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"Can You Feel Me . . ."
The Sociospatial Logics and Ghost-Map of Black and Urban Youth Navigating Urban Violence

By

David Alexander Philoxene

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Kris D. Gutiérrez, Chair
Professor Jason Corburn
Professor Cati V. de los Ríos
Professor Na'ilah Suad Nasir

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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This dissertation project is a critical spatial analysis of urban violence. Using a mixed-methods approach to interrogate youth experiences in Oakland, California, this study contributes to intersectional understandings of race, space, and violence, illustrating the significance of sociospatiality, or the (re)productive function of race and space, in the on-going development of urban space, including material and discursive representations of violence across a local urbanscape. The arc of this dissertation is organized around these central questions: (a) How do a group of Black and other youth of color in Oakland experience and understand everyday urban violence in their local geography, across community and school? How do they understand the racial and spatial contours to risk and safety? (b) How does anti-Blackness, and geographies of race generally, function in the creation and maintenance of urban space, including community violence? how can critical spatial analyses deepen our conceptualization and research of urban violence, including youth experiences with everyday precarity? And (c) How can youth narratives and "theories in the flesh" disrupt and counter-map hegemonic representations of urban communities and violence? Thus, the three-article study is organized around two central pillars: on one hand, it reconceptualizes urban violence beyond the interpersonal and spectacularized, attuned to the mutuality of racial-spatial processes and meanings entrenched in place. Moreover, it provides a richer depiction of (a reconceptualized) urban violence through understudied qualitative youth portraits and "theories of the flesh," which demonstrate sense-making repertoires and safe-keeping. In demonstrating the sociospatiality of race, space, and violence in Oakland, the gravity and capaciousness of an *everyday precarity* becomes clearer for these young people's lives. Overall, the dissertation works as a justice-centered advocacy project to counter-map understandings of urban violence, and asks youth practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers to feel the gravity of their stories and lessons.

In between my doctoral studies my two children, Naya and Qa'id, were born, and my mother, Pauline, unexpectedly passed away. With my love, I dedicate this completion to them.

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Introduction: A Point of Reference

I was ten or eleven when I learned that Black children do die in Oakland.

As a child of the 1980s, I was neither naive nor unaware of potential dangers in my city. I grew up like many children (I assumed) and learned to be aware of my physical surroundings, including those that were in it. The proverbial "never talk to strangers" rang true, and I still remember images of missing children on the side of milk cartons and television infomercials. Locally, I can recall the throes of crack-cocaine exploding in our neighborhood, and the associated dangers of its political-economy. But nothing can prepare you for the suddenness of death. Perhaps this is why adults are so ill-equipped to discuss it with young people. How do you talk to a child about the killing of one?

Eugene had completed his elementary education at Bella Vista only two years prior and attended our neighborhood junior high school. I recall him being a good student, well-liked by both his peers and teachers. I remember Eugene, in particular, from one of his official school photos that seemed to sum him up: dapper and self-confident, with a sly, self-assured smile. Eugene was one of my brother's best friends and would frequently come to our home to hang out and play. His family lived only a couple blocks away in a quintessential Victorian that typified early architecture of our neighborhood. He, like my brother, was almost three years older than me, but none of that mattered much in the late 1980s as we played with our collection of amassed GI Joes and Wrestlemania figurines.

Periodically, my fifth-grade teacher, Miss Wong-Reynolds, opened her classroom Saturday mornings for interested students to come freely. My elementary school was literally across the street from my house, so attending a non-mandatory session, with a teacher I enjoyed, was an easy decision. While Saturday sessions were always unevenly attended, there was a consistent throng of students that typically showed up. On this particular day, however, it was unusually quiet. This stood out to me as I made my way to her room on the third floor. Like many elementary classrooms, Miss Wong-Reynolds's room had a four-by-six-feet cubby area adjacent to the entrance. For many children, this closeted area for jackets and backpacks acted as a third space, a sort of staging ground for the day's gossip, candy sharing, random musing, and general subterfuge. As soon as I entered the classroom on this day, one of my classmates surreptitiously asked me if I had "heard the news."

Eugene had been killed.

I am not sure when my brother found out about Eugene's death. I cannot recall ever having an explicit conversation with him about his passing. Perhaps he and my parents already knew, and I had been buffered from the news as the younger child. But like my classmate's hushed tone, children often take their cue from the adults around them. No adult, not one teacher at my school, nor my parents, ever spoke openly to us about Eugene's death despite him being a direct member of our school community and neighborhood. We were left to our own devices to gather intel as it trickled down like a game of telephone. Walking home from school, Eugene was accidentally shot and killed as his friend opened his backpack to show him the concealed gun he had brought to school. Blocks away from his own house, eighth-grade Eugene died on Oakland's streets.

Eugene's tragic death animates this dissertation through two poignant lessons. The first involved recognizing that children are not inoculated from community violence. As I came of age in the city, Eugene's killing became the stand-in for numerous deaths of other young people in our neighborhood or the schools we attended, which were no longer there. While homicide represents, perhaps, a particular crystallization of spectacularized physical violence, there are more subtle and insidious forms of violence connected to and undergirding it that youth must also contend with. This dissertation study examines both of these poles of violence, from the spectacularized to the quotidian, taken-for-granted, and even spatially entrenched. The second lesson was the recognition that children have separate worlds unto themselves that adults are rarely privy to. Akin to the interstitial social space of that adjacent cubby, young people often navigate and negotiate their world, even in violence and safety, on their own terms. No adult, not my parents nor any teacher, explicitly explained Eugene's death to us. As children, we were left to answer whatever questions about the community violence, and the nature and meaning of his death. What also became apparent, in the process, was that there was something askew with the value of Black *life* in the city. Across experiences of community and school, there was an unspoken normalcy and acceptance of Black people's suffering. This dissertation, hence, also highlights this question about the specificity of Blackness and the meanings of race and racial space that are intertwined in and through community violence. That young people have a unique positionality, the dissertation study centers their qualitative experiences and sense-making, and the affective contours to their understandings of community violence. This is the affective youth geography of urban youth violence that requires you to *feel me*.

Spurred by my own experiences, this dissertation study has always been deeply personal. At its heart, *place* is central to the project. Here, Oakland takes center stage as the descriptive urban location where violence occurs, yet importantly, as a critical spatial analytic to engage the contours of community violence as well as race and space. As a "point of reference" here, Oakland is "method-methodology" (Clary-Lemon, 2009).

This project seeks to interrogate the impact, meaning, and significance of urban violence, articulated through the sense and spatial-making of Black and urban youth in Oakland. Employing a critical race spatial analysis (Velez & Solorzano, 2017) as a way to enhance analysis of the historical and social dimensions of urban violence in Oakland, the three articles examine the intertwined function of spatiality and race on community violence, including the sedimented nature of anti-Black violence undergirding urban space and hence urban violence. These forms of critical race spatiality form a "*conceptual* and *methodological* approach and not simply a spatial analytical technique" (Velez & Solorzano, 2017, p. 21), which allows theorization of anti-Blackness and racialization as a central structural antagonism shaping perceptions of allowable Black suffering, including physical violence, death (homicide), and associations of racialized space as violent, diseased, and disposable. Allowable suffering works discursively and materially across local space in Oakland, forming a constellation of violence or precarity which Black and urban youth must *sociospatially* navigate, negotiate, and sense-make. Methodologically, I employ a critical phenomenology that intentionally centers personal narratives of youth, including my own retrospective remembrances. These "theories of the flesh" (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983) function as a counter-map across the dissertation that disrupt normative logics and orientations to existing phenomena, such as urban violence, and work to extend and deepen understandings.

The overall dissertation is thus interested in troubling commonsensical notions of urban violence, and in the process, extending conceptualizations for the everyday precarity for Black

and urban youth. Through the amplification of local youth experiences in Oakland, the first article highlights various sense-making youth repertoires, ones that invariable demonstrate the complex and interrelated function of race and space for experiences and understandings of violence. The second article employs generative autoethnography as a form of critical race method to demonstrate school-based experiences with racialized forms of violence, and a context to reshift understandings of youth experiences with urban violence as institutional and discursive, in addition to interpersonal. Building upon earlier empirical pieces, the final article works theoretically to explicate the underlying structural antagonisms and logics of race/ism and anti-Black sentiment across the urbanscape structuring urban violence. As an arc, the three articles argue for the need for critical sociospatial analysis of violence and urban space, one in which urban youth experiences with sociospatiality are qualitatively understudied and uniquely suited in this regard. As such, the overarching research questions for the entire project are relatedly empirical and conceptual:

1) How do Black youth and other youth of color in Oakland experience and understand everyday urban violence, across community and school, in their local geography?
    a. How do they understand the sociospatiality of urban violence, namely the racial and spatial contours to risk and safety?
    b. What sense- and space-making logics and strategies do youth employ in their safe-keeping repertoires?
2) How does anti-Blackness, and geographies of race in general, function in the creation and maintenance of urban space, including community violence?
    a. How can critical spatial analyses deepen our conceptualization and research of urban violence, including youth experiences with everyday precarity?
    b. How can youth narratives and "theories in the flesh" disrupt and counter-map hegemonic representations of urban communities and violence?

Racial Geography of Violence

Spurred by 2020 social uprisings that protested the onslaught of Black death from police and White vigilantism, there has been increased attention to the study of *anti-Blackness* and its many materializations across our society. While some, importantly, point towards the state-sponsored killings of Black people as quintessential anti-Black sentiment, the organizing of coalitions like the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) remind us that this is in fact merely symptomatic of a larger structural and historical context of ongoing violence against Black life (Woodly, 2020), one that invariably has helped to shape ideas about Blackness and racialized others, but also Whiteness. Christen Smith (2016) reminds us of the *relational* role of violence and racialization, including socially produced meanings crystallized by and through violence, including anti-Black sentiment:

> Whether it is the physically violent moment when the police decide to use force against black bodies, the structurally violent moment when employers decide to discriminate in hiring based on appearance, or even the symbolically violent moment when children's entertainment stars associate black women with ugliness and foul odors; words, gestures, actions, movements, looks, and attitudes produce *racial meaning dialogically*. (p. 12)

Any interrogation of violence must invariably account for the ways meanings of race and processes of racialization are consequently (re)produced. Hence, violence is a product and process of racial formation. As such, this three-article dissertation study works as a portrait of urban violence in Oakland, California. Through the centering of Black and urban youth experiences with safety across community and school, I highlight the nuanced racial geographies

of Oakland's violence, that which is inextricably tethered to the spatial context of the local urbanscape. Within an urban context, spatiality has long been used as an exclusionary tool for racialized violence through processes of what Lipsitz (2007) has deemed the "racialization of space and the spacialization of race," or racialized *space-making* and spatialized *race-making*. In the urban, Black people have encountered systematic residential segregation, where meanings of race—Blackness, but also Whiteness—have become synonymous with space. Here, anti-Black sentiment is a dynamic process and product helping to mold race and racial space, and in the process shape the conditions for urban violence.

While the dissertation was initially conceived to more robustly examine the quality of vicarious urban violence in the lives of young people, over the course of piloting the project, however, it became evident that the roles of race and place were far more complicated than merely being descriptive features for public health or crime data sets. Moreover, significant socio-political dynamics continued to evolve over the course of my doctoral studies, which served to only intensify racial demographics and inequities across Oakland, altering the social and spatial landscape of the city I was raised and, subsequently, taught in. In the process, what started off as a study of violence developed more expansively to account for race and space as central analytical features of urban violence. Through a critical phenomenological lens (Guenther, 2019), this larger study presents findings that challenge commonly held notions about the nature of urban violence. In the process, it foregrounds the qualitative experiences of Black and urban youth as a means to highlight the racial and spatial meanings of urban violence, and to importantly trace the capacious reach of a rearticulated urban violence.

It is along these lines that this project seeks to examine the impact and meanings of "urban violence" in a local context. Across three articles, I highlight the gravity of urban violence, both in terms of the everyday pull or force it has in urban communities, and also for researchers, planners, and practitioners to more seriously account for its impact in young people's lives. The three-article dissertation, as an arc, is a critical phenomenological investigation into experiences with, understandings of, and reconceptualization of violence, as experienced by Black and urban youth. Central to this is the notion that violence is a spatial product and process, much like race/ism. Here, within this racialized geography, anti-Black violence is a central contour. This dissertation then serves two functions: the first is to center the experiences of young people navigating urban violence. While we know much about the "epidemiological" extent of violence from previous research, scholarship has failed to centralize the voices of those young peoples most impacted. Drawing upon critical phenomenology, including an auto-ethnographic account of school-based racialized violence, my project adds the qualitative experiences and, importantly, youth sense-making about urban violence in Oakland. In other words, it serves to elevate the affective geography of local violence, one that young people name in racialized and spatialized ways. Second, in doing so, the work troubles "commonsensical" ideas about urban violence focused on largely interpersonal experiences of spectacularized, physical violence. While the young people in the study surfaced these in detail, they importantly signify the insidious and everyday ways that (racialized forms of) urban violence seeps into their lives and into their landscape.

Those that are familiar with Oakland's historic hip-hop music scene may recognize the significance of the title. While paying homage to Oakland's unique local landscape, musically, politically, and otherwise, the title instead serves as an acknowledgement for the importance of what it means to be *felt*. This affective sphere—to be felt and to feel—is a constant refrain throughout the three articles where I hope the reader is able to empathize and be still with some

semblance of what many Black and urban youth contend with daily. Moreover, it makes the argument that anti-Black violence and signifiers of race are literally and figuratively mapped across the urban landscape. *Feel me.* While young people in Oakland suffer from disproportionate rates of violence, such as homicide, it is the capaciousness of the many constellations of violence that these young people are constantly aware of and contending. Taking my cue from Hartman (2008), the project thus reconceptualizes urban violence in quotidian ways, alongside the spectacularized. Spatiality offers a unique vantage point to help capture this constellation of urban violence. Hence, as a social and spatial process, I offer the concept of wayfaring as a methodological tool to better conceptualize and capture the dynamism or sociospatiality of violence, race, and space. In sum, violence is both a process and product of race and space.

Valuable research from the so-called Global South has pushed to shape understanding of everyday, lived experiences with urban *violence* that are entangled within broader structural, institutional, and political arrangements (Winton, 2004). Despite emergent scholarship that highlights a broader architecture of urban violence, much research about urban violence within a U.S. context has often failed to conceptualize the underlying assemblages of power that shape life in urban communities and neighborhoods, especially for those groups that are most impacted by systems of domination. On one hand, national research has examined the experiences of urban youth navigating physical safety and interpersonal violence. For instance, several national surveys have found "children are twice as likely as adults to be victims of serious violent crime and three times as likely to experience simple assault" (Costello et al., 2002), and disproportionately witness violence (Kilpatrick et al., 2003). Within this, Black, urban youth are statistically more likely to have experiences with violence than White youth (Breslau et al., 1998; Wilcox et al., 2009). Across applied domains of public health, psychology, and education, emergent scholarship has continually highlighted the significance of such adverse experiences, starting in utero and continuing into adolescence, on cognitive and social-emotional development, and across the lifespan for health-related morbidities and mortality. For example, trauma studies, including PTSD and other forms of cognitive behavioral phenomena, have shifted to examine some of the war-like experiences of some urban youth, largely due to experiences with violence (Dempsey et al., 2000). While such work has been essential to provide more trauma-informed care and pedagogy for improving urban youth well-being (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Ginwright, 2015; Hannegan-Martinez, 2019), it has done little to shift how we understand the *qualitative* nature of urban violence broadly experienced, including the significance of such violence for how young people understand racial identities or racial space. Hence, while previous studies have heavily documented the disproportional experiences of IPV for inner-city Black youth, they have not fully examined other typologies of violence and their intersectionality. Moving beyond the broad-scaled epidemiology of past studies, it is imperative to privilege the qualitative experiences and voices of Black youth contending with violence. Teasing out "new" phenomena and their relationships, it becomes essential to empirically capture how young people construct knowledge and related social meaning from violence. Understanding violence— specifically, how young people are impacted by it—are critical questions of inquiry across multiple policy and academic domains that have traditionally undertheorized violence (Jackman, 2002; Tyner & Inwood, 2014).

In addition to the numerous studies on broader community violence experienced by Black inner-city youth, there has been important work examining schools as "sites of suffering" for Black children (Dumas, 2014). While schools are commonly seen as places of refuge for many

children, many Black children experience schools as sites of material and ideological hostility. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue that schools have been places where Whites have exercised their "absolute right to exclude" (p. 60) Black children. Such school policy, while often coded in language, has served to exclude Black children and families from critical educational resources and opportunities (Anderson, 1988; Anyon, 1997; Rothstein, 2014). More recent scholarship has pointed out the overwhelming examples of disproportionate referrals, suspensions and expulsions, whereby Black youth are overrepresented at every stage of the "disciplinary" process (Gregory et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2002). Other areas of research have documented numerous school-based domains where similarly Black children are disproportionately tracked (Oakes & Lipton, 1990; Oakes & Guilton, 1995), placed in special education (Blanchett, 2006; Eitle, 2002; O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006), diagnosed psychotropic medications (Fitzgerald, 2009), even exposed to toxic hazards (Chakraborty & Zandbergen, 2007). Dumas and ross (2016) aptly point out that such examples are illustrative of a much larger system of racialized punishment for Black children, and "forms of anti-Black violence, [that] facilitate and legitimize Black suffering in the everyday life of schools" (p. 419). While perhaps different in scope from the aforementioned interpersonal violence experienced in many inner-city neighborhoods, the effect of these school-based experiences similarly violates Black children and harms their life trajectories. Rather than offering a sanctuary from racialized oppression, this research has documented a school ecosystem replete with various forms of violence that Black children must contend with. While race has been a key descriptor in much of the aforementioned research, affective geographies of violence highlight the processual ways urban violence (re)create meanings about race, racial space, and even belonging. As youth are forced to contend with the question of literal safety, they must also contend with the symbolism and social *meanings* about this safety and violence.

In Article 1, "*Navigating Geographies of Urban Violence*: Oakland Youth Sense-making Racialized Safety and Space," I center BIPOC youth subjectivities in a phenomenological project that offers a textured account about the scope and impact of urban violence. In particular, I highlight five youths' sense- and spatial-making repertoires as they navigate the social and material landscapes of Oakland, California. This paper offers a place-based analysis of violence that factors how young people experience and perceive geographies of safety and risk, and the myriad ways interpersonal violence intersects with racialized space. Such a process highlights sociospatial dynamics in "real-time," including the mutually constitutive ways social and spatial relations generate racial meanings. In this regard, the research is an interdisciplinary contribution that deepens understanding into the hyperlocal worlds and lived practices of a group of urban youth, and in the process, foregrounds a critical spatiality that widens the scope of knowledge about the capaciousness of urban violence. Findings suggest (a) "Whiteness" is perceived to be a form of sanctuary, with White bodies and "White space" as symbols of safety, perceived to be buffered from the most egregious forms of violence; (b) youth must leverage deep insider-knowledge and develop spatialized safe-keeping schemas to navigate everyday precarity; and (c) racialized violence conveys a narrative of disposability, creating an affective geography youth must contend with. Such findings signal the need for increased study into the qualitative impact of urban violence in the lives of youth of color, and the significance of racialized space as a function for safety and violence.

In Article 2, "*Upsetting the (Schooling) Set Up*: Autoethnography as Critical Race Methodology," Patrick Camangian, David Stovall, and I utilize autoethnography as a critical race methodology. Specifically, the authors use generative autoethnography—a collective spin-

story—to illustrate how their past personal experiences are present in their current educational lives. This generative autoethnography fulfills CRT's tenets of: intercentricity of race and racism; challenging dominant Ideology; the commitment to social justice; the centrality of experiential knowledge; and interdisciplinary perspectives. We illustrate the dialectical relationship of our lived experiences in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Oakland, and how these experiences propel the educational work that we do, the voices we choose to lift up, and how we choose to lift them. Shared publicly, these stories further invite readers to critically reflect on their own personal experiences and social realities, continuing the generative praxis of autoethnography. In this way, autoethnography, like critical race method, is an analytic tool that fosters internal reflection, intra/intercultural compassion, and community activism.

In Article 3, "*Ghost-mapping 'Urban Violence'*: Reconceptualizing the Racial-Spatial Contours of the Urbanscape," I assert that colloquial definitions of urban violence in the United States obfuscate the structural context of anti-Black violence, treating place *descriptively*, but not *analytically*. Critical racial spatiality offers tools to reconceptualize such violence, paying particular attention to the mutuality of race and space, which work dialectically to (re)produce and materialize racialized meanings. This conceptual paper then theorizes the multiple scales and intersections of an urban U.S. violence, attenuated to theories of anti-Blackness and sociospatiality that highlight urban space as a racialized (and violent) spatial project. Urban space works to sediment meanings about Blackness, including naturalize Black abjection, and in the process, obscure White spatial politics which structure(d) the urbanscape. This conceptual turn forces a reappraisal of everyday racial-spatial experiences of Black and urban youth who must navigate, sense- and space-make spectacularized forms of interpersonal violence, but just as importantly, the quotidian violence (Hartman, 2008) of racialized space. As such, reconceptualizing urban violence forces us to take more seriously the depths of everyday precarity for many Black and urban youth.

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Article 1

Navigating Geographies of Urban Violence: Oakland Youth Sense-making Racialized Safety and Space

In her articulation of the "afterlife of slavery," Hartman (2008) brilliantly provides a heuristic to understand our modern world, and yet an invocation to continue unpacking the innumerable ways we normalize Black abjection in our society. That our society continues to be structured through the "racial calculus" and logic of anti-Black violence requires us to think through the pervasive (and perverse) linkages across all segments of society. Taking Hartman's (1997) cue "to illuminate the terror of the mundane and quotidian rather than exploit the shocking spectacle" (p. 4), in this paper I seek to examine the *everyday experiences* of a group of urban young people as they navigate a local "geography of safety and risk" (Small & Feldman, 2012). While there are decidedly aspects of their life which would fit the spectacular, I instead situate them in their local geography, centering seemingly mundane reflections, thoughts, and feelings. In doing so, I seek to advance greater specificity about the qualitative and phenomenological impact of urban violence, one that is arguably an enduring artifact of this "racial calculus."

Extant research on "youth violence" would validate Toni Morrison's claim that "everywhere, everywhere, children are the scorned people of the Earth." To be a young person in the United States is to be disproportionately at risk for victimization to violence (Costello et al., 2002; Kilpatrick et al., 2003). Urban youth, in particular, navigate even higher levels of violence exposure (Breslau et al., 1998; Breslau et al., 2004); with Black youth experiencing some of the highest rates of interpersonal violence, including homicide. While much of the focus of the robust criminology and public health literature on violence focuses on the experiences of Black males, Christen Smith (2016) reminds us to consider the capacious nature of Black suffering and the reverberation of Black death across communities and social structures, especially Black women and mothers who disproportionately bear the burden of emotional work, protection, care, and grief: all indirect sequelae to premature forms of Black death.

While there has been important, and necessary, socio-political mobilization against state-sponsored killings of Black life across the American hemisphere (Alves, 2018; Smith, 2016), far less attention has been paid to the ways that urban violence—often purportedly narrated as "black on black" or "brown on brown" murder—fits within the logics of anti-Black violence or other frameworks to better situate this complex phenomena. Moreover, despite decades of research about urban violence or "crime," much of it quantitative, the voices of young people of color have rarely driven the conversation about collective understandings of violence in a meaningful or qualitative way. Urban youth have been frequent *objects* of study in the broad urban violence literature, yet have had limited opportunity to qualitatively define and name their everyday experiences with violence (Nicotera, 2003; Witherspoon & Ennett, 2011). Given that they are disproportionately impacted by incidents of and policy responses to violence, this is an arrogant omission on behalf of researchers and policy makers. Such youth perspectives are critical to deepening understandings of violence as a far-reaching, extractive force in many urban communities, including its relationship in the co-construction of race and space.

While place has been used as an important descriptor for incidents of violence (i.e., "urban" and "inner-city"), critical *spatiality* continues to be fruitful terrain to analyze phenomena across material and symbolic landscapes, such as "place-based" violence. Given the historical relationship between "the spatialization of race and the racialization of space," urban geographies remain a rich context to also unpack the racial and spatial implications (or "racespace") of violence that disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous, and POC (BIPOC). Thus, in this paper I strive to demonstrate the entangled ways urban violence, space, and race interact, and how they are taken up and understood by Black youth and other non-Black POC. To this end, I organize this paper through these key questions:

1) How do Black youth and other youth of color mundanely experience and understand violence across their local geography?
2) What "safe-making" repertoires do youth deploy to navigate their local geographies?
3) How do they understand the sociospatiality and relationship of the local racial geography to such violence, including the role of race vis-à-vis safety and risk?

Through a centering of youth subjectivities, I offer a more textured account about the scope of urban violence, highlighting youth sense/space-making repertoires across social and material landscapes. The youth offer textured accounts experiencing and perceiving geographies of safety and risk, including the myriad ways violence intersects with space and race. In this regard, this paper is an interdisciplinary contribution that delves into the hyperlocal worlds and lived practices of a group of urban youth, and in the process, widens the scope of knowledge about urban violence by foregrounding a critical spatiality. While "geographies of domination" (McKittrick, 2007) are not the sum total of Black and POC people's experiences with space and place-making in the United States, endemic structural violence persistently shapes the possibilities of Black and urban life. This point is yet another important dimension to fully understand urban youth navigating safety and everyday precarity.

Last, it is important to note the respective experiences of various marginalized groups to enduring structures of White supremacy and state-sanctioned violence, and also, the endemic nature of anti-Black violence as the "fulcrum for White supremacy" (Nakagawa, 2012). Although not all participants would (self)-identify as "Black," I consider the development of urban space through the logics of a White spatial imaginary (Lipsitz, 2007) and the excesses of "Blackness." While urban space was intended as "a racially demarcated space actively constructed by Whites, as a method for containing Black community development and mobility" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 798), the politics of ghettoization can penalize other non-White groups by proxy experiences. la paperson (2010) articulates this as the potential *dislocation of Blackness*—Blackness experienced beyond phenotype—that "non-Blacks can be subjected to" (p. 18), echoing Gilmore (1999) that "you do not have to be black to be prosecuted under black law" (p. 22). Still, I factor the respective experiences of non-Black POC navigating White sociospatial logics from their own particular standpoints, paying attention to not create "false equivalences" (Liu & Shange, 2018) of racial experiences, even while understanding that racial meanings are created relationally and proximally.

Conceptual Frameworks

Critical Race Spatiality and Black Geography influence the project's multidisciplinary framing and interpretation. Furthermore, I use the term "wayfinding" to characterize the multi-layered ways in which young people encounter and, more crucially, make sense of their local environment. Here, I use it as a *sociospatial* heuristic to tease out the mutually forming spatial and social domains that youth must navigate in their local urbanscape.

I bound my study employing a critical race spatiality. Developing the concept of "racespace," I draw upon Neely and Samura's (2011) theory of racial space to help bound my analysis. Here, I am interested in the complex dimensions of how race "lives" in, impacts, and helps to construct space, and conversely, the similar mechanisms through which space informs how we understand, see, and live race. While "race" is the defining characteristic for Neely and Samura, they build off of Soja's (1980) sociospatial dialectic, an important foundation to understand the spatiality of other social phenomena, like violence. Similar to the ways the race and space mutually constitute one another, sociospatiality examines the mutually-constituting relationship of materiality and sociality. In this sense, race, space, and violence work as mutual constructions. Pacheco and Valez (2009) describe the methodological considerations of critical race spatial analysis as going "beyond description to spatially examine how structural and institutional factors influence and shape racial dynamics and the power associated with those dynamics over time" (293). Within the context of this study, critical race spatiality

Similar to Critical Race Spatiality, I employ a Black Geography imaginary. Definitionally, Black Geography "consider(s) what kinds of possibilities emerge when black studies encounters human geography" (McKittrick, 2006, x). Yet, more so, it is a diverse and long intellectual project (e.g., DuBois, 1899) that seeks to *map* the myriad ways Black life is inherently geographic. Some of the central currents of Black Geography include the mutually constitutive relationship between Black spatiality, place-making, and spatial knowledge, on the one hand, and geographies of domination—on the other. The latter, Black Geography, writ large, challenges scholars and activists to take real the intellectual challenge to map the materiality of anti-Blackness, that which McKittrick argues "might be thought of as merely the black-symbolic or black-talk [that] is in fact unmistakably geographic, and imaginatively real, in multiple ways" (2006, 21). The study of "urban violence" often reifies conditions for Black death and Black spaces as "pathological;" Black Geography reframes the assumptions, questions, and objectives of such scholarship, centering Black life-making and everyday repertoires for sense-making and being.

Finally, Lynch's seminal work, *The Image of the City* (1960), emphasizes the importance of mental or cognitive mapping as a methodological intervention for delving deeper into everyday, lived understandings of urban space. On the one hand, mental maps aid comprehension of significant markers and recollection of space and place, while also revealing how and why people relate to them. In the context of this study, young people's perception of their surroundings reveals how they experience, make sense of, and even negotiate many parts of their geography. Young people's "maps of meaning" managing safety and risk offer sociospatial insight into the complex relationship of violence, race, and space. Wayfinding, defined here, is a navigational schema used by urban youth to avoid potential and perceived risks in their environment. As a socio-spatial "mental map," it reveals how youth understand and relate to racialized material and social space (or racespace), paying attention to these intersections of race, space, and violence across their lived geography.

(*Re)Mapping* Oakland

In a historical examination of the rise of class and racial politics in Oakland, California, Self (2005) describes the city's changing landscape in the twentieth century as one eventually having "embedded a class regime literally into [its] physical terrain" (p. 4). This relationship between geography or space, and subsequent social phenomena, such as race and class, is strikingly clear in Oakland. Joint processes of Black urbanization and White suburbanization, formally and informally sanctioned via Federal housing policies, racial covenants, and blatant

White hostilities, helped to shape racial patterns of segregation across the city and region. Local knowledge, for example, often juxtaposes largely working-class East Oakland “flats” or the spatially and racially isolated Black West Oakland neighborhoods to affluent, and largely White, Rockridge or picturesque “hills.”

The history of Oakland’s Black community reads similar to that many Black communities in the North, Midwest, and Western United States; communities founded by Southern Blacks with freedom dreams who fled hostile Southern conditions only to find “‘The South’ was everywhere that Black people called home” (Hunter & Robinson, 2018). Waves of Black migration during the Great Migration, largely lured by wartime industries at the ports, become the basis of the earliest Black communities in the Bay Area, from Richmond, San Francisco, and Oakland. As WWII job availability lessened post-War and a preferred White working class returned from military service, Black economic vitality proved ephemeral. Like *Chocolate Cities* reminds us, Oakland’s Black community was both representative of anti-Black racism, but also fundamentally connected to Black placemaking practices that would develop radical politics of prosperity and self-care, and the maintenance of deep connections to other Black geographies. Here, Black people created important infrastructure in the Bay Area, and redlined West Oakland, in particular, became a hub of Black socio-cultural life and an economic generator for the Black community overall.

De jure and de facto residential restrictions continued to reinforce the separate nature of Black life in Oakland. And while the overall Black population continued to increase in Oakland, concomitant waves of White residents fled into surrounding suburbs, similar to patterns of White fight that were happening nationally. While the creation of White, suburban space was markedly a socio-cultural phenomenon, it was remarkably facilitated through significant institutional and structural (re)arrangements of White capital, which ostensibly subsidized White life in the suburbs and penalized remaining urban residents who had no desire or means to leave the urban core (Self, 2005). Self characterizes the stark changes to quality of life in local urban/suburban landscapes using the dueling metaphors of *garden* and *plantation*, as a way to capture the very different spatial arrangements and experiences of residents locally. “The difference between a garden and plantation, between the open, connected city and a colony, between a neighborhood and a ghetto, between the pastoral and the imperial, is paramount. These differences tell us a great deal about what is at stake in the struggle for the city.” For Black residents of the city, Oakland increasingly became the plantation, despite the prospects of life in its juxtaposing gardens.

Social and health indicators offer one proxy into the place-based “plantation” effects of this structural racism. Juxtaposing the spatial arrangement of life expectancies in Oakland, “an African American born in West Oakland . . . can expect to die 15 years earlier than White person born in the Oakland hills” (vii). Moreover, across Alameda County, African Americans longitudinally have the worst indicators for 16 out of 19 main health outcomes. Health literature describes these processes through various frames, but *concentrated disadvantage*, *neighborhood effect*, and *place-based health*, all help to detail the ways that endemic anti-Black racism structures Black life and harms Black bodies. Alameda County Public Health Department’s (ACPHD) *Life and Death from Unnatural Causes: Health and Social Inequality in Alameda County,* lays out these points in tremendous detail:

> Regardless of where they live, African Americans tend to be burdened by higher rates of death than other racial/ethnic groups. This underscores the powerful influence of race/ethnicity and racism on their life chances. The combined effects of race, place,

> and income on the health of African Americans are profound. As described earlier, about two-thirds of deaths among African Americans in the highest poverty areas could have been prevented if they had the same death rates as Whites living in the lowest poverty areas. (p. 19)

In Oakland, the disproportional "spatial patterns of death" (p. 14) in the city overlap with areas with the highest Black population density—West Oakland and Deep East Oakland. Here, in these real and imagined places, the city's homicides are concentrated. Geographically, these areas have been colloquially deemed Oakland's "killing fields" (cite); and yet, despite numerous non-Black residents dispersed throughout these neighborhoods, Oakland's homicide is disproportionately Black. Comparative data (spanning the life of the study) revealed that Oakland had the third highest rate nationally of youth (aged 10–19) killed by gunfire. For example, between 2006 and 2007, 42 youth were murdered from gunfire—a rate of almost 50 youth per 100,000. Only New Orleans and St. Louis had higher rates of youth gun homicide during this time (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), and across a five year period Oakland consistently ranked as one of the "most violent" cities in America (Federal Bureau of Information's *Uniform Crime Report*, 2010). While harrowing, these outcomes of life and death are deeply rooted in the inequitable racial and spatial formations of Oakland's history. This paper is thus a critical reassessment of the nature of urban violence; one which a group of young people navigating Oakland's dueling gardens and plantations must contend with.

Methodology

Data for this paper comes out of a larger dissertation project focused on youth sense- and space-making racialized spaces in Oakland, California, across communities and school sites. Spanning more than six years, I worked with four of the youth represented in the study in a variety of Oakland-based "educational" capacities: including high school social studies teacher across two different public schools, youth development specialist/case-worker at a local community organization servicing Black youth, and an educator in a critical pedagogy university/high school partnership program. Each of these respective projects lasted approximately two years. While most were anchored within a school context, the ethic of the work cultivated relationships outside of schools and beyond any institutional or formal "end-date." These projects encompassed local organizing campaigns, various Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects, and various advocacy efforts around employment, college matriculation, and everyday living. As such, these five young adults in this study represent unique, individual cases, but comprise an "extended case" (Burawoy, 2009) about a larger context of youth safety in the city, which I am a life-long resident of. Most prominently, this relationship to the city—with my own historical memory as a young person traversing local geographies of race and violence—helps to guide my "cultural intuition" (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) as an insider, which has been essential to cultivating relationships with these young people and my ability to makes sense of interpreting respondents' stories.

All five young adults participated in semi-structured interviews, retrospectively examining their recollections growing up in Oakland. In doing so, respondents shared "critical incidents" (Angelides, 2001), which ranged from memorable to mundane personal experiences with everyday violence, corresponding to the various scales of violence (e.g., individual, vicarious, symbolic, structural, and more) which were central to conceptualizing their lived experiences with violence to the research study. All participants fit criteria of being (self-defined) "from Oakland," spending the duration of their life growing up in Oakland. Two male participants were born in other countries (Yemen and El Salvador), but each arrived to Oakland

under 5 years of age, while still maintaining ties to their parents' home country. The other three respondents (two male, one female) self-identified as "Black." At the time of their interviews, respondents ranged in age from 20 to 22, and hence had a couple years to reflect on their retrospective teenage experiences in Oakland. Moreover, participants attended a total of four different high schools in Oakland, including schools in West Oakland, Central Oakland, Deep East Oakland, and the Oakland Hills. Correspondingly, participants lived across various West and East Oakland neighborhoods. During the time of the study, three participants continued to live in Oakland, whereas two attended a local university, where they also lived. Semi-structured interviews on average ranged from 90 to 120 minutes in length. Importantly, however, the context for them, including important cues and examples, had been established by our previous relationships and work over many previous years.

Taking a critical phenomenological approach, I had hoped interviews would highlight their "situated knowledges," providing insight into local youth networks, which many adults rarely gain access to, but also the broader sociospatial context it was occurring in. Importantly, Guenther (2019) defines critical phenomenology as not "absolute priority to the first-person experience of individual consciousness but rather situates lived experience in a material, historical, and social context that is both prior to the individuation of any given subject and also shaped by the historical sedimentation of perceptual practices and existential styles" (p. 3). Local practices of knowledge into how youth "perceived and interpret their world" (Rudolph, 2005, p. 12) were crucial for understanding them on their own terms, but also helping to situate the sociohistorical and sociospatial contexts to understand violence as a "race-spaced" phenomena in Oakland. These became key when thinking about how certain processes may have become "sedimented" locally.

The semi-structured nature of interviews, however, allowed participants to share their experiences more freely, and prioritize what they were comfortable sharing. Given the sensitivity of many of their direct experiences with violence, and the sharing of intimate vulnerabilities, our prior relationship was crucial to establishing a rapport of mutual trust and intent. In doing so, I was able to set the general parameters for the areas of knowledge I hoped to gain further perspective into, while maintaining the participants' agency to co-direct the conversation. To this end, conversations were fluid, and each interview took its own particular shape. These wide parameters allowed participants greater ability to shape the direction of the conversation, which made them more comfortable and generated more honest communication. Without this, young people would likely have a more difficult time trusting me with their emotions, which are critical to understanding how we experience and live in the everyday sense. As Tyner and Smith (2015) note, "The everyday, to be sure, entails a routine, but it is also an emotional grounding of one's life to a particular place. It is where life is actually lived and felt" (p. 7). This point about "emotionality" highlights the ways that a geography of emotion is central to capturing *how relations are experienced in real-time*, which enhanced insight into the sociospatial relations that were central to the study. For this, I am eternally grateful for the young people's stories and their trust in me to receive them.

Positionality

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) write, "In researching settings that are more familiar, it is, of course, much more difficult to suspend one's preconceptions, whether these derive from social science or from everyday knowledge. One reason for this is that what one finds is so obvious" (p. 92). In conducting a research study on Oakland, my positionality as a lifelong community-member in Oakland— including questions of "insider/outsidership," and relations of

subjectivity/objectivity—are ultimately the greatest asset and weakness to this study. As such, I have attempted to be explicit about how I am very much a part of the research, and emphasize the ways that this insider knowledge is an asset. Ladson-Billings (2000) echoes this sentiment: "My research is part of my life and my life is part of my research" (p. 268). Hence, this project is an opportunity to systematically examine local issues of power, difference, and belonging in Oakland, where I have lived and worked most of my adult life. The more I am cognizant and reflective about my multiple identities as a community-member and community-researcher and how they blend, separate, and at times blur, the greater I can employ a "*both/and*" paradigm which doesn't betray who I am or inaccurately portray the experiences of other community members I say I value.

Findings

Three Sides of the Same Coin—Trialectics of Space, Race, and Violence

In these findings, I present an analysis of youth mutual space- and sense-making—or (*racial) wayfinding*—across Oakland's geography of violence and its associated racespace. These findings highlight youth understandings of the salience of violence, which significantly impacts how they discuss perceptions of and navigating safety across their physical and social environments. The power of urban violence, in this regard, impacts how these youth think about traveling across space—including racialized space—but also just *being* in the world. While sociospatial theory has helped to theorize the dialectical nature of race and space, these youth findings demonstrate the need for further theorization about the *trialectical* nature, or co-production of race, space, and violence.

On one hand, safety/risk was distributed along racial fault-lines, both in the material landscape and in the racial imaginary. In this sense, young people understood violence for its *geographicness* and its *racialness*. Moreover, echoing theories of sociospatiality, connotations of violence invariably revealed and further crafted meanings about race (Whiteness/Blackness) and place. Here, distinctions of "real" and "perceived" threats of violence were blurred, as both were germane to understanding the local landscape, and subsequent wayfinding schemas of their everyday geography. In this sense, discussing youth experiences with (violence) safety and risk in Oakland was as much about setting the stage for them to narrate the related ways they understood Oakland's racial imaginary and spatialization occurring in the everyday. Three central findings suggest (a) youth leverage deep insider-knowledge and develop spatialized safe-keeping schemas to navigate everyday precarity; (b) Whiteness conveys sanctuary, with White bodies and "White space" as symbols of safety, perceived to be buffered from the most egregious forms of violence; and (c) racialized violence creates an affective geography for youth, conveying a narrative of disposability they must contend with. In concert, these findings offer insight into both the social and spatial productions of racialized violence, yet importantly demonstrate the sociospatial linkages or mutually constitutive race, space, and violence in the lives of young people in Oakland, which articulate a (de)valuation of youth lives in the city.

Through these optics, urban violence in Oakland, like the racialized geographies writ large, is as much a product of and process of race/racialization. Social processes of race structure meaning about non-White disposability that are physically entrenched in physical locations, which further connote and "naturalize" disposability. Similarly, violence is clustered in spaces of concentrated racialized disadvantage—itself the result of historical processes of racespace-making—that further signify meaning about who violence "typically" happens to. Here, the "real" and "perceived" are blurred, as both factor into the tenor of qualitative life experiences for these youth in Oakland. Despite the ubiquitousness of violence, however, young people

understood it matter most along racial and spatial fault-lines. In this sense, discussing youth's experiences with (violence) safety and risk in Oakland was as much about setting the stage for them to narrate the ways that they understood race being entrenched and operating in the everyday.

(Un)Knowable Risks: Local Knowledge to Navigate Everyday Precarity

In "Death Around the Corner," Tupac Shakur (1995) articulates a deep awareness of and relationship to an impending doom. Despite an ever-present awareness of proximal danger, Shakur describes a death that is an inescapable destiny. "I see death around the corner, any day . . . " Locating the threat of violence in both spatial, temporal, and symbolic terms, Shakur describes a pervasive, everyday precarity that shapes the (im)possibilities for his life and gives meaning to how he also sees himself. Such profound risk for violence shapes how he makes sense of his social and physical world, the context for where he lives and ultimately anticipates (his) death occurring. Shakur's particular performance of the urban here—arguably raced and gendered—articulates the "struggles and strivings" of life-making in an urban geography of risk.

Similar to Shakur's depiction of everyday precariousness, youth respondents understood violence in Oakland as an expected contour to their life and one which they must anticipate and strategize. Since violence constituted such a pervasive part of their everyday landscape, they understood many of their schemas as "commonsense" backdrops to merely growing up in the city. All participants readily cited examples of being personally impacted by physical violence, observing it frequently throughout their community, and begrudgingly "accepting" it as integral to growing up locally. Even while critiquing media portrayals of Oakland, which they felt over-represented "crime" and violence, participants articulated an everyday precarity that was simultaneously "stretched out" over space and "clustered" in-place. At the crux of this was the belief that local violence was endemic, which created the need for daily forms of wayfinding that avoid harm. These constant reminders about safe-keeping form the backdrop for these young people as they actively develop rituals and schemas to increase their spatial safety in Oakland, even as violence seemingly lurks around Oakland's corners. Here, youth develop various safe-keeping schemas to navigate everyday precarity and leverage deep insider-knowledge to learn Oakland's space.

"Death around the Corner": Violence as Diffusive

Within much of the social epidemiology and criminology research, "violence" is characterized through the lens of individualized, concrete incidents. While the participants in the study could similarly name specific moments of direct violence, they expressed a much more expansive conceptualization. Doing so, they craft meanings of violence as a diffusive, active force. Massey (2013) argues for understanding spatiality, which "stretches out" social relations and phenomena. Echoing Massey, the young people describe the capacious reach of violence. As they observed this pervasiveness, youth detailed their experiences having to always contend with the *gravity* of violence.

Lee, a 20-year-old from West Oakland, discussed attending to daily ritualizations of daily safe-keeping. Here, his family provides constant admonishments to "be safe." At the thought of merely leaving the confines of his Oakland home, he navigated a *jungle* where the "skinny niggas die":

> Lee: There are probably . . . how can I put this . . . . The people who are out looking for violence, can find that. It's easy to find a target, in the jungle; it's harder to not become someone else's prey. Anybody can become a target. You don't have to be from here; you don't even have to know where you going. *It* can find you.

> DP: What type of awareness do your peers and classmates have into what you're describing?
> Lee: Oh, they're very aware. Cuz, it's like, that's one of the things you get warned about even stepping outside. Like, nobody in West Oakland when they leave, nobody that *I* know, nobody from *my* community, when they walk out the door their mom's isn't telling them to "Have a good day." They're telling them to be safe. Be cautious. About what you're getting yourself into; where you're going; who you're going to be with, who's around you.

In beckoning the metaphors of jungle, predator, and prey, Lee intentionally invoked a picture of sheer survival. Thus, leaving the house is never a simple, mundane act, but rather a *memento mori* and vigilant reminder to keep safety as close as possible. Furthermore, Lee made sure that he emphasizes the collectivity of his perspective. Referring to the people that *he knows*—from *his community*—Lee acknowledged the multiple local worlds at play. Framing the worldview as pervasive among his peer group, he is aware that these experiences are likely not universal to all (young) people, even across Oakland's landscape. This is an important detail, as Lee raised a reoccurring message in the project—that Oakland's violence, while expansive and sometimes unknowable, still discriminates.

Lee described a spirit of violence that one can essentially possess ("people . . . can find *that*") and be possessed by ("*it* can find you"). Similarly, he duplicitously mentioned family aphorisms to pay attention to material spaces, such as "where he is going," but recognizes the apparent randomness that "anybody" could be targeted. Even if one is strategic about the place one is going, violence is a "thing" that seemingly has its own sense of movement. Tyner et al. (2014) argue for a deeper interrogation of what violence actually constitutes, troubling the "commonsensical" understandings of everyday violence as mere physical act. Arguing for a much more expansive ontology of violence, they note the ways violence is not just "outcome" but active "process." Lee articulated a similar dialectic—the place and placeless of violence—measured by concrete moments and sites of violence, but violence as active, even if ephemeral, ether.

In a similar vein, Justin described the lingering sense of local violence as akin to addiction. Similar to violence having a gravity, Justin identified it as having *force* or *pull*.

> Violence . . . [*pause*] . . . it's consistent . . . everyday. It's just always there . . . . It's a bad habit . . . like smoking cigarettes. When you smoke cigarettes, it's a problem the first time. You cough. "Oh, it's nasty." . . . Then you go back to it; keep going back to it. Then, it becomes a habit…So it becomes an issue. Then the problem is . . . can you stop. But . . . [*pause*] . . . sometimes, you just keep going.

For Justin, the enduring, everyday nature of violence creates the context for potential habituation; a drug one gets "accustomed" to from a forced feeding. Again, relating violence with movement, he described a cyclical "back and forth" of rejection and acceptance, that ends in violence engendering more movement: it "just keeps going." In Justin's detailing of his geography, the expansiveness of violence gives it an "everyday, always there" feel that ostensibly is part of his local topography. In this sense, *violence* is a layer of the urbanscape he has begrudgingly learned to accept. Even while finding it "nasty" and "bad," Justin articulated resignation that, despite people's agency, violence has a life-force of its own.

"A need to know basis": Learning Place and Deep Insider-Knowledge as Safe-Keeping

While in previous instances youth defined local violence as a broad, diffusive precarity, in others they noted the deeply particular and situated examples that were embedded "in-place."

As such, the youth described the ways they “learned place” through experiences with safety and risk. They consequently learned wayfinding in various subtleties across numerous personal situations and observations in the community. Collectively, youth highlighted safe-keeping schemas that helped them decipher how to avoid especially dangerous places and minimize violence even when it eventually “finds you.”

Candice, for example, a life-long resident of Deep East Oakland, discussed the importance of learning to *read* her world. Dependent upon Oakland’s public bus system to get to a crosstown school, she described a thought process which factored spatiality and temporality. She noted, “I’d rather take the ‘1 Bus’ at times, even if I have to walk eight blocks, than take the ‘40,’ which drops me off a block from my house.” Despite its proximity to her house, the 40 bus included a potential confluence of different high school students or other young people, which experience had taught her could be volatile. While she may not be concerned with being directly harmed, she knew it was better to avoid prospective petty issues that could lead to further violence. Instead, she knows another bus line at this time offers less risk, largely due to where it travels and who may (not) be on it, even if it offers other inconveniences like having to walk eight additional blocks. After riding for years, Candice understood the significance of avoiding certain bus lines during the day, as a way to avoid other teens who she felt were more likely to heighten the threat of violence. It is not ironic, however, that Candice originally leveraged bus travel as a means to potentially minimize the gendered (and raced) violence she had been targeted as a pedestrian walking Oakland. While she developed safe-keeping repertories as much as possible, using the bus to literally safe-keep across Oakland space, the bus became a new context or place for encounters with violence, which Candice had to continually learn to negotiate.

Later, Candice elaborated on this *mining* of insider-knowledge to keep herself out of harm’s way, further expanding on the intersections of spatiality and temporality. Understanding the “where, when, and how,” she described developing an innate calculus for approximating safety when spending time at a friend’s house in East Oakland. Here, she explained how certain areas were “not cool” to travel through, even while being critical of overly simplistic popular narratives about violence in Oakland. While one side of 98th Avenue may be okay, she knew to not visit the “other side.”

> Candice: Well, it’s funny right. Sometimes I might be like, “It’s not safe on that other side of 98th.” You know what I mean. I can catch myself doing that. That type of thing. Or if you go past, you know, Bancroft and the upper 100s, that’s not cool. I can see myself saying stuff like that. But . . .
>
> DP: How do you know that? Is that just based on—
>
> Candice: It’s more so based on experiences. So the friend moved there later on in our high school . . . and she actually lived by MacArthur and a 100. So it would always be at her house. It’s drive-bys happening, and you know, police units going up and down, people getting shot, ran over, just random stuff would happen. And so, it was still be kinda like even me walking back to my house still be kinda like, “Uhhh.” I don’t even know if I want to go back right now. You know what I mean . . . . And then also, my other friend lives on 92nd and Sunnyside. Her cousin is part of a big gang, so he would always bring people over and they be like fighting, shooting people. Stuff like that would happen. People get shot in front of the house. So, it was like, kinda like, okay well . . . that was dangerous because I actually *know* this is happening. Not I’m seeing this on the news. Like, I actually know this is happening. Police always there.

DP: But you would still go, though, you said?
Candice: Yeah, I would still go.
DP: So, explain that then?
Candice: [l*aughing*] Umm, probably go early. Then leave before the sun goes down. You know what I mean. Before it kinda got crazy or . . . um, kinda call her. "Is everything cool?" And then she'd let me know. Or worst-case scenario, her mom would take me home. Like that type of thing . . . . It's like, of course you may be at risk, but you're at less risk.

Candice understands first-hand the variety of unsafe and unpredictable conditions in her friend's neighborhood. Rather than letting this insider information completely deter her from spending time at her friend's house and in this neighborhood, she chooses to utilize the same insider relationship to quarry additional information from her friend (i.e., Are there any simmering neighborhood conflicts? Have the police been around recently?).

While the neighborhood conditions have not necessarily changed, Candice has repositioned herself more safely among them. This deep knowledge allows her to understand that certain periods are more volatile than others, just like certain hours of the day or public transportation may not be ideal. This nuanced vantage point of the local landscape allows her to essentially travel through danger in Oakland more soundly, but understand it as contingent on place, as well as time. Similar to earlier renditions of violence as an *inevitable* part of Oakland's tapestry, Candice pointed to the taken-for-granted obviousness that "of course [she] may be at risk"; yet despite this realization, she insists on leveraging a sense of agency over her life and movement across Oakland's geography.

Even in the face of proximal gun violence, Ahmed noted a delicate balance of acknowledging local risk and negotiating life on his own terms. Similar to Candice, the desire to be, move, and navigate effectively trumps the potential place-based risks. Asked *how* he makes those real-time assessments, Ahmed feels confident that he has developed a competency to assess the threat for violence; that he "just knows how" to make sense of the collective geography:

> I'm so used to it that I don't mind going out walking around. So I was just so used to just, I guess, the violence and the gunshots and stuff that I knew where to go, what time to go, when to not go. So I was able to work my life around all that; just normalize it in a way. Normalize the violence and stuff . . . . But then again, if I were to have kids right now, I wouldn't want them to be raised in all that, but I would want them to be conscious of it. Not have them think that it's a perfect world.

Ahmed describes his "daily navigation" of violence as a mundane, almost uneventful, matter of fact way. His awareness after years of "taking notes" is embodied awareness. As noted in the previous section, Ahmed described the importance of mental note-taking, with a sharp eye for detailing his immediate neighborhood, including his family's market, and if anything seems "out of place." Surveying who was around and paying close attention to the subtleties of body language, like Candice, Ahmed must take constant inventory because his daily safety depends on it. Ahmed understands such "normalization" comes at a psychic cost, and the juxtaposition of his futurity quickly grounds this fact. Despite being "so used to it," his admission of not wanting (future) children to be "raised in *all that*" signifies he knows he should not have to either.

Whereas Candice and Ahmed detailed proffered insider-knowledge and a close relationship to a particular place, in some instances this may not be feasible. In such situations, the youth described the psychological and emotional toll of traveling through unknown or

perceived risky places. Not having the option of avoiding certain material landscapes as sites of potential violence meant they had to develop other wayfinding schemas, including various forms of emotional and psychological vigilance. Justin characterized this as being on his "*A-game*, all of the time," where he needed to be cautious, lucid, and flexible. This hypervigilant "A-game" meant that Justin was ready for whatever variables traversing unknown locations, taking extra precautions to spot potential perils before they ensnared him, using his "mouth-piece" to get out of some conflicts, and being ready to physically defend himself when he could not. In these instances, violence may be an unavoidable reality that one had to accept both physically and psychologically. Like Lee's description of his West Oakland surroundings, Justin was aware of the persistent threat of being in harm's way as he walked through Oakland or even took public transportation.

Finally, Lee recounted a memorable conversation with a childhood friend on the bus, who had seemingly accepted the prospect of being harmed as a result of place-based violence expected in a particular part of West Oakland. While we do not know the particulars for why he continues to travel into harm's way, this friend cynically acknowledges the threat of being gunned down in this part of town. For the friend, this place in Oakland is literally an expected geography of death:

> Okay, so there are people in West Oakland who wake up specifically, not necessarily consciously, but they wake up looking for ways to either get themselves killed or placed in prison. Doing a lot of illegal, irrational activities . . . some of it for attention. Some of it because they feel that's what they need to do . . . to live . . . . There is a friend of mine who I went to elementary school with when I moved to West Oakland. Like I run into him on the bus all the time and he's always talking about, he's pretty much always talking about getting high or whatever, and he always constantly brings up if he goes to this area that he'll get shot. And he always says, and he jokes about it, he says, uhhh, you know how people say "Don't say bye because it may be the last time you see him"? He always says, "Imma just say bye now, 'cuz I don't know if I'm going to see you again."

Lee's friend's "goodbye" is a chilling reminder of how life-threateningly close to mortality some young people feel, especially as they travel across different neighborhoods in Oakland. Lee prefaces his story with the fact that while many of his peers may engage in reckless, unsafe activity, their motivation is to try to actually find a way *to live*. Clearly, Lee's friend feels compelled to continue traveling to this particular part of the city, despite knowing severe risks that potentially jeopardize his life. Whether his motivation may be limited opportunities for work and prospects in another, the desire to visit a loved one (like Candice demonstrated earlier), a historical conflict, or merely the sheer impulse to defy the risk of physical violence to live on his own terms, Lee's friend refuses to allow the threat of violence to dictate his life, even if it may ultimately take it.

The snapshots of youth experiences across various Oakland geographies lend themselves to "real and perceived" associations with violence ingrained in the literal and symbolic Oakland "place." Knowles (2003) discusses this "active archive" of space, and the multiple meanings or layers that accumulate over time. Depending on the collectivity of these experiences, meaning is generated from and about particular material geographies, including pertinent symbols and how different groups of people "connect" to the space. For these young people, Oakland space is lived and conceived through an amalgam of personal, familial, and communal experiences and stories, including some of those aforementioned. Similar to cluster maps of violence, which visually capture individual incidents aggregated over space/time, the youth describe the

accumulated (archived) meaning of place, derived from the sum of localized encounters and memories. Hence, safe-keeping strategies were as much about making meaning and curating memory (Tyner et al., 2015) of Oakland's space; *place* memorializes these instances of violence and personal loss for the young people, and in this way, actively orients how they relate to space and interact with people within it. Given the rapidly changing racial demographics of Oakland as a result of displacement, it is important to also note shifting understandings of local meanings about Oakland's space and place, which are indubitably tied to racialized histories and memories that are being similarly displaced.

Negotiating Violence, Negotiating Race: Racialized and Spacialized Forms of Safety

The second finding discusses the racialized connotations of safety and risk in Oakland. While the young people described an everyday precarity that potentially lingered for them across and in-place, they also identified the varied ways safety and violence operate racially, and thus spatially. Here, young people captured Oakland's various racial geographies up close, connecting the connectivity of "racespace" to experiences with violence. Seeing violence, space, and race *trialectically*, participants outlined a local logic of violence in Oakland that happens to non-Whites in non-White spaces; conversely, White people and "White space" are seen as being largely buffered from the most egregious forms of everyday Oakland violence. Along these lines, these youth surface meaning-making and a sociospatial production of race and place, which articulates *Whiteness* as a form of safety, and *Blackness* as risk/danger. These mutual constructions were seemingly self-evident to the youth, with distributed rates of disproportionate racial/spatial violence, such as homicide, as self-fulfilling confirmation for the fact of what race *means*.

White Space as "Sanctuary"

> They lived up in the hills so it was less activity. So my mom was okay with that . . . that's why she would take me over there. She'd be like, "Okay, you in the Hills, so it (violence) doesn't matter. (Candice)

The stratification of race across Oakland's physical landscape—one historically contingent through redlining practices and various racial mobilization strategies—is still vividly apparent. Racial demographics continue to be dispersed and patterned across the city, and the young people understood violence and safety through these entrenched logics. Across generations of Oakland, "hills" and "flats" have been colloquial proxies for race. Echoing Lipsitz's (2007) "racialization of space and spatialization of race," Oakland geographies often dialectically produce enduring coupled meanings about race and space. Here, youth participants add an additional layer of meaning regarding the sociospatiality meanings of violence. While in the aforementioned narratives youth detailed their experiences navigating a quotidian violence, here they noted the power of White space as a form of sanctuary from violence. While Black youth were the largest composition in the study, all youth juxtaposed their experiences with the salience of Whiteness as a buffer to violence. Like Candice's statement above, youth participants recognized the ways White spaces (i.e., the hills) were etched with tacit understandings about safety; in the process, I argue, they trouble local articulations of racespace, which norm non-White suffering in Oakland.

Previously, Ahmed articulated an ingrained sense of "just knowing how" to navigate his Oakland geography. Here, he discussed his reflections on safety after moving from Oakland to attend college. Away in a neighboring town, Ahmed carefully observed the drastic contrast with how people navigate and understand the politics of safety in a predominantly White university.

On one hand, he values his ability to safely make sense of his cityscape back home, yet realizes its enduring impact in an ostensibly White geography.

> On some level I did feel safer. I still looked over my back. You know Oakland was still down the block. But I seen so much people not really caring, that I got into the hype of not really caring about (the threat of violence) . . . . But then when I go home on the weekend, it's a different story., I still have that habit but I have to like code-switch.

Ahmed underscored the drastically different safe-keeping logics of his PWI. He wrestled with the competing compulsions of wanting to just enjoy himself as a college student and let his guard down, with knowledge that the logic of this White space does not stretch back home.

This "type" of carefreeness is "hype" because he understands it is not really accessible for him or his community back home. Ahmed understands that while he has the skillset to adapt and code-switch, ultimately the logics for safety are incommensurate with life in Oakland. This is strikingly clear when he returns to see family and friends in his home neighborhood. He continued:

> . . . because of the stuff I've just experienced in Oakland. Uh, the certain folks that I've came in contact with, the certain memories that I have of certain blocks. Of certain spots in Oakland. Just of the certain memories that I have of Oakland, certain flashbacks I have when I go back walking to the store . . . . Time to put this on. I keep everything out and put on this shield, this mask on and really be, really, I guess strict. But really just watch out for certain things you say, certain things people say, certain interactions you have and stuff like that. You know, help a customer, go outside and check around the block see if nothing is going on and see if nothing is coming your way. Go back inside and do the same thing . . . . So definitely when I go to Oakland, that I guess that coat or that mask comes back on but when I come back to (the university) it's still kinda on for a little bit but fades away as I go to class as I come back and talk to different students, talk to them about high school experiences and it's like, "You lucky ass."

Ahmed notes he puts on a shield when he's home, his language conjuring images of someone preparing for war. His "active archive" of Oakland is directly tied to an actual geography of memory (Jones & Garde-Hansen, 2012) connected to material places—blocks of the city—including his family's grocery store where he works when he periodically returns home. Returning home then, is very much about returning back to the scene of experiences connected to the violation of his safety.

In particular, Ahmed recounted to me a very violent example of being robbed and pistol-whipped, right outside his family home. For him, this event exemplified how memories of violence are *locked* into particular geographies. Importantly, Ahmed is very cognizant of the double-consciousness he employs navigating two contrasting racial geographies. In the process, his narrative forces us to think about the associated value and meaning young people take when they discern racialized geographies that can and cannot access safety. Ahmed's final line—juxtaposing the previous high school lives of his "lucky" university classmates with his own—made it clear he understands the unfair tax of violence on the lives of non-White people.

Whiteness as Embodied Safety

While these were instances of youth articulating White racialized space as a form of sanctuary from violence, other examples sketched the ways they understood White people as *embodying safety* in Oakland. In their Oakland neighborhoods and schools, especially outside the context of those wielding institutional power, such as teachers and police, White people were rarely found at all. Yet increasingly, as the city became more gentrified, the young people

noticed more White people in their geography. Both Mario and Ahmed discussed gentrification as a force changing the color of their landscape, most notably how they similarly understood the racialized significance of safety and violence.

Mario, much like his peers, lamented the seriousness of worrying about questions of everyday precarity, so much so that his family would rarely let him walk or ride public transportation in the city. With his family's intimate relationship to conflict and loss back home in El Salvador, including the impetus for them coming to Oakland, Mario carried a twinned-sense of displacement as a Salvadoreño in Oakland. Arguably, this context of armed war served as a template for the seriousness of his family's safe-keeping in Oakland. In discussing the city's shifting racial demographic and the increased visibility of White people in the city, Mario understood gentrification as a "slap in the face to long-standing residents." While existing Black and brown community members have had to endure an endemic daily violence, untouched economic development, and substandard housing stock, Mario highlighted that White people instead have a "safety blanket" that inoculates them from the "typical" violence in his, or even a shared, Oakland. Here, White people access the same space, but on fundamentally different terms. Much like the logic of White spatial safety that was incongruent to non-White space, the logic of an embodied (racial) safety does not fit the non-White body. Based on this logic, gentrification is a form of "urban without the burden" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, as cited in la paperson, 2010), where Whiteness obscures the threat of violence. Stated differently, "naturalized" understandings of race engender meaning about who is ultimately (un)deserving of violence.

Along these lines, Ahmed similarly describes bicycling as a symbol of gentrification, and in the process, the optics to contextualize his understanding of racialized forms of safety in Oakland. Not surprisingly, he links the ability to bike with a more leisurely and privileged relationship that the White body has to safety and space in Oakland. He commented, "It's crazy how Oakland has changed now with all the gentrification and all that. I feel like in some ways, I see people riding bikes (for leisure), we never had that five, six, seven years ago. We never had that. People never ride their bikes in the East. If they did, *they would be out.* Trying to go home and hide their bikes. So Oakland has definitely changed." While it is safe to assume that there have always been some residents in Ahmed's community that have used bikes recreationally (just like it is probably safe to assume that some of these White bicyclists are not using them just recreationally), his commentary is significant for several reasons. In Ahmed's local world, the pairing of looming violence and leisure is a dangerous one. Being too leisurely—even being perceived as lax—can attract unwanted attention or make you the target of violence, intended or unintended. Instead, he perceives the White body as having access to a type of leisure, much like the carefreeness he observed while at his university. Even in Oakland's geography of violence, White people are *seen* as ennobled and freed from the constraints of community violence. Ahmed's remarks—that people in his community "would be out" on their bikes—speaks to his understanding of how one must literally and figuratively move to safe-keep in the community. Not having to "be out" is also a larger commentary about White people ostensibly occupying the same space but not being threatened by things Ahmed is acutely aware of and feels targeted by.

In "Whiteness as Property," Harris (1993) details the complex ways Whiteness has evolved institutionally and legally as a form of propertied privilege. As a sociogenic force (Guenther, 2019), Whiteness thus (re)articulates its privilege and being in the world, further normalizing itself across institutional, social relations, and space. Echoing Harris, youth respondents captured the ways they understood safety in Oakland existing in racialized ways. In

this way, Whiteness functioned to demarcate the parameters of safe space and safe bodies. As a parallelism, Wilderson (2003) argues that "white people are not simply "protected" by the police, they are—in their very corporeality—the police." Here, youth depict White people in Oakland space as more than just merely *safe*, but corporeally delimiting what safety *is* (and given the function of race, the relativity of who *is not*). This is arguably a function of Whiteness.

Witnessing Violence: Affective Geographies and the Politics of Grief

Finally, I consider the impact of endemic violence on the affective geographies of young people. By privileging Candice's example, I examine the significance of how young people are experiencing and naming their feelings, and the larger consequences of what this may mean. In other words, how do participants derive meaning about the value of their lives, if violence continues to be mundane and seemingly "acceptable" to their local racespace? What is the communicated social message about their belonging and value? I end by reassessing the significance of youth understanding Whiteness as a "color line" that demarcates the limits of safety. Arguably, this racialized sense of violence creates an affective context where youth must constantly contend with narratives of their disposability.

Frequently, participants described numerous instances of feeling "numb" upon hearing stories of violence, even death, in their community. While under "normal" circumstances, these emotions might be anticipated, healthy coping responses; in the interviewees' Oakland contexts, these emotions had become inaccessible and even undesirable. That they felt unable or unwilling to (consciously) experience sadness, anger, fear, or *anything,* spoke to their unrelenting sense of loss and insecurity in their community (and a sense that this reality would likely not change). By definition, dissociation is a cognitive reaction whereby one seeks to defensively create psycho-emotional "space" after experiencing a traumatic event. Youth describe a reaction akin to *shell-shock*, and one that points to participants protecting themselves from feeling bombarded by violence in Oakland. In this context, they describe an "emotional saturation point." Interestingly, many youth maintain a level of meta-cognitive awareness about this process of emotional "distancing," even when they may personally experience it.

When broaching the topic of homicide and death in Oakland, Candice juxtaposed hearing about "the killings" even while maintaining that Oakland was "not a violent place." Nonetheless, after I asked her to unpack the impact of frequently hearing about homicide loss in the community, Candice responded:

> Candice: Yeah, I feel like, and this is another thing too, which is not good. I feel like I got numb to it. And—
>
> DP: What you mean?
>
> Candice: You know, so when people used to say, oh a young person got killed or something, I'd be like "okay." Like, not okay but dang that's sad. *But I don't feel it* . . . . And it might be because the person wasn't close to me, but then it would still kinda be like, I felt bad, but I didn't feel anything else. You know what I mean. I feel like after so many years of hearing that, it just numbed me out. And I feel like it numbs a lot of people. Cuz the thing is like, even when it first kinda started to be bad, I felt like if people weren't so numb to it I feel like there would've been a real shift, like "ohhh this is happening . . . " I remember it was somewhere, maybe it was some place like Vermont, when they had their first ever homicide or something, and everyone flipped out and they were like, "we have to do something about this." So, that's why I felt like after so many years of hearing stuff (in Oakland) you just kinda go numb to it.

While Candice initially describes “feeling bad” about the loss of life in her community, after “so many years of hearing that” the discernible impact had waned.

Perhaps even more telling, she understands this is “not good” and that she should have a stronger reaction to these extreme instances of violence. Nonetheless, despite Candice’s real-time assessment of her own reaction to death, the cumulative emotional toll is apparent even in the lack of a response. Undoubtedly, she is also cognizant of the “business as usual” response of many, including formal institutional actors (i.e., teachers), to this ongoing violence in Oakland. Candice is able to connect her numbed feelings to the lack of a suitable formal response. In her estimation, if those in power cared (about her community) they would not tolerate violence in her city. In her anecdote about a killing in “some place like Vermont”—a nondescript symbol of protected “white space”—she juxtaposes the societal rejection of death as normal, with the perceived acceptance of death in her racespace. This reaction is vivid commentary about the racialized ways society tolerates/accepts some death and condemns/works to eliminate others. In this sense, Candice describes how violence is “out of place” in White space (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000), but naturalized for non-White spaces in Oakland. In her mind, the appropriate socio-political resources will be mobilized in *the Vermonts* to rid the space of unacceptable violence, while death in her community persists uneventfully. That her community is aware of this only further erodes the notion that their deaths or lives truly matter.

Later, in discussing the murder of a well-respected and popular high school classmate, Candice described how her “whole school was silent. I remember walking down the hallway the week after it happened, and everybody was silent. Everybody was like really affected . . . running down the hallway crying. People didn’t really go to class. I mean, we had an assembly for it.” Candice’s juxtaposition is both stark and instructive. How can the wailing of young people down the schools’ corridors coexist with a *silence*? While numerous contours help explain why this was so, surely this is not the first death that some of the young people had experienced. Moreover, it could be hypothesized that if a popular, well-liked scholar-athlete could be a victim of homicide, then none of them was immune to violence. In profound grief about a classmate’s death, with little illusion about the lack of safety in their city and the sense that “the adults around them” do not care enough to intervene, being outwardly silent is a reasonable reaction for these young people. This silence, however, and even the aforementioned “numbing,” is not clearly indicative of the deeper affective impact which these young people must navigate and make sense of. Candice’s observations, in short, point towards a “tolerated” death for Oakland—by the adults in the community, and reluctantly, by the young people.

Here, Candice discussed the role of hope as it relates to the numbing that she observes in her community:

> Candice: And I think people lost hope . . . or they didn’t have hope.
>
> DP: Why do you think your friends lost hope or never had it to begin with?
>
> Candice: I feel like more so because . . . you know I think it has to go to their teachers, you know what I mean. So back to their parents, their older siblings. Kinda like more of a passed down thing. And a more…I feel like the lack of hope may be distracted from feeling, you know, feeling anything. But from all the different distractions it becomes numbing. And so that why there’s a lack of hope. Because like there’s not . . . there’s a lack of everything now . . . in this day and age. *Like people don’t feel. In any type of way. Or they try not to feel or I hate love* . . . don’t feel love, I’m not going to get hurt, kinda like callous.
>
> DP: Why do you feel like they aren’t trying to feel?

Candice: Hmmmm. I feel a lot of people have been hurt. *So many times*.

Candice articulated that some of her peers may attempt to drown out any potential emotional bond rather than risk having someone they care about be harmed. In the context of normalized Oakland violence, it is better to *not love* than to love and be hurt. Attempting to feel nothing is one's endeavor when the chances of hurt—due to the level of violence—are high in the community. This shrinkage of human relations comes on the heels of people being hurt "so many times." And while many factors likely contribute to how people in the community get hurt, violence and homicide heighten the stakes. Insomuch as the conditions of violence have occurred in Oakland for generations, Candice surmised that many of the adults in the lives of young people have passed down this particular form of hopelessness, as they have dealt with their own form of emotional shell-shock and loss beforehand. Any attempt at shutting down relevant human bonds and striving for emotional invulnerability, however, may only prove disastrous psycho-socially and further erode community solidarity.

Mario, in fact, saw instances of violence as being so mundane that they only "really mattered" when they involved homicide. To him, the other acts of real violence—assault, rape, robbery, burglaries, and so forth—which occur daily, are too frequent and inconsequential to *really* matter unless someone dies. The everyday examples of violence in Oakland, which Mario frequently hears about and comes to expect, have inundated him to the point that they do not constitute "serious" violence, but rather just an accepted part of living in Oakland. Respondents also described the (lack of) meaningful state responses to violence in Oakland as a mechanism that communicates social acceptance about the harm of those in his community. Participants cited examples of policing and schooling institutions as inadequate responses to effectively address, let alone halt, violence in his community. In Mario's mind, who is "allowed" to be a victim and who is not, including where they lived, mattered in the type of state responses.

Ahmed articulated how he always expects "another instance" of violence and potential homicide whenever he visits home after being at the university. He has grown to expect this violence as a normal part of his city's landscape. When speaking about being "updated" by family about their neighborhood and the experiences at their two small corner stores throughout the city, Ahmed noted:

> Those experiences (shootings and homicide) are common. Too common. And then people's reactions are like sad for like a week or two, but then they go back to "well, that's Oakland for you." They just normalize it there and then. And it's just that constant stress, that constant trauma, and it's crazy how we just normalize it . . . . Those experiences are hella common and I just expect it when I go home or when I talk to my brothers. I knew something happened.
>
> DP: How did you know that?
>
> Ahmed: [pause] . . . because it just *always* happens.

In Ahmed's mind, he expects that he will hear about violence, especially gun violence, and he braces himself for that reality—*knowing something happened*, *because it always happens*. In fact, there is no discernible difference between the impact of these stories of violence and the perception he has; they confirm each other and contribute to his sense-making that violence is normal in Oakland. Ahmed's comment is also noteworthy because he speaks to the emotional and psychological impact this "normalization" has on many residents in the community who have to live under constant threat of violence. While sadness may be an expected response to the loss of life in a community, Ahmed noted that among his Oakland peers, it is more of an ephemeral one. Young people who feel inundated by stories of violence, even homicide, are

perhaps then protecting their emotional selves from the constant barrage of *feeling*. Butler (2009) argues that the politics of *grievability*, one of the most fundamental markers of our humanity, helps to demarcate who is allowed to *be* human; in the process, society's inability to recognize the social suffering of these young people communicates just in fact whose suffering and whose lives actually matter. That public, street-side memorializations of their community's dead are frequently desecrated by formal, city officials only further confirms to youth that their affective geographies to everyday violence and their lives are deemed insignificant.

Concluding Thoughts/Future Directions

In *How Racism Takes Place*, Lipsitz (2007) reminds us that racialized geographies in the United States are both a process and an outcome. In other words, race and space are mutually intertwined phenomena, which give rise to racialized ideas about particular places, as well as the racialized social relations within them. In turn, racialized perceptions about space, cities, and neighborhoods are reinforced through differential actions and resources available over time to different groups and places, further reinforcing the "naturalness" of racial patterns of residence, poverty, or even violence.

In Oakland, like so many cities across the country, race is literally and figuratively bound across the geography. As different racial groups have their purported "place" in the city, the concept of place transcends an actual neighborhood or zip code to also include the normalized lot within the social hierarchy—*who* violence is supposed to happen to and *where* it purportedly should happen. The young people interviewed in the study both implied and explicitly pointed to these taken-for-granted assumptions about the social and physical world. Through these lenses, violence in Oakland was a phenomenon that predictably happened in non-White spaces to non-White people. and the collective social imaginary excused this as a too-often accepted and expected part of the racialized landscape. While participants in the study remained tacitly aware of a normalization of violence in their city, they were just as much cognizant about (a) how this violence was normalized only for certain people and certain neighborhoods, and (b) how their racialized identities negatively impacted the way (and whether) they experienced violence and were exposed to trauma. Participants expressed the feeling that White people used their Whiteness as a shield to protect them from many of the psychological and emotional experiences the participants themselves had encountered. This feeling exacerbated in the context of rampant gentrification throughout the Bay Area, notably in Oakland. Not only did White people move in and push longstanding Black and Brown residents out, but they were able to do so without being forced to navigate the same violence the previous residents had encountered, and without the constant worry of traumatic encounters and exposure. Such a commonsensical assumption about *allowable suffering* for particular people and places signals another form of violence in and of itself. [That violence was often targeted to specific groups in Oakland warrants the need to further investigate the unique experiences of particular young people. For example, while gender was nominally surfaced by participants, copious research points us to gender-based violence, especially for Black women. Moreover, given Oakland's strategic location as a hub for female and youth trafficking in the region—predominantly impacting women of color—an intersectional analysis of gender and race-based violence is vital, and potentially limited here.

Here, exploring how participants perceived and made sense of violence and traumatic exposure in their communities meant understanding the schemas and coping mechanisms employed as responses to potential and actual violence. Such youth repertoires to community violence has tremendous social and political implications, from the cell, to the street, to the classroom. As future research explores questions about racialized safety and the spatiality of

Black education, in particular, we hope to understand the materialization of anti-Blackness across the urbanscape and the experiential ways anti-Blackness influences Black and non-Black youth of color.

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Article 2

Upsetting the (Schooling) Set Up: Autoethnography as Critical Race Methodology

> If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive. (Lorde, 1982)

In this article, we aim to continue Critical Race Theory's (CRT) insurgency by committing to name race and racism differently, specifically with the intent of disrupting and transforming the existing racial order. While critical race methodology spans an array of research approaches, much of CRT has been heavily reliant upon *counter-storytelling* as a way to draw on the experiential knowledge of people of Color to name race and critique racism. Counterstories—as a foundational component of critical race method—tell stories of people of Color, or as Derrick Bell (2018) would say, those at the "bottom of the well." Richard Delgado (1995) similarly asserts that chronicling—also a critical race method—centers the stories of people on the outside, intentionally prioritizing voices that remain unheard. *Testimonio*, as a component rooted in an articulation of the self in relation to the socio-political moment, allows for a reconceptualization of justice-centered orientations grounded in the perspective of those experiencing injustice (Ramirez, 2018).

As Solórzano and Yosso (2002) advanced critical race method in education, their scholarship centers the importance of counterstories by paying specific attention to the experiential knowledge of people of Color, pushing back against deficit narratives of students of color, and the overall commitment to social justice. Scholars in education have long since been interested in telling counterstories that illustrate how people resist racism, engage community, and enact the justice condition.

Their assertion of critical race method in the form of counter-stories allow people of color to: (a) build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; (b) challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; (c) open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and (d) teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone (p. 36).

Similarly, autoethnography functions to "engage in an explication of lived experience in a cultural context; exploring [ourselves] in relation to and in the context of cultural communities" (Alexander, 2013, p. 98). Functionally, these narratives help people engage in a process of critical self-examination, providing a vantage point to analyze significant life events, including the development of one's identity, through an understanding of one's social-historical and community context. Parallel to *testimonio* and counterstory, we understand autoethnography must still resist the articulation of stories of people of color through a majoritarian framing, which may diminish their humanity and reify existing racial orders.

Collectivizing Truths

Generative autoethnography—like spin story—scaffolds one story into the creation of a collective one. Methodologically, it begins with one author crafting their narrative, which is both

personal testimony and invitation. After an initial story is written and read, a subsequent author adds their own personal story, using the previous story as both launching pad and point of departure. For Alexander et al. (2011), "This writing exercise [is] a process of triggering elements, one story that triggered another telling, in a spin-storied and interspliced autoethnography. . ." (p. 2). This process is iterated until multiple stories create a collective tapestry that is "same and different." In sharing our stories, generative autoethnography becomes "a space in which an individual's passion can bridge individual and collective experience to enable richness of representation, complexity of understanding, and inspiration for activism" (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008, p. 448). For the purpose of this account, we understand the tenets of generative autoethnography to be in concert with critical race methodology in that both constructs seek to engage a process to center the lives and struggles of those who live their lives as targets of White supremacy.

As generative autoethnography engages a scaffolding project to build a composite story, we utilize Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) tenets of critical race methodology as a process that places race, racism/White supremacy at the center of the research process (p. 24). Generative ethnography, like critical race methodology, "challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color" (p. 24). In offering a praxis that positions ourselves as contributing to the struggle against White supremacy in education, both constructs utilize interdisciplinary knowledge to center our experiences as raced, classed, and gendered people.

From these experiences, generative ethnography and critical race methodology propel us to engage our work with students, teachers, families, organizers, and concerned community members in a way that provides tangible examples of what collective justice work looks like. The composite of our stories operate fugitively, as they are an articulation of the ways we navigate our world knowing that the rules of the White society will not move us towards liberation. Instead, our stories are reflections of how we move in and out of our paid occupations as educators and academics, constantly connecting our experiences with theory and method to create praxis (action and reflection in the world in order to change it). They are similar in that we were guided to critical consciousness by support from our peers and elders. They differ because of our specific experiences with White supremacy/racism in different bodies and locales.

Simultaneously, we challenge traditional qualitative methodological approaches in that we do not rely on precedent to validate our approach, but instead work with the aforementioned groups to change our conditions first. As our stories emerge, our articulations of our experiences are connected to each other in word and deed. To us, this is more important than any recitation of methodological approaches that are validated by Western European enlightenment or the rules of the academy. As fugitive work, our commitment is expressed in our approach to classroom space and community settings as we pull from the intersections of Black feminist thought, CRT, BlackCRIT, *testimonio*, critical philosophy, people's struggle, solidarity of the global South and the politics of abolition. In doing so, we hope to connect, inform, and continue the theoretical underpinnings of critical race methodology through the function of autoethnography.

Generative Autoethnographies in Praxis

The following section charts our initial impressions of schooling and education, including experiences of White supremacy and a subsequent budding consciousness of injustice in our lives and communities. It is written by three men of color—two Black, one a child of immigrants, and a Pilipinx—from differing personal and regional backgrounds. Thematically, our composite stories explore counter-learning within schools, including finding education

outside them, the contexts of our politicization or development of "knowledge of self," and lastly, an intentional repurposing of the function of schooling/academia in our work as educators.

Kapatiran

Against the wishes of her father whose expectations were for his thirteen children to remain in Cantilan, Surigao in Southern Philippines to support the family, my mother moved to the city of Manila to work as a dressmaker in 1957. My father was born and raised in Bolinao, Pangasinan, Philippines on the northern island of Luzon. He was said to be brilliant in mathematics and privileged to earn a Bachelor's of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from Manila's Mapua University, finishing at the top of his graduating class in 1950. Interestingly enough, however, I never even passed pre-algebra. I chalk this paradox to the fragmentation that often occurs between families in the Philippine diaspora.

Elder family members saw my mother as an over-opinionated, gregarious, and strong-willed woman while my father was seen as an aloof and quiet, though temperamental, man. Both did their best to help family and friends who called on their support in the United States and back home, understanding that life was not easy for those back in the Philippines. My parents migrated to the United States in search of a "better life." Sometime in the early 1970s, immigration laws allowed for my mother to migrate to the U.S. to work as a professional and put her skills in commerce to use. After his tour with the Philippine Navy, my father migrated to the United States in the 1970s, to what would become our permanent home in Los Angeles, California. They married in May, 1973 and I was born in March, 1974.

The only time I was in the Philippines was in 1980, when I was six years old. The implications of this proximal and temporal distance between me as an Americanized Pilipinx person and what I came to endear as our homeland Pilipinx people was not clear to me until much later in life. Unable to maintain stable employment nor thrive independently in their own businesses, they eventually opened a bar together in the Los Angeles County city of Huntington Park. Early in my elementary years, though, my mother and father began to realize that they were being alienated from the so-called American Dream. At home, I saw their realization of this change into sadness, which morphed into anger, and evolved into rage, which I internalized.

As early as second grade—as a seven-year-old—I would attend class, watch my teacher teach, not fully present with their teaching, but frequently ask myself, "What does this have to do with me?" So I disengaged. I was assigned poor grades—28 out 48 of my total grades were below a C, for what would be a 1.5 grade point average if those were assigned to second graders—not because I was unintelligent. I was assigned poor grades because my teachers lacked the personal connection and cultural competence to reengage children like me who were disengaged with the social irrelevance of their pedagogy.

My disengagement from the miseducation of schooling spiraled further and as a sixth-grader, I reproduced this compounded rage by fighting three tenth-grade boys as part of my initiation into the neighborhood gang. After the one-minute beatdown, I stood up and was given rugged embraces and neighborhood handshakes to welcome me into the life I would be most committed to for the next ten years. My initiation into the gang provided me the acknowledgment, affection, and sense of belonging for which I had long been yearning from school and home, which I rarely received to the degree that I had been longing. The neighborhood provided me what I understood to be practical solutions to my most pressing problems.

For the next few years, my identity as a gang member grew as I displaced this rage onto other young Filipinos who looked and probably experienced life just like me. In the tenth grade, I

started a rumble across the street from my school with neighborhood rivals who we were competing against for local notoriety. Meeting with my academic counselor, dean of students, principal and mother after this gang-related fight marked the end of my high school enrollment in 1989. I was already on academic probation after my grades were finalized—mostly fails—with a month to go before the completion of ninth grade in junior high school. The principal summed up the school's sentiments: "You're not cut out for a high school like this." I agreed, dropped out, and never really earned my high school diploma. I did not attend school for three years, but earned a high school equivalency in 1992.

While a lot of higher-achieving students attended their classes, did enough of their assignments to score a passing grade, and got along well enough with others in school to graduate, I was avoiding classes, not doing my assignments, and not getting along with others enough for me to have the privilege of continuing my enrollment in school. I was more concerned with unifying with my set and building camaraderie among one another in our neighborhood to feel a deeper sense of belonging and connection away from a school space that was not providing that for us. Being able to participate in that space required a level of practices that helped me earn membership in that particular gang-related community. These practices were a form of assessment much more worth my time than academic miseducation. These experiences were the foundation for my being pushed out of school as a 15-year-old, and accelerating my active participation in gang life until I changed my ways altogether at 23 years of age.

Mud City

I am a second-generation Chicagoan. My father and his sister (my aunt) were born in the city and his mother (my paternal grandmother) is from Mariana, Arkansas. Like many Chicagoans during and after World War II, my mother came North from Thomaston, Alabama. She came to Chicago when she was four years old, following her mother and her seven brothers before her. As the eighth of eight children (she being the only girl), she was raised by an Aunt (Julia Burns) as her brothers had left the household when she was in her formative years. I know neither of my grandfathers. Not until much later in life did I even begin to inquire about either of them. Like many families before me, my family figured out how to live in their absence.

Much of my formative years were spent with the same aunt who also raised my mother. As an only child, I was deeply influenced by my uncles and the myriad of their experiences as world travelers (largely through the military), partiers (which I enjoyed attending as a young person), and blues men (I grew a deep affinity for the blues through them). Their Southern accents and the way they interacted with each other continues to influence the way I communicate in the world.

My father's side of the family is smaller and was filled with independent women. Both my grandmother (Edna Stovall) and her sister (Alice Mayo) came North to Chicago from Marianna and began working at the post office, where my father and aunt had worked before they had their own families. Both my aunt and my grandmother retired from the post office. Until their passing, both of them lived in the same apartment building on separate floors. When I would go to their houses I was surrounded by books, baking materials, and jazz records. I learned to read here before the schoolhouse. This space was deeply influential in developing my capacities as a learner over any form of traditional schooling.

The best way to explain my early school experience was that there was something that didn't feel right. All of the order and compliance was strange to me, given that my kindergarten class was small and everything seemed to be about order more than learning. Here I learned the rules as opposed to new and exciting ways to engage. Recess, lunch, and naptime were the

highlights. Because of the books at my grandmother's house, I liked to read which was probably my saving grace in terms of occupying my time with something to do. For the life of me I couldn't understand the rules and compliance that seemingly had nothing to do with learning and more to do with punishment. It was my introduction to the fact that schooling had very little to do with education.

When I got to first grade a teacher called me "stupid." I don't remember telling my parents, but I do remember my mom telling me years later that she had to have a conversation with the teacher, reaffirming how much I suppressed the trauma. After this moment my sense of rebellion started to kick in, but I also noticed that I was also wrestling with a contradiction. I didn't have the vocabulary to articulate "contradiction" at six years old, but school became strange. It was the place where my friends were, but it was also the place where I was seemingly punished for no reason, to the point where a teacher could let out their frustrations on me to the point of dehumanization. School became the thing to "suffer through."

Where I didn't have the vocabulary to articulate anti-Blackness, White supremacy, colonization or capitalism, school became the space to pass the time. Most of the time I was bored and as I got older, athletics and social interactions became the primary motivators for attending. Early on, I became anesthetized to the logics of school and numb to the point that my trauma and suffering of the institution became commonplace. As a place that had me constantly in survival mode (deeply entrenched in my fight or flight mechanisms), school became a place that I did not trust. From kindergarten to twelfth grade, I was always in some sort of holding pattern that afforded me more coping strategies in opposed to practices that were centered in healing. Coping did not allow me to ask questions of my suffering to turn to healing. Instead, it allowed me to get to the next moment with the hope that I could momentarily forget what I was in, despite the dehumanization, lies, and compliance. Akin to a person early in the process of recovery from addiction, I would have moments of clarity throughout my K-12 experiences that would shock me back into the realities of White supremacy and schooling, but it remained a perpetual fight against falling numb to the conventions of school.

By the time I realized the totality of what I was in, I had reached graduation. My K-12 schooling experience reminds me of the moment before the uprisings of 2020 against state-sanctioned violence against Black people and other persons of color at the hands of the police. While some had to be shocked into the reality that we live in an anti-Black world that has declared my Blackness and humanity to be a crime, I am clear that we've been here for a very long time.

Archipelago

Like so many recent and not so recent transplants, my parents arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area, hopeful. They came from opposite parts of the globe, countries with contrasting social and historical geographies, and radically different locations in the popular imaginary. In fact, if two islands could be separate universes, it may very well be Hispaniola and Great Britain. Oakland then was a liminal space for all of us to live out and imagine the possibilities of an American Dream, but also Malcolm's *American nightmare*. On one hand, my father's story could be characterized through the quintessential immigrant trope of "seeking a better life." This would be partially accurate. But stories of migration are always messier and more muddled, especially in their remembering and retelling.

Similar to many Third World families, my father's family reflected the contradictions of class, color, and status. Despite being the *only* independent country in the Americas to be successfully and bloodily won through revolution, formerly enslaved African descendants still

toil under colonial relations centuries later. Largely orphaned as a young child, my father's father committed suicide when he was an infant, and his family having class clout, denied his indigo-skinned, rural mother the chance to parent him. Like many Haitian children, he was raised through extended family, some caring, some indifferent, and a few brutal. Showing scholastic aptitude, he was fortunate to have educational sponsors, eventually bouncing around various residences throughout the Gonaïves arrondissement and Port-au-Prince for schooling. For some, a desired freedom from the past translates into attempts to leave it behind; and my father fled Haiti after college, choosing to eventually enlist in the United States Army and fight an overseas "adversary," rather than the ones in his own homeland or past. He arrived in the United States in 1965.

The England my mother was born into had just turned the corner from post-World War austerity, and her family continued to live with simplicity. Much of England was entering a so-called golden period of modernization, including massive public work projects to rebuild housing stock destroyed during war. Peterlee, County Durham in Northwest England, was such a development built in the 1940s—a new town providing housing for the area's booming coal industry. Here, my mother's family would settle. Like many of the region, my mother's family was a collection of blue-collar workers, many whose livelihood depended upon the very coal mines which would eventually kill them. My mother's family was large. As the eldest daughter of six siblings in a traditional family, she was expected to shoulder domestic responsibilities, helping maintain the house and tend to younger siblings. In this regard, teaching became an outgrowth of what she intimately knew and ultimately enjoyed, and her post-secondary education culminated in her teacher degree and passage to North America.

Bella Vista Elementary School, Room #37

Mrs. Wann held the reputation of being one of the strict teachers at school. I remembered this vividly because despite being a California public school, Bella Vista had a cadre of long-time teachers who still employed corporal "discipline" as a proxy for classroom management. I would later come to understand that *strict* was often used to describe a litany of dehumanizing repertoires teachers saved primarily for the Black students at school. In Mrs. Wann's classroom there was no physical harm, but she was clearly an old-school disciplinarian. In her class, traditional academics trumped any perceived fluff of extracurriculars, let alone socializing. Having always excelled in school and labeled "gifted," my third-grade teacher, Mrs. Ham, wanted me to have more challenging reading materials beyond the *Berenstain Bears* books we so loved during circle time. So every afternoon I travelled upstairs to Mrs. Wann's classroom for language arts with the older children.

The next year in fourth-grade, not surprisingly, I was assigned to her classroom. Gone were the afternoon treks, even if much of the reading did in fact stay the same. No longer amongst the older children, I was with my immediate peers, many of which I had been classmates and friends prior. I respected that Mrs. Wann ran a tight ship, but like most children I preferred a more organic approach to learning, much like my Montessori foundations in preschool. In this regard, I was probably disappointed with the classroom learning. Or perhaps, I was merely a typical nine-year-old. Either way, on this day, Mrs. Wann would share her disappointment with me.

I finished up Mrs. Wann's assignment quickly (and *correctly*, for that matter), being the first one in class done. Naturally, I turned to a friend in class to socialize and produced a couple of laughs. Upset that I had ruptured the tranquility of her domain, Mrs. Wann ordered me out. Memorably, this would be the first of countless transgressions with authority within Oakland's

school system where I was repeatedly kicked out of class, “referred” to the office, suspended, and even arrested. Here, I learned my childhood “cuteness“ was ephemeral. In its stead, I was increasingly viewed through a distorted lens of Black male pathology. As a nine-year-old boy, this was my lesson.

I was quickly purged from the classroom, and rather intentionally, given no instructions. In speaking out of turn I had challenged the classroom “order,” including the sanctified power of my teacher. In what was perhaps the longest ten minute stretch of my nine-year-old life, I waited by myself in an empty hallway corridor unsure of what to do. *Was I supposed to stand next to the closed door? Perhaps, sit down, or just wait somewhere nearby?* After what seemed like an eternity, Mrs. Wann emerged from behind the closed door, instructing me to return inside to “address the class.” Stepping back to create room at the head of *her* classroom, she invited me to stand in front of the class. I obliged, tentatively.

Ask the class for forgiveness.

She lit into me about how I had disrupted the integrity of the classroom learning. If I wanted back into the class, I needed to apologize to the class.

Ask the class for their forgiveness.

Sheepishly, I apologized. I was sorry for disrupting class. I wanted this to be done as quickly as possible. I was nine years old.

Mrs. Wann relished the moment, including my perceived reversal from “brash” classroom socializer into docile, compliant pupil, and dug into me more.

You have diarrhea of the mouth. And now, you are like a slave that cowers from the whip. Beg the class for forgiveness.

I went silent.

I would learn much later the importance of my father’s country in relation to slavery and resistance; as a nine-year-old I knew little of Haiti and its history. Still, I was aware that my ancestors had in fact gone through the terror of enslavement. Mrs. Wann understood this just as much. Her words were intentional, demeaning. My fate, like so many children of color failed by schooling, was to be rendered powerless and consumed within the institution.

Sonje lapli ki leve mayi ou.

Remember the rain that made your corn grow.

Los Angeles, California

In 1996, I had the privilege of sharing narratives with an older, more reflexive Black inactive gang member (original gangster, or O.G.) in the 9500 block of Los Angeles Men’s Central County Prison. In the mid-1990s, there was a “green light,” or open season, on Asians in Southern California jails. There were eight phones in this dormitory—four phones controlled by the Black side, four phones controlled by the Brown side. The Brown side protected what was referred to as *Peckerwoods*, or White folks. The Black side protected Asians and Pacific Islanders. Upon entering the dormitory, my heart was beating in fear and all I could think to myself was, “Swing first, swing first.”

To beat a felony when he was 16, the aforementioned O.G. agreed to enlist in the military and served his military time in the Philippines. He recognized me as a Filipino, and offered me a bunk bed and protection. Critically reflecting on his military service in the Philippines made for relevant and engaging dialogue between this O.G. and me. We had a variety of conversations and if I wanted to pursue that life, I would have been a lot more educated around the nuances of the underground economy. In another type of conversation, the O.G. said, “Look around and tell me what you see.” I responded, in general, “Well, I see some . . . they look like Crips. They looked

like Bloods. They look like *eses*. They look like dope dealers . . ." He responded, "You're not looking close enough. If you were looking close enough, you will see that *we* are doing exactly what this system *wants* us to do." I had no idea what he meant, but he commanded space that caught my attention, so I just continued to listen.

We had all kinds of conversations along those lines, but the difference between him and the teachers that I had prior to him was that he had the personal connection and cultural competency to engage me in the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding he was trying to share with me. My prior teachers had seen my non-verbal communication, my delivery, and my sensibilities as a deficit that did not meet the expectations of their deficit perspectives. The O.G. saw what I brought into our conversations as an asset, what Tara Yosso (2005) refers to as *community cultural wealth*. The O.G. had high expectations for me as part of something larger than myself. Whereas my teachers had low expectations for me in that regard. They did not think I could be a servant of the community. The O.G. knew I had to be.

He introduced me to the concept and historical reality of colonialism, drew connections between my history as an Americanized Pilipino, his as a Black man, and the history of indigenous and other Third World people who have been dispossessed of their resources and found themselves struggling collectively as a result of this historical relationship to Europe. Our critical conversations served to further clarify that the interconnectedness of oppressed people's struggles is a product of worldwide social oppressions that is strengthened by colonially imposed self-hate, irrelevant schooling structures that overlook transformative potentials in schools, and a criminal (in)justice system that serves to buttress a burgeoning prison state in the United States.

After one week in the dormitory, I was transferred to a four-bed jail cell that was occupied by six men. I slept on the concrete floor next to another man who I assumed was also new to the cell. Amidst the discomfort of this setting, in the middle of one of my first nights in the cell, I thought to myself, "What the fuck am I doing here?" This was one of the first times that I was questioning my life. This state of confusion allowed me to seek the type of understanding of life that helped me transform my life moving forward. I began to reflect on the O.G.'s message and used it as a lens to reflect on the journey that had led me to county prison. I started reflecting back to all the varying forms of violence I engaged as early as kindergarten. I reflected on my surface-level participation in the underground economy. My life began to make more sense as I began to see all the self-hate, social vice, and divide-and-conquer as a social phenomenon of one segment of historically dominated people doing exactly what this system of oppression wanted us to do. It was during this time I decided that, given the opportunity, I would be the type of teacher I wish I had prior to leaving school—one who tapped into the motivating power of counter-hegemonic discursive spaces for youth of Color.

Fortunately, I was granted that opportunity, and after six and a half years in community college, I finished the credits needed to transfer to California State University, Los Angeles with the support of the Gang Violence Bridging Project and Educational Opportunity Program. It took me a year and a half to finish my upper-division courses majoring in communication studies with a focus in teaching English. When I realized that I wanted to study to transform this system that despised our humanity, I was more motivated to complete the more difficult part of my undergraduate study.

I learned exactly what I needed to learn, the basis for my philosophy of education ever since, from a person I was not supposed to learn it from and learned in a place that I was not supposed to learn in. For all intents and purposes, this experience has served as the foundation for my work as an educator for the rest of my life.

Chicago, Illinois

With the capacity to see how justice work is centered to life beyond my own, two specific experiences allowed me to deepen my understanding of what it means to work collectively to change conditions while simultaneously engaging intentional political study. Predating any understanding of Critical Race Theory or fugitivity, I knew something was awry in my schooling experience, but I couldn't articulate the layers of the problem. By the time I got to high school, I had socially positioned myself as an athlete and partier. I knew the mundane rules, regulations and compliance associated with school, but I didn't care as much because school was about socializing with my friends and athletics. Just like grade school, my saving grace continued to be my enjoyment of reading, allowing me to grapple with the content of my courses if I didn't necessarily understand the material.

At the same time, I was living in the throes of a cultural revolution. Hip-hop as music and culture had burst on the scene, and the multiple genres of music, while not yet mainstream, were deeply popular with my peers. Groups like N.W.A. and Ice-T and their West Coast comrades had released groundbreaking albums that put the reality of the streets on record. Deeply setting into my own sense of teenage rebellion, songs like "Fuck the Police" and "Six in the Morning" were unlike anything I had ever heard. As a young Black male in the late '80s, this type of music sparked interest and affirmation. I was drawn to it because I was familiar with police brutality and many of my friends and families were feeling the strain of local and federal iterations of the "War on Drugs." Simultaneously, we were also deeply influenced by East Coast hip-hop from Public Enemy, KRS-ONE, and Eric B. and Rakim. Their songs about rebellion and knowledge of self were also critical to my socio-political consciousness as they opened me to the world, making connections to the Black Freedom Movement (Civil Rights, Black Power, Black Feminist struggle, etc.). We wore black leather medallions with silhouettes of Africa, fists, and hearts to remind us of who we are and where we came from. Beyond the aesthetic, for many of us it represented a rejection of the orthodoxy and boredom in our school experience.

These feelings manifested in my chemistry class during my sophomore year. During class, my lab partner, Marcus Murray, leaned over to me one day and said "you know this some bullshit right?" Even though I agreed, I didn't know exactly *why* I agreed. We were all bored to death, but we didn't have a grounded critique of the rigid, anti-Black and racist origins of schooling. We just knew we didn't like it. He continued with "what you REALLY need to be reading is this." It was a small red book titled "The Collected Speeches of Malcolm X." It contained his landmark speeches like "The Ballot or the Bullet," "Message to the Grassroots," and "The Black Revolution." It was a moment that solidified my challenge to schooling (order and compliance) while pushing for education (asking questions and building with others to create solutions to change our conditions).

A year and a half later, another one of my classmates, Courtney Smith, approached me in the hallway about some thoughts she had. By this time (my senior year), I was known to "run my mouth" without fear of authority. She told me that we needed a Black Studies class and that I was going to work with her to create it. During the exchange she reminded me that "I liked to run my mouth a lot, so you should come to me when I talk to administration." Despite the fact that she was a year younger than me, she had already given me a copy of H. Rap Brown's "Die Nigga Die" months before and repeated Marcus's sentiment with "you need to read this." Again, it was life-changing in that yet another time I was able to learn from my peers not as a component of schooling, but I was learning communally *in spite of the school*. When we met with administration, Courtney had her facts in order—she showed the percentage of Black

students along with the courses that were offered in the school. She also identified a teacher who was currently on staff that was willing to teach the course. Because it was my senior year, I knew that I wouldn't be able to take the class, but what was more important was the fact that I could contribute to learning beyond my own engagement.

The lessons of knowledge of self and learning beyond the self have deeply impacted my approach to learning and education. From these lessons I have been able to dedicate myself to understanding that the school in its traditional sense is not the site of education for people experiencing isolation, marginalization, or containment at the hands of White supremacy. Instead, much of the education I have received and continue to receive has been in spite of the orthodoxy, compliance, and order of the traditional school. I continue to approach education fugitively, knowing that what we need will be created by those who understand that "reform" is unacceptable.

Oakland, California

After leaving Bella Vista, junior high would accelerate encounters with authority-figures who felt challenged by my presence. I was six-feet-tall, opinionated, with a wild afro almost as loud as my voice. I felt obliged to challenge apathetic adults who taught in my schools out of stipulation or happenstance, not duty or love. Nonetheless, I became very acquainted with the school office and the consequences for speaking my mind. Throughout seventh grade, I would have a prewritten disciplinary referral *waiting* for me when I got to school. Everything but the date and time had already been filled out by my first-period music teacher: "defiance of authority." In high school this took on increased interaction with the police at school, as my challenges to teachers graduated to challenging school administrators as well. On separate occasions, school officials called the district police on me to escort me out of class for "disobedience;" a third instance, I was arrested outside of my high school as I attempted to retrieve a pinhole camera for photography class from my car, after a city police officer demanded I return to school. I was ironically charged with "battery on a peace officer." It would not be embellishment to say I read Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* in my first-period English class and by third period was in a police paddy wagon filled with intergenerational Black men, spending the rest of the day at North County Jail in downtown Oakland "studying" racialized segregation. When I went back to school the next day (albeit tardy), I returned to the applause of my classmates. Most intuitively understood the hypocrisy of our social order, including the function of schooling within it.

Like all things, refusal bears material and psychic consequences. I was denied walking the stage at my junior high graduation. A high school administrator actively attempted to expel my closest friends and I, and my senior year was filled with countless suspensions, despite being an honors student with numerous college acceptances and a respected football captain. And while I was "fortunate" to qualify for a pretrial diversion program for my arrest, I was still mandated to complete 240 hours of community service before entering college. Fortuitously, I turned this into an opportunity to work with children in Oakland and sparked my love for young people.

Throughout my upbringing in Oakland, I knew that I needed to understand my positionality within the school institution. This often meant that I needed to be *in it*, but not *of it*. This "both/and" paradigm allowed a critique of schooling and teachers as gatekeepers of power and institutionalized inequity, while not giving them power to lock me out of those gates. Here, it was imperative to reject institutional norms of what was purportedly important, including any

false sense of self-validation and worth within it. Still, I remained exasperated witnessing the everyday normed violence of schooling harm my peers and community.

While my first-hand lived experiences within schools ultimately helped to politicize my understanding of them relative meritocracy, punishment, and capitalism, I also had a cadre of loving mentors to spur my intellectual development and channel my anger. As a 15-year-old in a summer academic program, a mentor offered up a cardboard box of books, telling me to read anything I wanted. I immediately gravitated to the bright red book of a seated young man, adorned with a beret and leather jacket, rifle, and spear in hand. While I would later more deeply understand the depths of radical Black politics, the iconography of Huey P. Newton enthroned in that wicker chair was a salve for my spirit. Beyond the parallels of our shared city and school system, *Revolutionary Suicide* crystalized my defiance, rage, and love: "Revolutionary Suicide does not mean that I and my comrades have a death wish; it means the opposite. We have such a strong desire to live with hope and human dignity that existence without them is impossible." Amongst a plethora of lessons, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense reminds us that our work to humanize the world cannot be absent of material changes in the lives of people who suffer the most. So while the BPP advanced a broad international, revolutionary campaign, they organized daily via numerous "survival programs" designed to explicitly address immediate and dire community needs, including those in my city.

Similarly, in this sense, my work as a scholar-educator must always strive to improve the material conditions of the communities I teach, study, and learn with. Documenting and theorization are critical components to a freedom struggle, but the point is to improve lives. Practitioners and researchers can do this in a multitude of ways, but it is critical to be accountable to this. In this vein, the point of research is not merely to document the world, but to help change it. As a teacher and researcher, I seek to create and lift up educational spaces that empower young people to hone critical voices, documenting that underlying ether that honors the humanity of Black children. This commitment moves beyond just shifting the damage-centric frames that many schools and teachers, like Mrs. Wann, have of our children and communities, and strives to (re)imagine the possibilities of an educational landscape for communities of color.

Dèyè mòn gen mòn.

Behind mountains, there are more mountains.

Theorizing from Lived Experience

Schooling as Sites of Colonial Reproduction

Our narratives speak to a larger body of experiences for students of color, young Black and Brown men, and other historically dispossessed youth in urban communities. Notions of *urban* and *dispossession* mutually inform our social commentary, but each provides a different lens of understanding. As the term "urban" traditionally connotes low-income and working-class city spaces primarily populated by Black and Brown people—it is emblematic of a deficit perspective that focuses on what people lack instead of centering on their capacity to contribute and change conditions. Dispossession recognizes what has been stolen from colonized people. As a result of the dispossession, thriving Third World people have been alienated from worldviews, ways of knowing, and resources that are inherently theirs. The consequences of this historical reality for our ancestors shape much of our families' socioeconomics, migration patterns, and experiences in society and schools.

As elementary-aged children, we did not have the language to name what our intuition was telling us about the function of colonial schooling. It was not until we accessed narratives and the critical intergenerational wisdom of others that we came to realize what James Baldwin

(1985) articulated decades prior: “Education is indoctrination if you’re white—subjugation if you’re black” (p. 327). If we understand miseducation in U.S. schools to incorporate this perspective, it is clear that schooling is designed to undermine the identity of those experiencing the vestiges of colonization, replacing our identity with a lens that is at odds with the existence and history of resistance.

Our struggles are rooted in the disconnect that too often defines the relationship between marginalized students and the schools said to be responsible for serving their needs. School curriculum, teacher training, and governing policies are incongruent with the holistic needs of students in their schools. All of the aforementioned elements fall short of providing personally engaging, culturally affirming, and critical spaces where young people of Color can deconstruct their social locations, racialized identities and historical relationships with intersecting systems of oppression. By disengaging in these forms of schooling, students are thought to not be well-positioned to matriculate through the highest levels of American universities or participate in the social mobility of a market-driven economy.

Our narratives disrupt false notions of conformity and offer insights to alternative pathways for sanctioned educational, civic, and economic engagement. We experienced schooling as a process that was hostile to our humanity because many of our teachers did not affirm our identities, stimulate our learning, help us make critical sense of our reality, or satisfy our practical needs as young men of Color in an anti-Black and White supremacist world. Instead, we primarily experienced Eurocentric, irrelevant classroom curriculum and poorly trained, impersonal, racist, and culturally non-responsive teachers, administrators and staff in schools. The sense of marginalization from dominant school settings effectively resulted in us resisting in ways that ranged from reactionary, to self-defeating, and transformative. In other words, none of our identities fit nicely into the bastions of racial hatred that shaped our schooling experiences.

Schools continue to privilege aesthetic caring (Valenzuela, 1999), banking education (Freire, 1970/2002), “official knowledge” (Apple, 1993) and “hidden curriculum” (Gillborn, 1992). These qualities of schooling continue to function as the cornerstones of colonial miseducation. Our disinvestment from the cultural alienation and irrelevance of schooling became the only viable form of agency against these institutional assaults on our belief systems and ways of knowing. Fortunately, we were able to access critical interpretations of our lives that we could identify with. As a result, we have been able to critically navigate hostile schooling institutions in more fugitive and socially transformative ways. Unfortunately, the majority of students whose cultural, ideological, and material needs are not being served by schools remain relatively defenseless in these sites of suffering.

Repurposing Schooling

To address the problems facing Black, Indigenous, and people of Color, we need an education that is abolitionist (Love, 2019), fugitive (Stovall, 2020), and humanizing (Camangian, 2019). School abolition recognizes that schools harm students and communities falsely in the name of education and calls on the political will of educators and others to dismantle schooling as a vehicle of state sanctioned ideological violence. As educators committed to the struggle for justice and schooling abolition, we understand that education must play a different role, requiring educators to embrace a different set of responsibilities. At best, the existing system teaches us to conform to our oppression while schooling abolition requires that we transform it. By embracing these principles, we must consider how to dismantle traditional schooling to create possibilities

of learning that awaken the critical consciousness of students while inspiring socially transformative agency.

By embracing fugitivity, we are required to look between and beyond the rules of schooling to make decisions to serve the needs of students in refusal of the norms and structures that an educator might feel obligated to honor professionally. Such a refusal would include the commitment to resist paradigms, policies, and practices that are hostile to the humanity of the learners and, instead, radically imagine and co-create fugitive learning spaces that help students of color name these tensions in order to transform them.

We were drawn to people and practices that reflected the material conditions we had to navigate as youth because they offered sensible, critical, personal and culturally affirming explanations to our most pressing concerns. Whether it was with members of our communities or books that articulated experiences that were first reflected in our embrace of hip-hop music and culture, there were numerous ways of knowing that resonated most with our worldview. These non-school spaces taught us to find peace in a world that despised our humanity. Appreciating the consequences of these alternative, fugitive, and more culturally congruent spaces on our lives, we decided to resist dehumanization by studying, teaching, and researching in ways that developed in us and others the type of humanization (knowledge of self, solidarity, and self-determination) we wish we had in school.

In our subsequent work as educators, our students struggle for a more holistic interpretation of the world because, for too long, dispossessed communities are often not allowed to explain the world as they understand it. This requires a philosophy and pedagogy that is fundamentally different than the ideology of the oppressor. As people who teach to transform the oppression that confronted us as children, we know the importance of having an approach to educating students who we identified with. This type of education supports them in explaining their conditions, while developing their capacities to transform their relationships to White supremacy and colonialism in their collective consciousness and communities.

When we think about who we are and what we bring to the table as educational practitioners and researchers, key to our development is the importance of a critical understanding of our lived contexts and how that informs our relationship to schools, education, and community. The critical interrogation of self in relation to one's political, social and historical condition is extremely valuable and essential for any educator doing work in so-called urban schools with historically dispossessed people. These understandings have taught us that educators must seriously consider questions of abolition, fugitivity, and humanization so that historically oppressed people and multiply marginalized communities actually receive locally contextualized, critically relevant education.

Conclusion

Cultural narratives that lack critical reflection have the potential to be more about amusement than analysis, telling without understanding and summarizing instead of meaning making. Calafell and Moreman (2009) remind autoethnographers that "the personal voice, depending upon context and the norms of field . . . is often times either read as reflexive and poignant or narcissistic and vain" (p. 126). Autoethnographies, as we use them here, are cultural narratives embedded with critical reflection on the interconnected set of conditions that make up our lived experiences, and aims to make meaning of one's social and material conditions. This serves as a catalyst to ignite and inspire socially transformative action.

In prior writing, Camangian (2010) argues that autoethnographies should (a) examine the alienating effects of dominant society, (b) explore the connections within and across oppressed

cultures, and (c) strategize for self and social transformation. In this sense, autoethnography is positioned as a method of learning about and understanding lived experience in order to benefit self, society, community, and culture. Thus, autoethnography can "make personal experiences meaningful for others, and, consequently . . . motivate cultural change" (Adams, 2011, p. 158). Generatively, this helps autoethnographers to theorize action from lived experience. To do otherwise risks being an exercise in the self-centeredness critiqued above. This move from self-centeredness to social analysis to collective action is important in fostering internal reflection, intra/intercultural compassion, and community activism. In this way, autoethnography, like critical race method, is an analytic tool that creates "the conditions for [people] to find [their] own voice and participate in transforming [their] world, from the inside out and the outside in" (Romo, 2005, p. 200).

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Article 3

Ghost-mapping "Urban Violence": Reconceptualizing the Racial-Spatial Contours of the Urbanscape

> . . . the routinized, everyday nature of violence across a range of social institutions highlights and erases violence targeted towards specific groups as well as the culpability of some groups in causing it. Patterns of legitimated and non-legitimated violence, violent acts and verbal violence become routinized in a series of micro-interactions across an assumed separation between public and private spheres of everyday life. In both these spheres of social organization, systemic violence has become so routinized against less powerful groups that its everyday nature ironically fosters both its invisibility and acceptance. Hidden in plain sight, the routinization of violence in the workplace, government, media, streets and other social institutions remains so prevalent and racially and gender encoded that most people have difficulty in identifying routinized violence as violence at all. (Collins, 1998, p. 924)

> The epistemological effects of the association between "slave" and "black" linger in ways that continue to haunt the African diaspora. Global epistemological frameworks of blackness continue to locate black people outside the realm of the human, refusing to recognize black people as coeval, dynamic, political subjects whose lives matter. This broader ontological question pushes us even farther beyond debates about citizenship. Black people become conceptually distant from citizenship in the popular imagination because they are ghosts—invisible subjects relegated to the realm of either the dead or the nonhuman. (Smith, 2016, p. 112)

In *Spatializing Blackness*, Rashad Shabazz (2015) describes the sociospatial conditions in Chicago whereby race, location, and various "geographies of risk" converge and generate the context in which Black Chicagoans contend with, make meaning from, and, above all, live in. G*host-mapping* becomes an ideological and material project that recasts the "public policies and political decisions, not internal moral failings" (p. 99) that structure Chicago's Black AIDS epidemic, and the larger racialized conditions of Black disposability and suffering. Here, Shabazz skillfully illustrates the *structural linkages* of racialized segregation, carcerality, and disease across time and space. As Shabazz demonstrates, ghost-mapping is just as importantly a human endeavor that brings into focus the (ghostly) specter of Black life (and death), and the confluence of shifting social, historical, and spatial processes that structure possibilities for Black life in the United States. Mapping Black experiences, then, is as much about understanding a context of *state intimacies* of race and space (making) in the United States.

"Commonplace" understandings of violence, like those of health, are often understood and articulated myopically through the lens of individual choices, responsibilities, and short-comings (Bobo, 2004; Schuman & Krysan, 1999). Given the transdisciplinary scope and question of violence, these topics are researched extensively. From public health and criminology, to sociology and planning, numerous academic and professional fields have

interrogated the far-reaching causes and effects of violence on our society. Much of this work, however, has grounded notions of violence as physical or interpersonal acts, with much less empirical emphasis examining other potential manifestations or "typologies" of violence. Hence, despite the voluminous scholarship and policy about violence, many conceptual soft spots persist, and in some cases, important theoretical distinctions address what violence truly *is*. In the words of Stanko (2003), "[d]espite an assumed, almost self-assured core, "violence" as a term is ambiguous and its usage is in many ways moulded . . . to describe a whole range of events, feelings, and harm" (pp. 2–3).

The conceptual geography of *urban violence*, similarly, echoes these tensions, ambiguities, and assumptions. Urban violence, although constructed heavily through lay discourse via sensationalized news media, occupies a similar position within the academic literature. Dominant conceptualizations of urban violence have been largely studied through a commonsensical, albeit criminological, purview; one which understands violence as a violation of law and the purported contract modern (hu)man has as a part of *civil* society. Such a framing of "violence as criminality," however, obfuscates the context in which "urban violence" occurs: *the urban*. Here, *place* becomes the descriptive site—*the where*—for such a particular violence to occur, rather than the analytic location—the *how*—for its occurrence. This paper, hence, strives to attend to these specificities and analytical tensions, and attempts to shift or *remap* how we conceptualize urban violence. Here, the "*urban*" in urban violence is deployed analytically, not just descriptively, as a sociospatial conduit which reinscribes and emplaces meanings about race and Black disposability. Articulated as such, urban violence is seen as a much more expansive product and process of racialized space and spatialized race. In other words, "commonsense" representations of urban violence work discursively to elide the structural and historical context which creates the conditions for interpersonal violence, and are arguably narrow, having limited capacity to conceptualize critical contours of violence, such as the mechanics of space and race in it. This latter point is particularly poignant given the history, meaning, and enduring material and social impact of the urbanscape in the United States. These particularities, foregrounding the historical and spatial contexts, help to paint a picture of what is truly *urban* about urban violence (Pavoni & Tulumello, 2020), and point us towards a much more capacious conceptual *and* experiential landscape to attend to.

Similar to Shabazz's *ghost-mapping* of racialized epidemic, urban violence must also be situated in a racialized sociospatial and historical logic. Here, I define the creation of the modern "inner-city" United States through both policies of ghettoization, and the spatialization of White supremacist, anti-Black violence. Experiencing "urban" as a form of racialized sociospatial enclosure (Shelby, 2007; Wacquant, 2000, 2009a), Massey (2004) reminds us that "no other group in the history of the United States has *ever* experienced such high levels of segregation, even for a brief period" (pp. 8–10). Urban space, accordingly, has historically operated as a unique racialized project from the White spatial imaginary (Lipsitz, 2007, 2011) that attempted to curtail Black life and "let (it) die" (Foucault, 1990a). Along these lines, Duneier (2016) argues that the Black ghettoization differs in *kind*—and not merely in *degree*—to poor White neighborhoods and even poor immigrant/ethnic neighborhoods and enclaves. Without the proper context for the *particulars* of the Black urban experiences, we risk "obscuring the specific mechanisms by which the White majority has historically used space to achieve power over blacks—from restrictive covenants to public housing policies to place-based policing" (Duneier, 2016, p. 224). That Black folks were able to radically create home in and outside these conditions is remarkable in itself. Timely scholarship continues to lift up the vibrancy of Black

life in these contexts in meaningful and important ways, including Black place-making strategies (Blokland, 2009; Hunter, 2013; Hunter & Robinson, 2018; Summers, 2019). It is critical to account for the ways deficit-based portrayals of the urban may further reinscribe Black and POC to the margins, even if unintended. Black people continue to demonstrate that we will always be greater than the sum of our parts with anti-Black violence.

This article, however, argues for a reconceptualization of urban violence in the United States that better theorizes the interrelatedness of spatiality and racialization. Moreover, the "active archive" (Knowles, 2003), or "sedimentation of history" (Ahmed, 2015) of urban space, is a lived history that includes the spatialization of race and racialization of space (later articulated as "racespace") as an integral process which has given meaning, value, and "materialization" to race and racial space. Contrasting the spectacularized incidents of interpersonal violence, such as the disproportionate assaults and homicide, structural conditions provide a context for more routinized forms of quotidian anti-Black violence; a mundane state of affairs, which naturalizes Black abjection as an accepted component to the social and material landscape. In this paper, I attempt to conceptualize the many scales of violence—the mundane and the spectacular—that Black people, and youth in particular, are forced to navigate in the everyday. This mundane violence is glaringly absent in hegemonic depictions of urban violence, yet articulates a disposability about Black life, which young people must make-sense of socially and spatially. As such, this paper sets out to engage two separate but connected issues: (a) Argue the limits of commonsensical framings of purported *urban violence*, which obfuscate historical process—the "sedimentation of history"—of the urbanscape as a racial/racist sociospatial project of violence, one whereby anti-Black violence has become "natural" and embedded spatially. This gravity helps shape material and social relationships around the disposability of Black life or *urban* as the materialization of anti-Blackness. And (b) Theorize the relationship between violence, race, and space (as a sociospatial *trialectic*) and better conceptualize the incessant ways Black youth are forced to contend with and navigate violence that reifies the value of White life and Black disposability. As demonstrated previously (Philoxene, *in press*), young people's experiences with localized "everyday violence" (Bourgois et al., 2004; Sabo et al., 2014) highlight the sedimented nature of racialized violence that is (sociospatially) archived in urban space. Hence, critical forms of sociospatial analysis and "racespace," arguably, provide a more robust conceptualization of urban violence and, in doing so, offers a methodological refrain to recenter the significance of racialized violence and racialized meanings to everyday youth of color experiences in urban geographies.

While it is beyond the scope of the paper to demonstrate the precise ways anti-Black violence creates particular local "racespace" for youth, it is an important genealogy to connect these enduring structures over time and space. Echoing Mbembe (2001), Smith (2016) argues that violence and its repetition is always "entangled in time and space, implicating the past, the present, and the future" (p. 25). Refocusing the sociospatial history of place helps to denaturalize the idea that certain spaces are inherently violent, deviant, or pathological. Such moral cartographies work to obscure the entanglements of spectacularized urban violence (read: physical or interpersonal) which are connected to forms of structural, state, and symbolic violence (Bourgois, 2001; la paperson, 2009). In this way, urban violence becomes *symptomatic* of the larger sociospatial context of institutional violence. "All violence is paid for . . . structural violence is matched sooner or later in the form of suicides, crime and delinquency, drug addiction, alcoholism, [and] a whole host of minor and major everyday acts of violence" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 40). I echo Bourdieu's "conservation of violence" (or what Fanon (1963)

deemed "auto-destruction") to explicate the ways everyday violence is mired in lived experiences with racialized oppression and anti-Black violence. Factoring these many contours is critical to accurately capture the *ghost-map* and function of sociospatiality for urban violence. Ghost-mapping then, taking inspiration from Shabazz (2015) and others, is *Black Geographic autopsy*, or a sociospatial project to (re)conceptualize and historicize "premature black death" (Gilmore, 2007) and "life lived in the immanence of death" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 127) by making visible the shape and structure of anti-Black violence.

Understanding and Troubling "Violence"

Black Urban Violence

While this paper critiques those conceptualizations of urban violence as being overly reliant on interpersonal incidents of violence, it does not dismiss them. For many, the threat of physical violence and harm are significant contours to living in the inner-city. Breslau and others (1998) have consistently shown that inner-city residents typically experience a higher rate of violence exposure than the rest of the nation. Moreover, that Black life in America's inner-city neighborhoods is wrought with numerous concentrated disadvantages (Sampson, 2012), a constellation of risks (Peterson & Krivo, 2010) and racialized injustices is not new, particularly for young people. Research continues to demonstrate this point. Various indices point to elevated risks related to safety, including Black youth across the national population having some of the highest recorded levels of exposure to interpersonal and assaultive violence, and indirect "secondary exposure" to community violence (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993; Selner-O'Hagan et al., 1998; Shakoor and Chalmers, 1991). Rates of documented trauma for Black youth, for example, are disproportionately experienced, including a multitude of violent experiences throughout adolescence (Breslau et al., 2004; Roberts et al., 2011, Voisin, 2019). In their sample of high-risk urban youth, Wilcox et al. (2009) found that almost 85 percent of those in their study experienced some sort of traumatic event in their lives, with two-thirds of all males experiencing some type of assaultive violence (e.g., mugging, threatened with weapons, shot, stabbed), and many experiencing *multiple* exposures. (In fact, most of the trauma studies up to this point have been limited in their ability to account and conceptualize multiple trauma exposures and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) of the highest-risk youth (Hughes et al., 2017)). Expectedly, epidemiological studies illustrate that Black residents in inner-city communities, especially those most heavily segregated, experience elevated risk exposures to numerous forms of assaultive violence, including victimization and perpetration of gun violence (Berthelot et al., 2016), such as homicide (Tita & Radil, 2011). Importantly, Black risk of gun victimization correlates positively as residential segregation becomes more concentrated (Berthelot et al., 2016). And despite conceptual differences with Anderson's (2000) moralizing "code of the street" framework as the central driver for urban interpersonal conflict, Anderson highlights the gravity of street-level conflict and safety as central considerations for day-to-day realities of many inner-city Black youth.

However, this trend is partially symptomatic of early sociological studies of the city, which framed urban space as dangerous and fundamentally prone to decline, harm, immorality, even pathology (Jacobs, 1961; Park & Burgess, 1925; Wilson, 1987; Wirth, 1938, 1998). Such conceptualizations still dictate hegemonic interpretations and assumptions of the urbanscape, often including a problematic refrain of "deficit" depictions for many of the residents living theren. While some scholarship has importantly critiqued the tendency to view *violence* through a descriptive cataloguing of crime statistics and epidemiological data (Pavoni & Tulumello, 2020), these particular rates of victimization do paint a compelling picture of the

disproportionate nature of interpersonal violence experienced by Black youth. However, the presence of interpersonal violence does not negate the absence of broader structural arrangements at play, even if collectively these sort of public health epidemiological datasets may serve to "validate" ideas of danger being endemic to Black bodies and racialized urban space. Increasingly, there has been a shift to use statistical analysis and spatial modeling to better analyze the relationship of interpersonal violence to space, such as neighborhood or city-level. Such regression modeling research (see: Sampson et al., 2002; Tita & Radil, 2011; Ward & Gleditsch, 2018) is helping to shift how we conceptualize urban violence beyond the interpersonal, linked to issues such as residential segregation and historic *redlining*, and other spatially entrenched mechanisms in the inner-city (Graetz & Esposito; 2021; Paulson et al., 2021). For instance, in their examination of Philadelphia, Jacoby et al. (2018) find that, not surprisingly, " . . . the same places that were imagined to be areas unworthy of economic investment by virtue of the races, ethnicities, and religions of their residents are more likely to be the places where violence and violent injury are most common almost a century later" (p. 7). Such modeling demonstrates the enduring and embedded quality of a racial-spatial politic of neglect, one where "things" like poverty and interpersonal violence are structural and "stuck in place" (Sharkey, 2013). Additional research has examined the relationship of residential segregation to outcomes such as health (Nardone et al., 2020), finding similar correlations. While this shift to a more spatially integrated criminology may not radically move the field outside the domain of "crime" or an explicit analysis of racial processes, including a spatiality of anti-Blackness or otherwise, it represents the acknowledgment that better conceptual tools are needed to more vividly understand processes of spatiality, including its "living" history, as well as the functionality of structure on individual acts of violence. This is an important gesture because it transitions the discussion from individualized framings of violence into relevant critical theories of violence, which can help us more fully conceptualize urban violence.

Critical Theories of Violence: Surveying the Literature

While there is perhaps more agreement colloquially about everyday, "common-sense" notions of violence (Jackson, 2002; Garmany, 2011), there is much divergence across the critical theory literature (Tyner & Inwood, 2014). Levi and Maguire (2002) argue that violence should be seen as "a slippery term which covers a huge and frequently changing range of heterogeneous physical and emotional behaviors, situations and victim-offender relationships" (p. 796). As such, I highlight some central currents and, most importantly, frame the literature for relevance in thinking about urban violence in the United States. I organize my discussion based upon Bourgois's (2001) four-pronged framework of violence—*interpersonal, structural, symbolic, and political*. I am less concerned with a cohesive definition or typology of urban violence; rather, I seek to develop a framework and language to conceptualize the multifaceted way violence operates within and across urban contexts. Echoing Tyner and Inwood (2014), this "advocate[s] for new understandings—not definitions—of violence that eschew the development of essentializing typologies or generalized explanations of violence . . . " (p. 2).

As described in the aforementioned research about "urban violence," interpersonal or direct violence is the most empirically researched and seemingly straight-forward. It is seen as a "black box, assumed, acknowledged," even if it is "rarely theorized in such a way that affords a critical evaluation of its constitution" (Tyner & Inwood, 2014, p. 2). In many ways, it is the taken for granted, "normed" idea of violence, with rarely any "philosophical" disagreement about it. On the surface, it is easy to see why; interpersonal violence is a seemingly straightforward, concrete transgression. This *violence as interpersonal*, with a large emphasis on elements of

criminality. Focusing on instances of largely physical and individualized violation, where there is clearly harmful intent, is a narrow, albeit hegemonic orientation of violence (Zahn et al., 2004). Inversely, however, it provides a starting point to open up the broader interrogation of violence, or one that problematizes the notion that "violence appears to be a simple concept," of merely "the act of doing harm, injury, or desecration through physical force" (Mitchell, 1996, p. 156).

In the definitive piece *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls (1971) comments, "[u]njust social arrangements are themselves a kind of extortion, even violence, and consent to them does not bind" (p. 343). In this rumination about the nature of justice, Rawls provides a broad critique of social arrangements and the "normed" inequality in our society. Here, Rawls highlights the structural contexts that drastically negate people's dignity and fundamental human rights. More importantly, Rawls helps us reframe questions of (in)justice in our society as *questions of violence*. In doing so, it begs a rethinking of the structural conditions of the urbanscape in the United States—the creation and enduring nature of racial segregation, spatial isolation, concentrated poverty, stigma, for example—as a type of extortion, even violence.

In highlighting the role of justice, Rawls (1971) illustrates the importance of being attuned to people's qualitative experiences with injustice and suffering. Forms of social suffering—unjust suffering—become a key phenomenon and litmus test of sorts for conceiving violence. Importantly, these sensibilities point to shifts in conceptualizing violence beyond interpersonal, physical harm. In highlighting "social arrangements," Rawls asks us to rethink what types of social suffering have become socially acceptable in a purportedly civil society. This rupture highlights the "perpetual war" (Cuomo, 1996), where modern social arrangements arguably mask their violence in the everyday sense of regularity and routinized suffering (Basaglia,1987; Scheper-Hughes, 1997).

Critical theorists from various disciplines (e.g., Bourgois 2001; Galtung, 1969, 1975; Scheper-Hughes, 1992, 1996) have continually refined the idea of social arrangements as a kind of *structural* violence echoed in Rawls. This shift is necessary to move beyond more micro-level instances of individual violence and signal the possibilities of multiple scales of urban violence, especially those that critique systems of domination, suffering, and injustice. For instance, Galtung (1969) offered early pronouncements of structural violence in his larger body of work outlining peace and justice, arguing that "violence [is] built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (p. 171). Here, Galtung argues that unjust and asymmetrical power relations crystallize through social institutions and structures. This structural violence represents a type of *indirect* violence, nebulous and difficult to pin down but clearly existing. This violence has a "more abstract nature . . . that cannot be traced down to a particular institution" (Galtung, 1975, p. 175). In this sense, structural violence was an important conceptual contribution highlighting instances where there was ostensibly no discernable actor/subject. Rather, this violence and its effects were seemingly taken for granted as a component of the social fabric, "as natural as the air around us" (p. 173). Stratification, such as race, gender, and class in our society, "just is."

While Galtung describes this type of violence as inherently "silent" and not easily discernible, there still are concrete *materializations* of this violence. Bourgois (2001) illustrates this in his definition of structural violence as, "the political-economic organization of society that imposes conditions of physical and emotional distress, from high morbidity and mortality rates to poverty and abusive working conditions" (p. 7). In this sense, while the agent or actor of the violence may not be easily discernible, *the effects on individuals and groups are*. Structural vulnerability (Quesada et al., 2011) and the structural determinants of health (Braveman et al.,

2011; Navarro, 2004, 2009) all signify the disproportionate impacts of structural conditions and inequality as a violation against various groups of people, directly impacting social outcomes. While the aforementioned *social indicators of health* literature maps the "upstream" structural relationship clearly for health and disease, broad works have examined the structural context for various social indicators across education, economics, carcerality, and so forth. The shift that I am signaling, however, recognizes these as deeply entrenched aspects of our society, such as the political-economic (Farmer, 2004; Torres-Rivas, 1999) or ideological (Mills, 2014; Sung, 2018) as a condition of violence. Indubitably, this type of violence is one that the most socially vulnerable carry the weight of.

Structural violence attempts then to make explicit the phenomena that create mundane and largely taken for granted social stratification and inequality; in short, ideological and state-sanctioned conditions which perpetuate vulnerabilities and deny people access to basic needs and agency, being "exerted systematically, that is, indirectly by everyone who belongs to a certain social order" (Farmer, 2004, p. 307). Through this purview, structural violence frameworks strive to examine macro-level forces that create particular micro-level material conditions of poverty, deprivation, and misery. Moreover, while traditional definitions of violence have clearly identifiable actors as culprits, theories of structural violence endeavor to demystify and identify more nebulous hegemonies creating asymmetries of power and "normative" social conditions for suffering. In short, structural violence highlights *everyday violence* (Scheper-Hughes, 1996), *silent genocides* (Farmer, 2004) and *excess death* (Gilligan, 1996), characterized by disproportionate rates of mortality and morbidity. Shabazz's (2015) work is just one instantiation of importantly reframing *racialized* social outcomes relative to the many structural arrangements of Black life and death in an urban context. Structural violence theorists argue these deaths are far from any natural causes; rather, they result from inherently unnatural conditions that are instead rooted externally in social systems. Gilmore (2007) argues that *structural* racism is, at its core, "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (p. 247).

While structural violence importantly highlights externalized arrangements and context that shapes our relationship to power and privilege, theories of *symbolic* violence shift the focus to internalizations of these externalities of power, misrecognized as perceived personal short-coming or failings. Bourdieu (1997) coined the term "symbolic violence" as a means to capture mechanisms of domination that function internally or psychically, or a violence that "operates on an intimate level via the misrecognition of power structures" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This violence affects "internalized humiliations and legitimations of inequality and hierarchy," such as "sexism and racism to intimate expressions of class power" (Bourgois, 2001, p. 8). In many ways, symbolic violence can be the prism through which people internalize structural arrangements and ideology, unknowingly adorning it as their own. These implicit ways of seeing and understanding the world—all "commonsensically" learned—occur when people collude in their own oppression to the extent that they perceive and judge the social order through categories that make them appear natural and self-evident (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Hence, at the core of symbolic violence is the "unwitting consent of the dominated" (Bourdieu, 2001), or a dissonance between structurally and ideologically imposed constraints—mechanisms of domination and power—and a cognitive belief that one somehow "deserves" their inferior *location* in the world because of the purported meanings of their social location and identity.

For instance, the oft-repeated colloquialism of urban "*Black-on-Black* crime" forwards a simplified vision of Black deviance and aggression, rooting interpersonal violence in the

individual (*and* collective) shortcomings of Black peoples, eliding complex structural contexts, histories, and in the process, naturalizing a form of criminality as singularly Black (Lubiano in Smalls, 2018). Such phrasing has dire consequences because it works discursively to justify the condition of Black poverty and increase carcerality as a "suitable" state-response, even if it may get parrotted by some Black persons. "*White-on-White* crime" fails to gain the same discursive traction, arguably because of the fundamentally different racial symbolism and logic at work, despite the statistical fact that White people are overwhelmingly more likely to be victimized by other White people.

In her work examining tensions between a group of "continental" and "American" Black students at a U.S. high school, Smalls (2018) highlights the impact of such racialized discourses; here, institutional power brokers (school administration and local news media) deferred to "Black-on-Black" tropes to explain youth conflict, rather than actually listen to the youth in question:

> "Black-on-black violence" [is] a problematic discursive construction that tells us more about popular notions of raced and gendered violence than it does any real phenomenon, the framings of such troubles by school authorities and the media rarely considered any of the possible sources presented in the students and community's nuanced and insightful analyses. (Smalls, 2018, p. 359)

That some youth offered their own analyses and rejected simplistic narratives highlights the agentic power by youth at play, even if they were simultaneously being interpellated as/by something else. Still, such flattened frames of urban conflict obfuscate White power structures and more nuanced structural conditions, such as perhaps in this scenario, those that involve global political-economic exploitation, colonization, and forms of anti-Blackness across the diaspora, which concentrate in the spacetime of this urban context.

Last, as a counter-example, Kiyama et al. (2016) explore the mechanisms of symbolic violence at play in the educational experiences of urban, Puerto Rican girls who agentically resist various stereotypes *and* still engage in various forms of "self-deprecation" (Bourdieu, 2004). One of such examples of symbolic violence through which the oppressed engage in forms of self-harm and self-sabotage, or even the "lateralization of violence" (Fanon, 1961). The unquestioned normalcy of structures of violence is often such that many of us demonstrate resilience, agency, even resistance, yet are still complicit in deeply entrenched hierarchies and ideologies of the social order, such as those that devalue Black life and routinize Black death and suffering.

While I make little mention here of Bourgois's fourth typology, *political* violence, there has been critical work to date detailing explicit forms of state-sanctioned, political violence on Black people, from police murders and community organizing responses such as Movement for Black Lives (IDK, 2021; Patton et al., 2016; Richie, 2017), to diasporic work across the Global South, such as Brazil and Colombia (Paschel, 2016; Smith, 2016, 2017). This is arguably a more explicit function of anti-Black violence, and adds another dynamic in which Black and urban youth must contend in their everyday lives. For many youth, including those from my empirical work, "*fuck tha police*" (Carraby et al., 1998) is much more than a common refrain, but a praxis that guides interaction with the State and an overall disdain for any formal representative of State power.

Reappraising Violence

Interpersonal, structural, symbolic, and political frameworks of violence provide a more layered account of urban violence. In essence, these point to different scales of violence and

create a context to (re)situate the intersections of urban precarity experienced by many Black youth. Bourgois (2001) argues that it is the *relational* nature of these "violences" that creates particularly pernicious experiences in a U.S. context:

> In the United States, the fusing of structural and symbolic violence produces especially destructive but persistent patterns of interpersonal violence that reinforce the legitimacy of social inequality in the public eye. Racism, unemployment, economic exploitation and infra-structural decay are exacerbated by the indignity of being a poor person of color in a white, Protestant-dominated country that is the richest in the world. This nourishes among the excluded an angry sense of inferiority that results in acts of self-destructive or communal violence which in turn further fuel a cycle of humiliation and demobilizing self-blame. Out of this dynamic grows an oppositional, inner-city street culture–especially among youth–that fills the vacuum left by unemployment, underemployment and social disinvestment. (p. 29)

Bourgois (2007) later describes this relational nature of violence as the "continuum of violence," attempting to capture the ways that these frames of violence intersect. Bourgois argues that these forms of violence are not the exclusive domains for capturing all violence, but that they "approach violence in a way that facilitates recognizing the roots, links, tentacles, diversity, and pervasiveness of violence's multiple forms and effects" (Neoliberal Lumpen Abuse in the 2000s, speech). Similarly, Bourdieu (1998) discusses "the law of the conservation of violence," a related concept that argues manifestations of interpersonal violence—like those often studied empirically—need to be situated through the lived experiences with structural forms of violence and marginalization. In this sense, interpersonal forms of violence, including self-harm (such as addiction), are the crystallization of broader, societal forces, or "the product of inert violence of economic structures and social mechanisms relayed [in] the active violence of people" (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 233).

Despite the utility of these categorizations and multiple frames of violence, they still fail to capture important dimensions. Namely, they fail to emphasize the pervasive and enduring nature of Black abjection in U.S. urban life, nor the particularities of a spatiality serving to reinforce and naturalize this Black suffering. Following, I present theories of anti-Blackness and sociospatiality as a throughline to situate and orientate these critical theories of violence in my attempt to remap urban violence.

Conceptual Linkages: Re-reading and Re-mapping Urban Violence

At its core, this paper is a project to examine urban violence in the United States as an extension of anti-Black violence, which has been foundational in the creation, maintenance, and gravity of urban, racialized space. As such, Black geographical imaginaries and Critical Race Spatiality influence the interdisciplinarity of my analysis. Moreover, I utilize the concept of *wayfinding* to describe the layered ways that young people experience, and importantly, sense-make their local geography. Here, I employ it as a sociospatial heuristic to tease out the mutually constituting domains of spatial and social relations in local youth urbanscapes, as its impact on how Black youth are potentially understanding the meaning of race and the value of Black life.

Ghost-mapping Urban Violence

Definitionally, Black Geography is a space to "consider what kinds of possibilities emerge when black studies encounter human geography" (McKittrick, 2006, x). Yet more so it is a diverse and long intellectual project (e.g., DuBois, 1899) that seeks to "map" the countless ways Black life is inherently *geographic*. In the words of McKittrick, Black Geography is "a story of material and conceptual placements and displacements, segregations and integrations,

margins and centers, and migrations and settlements" (xiv). Appraising McKittrick, Hawthorne (2019) summarizes some of the central currents of Black Geography to include the mutually constitutive relationship between Black spatiality and spatial knowledge, on the one hand, and geographies of domination—colonialism, slavery, imperialism, racial-sexual displacement—on the other. The latter, Black Geography, writ large challenges scholars and activists to take seriously the intellectual challenge to *map the materiality of anti-Blackness*: "What might be thought of as merely the black-symbolic or black-talk [that] is in fact unmistakably geographic, and imaginatively real, in multiple ways" (McKittrick, 2006, p. 21). While there is not a singular definition of anti-Blackness or anti-Black violence, it is helpful to conceive it as "a cultural disregard for and disgust with blackness" (Dumas, 2016, p. 11); more than merely *racism* (ross, 2020), anti-Blackness argues that the dehumanization of Black people has been the core feature of modernity (Mills, 2015), one where Blackness is an anti-human *ontological terror* (Warren, 2018) in the White imaginary. Taking root in Patterson's (1982) description of the enslaved Black individual "living a social death" and being a "social non-person," anti-Blackness attempts to speak to the unending assault on Black life across the diasporic arc of the modern world. Here, the "time of slavery" (Hartman, 2002) endures epistemologically and materially, where "Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago" (Hartman, 2007, p. 6).

Similar to the study of violence, Black geographic imaginaries operate outside any disciplinary silos. It is inherently interdisciplinary—intentionally and willfully—just as Black life. "To critically view and imagine black geographies as interdisciplinary sites—from the diaspora and prisons to grassroots activisms and housing patterns—brings into focus networks and relations of power, resistance, histories, and the everyday, rather than locations that are simply subjugated, perpetually ghettoized, or ungeographic" (Woods & McKittrick, 2007, p. 7). In this light, a Black geographic remapping of urban violence is a justice project centering perspective; it is "the terrain of political struggle itself" (McKittrick, 2006, p. 6), which simultaneously recasts the assemblages of power operating with Black life and seeks to lift the agency of Black people.

The intentional analysis of studying urban violence, even homicide, is not then to reify the condition of death for Black life, nor Black space as a place of pathology, but rather, see the everyday ways that Black people *make* life, even among the dying. Hence, this project's concern with optics, including the vantage point of young people's lives as a way to take seriously the magnitude of urban violence—a geography of risk and safety—and using this terrain to also consider the sociospatial linkages of race and space with violence. Smith (2015) argues that "black horizons of death emerge from the cognitive dissociation between blackness and humanity" (p. 385). That instantiations of premature Black death—from state-sanctioned murder, and here, urban violence—are rooted in a modernist, world-making project that denies Black people's humanity is not surprising, but requires us to continually discern how power operates in our lives so we may disrupt it.

In this piece, even while ghost-mapping Black life in "geographies of death" (Shabazz, 2015; Vargas & Alves, 2010), such as the spatialization of endemic structural violence across the inner-city urbanscape, I employ a Black geographic imaginary as an organizing tool to also conceptualize everyday forms of resistance, place-making and life-creating, and ways of just being in the world. While Black Geographies acknowledge life "in the wake" (Sharpe, 2016) of anti-Black violence—including these mechanisms that have structured it in place—it also

foregrounds possibilities beyond the response to endemic Black racism and the everyday precarity of Black space.

Thomas (2010) forwards the idea of the *palimpsest* as a methodological tool to help conceptualize the function of history as having embedded meanings in place, and a method to "parse the place of the past in the present" (cited in Smith, 2016, p. 11). Echoing Knowles's (2003) notion of the "active archive," a Black geographical reading of urban violence makes visible the historicity and context of urban space, indexing layered histories of situated violence. Urban space here functions as a living history of anti-Blackness, which structure Black possibilities and, importantly, (re)produce racialized meanings. Smith (2016) argues that these "repetitions of violence are entangled in time and space, implicating the past, the present, and the future" (p. 25). Through these "palimpsestic heuristics," *urban space becomes a project where all people must contend with sedimented violence and meanings about Blackness*.

The Sociospatiality of Racial Geographies

I employ aspects of "critical race spatiality"—a sibling of Black Geography—to foreground analysis of urban violence. Vélez and Solórzano state critical race spatial analysis is "an explanatory framework and methodological approach that accounts for the role of race, racism, and white supremacy in examining geographical and social spaces and that works towards identifying and challenging racism, white supremacy within spaces as part of a larger of identifying and challenging all forms of subordination" (Morrison et al., 2017, p. 20). By employing the concept of "racespace," moreover, I draw upon Neely and Samura's (2011) theory of "racial space" to help bound this analysis. Here, I am concerned with understanding the layered dimensions for how race "lives" in, influences, and helps to produce space, and conversely, the similar mechanisms through which space informs how we understand and see race. Like Knowles (2003), Neely and Samura argue that spatial analysis helps to deepen analysis of race (and other "assumed" phenomena, such as gender), and trouble aspects of our social world which may seem otherwise "natural" and obscured.

While race is the defining characteristic for Neely and Samura (2011), they build off of Soja's *sociospatial* dialectic, a helpful heuristic to conceptualize the spatiality of other social phenomena, like violence, and their relationship to processes of racialization. Soja's (1980) theorization of sociospatiality articulates space as a dialectical juncture between social and spatial relations, challenging critical theories at the time that conceived *temporality* fluidly, but viewed space as largely a static container for social activity. Soja argues that spatiality should also be understood as *shaping* human activity, and not just human activity shaping material space. This dialectical understanding of space and sociality would form the crux of his sociospatiality. Soja (1996) acknowledges the impossibility of resolving all spatial knowledge, but here, it operates as a key heuristic that guides deeper engagement into the function of space as a process, including the development of interconnected scales of urban space, racial formation, and subsequent racial/spatial meanings. As a sociospatial "loop," *racespace*—itself created in exclusionary, anti-Black logics—further (re)produces anti-Black violence and racial meanings, including the abjection of Black life, which serve to reify and naturalize "proof of its own existence." In short, sociospatiality helps us reconsider the terrain of urban violence—namely the dialectical relationship between the *spatialization of violence* and the *violence of spatialization*—that factors the analytical significance of spatiality shaping violence, rather than merely using space to describe locations of/for violence.

Similar to the ways that race and space constitute one another dialectically, sociospatiality allows for examination of these mutually constituting relationships of materiality

and sociality. Zooming out, in this sense, race, space, *and* violence work as mutual constructions or *trialectics*, existing relationally to (re)produce and (re)organize one another. Returning to race, Lipsitz (2011) comments on this co-constitutive sociospatiality, such as processes of racialization:

> Social relations take their full force and meaning when they are enacted physically in actual places. . . . Because of practices that racialized space and spatialize race, whiteness is learned and legitimated. Perceived as natural, necessary, and inevitable. Racialized space shapes nearly every aspect of urban life. The racial imagination that relegates people of different races to different spaces produces grossly unequal access to education, employment, transportation, and shelter. (pp. 5–6)

And while Lipsitz explicates this production of *Whiteness* and "White spaces," we are reminded that race and space are always defined relationally, and other races and racialized space are relationally (re)produced in the sociospatial imagination and across the literal terrain. Hence, race is materialized through these processes, spaces become "raced," and sociospatial boundaries "maintain" racialized relationships. As a result, *place* is always imbued with various racial meanings and symbols (e.g., "urban" as proxy for *Blackness* or non-Whiteness), including racialized legitimacy about ownership of space and place or "appropriate" racial belonging (Pulido, 2000). This notion of one's "proper place" takes on duplicitous (racial) meaning as both a social and material location. Thus, sociospatiality is an important dimension to understand the processes through which racialization and violence (i.e., anti-Blackness) unfurl discursively and materially, and furthermore, the experiential and affective impact of *racespace* on people's everyday experiences in/through space.

Pacheco and Velez (2009) describe these methodological considerations of critical race spatial analysis as going "beyond description to spatially examine how structural and institutional factors influence and shape racial dynamics and the power associated with those dynamics over time" (p. 293). In this way, it is critical to examine the interplay between the "racialization of space and spatialization of race" (Lipsitz, 2007) as a reproductive structure/structuring force of anti-Black violence, and as an articulation point to reconceptualize urban violence.

"Wayfinding" as Sociospatial Tool

Lynch's (1964) quintessential work, *The Image of the City*, highlights the significance of *mental* or *cognitive mapping* as a methodological intervention to deepen our examination into the everyday, lived understandings of urban space, including here young people's experiences navigating a constellation of urban *violences*. On one hand, mental maps can strengthen our understanding of significant markers of space and place, yet also simultaneously speak to people's relationship to and understanding of them. In the context of this study, young people's sense of their local surroundings demonstrates how they experience, make sense of, or even negotiate various aspects of their geography. That processes of racialization and racial meanings are significant to urban space, essentially young people's "maps of meaning" as they negotiate safety and risk, also offers sociospatial insight elucidating the messy relationships of violence, race, and space.

Along these lines, *wayfinding* has largely been conceptualized in architectural studies to describe the ways people (and other organisms) understand and "make their way" between spaces, including knowing how to navigate to and from a destination (Arthur & Passini, 1994; Passini, 1984). While it is typically conceived in terms of the how individuals perceive, understand, and make sense of physical space—including problem-solving questions about

location and orientation—for our purposes, wayfinding is the navigational *sociospatial* schema urban youth utilize to avoid potential and perceived threats in their environment, such as how they navigate multiple neighborhoods across a city or make their way to and from school. Hence, urban wayfaring has as much to do with traversing physical space, as it does social. Here, it provides a rich analytic to deepen conceptualizations into how Black and urban youth "process and make decisions" about their space (Dalton et al., 2019), such as real-time assessments about safe-keeping, but also the racialized context to these understandings of safety and violence. In short, wayfinding highlights the mutuality of their thinking about their local racialized material and social space. Hence, as a spatial and social "mental map," it reveals how these youth understand and relate to this sociospatial *racespace*, paying attention to the intersections of race, space, *and* violence across their lived geography. Given the ways that adults are inattentive to young people's experiences (Katz, 2004), and how youth perspectives are heavily understudied (Valentine, 1999; Wuff, 1995), this is a meaningful and timely contribution. Moreover, through these youth perspectives and critical phenomenologies navigating forms of "urban violence" we are able to situate an anthropology of (anti-Black) violence, including its connected trialectics of race and space.

Implications and Future Directions

In this article, I argue for a necessary reframing of urban violence in the United States. The reconceptualization advanced here highlights the function of urban space as a historicized project of racial space-making and spatialized race-making, a product *and* process of structural violence that has normalized and materialized Black abjection. Through these optics, urban space as an analytic site, not merely descriptive, is understood as an ongoing, yet sedimented, anti-Black spatial project. Such framings of urban violence that are disconnected from this situated, "active archive" (Knowles, 2003) of violence, obscure the arrangements animating urban space, and the entangled ways race, space, and violence continue to mutually inform one another and give meaning about the (de)value of Black life. Given these structural and symbolic mechanisms at play in the urbanscape, it should not be unexpected then to find instances of disproportionate physical violence, including homicide, similar to disproportionate Black health outcomes. However, disconnecting such phenomena from the genealogy and "continuum of violence" (Bourgois, 2007) only reifies the same racist logics, which created Black sociospatial enclosures to begin with.

Hence, critical frameworks of spatiality, namely Black Geographies and Critical Race Spatiality, situate an analysis and contextualize urban space as a map of anti-Black violence, one where Black life constantly negotiates a social death. Connectedly, sociospatial heuristics deepen this analysis by interrogating the mutuality of urban space, race, and multiple forms of violences. In concert, these help shift and reorientate the "commonsensical" narratives of urban violence as "spectacularized" into a historically situated one, which make visible the everyday, routinized architecture of White spatial logics constraining Black urban life. Put simply, urban scholars, including those querying violence, must conceive of the ways social, symbolic, and material relations inform one another over time and space.

Ghost-mapping urban violence, then, recasts purported Black criminality and deviance by foregrounding the sociospatiality and historicity of racialized, anti-Black material and social geographies; it is thus a project to make visible "her shape and his hand" (Gordon, 2008; la paperson, 2010). Capturing the everyday lives of Black youth in their local space—their *wayfaring*—highlights the ways their lives are ensnared by capacious forms of violences, but also the ways they circumvent it (Philoxene, *in press*). Subsequently, the lives of these youth are

filled with various navigational strategies for experiencing disproportionate violence, as both a spectacular, yet also mundane quality of anti-Blackness. Developing the sociospatial concept of wayfaring offers insights into the mutuality of youth experiences with race, space, and violence, and the constant vigilance and emotionality of having to navigate an entrenched urban violence.

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Conclusion: Learning Race, Space, and Violence From Our Youth

Learning Race and Spatiality From Our Youth

The arc of this dissertation is organized around these central questions: (a) How do Black youth and other youth of color in Oakland experience and understand everyday urban violence in their local geography, across community and school? How do they understand the racial and spatial contours to risk and safety?; (b) How does anti-Blackness, and geographies of race generally, function in the creation and maintenance of urban space, including community violence? How can critical spatial analyses deepen our conceptualization and research of urban violence, including youth experiences with everyday precarity?; And (c) How can youth narratives and "theories in the flesh" disrupt and counter-map hegemonic representations of urban communities and violence? Overall, the study is organized around two central pillars: on one hand, it reappraises *urban violence* as merely interpersonal and spectacularized, instead attuned to the mutuality of racial and spatial processes and meanings, or the interrelated function of sociospatiality as a product and process of urban violence. Moreover, it provides a richer depiction of (a reconceptualized) urban violence through qualitative portraits of Black and urban youth experiences and sense-making in a local context. In demonstrating the sociospatiality of race, space, and violence in Oakland, the gravity and capaciousness of an *everyday precarity* becomes clearer for these young people's lives. Overall, the dissertation works as a justice-centered advocacy project to counter-map understandings of urban violence, Oakland's urban space, and the ingenuity of our young people, echoing Said (2012) that "geography is therefore the art of war but can also be the art of resistance if there is a counter-map and a counter-strategy" (p. 26).

While the dissertation is primarily focused on youth experiences with urban violence, it is also a project to unpack the ways that these youth are making sense of race and processes which *racialize* and give racial meaning, even across spatial arrangements. Here, remapping urban violence becomes a map of racial meaning, including a materialization of anti-Black violence. While there is a long intellectual history, this *mapping of anti-Blackness* has become an important emergent project. As McKittrick has duly noted, "Black matters are spatial matters" (xii). While important attention has been called to highlight police killings of Black people, less attention has been raised to explicitly theorize the conceptual linkages, spatial and otherwise, between urban violence—including homicide—and anti-Blackness. As Smith (2016) explains, "The dialogic nature of racial formation requires us to move away from an analysis that overdetermines race as an elective identity marker toward a discussion of structural antagonisms—historical, social blocs that define what position people hold in society based on racial hierarchies . . . We must move away from symptomatic notions of violence toward understanding violence as a process that 'transforms material and experiential contexts and becomes the condition of its own reproduction'" (pp. 14–15). That racial meanings are (re)produced in and through violence—physical, structural, symbolic, political, and so forth—means we must interrogate the many sociological and spatial reverberations of violence for our society, *and* inversely, how these attendant meanings of race shape, perpetuate, and normalize suffering against Black bodies and geographies, such as the racialized urbanscape. Next, I provide key insights from each article and a brief summation of the workings of race, space, and violence in the lives of Black and youth of color in Oakland.

Research Findings & Takeaways

Navigating Geographies Violence, Urban Youth Demonstrate Racial and Spatial Logics of Safety

This article serves as a corrective to traditional ideas of "urban violence," which are undertheorized and commonsensically skewed towards interpersonal and criminalized phenomena. These renditions of urban violence distort other *typologies*, including structural, historical, and spatial mechanisms that are entrenched in urban space. Importantly, this project entails a youth-centered phenomenological study of mundane experiences with community violence. While many epidemiological studies have noted urban experiences with disproportionate physical violence, this study explicitly focused on subtle forms of violence, taking note of Hartman's (1997) cue "to illuminate the terror of the mundane and quotidian rather than exploit the shocking spectacle" (p. 4) as a way to gain deeper insights to the *normalized* function of violence in the everyday. In doing so, youth participants' sense-making strategies around safety and risk demonstrated a sociospatial understanding of violence, which was inherently tethered to racial meanings and racialized space. In this sense, formations of violence worked (re)productively with racial and spatial formations. Core findings suggest that youth understand "Whiteness" as a form of sanctuary, perceived as a buffer from the most egregious forms of violence. Whiteness, as embodied and spatialized, operates as a symbol of safety across the urbanscape. Second, Black and youth of color leverage deep insider-knowledge and develop spatialized safe-keeping schemas to navigate a deep, everyday precarity. Last, the racialized contours of violence, both embodied and spatialized, work discursively as an affective geography to convey a narrative of disposability about urban life for Black and youth of color. The paper signals the need for more nuanced critical spatial analysis to highlight sociospatial formations of race, space, and violence, including the qualitative impact of a reappraised urban violence in the lives of urban youth of color. That this violence is capacious in scope requires researchers to seriously consider the significance of racial formation and racial meanings as a generative function for urban safety and violence.

Schools as Sites of Racialized Violence and Autoethnography as Counter-mapping Method

This co-authored piece shifts the focus of urban violence from the street to the school, as a way to demonstrate the multi-sited nature and scalarity of violence across the urban landscape. By employing generative autoethnography as a form critical race methodology, the authors highlight retrospective school histories to illustrate the institutional and discursive violence of urban schooling for three authors of color. While not limited to Oakland, we recall historical experiences which shape our relationship to the institution of schooling, our identities as students and learners, and racial connotations and meanings generated from them. Methodologically, this article advances a collective spin-story or "theory of the flesh" that operates in concert with the dissertation as a counter-map challenging hegemonic representations of schooling and urban youth of color, in general. Moreover, it demonstrates the function of counter-learning and community-based assets, as a counter-script to dehumanized, violent institutional learning conditions. As such, the authors utilize these past personal experiences to ground their subsequent educational trajectories and role as critical educators. This piece, as methodology and method, fulfills Critical Race Theory tenets of intercentricity of race and racism, challenging dominant ideology, a commitment to social justice, and the centrality of experiential knowledge and interdisciplinary perspectives. As a public share, the work attempts to operate affectively and spur readers to feel and critically reflect on their own personal experiences and social realities, continuing the generative quality of autoethnography.

Reconceptualizing Urban Violence Through a Ghost-Map of Urban Space

Building off the contributions from the empirical pieces, this article advances a new conceptualization of urban violence, which scaffold *trialectical* understandings of violence, race, and space, and offer a corrective to colloquial definitions of violence. Here, I employ *place* as a heuristic, rather than merely a descriptive unit, to analyze the structural conditions and anti-Black function of urban space. Critical spatial frameworks, and Critical Race Spatiality in particular, offer important tools and a vantage point to reconceptualize violence, paying particular attention to the mutual (re)production of race and space, which operate in concert with/through violence and materialize racialized meaning. As a conceptual paper, it theorizes multiple scales and intersections of an urban U.S. violence, drawing interdisciplinarily to include theories of anti-Blackness and sociospatiality that highlight urban space as a racialized and inherently violent spatial project. In this regard, the urban space works to sediment meanings about Blackness, naturalize Black abjection, and in the process, obscure the White spatial politics (Lipsitz, 2011) which structure(d) the urbanscape. Consequently, this rearticulation of urban violence forces a conceptual reappraisal of everyday forms of racial-spatial experiences of Black and urban youth, as well as how we view interpersonal, community conflicts. As such, reconceptualizing urban violence forces us to take more seriously the depths of everyday precarity and quotidian violence (Hartman, 2007) for many Black and urban youth.

Recommendations: Rethinking and Reengaging Urban Violence

This project is intentionally non-prescriptive. I am leery of one-size-fits-all approaches to complex social (and spatial) phenomena, and those that are not contextually specific and situated in hyper-local knowledge. Moreover, in the case with this dissertation study, *it should be enough for us to consider the experiences and everyday forms of precarity that many Black and urban youth experience*. Periodt.

Too frequently the value of Black lives, including our individual and collective deaths, is transactional fodder or a performative backdrop for political, policy, and academic theater. As such, I will offer particular implications—practitioner, scholarship, and policy—with a caveat to contextualize inquiry in localized contexts. As an ethic, just as these young people demonstrate, meanings and analysis must be generated from our respective social and material locations.

1) **Youth-based practitioners advocate and support safe-keeping of Black and youth of color.** Various practitioners engaging, teaching, and working alongside young people in high-violence contexts must account for the nuanced and insidious ways violence animates urban space and work to expand the capacity of safety. This includes the differential ways scales of violence operate through power relations of intersectional identity. While this project centers the racialization of violence, other markers, such as gender, sexuality, immigration status, and language, and their many intersections, are significant contours for respective experiences with urban violence. On one hand, Teacher educators, and teacher education, for instance, must work pragmatically to create appropriate mechanisms for protection (McKinney de Royston et al., 2021), including committing to challenge endemic processes of racism and anti-Blackness of schooling. On the other hand, it requires us to *bear witness to the experiences of young people and stand with them in solidarity and their stories*, and create space for this—formally and informally, professionally and personally. "Witnessing means traveling side by side with the colonized and walking alongside the community in its suffering: We must not simply fly over it. We must, on the contrary, walk step by step along the great wound inflicted on

[colonized] soil and on the [colonized] people" (Fanon, 1965a, p. 119 in Smith, 2016, p. 205).

2) **Research and policy must employ critical spatial frameworks to deepen conceptualization of existing social issues, such as violence.** Study of urban violence must employ critical spatial frameworks and tools (*methodology and method*) to deepen our analysis of the problems and solutions, and to clarify the nature of reality as we understand it. In urban space, this includes the historically sedimented and "active archive" (Knowles, 2003) of a living, reproductive space. Importantly, critical spatial frameworks should also elucidate key community assets, including the ways that Black and urban youth of color take up, relate, and create urban space in ingenious ways. *This requires us to view, treat, and examine urban space as an analytic, and work to excavate real-time sociospatial processes for how race is lived, expressed, and spatialized.* Morrison et al. (2017), for instance, provide an invaluable resource. "A critical spatial dimension, [is] not to replace either the historical or the social, but to enhance," it is "to draw upon their own contexts to use and develop theories and methodologies that work in their spatial contexts" adding "a spatial analysis to the historical and social lenses" (Morrison, 2017, p. 4). Ghost-mapping, in particular, is a vital spatial justice project to uphold Black life in the face of state intimacies, helping to necessarily reframe how we conceive premature forms of Black death. In this regard, it is a necessary "anti-anti-Blackness" conceptual project. Youth "wayfaring" maps also offer an important emergent project whereby researchers and practitioners can gain deeper insights to youth worlds and empirically ground sociospatial processes and understandings of urban space.
3) **Policy must focus on the structural context of violence, including spatial and collective resilience.** Policy responses, including those across education, planning, and public health, must focus on "upstream" structural factors, including those which may be historically and spatially entrenched. Individualized responses to traditional "crime prevention," for example, have continually been found to be problematic and ineffective. Important scholarship has continued to emphasize the need for alternative models focused on structural conditions, and community assets and relationships, rather than punitive approaches to urban community conflict (Corburn et al., 2020; Corburn et al., 2021). Urban problems are largely social in nature, and it is also an important reminder that resilience is collective and communal as well (Bowes & Jaffe, 2013; Ungar, 2013). *Along these lines, we must remember that urban youth, even when exposed to adverse conditions, geographies of violence, and complex trauma exposures, are not determined by them*. Varying articulations of resilience, empowerment, and resistance to oppression should be understood dynamically over a "life-course," recognizing different developmental trajectories and periods of greater sensitivity, with the throughline of bolstering community and networks. The stories of the youth involved in the project, those that I have worked alongside over the course of my 15-plus years in education, and even adult retrospective autoethnographies, all testify to this. "Resilience" can be present, demonstrated, and developed alongside adverse, even traumatic, conditions and exposures. This co-occurrence is an important reminder that practitioners, policy-makers, and planners should help to cultivate the conditions to support, protect, and advocate for young people, even if there are seemingly monumental challenges in a young person's environment.

Future Directions, Closing Thoughts

Tuck (2009) makes a compelling case that academics need to move away from "damage-centered" research, in general, given the tendency (intentionally or otherwise) to further re-inscribe urban communities as places of pathology, and the people within them as "depleted, ruined, and hopeless." There then is the slippery-slope of navigating a discussion of actual urban problems, such as violence, while not further reinforcing deficit notions about these communities or the people who live there. In their decade-long ethnography of heroin addiction in San Francisco, Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) discuss the challenge of scholarship to accurately describe lived experiences with suffering, while simultaneously recognizing people's humanity: "Our challenge is to portray the full details of the agony and ecstasy of surviving on the street . . . without beatifying or making a spectacle of the individuals involved, and without reifying the larger social forces enveloping them" (p. 5). Echoing *Righteous Dopefiend*, this dissertation has strived to lift the structural conditions of such social suffering, while neither romanticizing nor pathologizing, and capture social problems in their conceptual and lived complexity. In this vein, researchers must always hold the principles of a radical humanism at the core of the work, both of those researched, but also those doing the research. *Framing* becomes one of the most central issues then; hence, our description and analysis of "the problem" indubitably sets up the logics for how we work through potential solutions, including the recognition of people's humanity. Therefore, the challenge is accurately "portraying the full details" of the urban landscape "without beautifying or making a spectacle." It *is* important who is doing the research, but my position as an Oakland insider-ethnographer does not absolve me from these contradictions. I hope I have remained consistent in these principles to not "create a museum of suffering" (Feldman, 2004).

As I conclude this dissertation and the culmination of years of study and research, I am reminded of Audre Lorde's (1977) insightful words: "There are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt." It is along these lines that the dissertation pulls from a wide scope of multidisciplinary ideas to (re)frame what we already (should) know. It offers, if anything, novel ways to make them more felt.

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