their feelings, thoughts, and perspectives, and as time passed, their mood shifted from a negative state to a positive state. The incident triggered a cascade of emotions throughout the classroom, from silliness and playfulness to shock, worry, anxiety, sadness, fear, frustration, and rage. Emotions like worry and anxiety spread quickly among the students, affecting their behavior and attention. More specifically, each emotion is felt by the individuals directly involved in the incident and the entire classroom community, shaping how individuals behave throughout the environment. All the students, especially Royal and Dante, express concern and empathy for their injured classmates, showing a sense of collective responsibility and care. However, there's also a sense of fear and anticipation about the consequences for the aggressor when he returns to school. Both the students highlighted their and identified the teacher's struggle with emotional regulation in response to the incident. While some students react emotionally, others, like Royal and Dante, attempt to regulate their emotions, albeit with difficulty.

Moreover, the incident reveals power dynamics within the classroom, with the aggressor exerting physical power over his peer. The response from authority figures, like the teacher and principal, also reflects power dynamics as they navigate their roles in managing the situation. The reactions of different individuals within the classroom, such as students, teachers, and support staff, highlight the complexities of group dynamics. Some groups, like the students, respond emotionally, while others, like the adults, try to maintain control and order. The institutional response to the incident is fragmented and ineffective, lacking coordination and follow-up. The event highlighted the school system's shortcomings in addressing complex emotional and social issues, as well as the need for more comprehensive support and intervention strategies. Ultimately, signaling, as well as creating social norms around violence, aggression, and responsibility, shape how individuals and groups respond to the incident. The expectation that adults will address the situation contrasts with the student's perception that adults won't intervene effectively. It is important to note that some adults take immediate action, while others, like the teacher, appear unsure or overwhelmed by the situation. The lack of a meaningful restorative conversation reflects broader institutional shortcomings in addressing conflicts and repairing harm within the school community. Rather than understanding and reconciliation, the focus on punishment and discipline perpetuates the dynamics of oppressive disciplinary actions and highlights the lack of emotional awareness and understanding of adults. The role of emotional support students provide is crucial in noting that students actively help one another process their emotions and experiences. Additionally, the mindful room serves as a

space for the two students to express themselves and seek comfort amid the chaos of the classroom. Both the boys were playful but fully engaged in expressing their authentic feelings and emotions.

With the bell ringing, both boys raced down the stairs. They laughed and joked their way to the cafeteria. As I reflect on the incident, it raises important questions about how adults and schools can create environments where all children, particularly Black children, have the right to be, express themselves, and heal fully. It calls for a commitment to creating inclusive, supportive, and emotionally literate educational environments that prioritize the well-being and empowerment of all students. Ultimately, addressing students' complex emotional and social needs requires a collective effort from educators, administrators, and policymakers to create a more just and equitable world for all.

"1…2…3… eyes on me": An Exploration of Playfulness and Silliness among Black Students

The classroom lights were completely off, and a number of students were sitting at their tables with their heads lying flat on the table. The teacher calls students she believes are showing her they are ready to sit quietly on the rug. She smoothly walks the room with a calm demeanor, with her earpiece and microphone to enhance the projection of her voice. She walks in an ordering fashion, calling students to the front of the classroom to sit on the carpet. The classroom is a traditional square shape. With three long tables placed in three neat rows. The tables sit four students at a time. When requested, students moved but not quietly. Random noises can be heard throughout the room, from tapping fingers on the table to moving chairs to side comments from different students. Within minutes, the teacher made her way over to her desk, where the light switch was, and turned the lights back on, brightening the room. One of my focal students once called to the front of the class and took it as an opportunity to request that I "take him," meaning allowing him to have some time in the therapeutic room to relax and watch a movie. He approached me with a soft but questioning face. With the beam of the classroom shining off his light brown skin, eyes wide open, and mouth slightly opened, he begged me to take him. No, after no rang from my mouth, but it did not persuade him enough to accept, but after a "Boy, go sit down and learn" with one hand anxiously fidgeting in his pocket, he gently turned and headed towards his seat. The teacher in the front of the room faced the smart board where a reading lesson appeared. 18 students sat on the carpet. Both of my focal students are in the classroom today. Dante is sitting in his chair while Royal is on the floor.

While Royal sat on his knees, the teacher asked the class for help but was distracted as she saw students not sitting appropriately or paying attention. With the indirect but direct request, Royal sat on his bottom crisscross apple sauce but turned directly in front of me to the right side of the classroom. At this moment, the teacher stated, "I love that [some students] are crisscross apple sauce and facing forwards." Without a care in the world or awareness of the teacher's request, Royal remained turned towards me with a huge, silly, goofy grin with his two front teeth missing across his face, staring directly at me. The teacher jumped back and forth from her lesson to attempting to get other students to sit crisscross apple sauce and face forward. Dante sat in his chair but turned his body so he could lean on the table facing away from the teacher. He mysteriously played with an item on the table, moving his hand from his mouth back to the table and back to his mouth. Royal twitched and wiggled as he continued to stare at me. Dante now has turned his body towards me.

With Royal and Dante staring at me, the teacher pressed on with her lesson, stopping every few minutes and sometimes seconds to remind students to listen. In the corner of my eye, I could finally make out what Dante was putting in his mouth—an eraser from the end of a pencil. Chewing and chomping, he stares with a lack of interest in the lesson and boredom on his face. Other students sitting on the carpet wiggled, moved around, and played with each other subtly as the

teacher attempted to get through the reading lesson. In the middle of every word the teacher uttered, she was quickly drawn back to the students' behaviors and eagerly committed to addressing the behaviors. Sitting still, on their bottoms, quiet, and facing the front of the classroom signaled a readiness to learn. Anything outside of that signaled an unwantedness to learn or a lack of focus on the task. Teaching seems to be about control, management, and regulation. Teachers thrive off students' responses, eye contact, and the still bodies of each student. She said, "I love that X and Y one sitting crisscross facing me." While one of my focal students is staring at me, making silly and smiling faces. To make a point, my student completely turned his body and sat perfectly before me as the main teacher requested. With a silly and goofy grin, the student stared. The teacher, who is so concerned about everything from body posture to picking fingers or fingernails to students fidgeting, was constantly distracted by the students' sounds, body language, and feelings. Between her distraction from students and trying to teach the lesson, the class or a few students began to unravel. My focal students were not focused and showed a lot of boredom. A lot of wiggles. Within seconds, the teacher jumps from teaching to trying to manage the students' behaviors near her, ignoring the students out of her sight.

Dante's and Royal's friends were crawling across the classroom using the chair as a turtle shell. Royal smoothly and quietly grabs the leg of the chair, and both Royal and their friend begin to tug. His peer, still crawling, realizes he cannot move as he is yanked back at every attempt to push forward. Feeling the grip and tug of Royal, his friend repositions himself, grabbing one of the legs on the chair. They struggled as the two pulled. Tugging back and forth. The teacher, lost in correcting other students and trying to get through the lesson, does not see the two students pulling the chair. Dante gets out of his seat quietly and walks over to grab ahold of the chair. The teacher used to call and respond as a method, "1…2…3 eyes on me," to try and gain the class's full attention. There aren't many side conversations or unnecessary noise, but the teacher continues to reinforce her expectations, blurting out as a few students sat on their knees to "sit crisscross apple sauce and be ready to do." She then began to name off the students who were showing her they were paying attention but, most importantly, following the expectations that she set out for the class.

Stillness is a desired outcome. The three boys pulled as the teacher attempted to get through her lesson. Students in the class watch the tug-of-war match, smiling and laughing silently. Dante and their friend pulled hard; Royal, feeling as if he was losing grip, realigned himself, grabbing one chair leg in his right hand and the other in his left hand. The strength of Dante and their friend sent Royal flat on his belly, fully stretched out. The teacher trying to make progress through the lesson was fully unaware. Royal, Dante, and their friend weren't the only ones distracted. While on the carpet, other students played with their shirts, played in their hair, and picked at each other's feet. One student lay playing with his fingers, another playing with a few stranded barrettes, another facing his peers, making faces and sticking their tongue out, others ripping up pieces of paper, and others were lost in their own imagination. The three boys continued to tug and pull each other quietly. The teacher was still unaware as she lost her focus between teaching and managing the class.

As their eyes caught mine, they immediately dropped the chair and scattered back to their assigned seating. Dante ran back to his chair. Royal rolled back to his spot on the carpet, and their friend snuggled himself back under the chair and continued to crawl across the room. At the same moment, the gentle scatter caught the attention of the teacher, who slowly uttered, "Oooppp… I see a lot of our friends who won't know what to do." She bent over to finally take pieces of paper that were being ripped up by three students sitting in front of her. Not even a minute passed before Royal, licking his lips, could resist another opportunity to grab ahold of the chair that lay upon his friend's back. His attention back on his friend, Royal scooted towards the chair, and with swiftness, he grabbed ahold. Royal and his friend tugged back and forth as the teacher stared. She watched them tug. They watched her watch them tug. The noise in the classroom grew from farts to burps to

laughs to side conversations. The teacher was distracted from left to right. Building the courage, she moved toward Royal and his friend, grabbing the chair and stating, "I am going to take this; this is a distraction and not a good choice." Tug of war has ended sadly, but the distractions and disruptions grew as other students became increasingly antsy. Silly, playful frustration and complaints filled the room. The room of students buzzed with high energy, boredom, and silliness. Play or playfulness is an obvious tool students use constantly to deal with the environment around them.

The teacher's attempts to establish order and control reflect the dynamics of conformity and obedience. Students must adhere to specific behaviors (sitting still, facing forward) as the teacher dictates. However, not all students comply, indicating resistance to authority and norms. The classroom's implicit feeling rules regarding behavior, such as sitting quietly and attentively. Students who deviate from these norms (e.g., Royal and Dante) face corrective actions from the teacher, highlighting the tension between conformity and individual expression. The teacher's interactions with students vary, from authoritative commands ("sit crisscross apple sauce and be ready to do.") to attempts at persuasion ("I love that X and Y…"). These interactions influence students' behaviors and emotional responses. The interactions among students, such as the tug of war over the chair, reflect peer dynamics and power struggles within the group. The classroom serves as a microcosm of social interactions, emotional experiences, and cognitive processes, most importantly, how students engage playfully to navigate difficult or non-preferred activities.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I provide three important themes for understanding distractions and disruptions within the classroom. First, the chapters vividly depict the complex emotional dynamics and disruptive behaviors observed during a third-grade math lesson. The classroom environment is characterized by restlessness, disengagement, and a lack of focus among the students. Despite the teacher's attempts to establish order and facilitate learning, students display a range of disruptive behaviors, including fidgeting, talking, and moving about the classroom. I observed students struggling to concentrate on the math lesson, with many exhibiting boredom and frustration. Amidst the chaos, I encountered students grappling with personal emotions and challenges, such as losing a family member. These emotional struggles add another layer of complexity to the classroom dynamics, highlighting the importance of addressing students' emotional well-being in the educational context. Moreover, the teacher's efforts to regain control of the classroom are met with resistance, as students continue to act out and express their disinterest in the lesson. Despite the teacher's punitive responses to student misbehavior, the disruptive atmosphere persists, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the lesson. The intricate interplay between emotions, behavior, and the classroom environment is evident. The physical layout of the classroom, including uncomfortable seating arrangements, exacerbates students' restlessness and contributes to their disengagement. Meanwhile, the teacher's frustration mounts as she struggles to assert control in the face of perceived distractions and disruptions.

Second, this chapter delves into the harrowing incident that occurred in a third-grade classroom, leaving a lasting impact on the emotional well-being of the students, particularly focusing on the experiences of two focal students, Royal and Dante. The classroom, initially filled with typical youthful energy and playfulness, quickly descended into chaos when a physical altercation ensued between two students, resulting in one being seriously injured. I vividly describe the aftermath of the incident, with blood scattered across the floor and students in a state of complex emotions such as shock, sadness, fear, distress, and silliness. Despite the severity of the situation, the teacher's response appears subdued, reflecting a lack of preparedness or emotional readiness to handle such crises. Meanwhile, students grapple with a range of emotions, from worry and anxiety to sadness and

fear, as they witness the trauma unfold before them. The power dynamics within the classroom become apparent as the aggressor stands alongside the principal with a sense of defiance while the injured student receives care from adults and peers. Also, this section explores the emotional experiences of Royal and Dante, who struggle to process their feelings of sadness, worry, and anger in the aftermath of the incident. Despite their attempts to regulate their emotions, both boys find solace in each other's company, seeking comfort and support in the mindful room. Lastly, this chapter provides a detailed exploration of the dynamics of playfulness and silliness among Black students in a classroom setting, examining the interactions between students and the teacher, as well as among peers. This section unfolds in a classroom environment where the teacher strives to establish control and order while students exhibit behaviors that deviate from the expected norms of attentiveness and stillness. The teacher's attempts to regulate student behavior reflect the social psychology of emotions, as she employs various strategies to enforce conformity and stillness. From authoritative commands to attempts at persuasion, the teacher's interactions shape the emotional atmosphere of the classroom. Students who resist or deviate from the prescribed behaviors face corrective actions, highlighting the tension between conformity and individual expression. The interactions among students, such as the tug of war over the chair, reveal the complex dynamics of peer relationships and power struggles within the group. Through playful and silly behaviors, students navigate the challenges of the classroom environment, finding ways to express themselves and assert their agency. The classroom is a microcosm of social interactions, emotional experiences, and cognitive processes. Despite the teacher's efforts to maintain control, students engage in playful interactions that reflect their efforts to cope with boredom, frustration, and the constraints of the educational environment.

This chapter underscores the importance of addressing students' emotional needs and implementing effective classroom management strategies to create a positive learning environment. It underscores the importance of addressing students' complex emotional and social needs through collective efforts from educators, administrators, and policymakers to create a more just and equitable world for all. Also, it sheds light on the importance of understanding the role of playfulness and silliness in students' emotional experiences and social interactions. By acknowledging and supporting students' emotional well-being and recognizing and validating students' need for expression and agency, educators can foster more inclusive and holistic learning environments and promote positive social and emotional skills that foster healing for all students, particularly those from marginalized communities.

Chapter Eight: Towards a Holistic, Humanizing, and Culturally Liberating Care Approach: Advancing Research and Practice for Social Change

The treatment of Black children in society reflects systemic neglect, impacting their emotional well-being due to societal attitudes and anti-Black racism. These factors marginalize Black children, shaping their emotional experiences and perceptions. Understanding these impacts is crucial for addressing the emotional well-being and mental health needs of Black children effectively. Despite cultural pressures, Black children utilize emotions as tools of resistance, finding joy and connection among each other. Through playful storytelling, they reclaim agency over their humanity. Emotions like joy, rage, compassion, and love fuel their dreams for a more equitable society. Black children engage in self-care to prioritize their emotional well-being amidst societal neglect. Schools, as vital sites for Black students, often fail to provide a supportive environment due to hostile policies and pedagogical practices. Investing in the mental health of Black students is essential for building inclusive educational environments. My research at the Academy of M.F. Nelson provided insight into the emotional lives of Black students and aimed to foster an understanding of how social interactions shape their emotions. This study celebrates the strengths of Black students and seeks to create a more holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating educational environment that values their experiences. Ultimately, the goal is to foster a more holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating educational environment that acknowledges and values the experiences of Black children. This chapter first outlines the main themes of the study and maps the importance of the research and provides insight and recommendations for practice, theory, policy, and school-based mental health. Finally, it explores the future direction of research on this important topic.

Implications Unbounded: Practice, Theory, Policy, & School-Based Mental Health Interventions

This study holds significant implications across various domains, including practice, theory, policy, and school-based mental health interventions. Its impact extends beyond conventional understandings within emotion science and emotional development research, providing valuable insights into the emotional lives of Black children in educational settings. Grounded in humanizing their experiences, the study highlights the multifaceted nature of their emotions and their pivotal role in both reproducing and reducing inequality within educational environments. The implications of this research are manifold and crucial for understanding and supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of Black children in educational settings. This study focuses solely on Black children's emotions and the various factors that shape their emotional experiences. The findings build upon existing literature by addressing the gaps in understanding Black students' emotional experiences within educational settings. The study provides a nuanced understanding of the emotional experiences of Black children by highlighting the multifaceted nature of their emotions.

Acknowledging the influence of cultural norms, racial dynamics, and social environments, the findings challenge the notion that children's emotions exist in isolation from their cultural and contextual backgrounds. This underscores the importance of considering these factors in understanding and supporting the emotional well-being of Black children, advocating for more culturally responsive approaches. Through individual narratives and interactions, the study explores the intersectionality of race, gender, space, place, and identity in shaping the emotional experiences of Black children, calling for a holistic understanding of the factors influencing their emotional development. By examining individual narratives, the study reveals the richness and complexity of emotional experiences among Black children, challenging simplistic notions of emotional comprehension and expression that is apparent across conventional research on emotions. By acknowledging the influence of cultural norms, racial dynamics, and social environments, the findings challenge the notion that children's emotions exist in isolation from their cultural and contextual backgrounds. It emphasizes the importance of considering these factors in understanding the emotional lives of Black children and calls for more culturally responsive approaches to supporting their emotional well-being. This study addresses the underdeveloped literature on elementary school-aged Black children's emotions and their relationship to social interactions and behavior. It sheds light on how racial, sociocultural, and political mechanisms within schools significantly influence how Black children understand, express, and regulate their emotions. Providing insights into their everyday emotional lives and contextualizing their emotional well-being within broader sociocultural, racial, and political forces. In other words, this study highlights the complex ways emotions play a pivotal role in the processes that reproduce and reduce inequality in the everyday lives of Black children in educational settings. Understanding how emotions shape the experiences of Black children in education is crucial for addressing inequality. By recognizing the role of emotions, we can develop inclusive practices and address systemic issues to create supportive learning environments for all students.

The results of this study will serve as a guide for (1) educators and practitioners in creating an educational environment where Black children feel a sense of belongingness, (2) educators can better understand, assess, and implement interventions that support Black children's well-being and mental health, especially when taking to consideration the Black experience, (3) encourage a shift in pedagogical practices to center more humanizing and social-cultural appropriate practices and interventions to support Black children (e.g., healing practices, play therapy, culturally relevant curricula), and (4) understanding the complexity of emotions by contributing to a comprehensive and integrative model on emotions. Understanding the social and emotional development of Black children is crucial for implementing effective strategies to support their mental health. This research critically impacts understanding and supporting Black children's healthy social and emotional development in education spaces. In the section below, I will outline the practice, theory, policy, and intervention implications of the study. Also, I outline the future direction of research on this important topic.

Implications for Practice & Pedagogy

Students' mental health and emotional well-being, particularly those from marginalized communities, are critical across educational spaces. This essay delves into the implications of research that explores the emotional experiences of Black children in school settings, shedding light on the need for deeper understanding and culturally responsive support systems. Understanding the nuanced emotional experiences of Black students is essential for effective support. Detailed narratives offer invaluable insights for practitioners and educators striving to create inclusive,

supportive environments where Black children can thrive emotionally. The research underscores the multifaceted nature of emotions among Black students, shaped by various social factors such as family dynamics, peer relationships, societal expectations, and cultural influences. Despite lacking formal education on emotions, Black students demonstrate robust understanding and employ diverse coping mechanisms. Individual narratives illustrate how environmental factors significantly influence emotional development, underscoring the need for supportive relationships and culturally responsive interventions. Challenges within educational settings exacerbate emotional labor for Black children. Classroom dynamics, disciplinary practices, and societal biases contribute to feelings of isolation and frustration. Teachers' responses to disruptive behaviors often lack empathy and fail to address underlying emotional needs, perpetuating cycles of tension and disengagement.

Moreover, incidents of trauma, such as physical altercations, further highlight the importance of proactive support systems to address students' emotional well-being. Despite barriers, Black children demonstrate agency and strength through playfulness and seeking connection with peers, teachers, and parents. The narratives of individual students, such as Dre, D'Angelo, Jade, Surae, Ree, Zeal, and others, illustrate how environmental factors significantly influence emotional development. From familial dynamics to societal expectations, each student's emotional experiences are deeply intertwined with their surroundings. For instance, Jade copes with her father's absence due to incarceration, while D'Angelo navigates societal expectations surrounding masculinity. These experiences underscore the need for supportive relationships and culturally responsive interventions to promote emotional well-being. The research exposes challenges within educational settings that exacerbate emotional labor for Black children. The findings call for a paradigm shift in educational practices to prioritize emotional well-being. Culturally responsive pedagogies, trauma-informed approaches, and restorative practices can support emotional development. The research on Black students' emotions provides invaluable insights that can inform and transform teaching practices. Educators should recognize and validate students' emotional expressions, prioritize fostering connections, and integrate emotional literacy into the curriculum. By embracing culturally responsive approaches, prioritizing supportive relationships, integrating emotional literacy education, adopting trauma-informed practices, and promoting equity and anti-bias education, educators can create nurturing learning environments that uplift and empower Black students. Addressing systemic inequities and biases within educational settings is crucial for promoting mental health and emotional well-being Black students. Ultimately, by prioritizing their emotional well-being, educators contribute to fostering their overall flourishing.

Implications for Theory

Theoretically, this research challenges conventional notions of emotional comprehension and expression among Black children, advancing a nuanced understanding of children's emotional lives within educational spaces. By delving into the multifaceted emotional landscapes of Black students, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how children, particularly those from marginalized communities, navigate and express their emotions. It challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about their emotional capabilities, emphasizing their richness, complexity, and resilience. The research highlights the importance of considering cultural and racial contexts in which children's emotions develop, challenging the notion that emotions exist in isolation from social, familial, and cultural factors. It underscores the agency and autonomy of Black children in navigating their emotional experiences, challenging paternalistic views. By recognizing the influence of cultural norms, racial dynamics, and social environments, the study advances a theoretical perspective emphasizing the sociocultural construction of emotions. Furthermore, the research

sheds light on the role of institutional factors, such as school environments and disciplinary practices, in shaping children's emotional experiences. It emphasizes the need for more culturally responsive and equitable approaches to supporting students' emotional needs, aligning with critical theories of emotion. By exploring the complex emotional dynamics within educational spaces, the research provides valuable insights into how environmental factors influence children's emotional well-being. Moreover, the research underscores the significance of addressing students' emotional needs and implementing holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating care practices to support their mental health. It challenges outdated assumptions and provides a more nuanced understanding of the emotional lives of Black children within educational settings. By centering the cultural, social, and institutional contexts in which emotions are experienced and expressed, the study contributes to promoting more inclusive and equitable approaches to supporting children's emotional well-being.

It is important to note that this dissertation advances an integrative framework on emotions and Black placemaking by providing insights into the complex relationship between emotional experiences, spatial contexts, and socio-racial-cultural dynamics. Centering Black children's voices and experiences, advances these theories to more effectively address the unique emotional needs and challenges faced by Black communities, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and equitable theoretical frameworks. Overall, this research offers valuable insights that can enrich theoretical perspectives in emotion science, mental health, emotional development, and social and emotional learning research, challenging outdated assumptions and providing a more nuanced understanding of the emotional lives of Black children within educational settings. This research underscores the need for a more holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating care approach to SEL. Traditional SEL frameworks often lack cultural relevance or grounding in mental health and emotion science, which can result in overlooking or misinterpreting the emotional experiences of Black students. By highlighting the complex interplay of familial, societal, and personal factors that shape the emotional lives of Black children, this research challenges the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to SEL. Instead, it calls for SEL programs and interventions that consider the cultural and racial contexts in which emotional development occurs. Moreover, this research emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and validating the emotional experiences of Black children. By giving voice to the emotional narratives of Black students, the study challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about the emotional capacities of children from marginalized communities.

Contrary to prevailing beliefs that children lack the ability to articulate or comprehend complex emotions, this research demonstrates that Black children possess a rich and nuanced understanding of emotions. This challenges educators and policymakers to reevaluate their assumptions about children's emotional capabilities and to provide more comprehensive support for emotional development. By examining the ways in which societal expectations, cultural norms, and institutional practices shape children's emotional lives, the research provides valuable insights into the complexities of SEL in diverse contexts. In addition, this research underscores the importance of addressing the emotional labor experienced by Black children. By exploring the factors that contribute to emotional distress, such as racism, discrimination, and socioeconomic challenges, the study calls attention to the need for greater support and resources to promote the emotional well-being of Black students. This includes implementing more equitable disciplinary practices, providing culturally responsive counseling services, and fostering positive relationships between students and adults. This research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of SEL theories, particularly in relation to Black children. By centering the voices and experiences of Black students, the study challenges existing paradigms and offers valuable insights that can inform the development of more culturally relevant and inclusive SEL programs and interventions. By, integrating an analysis of the structures that shape a child's ecological environment (e.g., schools and neighborhood) provides critical insights into how various structures shaping the everyday emotional lives of marginalized

children, particularly Black children. Ultimately, this research has the potential to lead to more equitable outcomes for Black students and to promote their social and emotional well-being in educational settings and beyond.

Implications for Policy on Black Children's Mental Health

The findings of this research highlight the urgent need for policy changes to address systemic inequalities across educational spaces revealing how deeply ingrained structural inequities affect the emotional well-being and mental health of Black children. By demonstrating the specific emotional challenges faced by Black students—such as increased anxiety, stress, and feelings of exclusion—these findings underscore the necessity for targeted interventions and reforms. Prioritizing culturally responsive interventions can promote emotional well-being and healthier social and emotional development among Black children. By contextualizing Black students' emotional well-being within broader sociocultural, racial, and political forces, policymakers can develop inclusive policies that support their emotional needs, fostering more equitable educational environments. Recent years have seen a growing recognition of the importance of addressing children's emotional well-being in school settings. This study is particularly crucial for Black students, who often face unique challenges impacting their mental health and emotional development. It sheds light on the complex emotional dynamics experienced by Black students in schools, providing insights to inform policies and practices aimed at improving their well-being. Through detailed narratives, the research reveals the significant role of various social factors in shaping the emotional landscape of Black students, challenging misconceptions about their emotional capabilities. One key finding is the robust emotional awareness exhibited by Black students from a young age, challenging the misconception that children from marginalized communities lack emotional understanding. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and validating the emotional experiences of Black students, advocating for inclusive approaches to supporting them in schools. It also sheds light on the impact of familial dynamics, societal expectations, and disciplinary practices on their emotional well-being. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of recognizing and validating the emotional experiences of Black students.

It emphasizes the need for a deeper understanding of how Black children comprehend, articulate, and regulate their emotions, challenging outdated and limited perspectives on their emotional capabilities. The research underscores the importance of addressing students' emotional needs and implementing effective classroom management strategies to create positive learning environments. It highlights the significance of playfulness and silliness as coping mechanisms for Black students in navigating classroom challenges. By understanding the complex emotional dynamics experienced by Black students and recognizing their agency in managing their emotional well-being, policymakers and educators can develop more equitable policies and practices. Policies must be developed to create more inclusive, supportive, and culturally responsive educational environments. Such changes might include implementing anti-racist curricula, providing comprehensive mental health support, training educators in cultural competency, and ensuring equitable resource allocation. Addressing these emotional dimensions is crucial for dismantling systemic barriers, promoting equity, and fostering an educational system that prioritizes the emotional well-being of Black students contributing to creating a more just and empowering educational system for all students.

Implications for School-Based Mental Health Interventions

Educators can utilize insights from this research to enhance their understanding of and interventions for supporting the mental health of Black children. Tailoring interventions to their specific needs while recognizing emotions' importance in educational spaces is crucial. By dismantling systemic inequalities and adopting culturally responsive approaches, interventions can create supportive environments for Black children'\'s emotional well-being. The research provides insights into Black children's emotional experiences in schools, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions to support them. Drawing from student narratives, such as Dre, D'Angelo, Jade, and Surae, who navigate various challenges, the research underscores addressing Black students' complex emotional needs in schools. Understanding how students comprehend, express, and manage emotions can inform the development and implementation of school-based mental health centers, wellness rooms, or therapeutic rooms.

Firstly, the research stresses culturally responsive approaches. Interventions should incorporate culturally relevant practices, such as providing healing spaces for familial connections, to resonate with Black students. For example, providing space for healing and familial connections, as seen in Surae's coping mechanisms, can be integrated into wellness rooms to offer students avenues for emotional support that align with their cultural backgrounds. Secondly, emotional expression and validation within school settings are crucial. Safe spaces for articulating feelings, like peer support groups or therapeutic sessions, can empower students to express themselves authentically. For instance, implementing peer support groups or therapeutic healing sessions facilitated by trusted adults can foster a sense of belonging and validation for students like D'Angelo, who express a desire for understanding and validation in navigating societal expectations. Lastly, positive role models and supportive relationships play a significant role. Healing-oriented therapists can create safe spaces for processing emotions, while mentorship programs or affinity groups led by Black educators can provide guidance and a sense of belonging. Therapeutic interventions can focus on strengthening these relationships, whether through mentorship programs, support groups, or individual counseling sessions. Collaborative efforts between educators, counselors, and community stakeholders are essential for developing comprehensive support systems addressing the diverse needs of Black students. By prioritizing culturally responsive interventions, fostering positive relationships, and developing support systems, schools can become nurturing environments supporting Black students' emotional well-being and academic success. The research underscores the importance of holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating care approaches in addressing the emotional needs of Black students, such as Jade's father's incarceration or Dre's exposure to violence and poverty. Interventions within mental health centers or wellness rooms can incorporate holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating care practices that prioritize joy, awe, and human flourishing, allowing students to process and heal from their experiences in a supportive environment. Through collaborative efforts between educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals, schools can become nurturing environments where Black students feel seen, heard, and supported on their journey toward emotional wellness.

This may involve implementing restorative justice practices, transformative social-emotional learning curricula, and community partnerships to create inclusive and equitable school environments that promote emotional resilience and academic success. The findings provide valuable insights into the emotional experiences of Black children in school settings and underscore the importance of tailored interventions to support their mental health and emotional well-being. By incorporating culturally responsive practices, providing opportunities for emotional expression and

validation, fostering positive relationships, implementing holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating care approaches, and developing comprehensive support systems, school-based mental health centers, wellness rooms, or therapeutic rooms can enhance the emotional development and well-being of Black students in schools. In conclusion, the research offers a comprehensive understanding of the emotional lives of Black students in schools and provides a roadmap for developing targeted therapy, healing, and support services across educational spaces.

Future Research Directions

Black people, especially Black children within Black communities, have collectively found various ways to continue to resist, survive, and thrive amid anti-Black violence. However, not only does there tend to be an overemphasis on the violence and harm endured by Black children, but scholars tend to understudy how Black children thrive and flourish under such oppressive, anti-Black conditions. Black children's beauty, joy, and playfulness tend to be excluded from scholarship across psychology, social work, and education. The emotional well-being of Black children in educational settings is a critical yet understudied area that warrants further exploration and understanding. While existing research has shed light on various aspects of Black children's emotional experiences, there remains a need for future research projects to delve deeper into this complex and multifaceted topic. In this section, I outline several key areas for future research that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional lives of Black children and inform targeted interventions to support their well-being in schools. Although Black children are navigating a deeply anti-Black society, we need more research that explores the ways anti-Black racism sets the context for which Black children understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions within social interactions. We need more emotion research that takes the role of racialization, culture, and society seriously, as it can lead to necessary insights that can improve the well-being of marginalized communities, especially Black children. Grappling with how Black children understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions within their social interactions can move us beyond the universality of emotions discourse. In doing so, this study will support schools in designing educational spaces and curricula that will center the lived experiences of Black children, support Black children's learning, and, more importantly, their social-emotional development and well-being. One promising avenue for future research is the implementation of longitudinal studies to track the emotional development of Black children over time. By following cohorts of Black children from early childhood through adolescence and adulthood, researchers can gain valuable insights into how various factors, such as family dynamics, societal expectations, and institutional practices, shape their emotional resilience and coping strategies. Longitudinal studies can provide a holistic understanding of the long-term impact of these factors on Black children's emotional well-being and inform the development of interventions tailored to different developmental stages.

Another critical area for future research is exploring intersectionality and identity development in shaping Black children's emotional experiences. Research could investigate how factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other identities intersect to influence emotional development in educational settings. By examining the complex interplay of multiple dimensions of identity, researchers can better understand the unique challenges and strengths that shape Black children's emotional lives and inform culturally responsive interventions that honor their diverse identities. Future research projects should also focus on examining the influence of cultural and contextual factors on Black children's emotional well-being. By exploring how cultural practices, traditions, and beliefs shape emotional development, researchers can better understand

how Black children express and manage their emotions in diverse cultural contexts. Further, exploring the influence of cultural and contextual factors on Black children's emotional experiences can provide insights into the diverse ways in which emotions are understood, expressed, and managed within different cultural contexts. By tracing the legacies of slavery, segregation, and systemic racism, the study would explore how these historical traumas continue to impact the emotional well-being of Black children today, as well as the role of cultural traditions and community resilience in fostering emotional resilience. Additionally, investigating the impact of community and neighborhood factors on Black children's emotional experiences can provide insights into how social and environmental factors contribute to their experiences of joy, awe, and human flourishing in diverse cultural and geographical settings.

Understanding the coping strategies employed by Black children in response to anti-Black racism and other forms of daily harm is another important area for future research. Researchers can identify protective factors that promote emotional resistance by examining how Black children draw on cultural strengths, community resources, and interpersonal relationships to navigate challenges. This knowledge can inform the development of interventions that build on Black children's existing strengths and support their ability to cope with stressors in educational settings. Harnessing technology and digital interventions to deliver culturally responsive mental health support to Black children can expand access to care and provide tailored interventions. Research could explore the feasibility and effectiveness of digital platforms, mobile apps, and virtual reality tools in addressing the emotional needs of Black children in educational settings. This research will investigate the role of literature and representation in shaping Black children's mental health and emotional well-being.

By analyzing portrayals of Black childhood in literature, media, and popular culture, the study would explore how representations of race, identity, and emotion impact Black children's self-perception, sense of belonging, and mental health outcomes. Additionally, the research would examine the potential therapeutic benefits of engaging with diverse and affirming narratives that reflect and validate Black children's experiences. Exploring the role of community partnerships and collaborations in supporting Black children's emotional well-being can identify innovative approaches to address systemic barriers and promote equity in educational settings. Research could investigate how schools, mental health providers, community organizations, and families can collaborate to create holistic support systems for Black children. Examining the role of parent and family involvement in supporting Black children's emotional well-being can highlight the importance of collaborative partnerships between schools and families. Research could investigate how parent education programs, family therapy, and community-based interventions can strengthen familial relationships and promote positive emotional outcomes for Black children. Lastly, future research should also focus on evaluating the impact of teacher training and professional development programs on educators' ability to support Black children's emotional well-being. By examining the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogies, trauma-informed approaches, and restorative practices in promoting positive emotional outcomes for Black students, researchers can identify best practices for supporting Black children's emotional development in schools. Additionally, investigating the role of teacher-student relationships and classroom climate in shaping Black children's emotional experiences can provide insights into how educators can create supportive learning environments that foster emotional well-being.

In conclusion, the emotional well-being of Black children in educational settings is a critical yet understudied area that warrants further exploration and understanding. By grappling with how Black children understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions within their social interactions, we can move beyond the conventional to critical discourse on emotions. This deeper understanding can inform interventions that support schools in designing educational spaces and curricula centered around the lived experiences of Black children, thereby fostering their learning,

social-emotional development, and overall well-being. This dissertation illuminates promising future research that disrupts anti-Black racism in schools by centering the immediate importance of holistic, humanizing, and culturally liberating therapeutic support in fostering learning, mental health, and well-being. In addressing these research gaps, research and policy can work towards creating more equitable and supportive educational environments where Black children can thrive emotionally, academically, and socially.

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APPENDIX A

Student Interview Questions

Demographic Information:

Interviewer: _____
Subject ID: _____
Date: _____
Location: _____
Time of Interview: _____
Race: _____
Gender/Sexuality: _____
Age: _____

(Ask for permission to record the interview): Part of the interview process includes audio recording so the data may be reviewed. Do you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview session?

Warm-Up Interview Questions:

1. How are you feeling today?
2. How do you feel at school?
3. How do you feel at home?
4. How do you feel on the playground or when playing outside?
5. What do you like to do at school and home?
    a. Why?
6. What do you want to be when you grow up?
    a. Why?
7. What was the best part of the day or you?
8. What was the hardest part of the day for you?
9. Tell me more about yourself.
    a. What are some things you like?
    b. Favorite food? Favorite music? Favorite game to play?
10. What activities are you involved with in school?
11. What types of things are you involved with outside of school?

Interview Questions:

I. **Section One: Questions about students' perspectives on how they understand, experience, express, and manage emotions**

Understanding of Emotions

1. What are emotions?

2. Have you learned about emotions?
3. What have you learned?
4. Are emotions and feelings important?
    a. Why?
5. How many emotions are there in the world?
6. Out of this list of emotions, how many emotions do you know?
7. Can you tell me about them?
8. What is happy?
9. What is sad?
10. What is anger?
11. What is transcendence?
12. What makes you happy, sad, angry or really excited?
13. How many emotions are there in your body?
14. List some people who have taught you about emotions?
    a. Does your family talk about, or openly express emotions?
        i. (On a scale of 1 = never to 10 = all the time)
        ii. If so, how?
15. How does being at home feel?
16. How does being at school feel?
17. How does being with friends feel?
18. How does your teacher make you feel?
19. How do you know when other people are _____?
20. What emotion best describes you?
    a. Why so?
21. Do you have a hard time understanding emotions and expressing their emotions?
22. Where do you hear, see, or feel emotions?
23. Draw your favorite emotion?
24. Does your emotions/feelings make sense to you?
25. Do you know when you are feeling _____?
    a. If so, how do you know?
26. Do people make you feel _____?
27. Draw a face and label the person's emotions
28. Is _____ a bad feeling?
29. How do you get someone to love you?
30. How do you get someone to be angry/mad at you?

Experiences with Emotions

1. How many emotions are there in the world?
2. What emotion do you feel the most?
3. What emotion are you feeling the most today?
4. During the day, how often did you feel:
    a. [Excited? Happy? Loved? Safe? Hopeful? Angry? Lonely? Sad? Worried? Frustrated?]
5. What are some things that make you feel mad? Sad? Happy?
6. Read Children's Books:
    a. Describe a time you felt the same way a story character felt.
7. Draw about a time when you felt happy, sad, angry, and very excited?
    a. Why?

8. Draw about a time your emotions impacted your actions in a good way.
9. Draw about a time your emotions impacted your actions in a bad way.
10. How does _____ emotion feel in your body?
11. What do you do when you feel _____?
12. What is something you are good at? Something you want to get better at?
13. What makes you feel _____? [provide images of each emotion in each state]
    a. State of Angry
    b. State of Sad
    c. State of Happy
    d. State of Transcendence
14. Can you tell me a story of when you felt _____?
    a. State of Angry
    b. State of Sad
    c. State of Happy
    d. State of Transcendence
15. Write about a time you wanted to play with a new person or group.
    a. What did you do?
16. What are some ways you let friends in your class know you care about them?
17. Do you avoid certain emotions?
18. What people, places, and things will help you feel _____?
19. Do you feel loved?
    a. Do you feel _____?
20. Who loves you?
21. Do you love yourself?
    a. Do you _____ yourself?
22. What makes you _____ at home, school, or playground?
23. Do you get _____ when others get in trouble?
24. Do you get _____ when others get gifts?
25. Do you get _____ when others are happy?
26. Do you get _____ when others are sad?
27. When I ask about an emotions, what spaces do they feel them in the most?
28. What makes you feel _____?
29. How do you know you like someone?
30. How does it feel when you get a kiss, hug, hand hold, someone laughs at your joke, you win, etc.?

Expressions of Emotions

1. What are you feeling right now about _____?
    a. Can you express the feeling you are having right now about ____?
2. What do you do when you feel _____?
    a. State of Angry
    b. State of Sad
    c. State of Happy
    d. State of Transcendence
3. How do you express _____ ?
4. How are Black people supposed to show _____?
5. How are boy supposed to show _____?

6. How are girls supposed to show _____?
7. How are kids supposed to show _____?
8. How are adults supposed to show _____?
9. How does your body feel when_____?
10. What does your body do when you feel _____?
11. How do you believe people should act when feeling _____?
12. How would you describe people who are _____?
13. If you had to pick a word that best describes you what would it be?
14. When you are _____, what happens?
15. Do you think feeling _____ is good for you?
16. Is it hard for you to stop feeling?
    a. If so, what happens?
17. How do you act when someone is feeling _____?
    a. Why?
18. When you are on the playground and a friend does not give you a turn on the monkeybars, how do you feel?
    a. And, what do you do?
19. Darnell and Kai are very good friends. They hang out all the time at school. They share hot cheetos and takis. They both like basketball and football. And, they both are very funny. One day Darnell came to school very very angry and sad. He was crying, sitting far away, and screaming at other kids when they asked him what was wrong. Kai walked over and said "What wrong?" and Darnell yelled "Get away from me, stupid!"
    a. What would you do?
    b. How would you respond?
    c. Why?
20. How does your _____ act when they are _____?
21. How would you respond to disrespect?
22. Who can you express your real feelings to?
    a. Why?
23. Have you ever had to stop being _____ because someone was _____?
24. How do you make people _____?
25. When someone is feeling _____, how do you feel?
26. Do you hold your emotions inside?
27. When you feel like someone one is being happy, sad, angry, or excited, how do you feel?
    a. How do you feel when someone is feeling _____?
28. How do you make friends?

Management of Emotions

1. Can you control your emotions? If so, how?
2. Is it important to control your emotions?
3. Do you have control over emotions?
4. How strongly do you feel _____?
5. Do you keep your emotions and feelings to yourself?
    a. If so, why?
6. Do you care about the way you express yourself?
7. How do you not get in trouble?
    a. When you are _____, what can you do?

        i. Where can you go?
    8. Do you like when people help you when you are feeling _____?
    9. Have you ever said sorry to someone?
        a. If so, why?
        b. How does saying sorry make you feel?
    10. Is it hard for you to forget when someone hurts you?
    11. Is it hard for you to forgive someone when they hurt you?
    12. Do your emotions change a lot?
    13. When are emotions a problem?
    14. When you are feeling _____, how do you change your feeling?
    15. What tools do you use to help you with feeling _____?
    16. When you are feeling _____, how do you feel the opposite emotion?
    17. What happens if you do not feel the emotion you need?
    18. How does it feel when a parent or teacher yell or get mad at you?
    19. Where can you go to feel _____?
    20. How do you want to manage your emotions?
    21. How do you feel when you _____?
    22. How do you not get in trouble?
    23. Do you use your words when _____?
    24. When someone says something bad about your _____ is it okay to hit them?
        a. If so, why?
        b. Is it hard not to want to hit them?
    25. When you are scared or angry is it hard for you to calm yourself down?
    26. Do you feel like other people have to control their emotions like you do?
    27. Are people supposed to help you feel better?
        a. Are you supposed to manage your emotions or are other people supposed to help?
    28. Why is controlling your emotions important?

II. **Section Two**: **Questions about students' perspectives on what shapes how they understand, experience, express, and manage emotions**

Factors that Shape Childs Understanding

1. Who are the people in your life?
2. Do you like the people you live with?
3. Do you like where you live?
4. Who do you live with?
5. Do boys and girls have different or same emotions?
    a. Why?
6. Do Black people have different or same emotions or feelings than other people?
    a. Why?
7. Do kids and adults have different or same emotions?
    a. Why?
8. Who controls your emotions or feelings?
    a. Do adults control your emotions?
    b. Do you control your emotions?
9. What do you see at home?

    a. Are there good things? What are they?
    b. Are there bad things? What are they?
    c. How does it make you feel?
10. Can you feel _____?
    a. How do you know?

Factors that Shape Childs Experiences

1. Who has taught you about emotions?
2. How included did you feel in class today?
3. Did your teacher talk about any emotions in class today?
4. Do you feel like other students care about you?
5. Do you feel like teachers care about you?
6. Do you feel like your parents care about you?
7. What happens when you are feelings _____?
    a. State of Happiness
    b. State of Sadness
    c. State of Anger
    d. State of Transcendence
8. What kind of things make you feel _____?
9. Can you tell me about your experiences with different racial or ethnic backgrounds?
    a. What do you notice about these differences, and how do you feel about them?
10. Have you ever felt left out or treated differently because of your racial or ethnic background?
    a. Can you describe the situation and how it made you feel?
11. Are there any stories or experiences related to your race or ethnicity that you would like to share with me?
12. How do you feel when you see people who look like you represented positively in books, movies, or media?
    a. How about when you see negative or stereotypical representations?
13. Do you have friends from different racial or ethnic backgrounds?
    a. What do you like about your friendships, and have you ever faced any challenges related to race?
14. How does it make you feel when you talk about race or being Black?
15. How do you think your family influences the way you feel emotions, both positive and negative?
16. Are there any specific family members or friends who play a significant role in shaping how you understand and express your emotions?
17. Can you tell me about a time when someone in your family helped you navigate through a difficult emotion or situation?
18. Do you think there are certain emotions that your family encourages you to express more openly, and are there any that they may discourage or downplay?
19. How do you feel when you receive support and understanding from your family during emotionally challenging times?
20. Are there specific things that impact the way you feel _____?
    a. If so, why or how?
21. How do you feel when you're at school,?
    a. Does going to school make you feel _____?

Factors that Shape Childs Expression

1. Can you be happy anywhere?
1. Can you be angry anywhere?
2. Can you be sad or cry anywhere?
3. Can you be very, very excited anywhere?
4. Are there any specific situations or places where you feel more comfortable or uncomfortable to express your emotions because you are Black?
5. What emotion best describes __[insert picture of race/ethnicity]_?
6. Are there rules to emotions?
    a) What are some rules, expectations or norms related to emotions?
    b) Who makes those rules?
7. What is your favorite song?
    a) How does it make you feel?
    b) Can you show me how you would express that emotion?

Factors that Shape Childs Management

1. How do you handle situations where someone says or does something hurtful or offensive related to race or ethnicity?
2. When you are at __home/school/playground___, how do you handle situations that make you feel _____?
3. What have you learned that helps you calm yourself down when you're feeling upset or angry?
    a. Does it help?
4. Are there any specific places or environments where you feel more at ease and emotionally stable?
5. What do you do when you are feeling _____?
    a. How did you learn that?
6. Can you share a time when a friend or family member helped you through a tough emotional experience?
    a. How do you feel when you receive emotional support from someone?
7. Do you like when someone helps you when you feel _____?
8. Do you think there are specific social activities or gatherings that positively impact your emotional well-being?
9. Where do you go when you are feeling _____?
    a. Why?
10. Who do you turn to when you need someone to talk to or support you emotionally?
        i. Why?
11. Who do you go to when you are feeling _____?
12. Where can you be _____?
    a. How do you not get in trouble for being _____ when you are not supposed to?

III. **Section Three**: **Questions about students' perspectives on play, emotions, and social interactions at school**

Warm-Up Questions

1. What is play?
2. Why do you think play is important?
    a. Why is playing so fun?
3. Do you like to play?
    a. Do you like to play by yourself or with others?
4. When you are playing, what do you learn?
5. Who do you play with the most?
6. Do you play with your mother or father?
7. Do you play with your siblings or cousins?
8. When you are at home where do you play?
9. When you are at school where do you play?
10. Is school a place where you can play?
11. How do you play?
12. What makes you feel like dancing?
13. What is the nicest thing a friend has ever done for you?
14. What are you excited about in the morning?
15. What makes someone a good friend?
16. What are you thankful for?
17. What makes you feel afraid?
18. Do you like dogs or cats better, and why?
19. What is your favorite toy and why?
20. What is your favorite part of the school day?
21. Can you draw me a picture of you playing?
22. Do adults play?
23. What is your favorite tv character?
24. What do you like to do the most when outside on the playground?
25. What is your favorite thing to do outside?
26. What do you like to play with the most outside?
27. If you could create your own playground, what would it look like?
    a. What kind of toys would be there?
    b. Would adults be there?
    c. Would there music?
    d. Would people be laughing, angry or crying?
    e. Would poeple be kind to each other or mean?
28. What is one thing you would change about the world?
29. Imagine you just won a million dollars, what would you do with it?
30. Can you play anywhere?
31. How do you keep people safe when you play?

Ages 5-6 (Kindergarden)

1. Can you tell me about your favorite games or toys to play with? Why do you like them?
2. How do you feel when you're playing with your friends or family members?
3. What kind of pretend play or make-believe games do you enjoy the most?
4. Can you describe a time when you felt really excited and playful during a game or activity?
5. Do you have any special playtime routines or rituals that make playing more fun for you?

6. How do you feel when you're playing with your friends or family members? What emotions do you experience during playtime?
7. Can you describe a time when playing a game made you really happy or excited? How did that make the playtime more enjoyable?
8. What do you think are some of the ways that playing with others helps you build friendships and connections?
9. Are there any playful activities that you find comforting or calming when you're feeling sad or upset?
10. How do you show your emotions while playing with others, and how do they respond to your expressions?
11. Do Black children play differently than other children?
    a. If so, why?
12. What are some games or activities you enjoy playing with your friends or family?
13. How does playing together make you feel?
14. Can you tell me about a time when you played a pretend game that involved people from different cultural backgrounds? What did you like about that game?
15. How do you think playing with friends who have different traditions or speak different languages can be fun and exciting?
16. Can you describe an experience when you used your imagination during play to connect with people from different cultural communities?
17. What makes you proud of your cultural background, and how does playfulness help you share it with others?
18. Do boys play different than girls?
    a. How do boys play?
    b. How do girls play?
19. Do Black children play different than other children?
    a. How do _____ play?

Level 2: Ages 6-7 (First-Grade)

1. What are your preferred outdoor games or activities, and how do they make you feel?
2. Do you think playing with certain toys or games allows you to express your creativity and imagination? How?
3. Can you share an experience when playing helped you solve a problem or understand something better?
4. Are there any cultural games or traditions that you enjoy playing, and what do they mean to you?
5. How do you include others in your play, and how does it make you feel to play together?
6. How do you think your emotions impact the way you play and interact with your peers?
7. Can you describe a time when playful interactions with friends helped you resolve a disagreement or conflict?
8. How does playing imaginative or pretend games with others make you feel more connected to them?
9. Do you think being playful and using humor helps you overcome shyness or nervousness in social situations?
10. Can you share an experience when you felt proud of yourself during a play activity that involved teamwork or cooperation?

11. How do you feel when you play games that include elements from different cultures or involve friends from diverse backgrounds?
12. Can you share an experience when playful interactions with friends from various cultures helped you learn something new and interesting?
13. What are some ways you use play to understand and respect the traditions and practices of your friends' cultural communities?
14. How do you think play can be a bridge between your cultural identity and the cultural identities of your friends?
15. Can you describe a time when playfulness allowed you to explore different cultural worlds and appreciate their uniqueness?

Level 3: Ages 7-8 (Second Grade)

1. What role does playfulness and humor play in your interactions with friends and family?
2. How do you balance schoolwork and playtime, and how does it affect your emotional well-being?
3. Can you describe a time when you used play as a way to cope with stress or difficult emotions?
4. Are there any games or activities that you find challenging, and how do you feel when you overcome those challenges?
5. How do you think play helps you learn about your cultural identity and history?
6. How do you express different emotions, like excitement, disappointment, or frustration, while playing competitive games with others?
7. Can you think of a time when you played a game that made you feel a bit anxious or challenged? How did you handle those emotions?
8. Are there specific play activities that you find help you build trust and deeper connections with your friends or siblings?
9. How do you use playfulness to express empathy and support when one of your friends is feeling down or upset?
10. Can you share an experience when playing with others helped you understand their emotions better?
11. How do you navigate playful interactions when cultural practices or traditions are different from yours? What do you learn from these experiences?
12. Can you think of a time when playfulness helped you address cultural misunderstandings and build stronger friendships?
13. How do you use play to express your cultural identity confidently while embracing and appreciating other cultures?
14. Can you describe a time when you and your friends used playfulness to celebrate your diverse cultural backgrounds together?
15. How do you think playfulness can foster a sense of belonging and inclusion among friends with different cultural heritages?
16. Can you share an experience when playful interactions with friends from different cultural backgrounds helped you navigate challenges in your relationships and grow closer?
17. How do you use playfulness to challenge stereotypes or misconceptions about your cultural background in a fun and creative way?
18. Can you describe a time when playfulness allowed you to confidently assert your cultural knowledge and experiences with others?

19. How do you think playfulness empowers you to be proud of your cultural heritage and appreciate the richness it brings to your life?
20. Can you think of an example of how playfulness helps you create a sense of community and shared experiences with friends from diverse cultural worlds?

Level 4: Ages 8-9 (Third Grade)

1. Can you tell me about a play experience that taught you something important about yourself or others?
2. How has your perception of play and playfulness changed as you've grown older?
3. Do you think your cultural background influences the types of games or play activities you enjoy?
4. Are there any play experiences that have helped you build strong bonds with friends or family members?
5. How do you think adults can better support and encourage your play and playfulness?
6. How do you balance the desire to have fun and be playful with the need to consider others' feelings during play?
7. Can you describe a time when playful interactions with your peers helped you bond with someone you didn't know very well before?
8. How do you navigate emotions like jealousy or competitiveness when playing games with friends or classmates?
9. Are there any play activities or games that allow you to explore and express complex emotions or ideas?
10. Can you share an experience when playfulness and humor diffused a tense or awkward social situation?
11. 21. How do you think play and playfulness evolve as you grow older, and how does that influence your emotions and social interactions?
12. Can you describe a time when you used play as a way to cope with stress or difficult emotions during a challenging period?
13. How does your cultural background impact the way you approach play and playfulness with friends from different backgrounds?
14. Are there any specific rules or norms within your social group that affect how playfulness is expressed and perceived?
15. Can you share an experience when a playful interaction helped you bridge cultural differences and connect with someone new?
16. How do you use playfulness as a form of creative expression to resist cultural assimilation and honor your unique cultural identity?
17. Can you describe a time when playfulness helped you navigate challenging cultural situations with confidence and assertiveness?
18. How does playfulness allow you to act as a cultural ambassador, sharing your traditions, values, and beliefs with others?
19. Can you share an experience when playful interactions helped you make choices that aligned with your cultural values and principles?
20. How do you think playfulness contributes to your sense of wholeness and self-assuredness while engaging with diverse cultural worlds?

APPENDIX B

School Affiliated Adult Interview Questions

Demographic Information:

Interviewer: _____
Subject ID: _____
Date: _____
Location: _____
Time of Interview: _____
Race: _____
Gender/Sexuality: _____
Age: _____

(Ask for permission to record the interview): Part of the interview process includes audio recording so the data may be reviewed. Do you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview session?

Opening Questions/Demographics (Optional)

1. What is your name?
2. How are you today?
3. How old are you?
4. How In terms of gender, how do you identify?
5. How do you identify racially and ethnically?
6. What neighborhood?
7. Are you married or partners?
8. What is the highest level of education that you completed?
9. What do you do for a living?

Classroom Information for Educational Professionals

1. How are you?
2. How is teaching going this year?
3. How long have you been teaching?
4. How many kids are in your classroom?
5. How would you describe the racial, gender and socioeconomic demographics of your classroom?
6. How many Black children are in your classroom?
7. Do you have any children?
8. Can you describe the Black children in your classroom?
9. What are the Black children in your classroom like on a day to day basis?
10. What do the Black children in your classroom like to do for fun?

Understanding of the Emotional Self

1. Where are you from?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Who raised you? How were you raised?
    1. How do you see yourself emotionally? (On a scale 1 = very unemotional - I never feel, express, or make decisions based on emotions to 10 = very emotional - I always feel, express, and make decisions based on emotions)
    2. How do others see you emotionally? (On a scale 1 = not at all emotional to 10 = very emotional)
        1. Are you an emotional person or someone who wears their emotions on their sleeves?
    3. Did your family talk about, or openly express emotions? (On a scale of 1 = never to 10 = all the time)
    4. What do you remember learning about emotions or feelings growing up?
4. Do you have any early memories of being in the world such as school, neighborhood/community, park, or community centers?
5. How old were you when you started understanding your emotions and feelings?
    1. How did people perceive or respond to your emotions?
    2. How do you perceive or respond to your own as well as others' emotions?
6. To what extent do you feel people are aware of their own emotions and feelings?
    1. Specifically, Black and Brown people's emotions and feelings?
7. Would you consider yourself open to or aware of your own emotions or feelings?
8. What language do you use to communicate your emotions or how you are feeling to other people?
    1. Do words like anger, happy, afraid, disgusted, or sad fully communicate how you are feeling?
        1. What are some ways you would use language to communicate your feelings in more specific or authentic ways?
9. What are the most common emotions that you witnessed in your household or community?
10. Does it feel like Black and Brown people are required to manage and control their emotions and non-Black and Brown groups can express any of their emotions?

Perceptions of Black Children's Emotions and Well-Being

1. What's your childs name?
2. How old is your child?
3. How would you describe your child emotionally?
    a. What kind of personality does your child have?
        i. Is he shy or outgoing?
    b. What does your child do on a day to day basis?
    c. What do you think makes your child happy or excited?
        i. What is your child interested in?
    d. What do you think makes your child angry or upset?
    e. What types of things is he interested in?
    f. Does your child have or make friends easily?
4. Can your child control their emotions well? How?
5. When are emotions a problem for your child?

6. How do you feel about raising a Black child in todays society?
    a. Can you explain your statement?
7. What are you doing as a parent to teach your child about emotions?
    a. Do you teach them about how to understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions?
    b. Can you provide examples?
8. Do you think that your child has a hard time understanding emotions and expressing their emotions?
9. How does your child self-regulate when experiencing difficult moments at home?
10. Is your child a sensitive person? Is your child more emotional or less emotional than other people?
11. Do you think that your child has the emotional skills necessary to navigate the world around them?
12. What are some thing that you believe impact how Black children understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions?
    a. How so? Can you give me an example?
    b. Why do you think this is the case?
13. Can you recall any major events that have changed the way your child is emotionally?
14. What are the most common emotions that you witness from your child at home?
15. What do you think is important for a Black child to grow up successfully in today's society?
16. On a scale 1 to 10 (e.g., 1 being unhealthy and 10 being very healthy) how would you rate your child's social and emotional well-being?
17. How would you define Black childhood in your own terms?

Perceptions of Contextual Factors and processes that influence Black Children's Emotions

1. How do you think your child racial identity influences their emotions?
    a. Can you provide any examples?
2. Can you recall times or events in which your identity (race/ ethnicity, social class status or gender) were made obvious or important to you?
    a. In what ways does your identity inform who you are as an educator?
3. What are the relevant similarities and differences in your lived experiences and those of your students? What are the historical, contextual and personal factors that help explain this?
4. Are you doing everything you can to move your students closer to opportunity?
5. What is the connection between your sense of wellbeing and the educational experience you provide your students?
6. How do you best support students who experience difficulties outside of the classroom? What about inside the classroom?
7. What are the best strategies for encouraging students to assert themselves in constructive ways?
8. How do you respond when you feel like students aren't engaged in classroom activities?
9. How do your personal preferences/biases affect how you interact with your students?
10. What does it mean to provide a great education for underserved students?
11. What types of discrimination are experienced in the US? What types of disadvantage are experienced
    by your students?
12. What are the social dynamics among students from different backgrounds in your classes?
13. Do you see differences as deficits or assets to be leveraged?

14. How can what and how you teach better position your students to address their concerns and interests?
15. Are there policies and practices in your school that undermine your students receiving the high-quality

Perceptions of support needed to promote Black children's social and emotional development and well-being

1. What, if anything, do you need to help you promote your child's development social and emotionally?
2. How do you support your child's social and emotional development?
    a. In particular, how do you support their emotional understanding, experiences, expression, and regulation in the classroom or home?
3. Are there any messages or artifacts you provide your students or child in order to support their social and emotional development?
4. Do you do anything to help your students or childs express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, with you or others?
5. How would you describe your neighborhood you teach in or your family live in, and the surrounding neighborhoods?
6. How would you rate your neighborhood in terms of safety on a scale of 1(unsafe) to 3 (safe)?
    a. Can you provide an example of why you rated your neighborhood in that way?
    b. Do you think this affects your students or child's emotions or feelings?
    c. If so, in what ways?
7. Are there spaces within your neighborhood or school neighborhood where students are able to be safe and express their feelings such as playgrounds, parks, and therapy?
8. How can you help students to become informed and engaged with their emotions and the emotions of others?
9. How do you ensure that you create an inclusive, safe learning environment for all of your students to social and emotionally develop?
10. To what degree should students have input on what and how they learn?
11. How do you make sure that students help/support each other to grow and learn in positive ways?
12. Do you make every effort to get to know your students and their community?
13. Do you invite students to get to know you?
14. In what ways can you address power relationships that discourage engagement in academic, social and emotional learning?
15. How can you create opportunities for the range of perspectives and talents in your classroom to be appreciated/leveraged to improve learning for all?

APPENDIX C

Parent and/ or Guardian Interview Questions

Demographic Information:

Interviewer: _____
Subject ID: _____
Date: _____
Location: _____
Time of Interview: _____
Race: _____
Gender/Sexuality: _____
Age: _____

(Ask for permission to record the interview): Part of the interview process includes audio recording so the data may be reviewed. Do you give consent to be audio-recorded during this interview session?

Opening Questions/Demographics (Optional)

1. What is your name?
2. How are you today?
3. How old are you?
4. How In terms of gender, how do you identify?
5. How do you identify racially and ethnically?
6. What neighborhood?
7. Are you married or partners?
8. What is the highest level of education that you completed?
9. What do you do for a living?

Understanding of the Emotional Self

1. Where are you from?
2. Where did you grow up?
3. Who raised you? How were you raised?
    a. How do you see yourself emotionally? (On a scale 1 = very unemotional - I never feel, express, or make decisions based on emotions to 10 = very emotional - I always feel, express, and make decisions based on emotions)
    b. How do others see you emotionally? (On a scale 1 = not at all emotional to 10 = very emotional)
        i. Are you an emotional person or someone who wears their emotions on their sleeves?
    c. Did your family talk about, or openly express emotions? (On a scale of 1 = never to 10 = all the time)
    d. What do you remember learning about emotions or feelings growing up?
4. Do you have any early memories of being in the world such as school, neighborhood/community, park, or community centers?

5. How old were you when you started understanding your emotions and feelings?
    a. How did people perceive or respond to your emotions?
    b. How do you perceive or respond to your own as well as others' emotions?
6. To what extent do you feel people are aware of their own emotions and feelings?
    a. Specifically, Black and Brown people's emotions and feelings?
7. Would you consider yourself open to or aware of your own emotions or feelings?
8. What language do you use to communicate your emotions or how you are feeling to other people?
    a. Do words like anger, happy, afraid, disgusted, or sad fully communicate how you are feeling?
        i. What are some ways you would use language to communicate your feelings in more specific or authentic ways?
9. What are the most common emotions that you witnessed in your household or community?
10. Does it feel like Black and Brown people are required to manage and control their emotions and non-Black and Brown groups can express any of their emotions?

Perceptions of Black Childrens Emotions and Well-Being

1. What's your childs name?
2. How old is your child?
3. How would you describe your child emotionally?
    a. What kind of personality does your child have?
        i. Is he shy or outgoing?
    b. What does your child do on a day to day basis?
    c. What do you think makes your child happy or excited?
        i. What is your child interested in?
    d. What do you think makes your child angry or upset?
    e. What types of things is he interested in?
    f. Does your child have or make friends easily?
4. Can your child control their emotions well? How?
5. When are emotions a problem for your child?
6. How do you feel about raising a Black child in todays society?
    a. Can you explain your statement?
7. What are you doing as a parent to teach your child about emotions?
    a. Do you teach them about how to understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions?
    b. Can you provide examples?
8. Do you think that your child has a hard time understanding emotions and expressing their emotions?
9. How does your child self-regulate when experiencing difficult moments at home?
10. Is your child a sensitive person? Is your child more emotional or less emotional than other people?
11. Do you think that your child has the emotional skills necessary to navigate the world around them?
12. What are some thing that you believe impact how Black children understand, experience, express, and regulate their emotions?
    a. How so? Can you give me an example?

    b. Why do you think this is the case?
13. Can you recall any major events that have changed the way your child is emotionally?
14. What are the most common emotions that you witness from your child at home?
15. What do you think is important for a Black child to grow up successfully in today's society?
16. On a scale 1 to 10 (e.g., 1 being unhealthy and 10 being very healthy) how would you rate your child's social and emotional well-being?
17. How would you define Black childhood in your own terms?

Perceptions of contextual factors and processes that influence Black children's emotions

1. How do you think your child racial identity influences their emotions?
    a. Can you provide any examples?
2. Can you recall times or events in which your identity (race/ ethnicity, social class status or gender) were made obvious or important to you?
    a. In what ways does your identity inform who you are as an educator?
3. What are the relevant similarities and differences in your lived experiences and those of your students? What are the historical, contextual and personal factors that help explain this?
4. Are you doing everything you can to move your students closer to opportunity?
5. What is the connection between your sense of wellbeing and the educational experience you provide your students?
6. How do you best support students who experience difficulties outside of the classroom? What about inside the classroom?
7. What are the best strategies for encouraging students to assert themselves in constructive ways?
8. How do you respond when you feel like students aren't engaged in classroom activities?
9. How do your personal preferences/biases affect how you interact with your students?
10. What does it mean to provide a great education for underserved students?
11. What types of discrimination are experienced in the US? What types of disadvantage are experienced
    by your students?
12. What are the social dynamics among students from different backgrounds in your classes?
13. Do you see differences as deficits or assets to be leveraged?
14. How can what and how you teach better position your students to address their concerns and interests?
15. Are there policies and practices in your school that undermine your students receiving the high-quality

Perceptions of supports needed to promote Black children's social and emotional development and well-being

1. What, if anything, do you need to help you promote your child's development social and emotionally?
2. How do you support your child's social and emotional development?
    a. In particular, how do you support their emotional understanding, experiences, expression, and regulation in the classroom or home?
3. Are there any messages or artifacts you provide your students or child in order to support their social and emotional development?

4. Do you do anything to help your students or childs express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, with you or others?
5. How would you describe your neighborhood you teach in or your family live in, and the surrounding neighborhoods?
6. How would you rate your neighborhood in terms of safety on a scale of 1(unsafe) to 3 (safe)?
    a. Can you provide an example of why you rated your neighborhood in that way?
    b. Do you think this affects your students or child's emotions or feelings?
    c. If so, in what ways?
7. Are there spaces within your neighborhood or school neighborhood where students are able to be safe and express their feelings such as playgrounds, parks, and therapy?
8. How can you help students to become informed and engaged with their emotions and the emotions of others?
9. How do you ensure that you create an inclusive, safe learning environment for all of your students to social and emotionally develop?
10. To what degree should students have input on what and how they learn?
11. How do you make sure that students help/support each other to grow and learn in positive ways?
12. Do you make every effort to get to know your students and their community?
13. Do you invite students to get to know you?
14. In what ways can you address power relationships that discourage engagement in academic, social and emotional learning?
15. How can you create opportunities for the range of perspectives and talents in your classroom to be appreciated/leveraged to improve learning for all?