AFFIRMATIONS 2.0: THE POLITICS OF LIBERATION AND EXPLORATION OF HEALING IN DIGITAL GAMES

by

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Negative thoughts plague the self-consciousness of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and affect how we proceed through our days. Through my own struggle with this, I developed a personal coping mechanism of visualizing and facilitating an encounter with both the negative and positive attributed versions of myself as a Black woman. In previous works in ATEC, I developed a game, Affirmations, representing this personal coping mechanism for reconfiguring my sense of self. As an extension, Affirmations 2.0 explores the affordance of a digital game as a communally situated coping mechanism and critical making technology for Black women and children. Through the game, the player encounters intrusive thoughts and reflects on how the main conflict within oneself is rooted in the internalization of systemic oppression. In so doing, Affirmations 2.0 complicates player’s knowledge of the self and works as a flexible artifact that facilitates critical making, reflection, and self-care for Black women and children. This project directly addresses the concerns of mental health perceptions in the traditionally underrepresented group of Black women and children by highlighting the contributing factors of internalized systemic oppression. This project is grounded in the
theoretical framework of pleasure activism and healing as community care work in order to resist neoliberalist perceptions of health as individualistic responsibilities. Furthermore, this project challenges the common oppositional relationship between game designer and player by introducing a collaborative partnership based on critical making between players and game designers. By engaging with the game’s infrastructure as a critical making technology, players will complicate their perception of their internal voice and understand the outside factors that affect individual and community health.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I create things that I would have wanted to see as a young Black child growing up. The intention behind this paper is to discuss the process of developing my thesis game, *Affirmations 2.0*, and how it relates to my larger creative practice. From inspiration and content sourcing to digitization and game development, this paper discusses how *Affirmations 2.0* came to fruition.

In my creative practice, I strive to educate and advocate for the marginalized and traditionally underrepresented voices of Black women and children. I do this through utilizing digital games as a communicative medium and an experimental epistemological artifact. On the surface, the main concept for *Affirmations 2.0* is to fight negative thoughts with positive affirmations. However, grounded in my personal experiences and deep commitment to improving access and caring for the diverse population in Dallas, this game is more broadly aimed towards pushing the boundaries of Black women and children’s representations in game titles, academia, and the video game industry. I am a first-generation college student from a working-class Black family statistically below the poverty line. I grew up in a racially segregated, predominantly African American neighborhood in the south, rich with culture but lacking infrastructure and public services. I am the first person in my family to attend college and to seek post-graduate education. My mother, as my primary caregiver and parental figure, instilled in me the importance of political awareness and community engagement. I have directly experienced economic uncertainty. I center my personal experiences navigating the many spaces I inhabit in my works and seek to capture the nuances of my intersecting identities through creating complex narratives. Taking inspiration from Black poets and scholars in making
Affirmations 2.0, I seek to encompass the characteristics of Zora Neale Hurston’s works that position “black people as complete, complex, undiminished human beings” (Walker, 1983, p. 85) by extending these characteristics into digital games.

I began conceptualizing the first version of Affirmations in September of 2019. Entering an academic environment, where the only Black teacher I had in my academic career was a high school history teacher, was daunting. Though I had the same degree and many accomplishments under my belt, being within a new environment with no one who looked like me was the perfect grounds for negative thoughts to brew. These negative thoughts combined with the pressures of navigating the world as a Black woman in America felt insurmountable. As an artist and game designer, I decided to search for the answers with the tools and frameworks I had developed, and Affirmations 1.0 was created in the Fall of 2019. The first version of Affirmations followed the intrinsic game design mechanics of combating enemy targets by defeating the perceived enemy character. The enemy character was structured to reflect the appearance of the player character, and the enemy character shot negative thoughts and comments at the player character. The player character would then be expected to combat the negative thoughts that the enemy character presents with a variety of positive-thought-infused punches and kicks. The conceptualization for Affirmation 1.0 stems from my way of dealing with negative thoughts at the time. Influenced by memes and sites like Twitter, I felt the best solution to the false feeling of inadequacy would be to literally enact violence against the negative versions of myself. In creating this game, Affirmations 1.0 allowed me to take this learned coping mechanism into a 3D setting. However, the process of creating Affirmations 1.0 and the reflection period accompanying this process allowed me to take the time to reflect on the effectiveness and the root of dealing with my
negative thoughts in this manner. I came to realize that enacting violence against my negative thoughts, that are still a part of me, simply did not make those thoughts go away. As such, I approach the creation of *Affirmations 2.0* as a critical making process of my dealings with systemic oppressions.

Throughout the preproduction phase of *Affirmations 2.0*, I utilized theories of play outlined by Miguel Sicart in *Play Matters* (2014) to play with game mechanics as a tool for facilitating healing and exploration. This was done through examining the “mechropolitics” (Phillips, 2018) of death systems conventionally found in digital games and developing the self-care journal prompt mechanics. With the ways “technological artifacts as embodied through their design” (Wu, 4) specific values, structural whiteness in our world encourages games that reinforce oppressive structures and seek to maintain the status quo. Structural whiteness in this context refers to the militarization and weaponization of differences and othering to center and distribute power in service of white hegemony. Hegemony in this context is understood as the dominance of one social group over others. With these understanding, I situate play and the art of developing a game as an intervention to problematize what we come to understand as ‘legitimate’ as well as to disrupt cultural understandings that centers whiteness by creating a gaming experience that is culturally inaccessible to whiteness. Play as a technology for intervention in this way interrogates power structures, cultural knowledge, and ways of understanding.

Specifically, in the design of *Affirmations 2.0*, I challenge the idea that symbolic character death and violence is the sole way of facing negative thoughts throughout the course of the game. In game design, it has become an industry standard built inherently into game
mechanics to reward fighting and violence as the only way to deal with conflict and negativity. Against this default mechanic, *Affirmations 2.0* subverts our understanding of play and symbolic death by not creating a ragdoll physics or death sequence of Black bodies. Instead, *Affirmations 2.0* offers the player multiple different strategies for coping with negative thoughts through a design justice framework that explores disability and community health through game design. In so doing, *Affirmations 2.0* seeks to reimagine a narrative and environment where failing does not necessitate violence but instead compassion and a space to reflect.

In addition to learning to live with negative thoughts, *Affirmations 2.0* sits as a divergence from games made for a broad range of commercial audiences. Specifically, I created *Affirmations 2.0* as a type of critical making centered on dialogs between myself as a game designer and Black women and children as players. Digital games allow for me as the game designer to have a dialogue with the players about the internalization of systemic oppression and to experiment with the limitations and affordances of digital games in challenging existing relations of power. In *Affirmations 2.0*, I seek to help players foster a sense of self through creating character identities and narrative levels that place the players’ experiences as the central component of the game.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The core of the selected theoretical frameworks for Affirmations 2.0 centers around the concepts of race and gender as well as knowledge and power. These concepts are central to and drawn from Black feminist thought, and I apply them to question the process of knowledge production, the politics of play, the configuration of space in and out of digital realms, as well as the practices of healing justice and care work informed by disability studies. Throughout the development process for creating Affirmations 2.0, I center Black feminist thought and epistemology, reaching outside of the bounds and constraints of academia. Specifically, I foreground Black experiences as intricately tied to and seen in the works of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, and I ground Affirmations 2.0 in the works of Adrienne Maree Brown, Amanda Phillips, Sasha Costanza-Chock, and Kishonna Gray. In particular, I utilize the idea of rest as foregrounded by these scholars, within the context of the Black experience, to critique game development standards and practices. I seek to diverge from the practice of legitimizing games and creative work by centering whiteness.

This centering of Black and brown theorist and epistemology offers a theoretical ground to interweave insights from games studies and disability studies through the medium of digital games. By situating the core concepts within Black studies, at the intersects of game studies and disability studies, I am able to better encompass a nuanced perspective of my Black experience that informs the production process, gameplay experience and reflection for Affirmations 2.0. For example, in Play Matters (2014), Miguel Sicart questions the common understanding of play and games as universal across people, places, and bodies. What is a game, and does it have to be fun?
He argues that play is a way of participating and experiencing the world, and it is a way of engaging with others and understanding who we are (p. 1). If so, our perceived race and gender as well as our access to knowledge and power are fundamental in shaping our play practices in cultures. Encompassing understandings of culture as an artistic practice, as a society, and as a process or culture as an achieved state, Stuart Hall (1980) further positions culture as a constant struggle to conceptualize the conditions of context and space. While ludology approaches in game studies often frame games as a distinct culture, I seek to diverge from this understanding and approach games as situated with the context of shared space, experiences, and society. Given, play is intrinsically tied to context. The experience of playing a game differs based on our cultural understandings and our experiences scaffolded by race, gender, knowledge, and power within structural whiteness. Utilizing these concepts within the context of the production and gameplay experience, *Affirmations 2.0* puts diverse ways of knowing in conversation with each other to better encompass the Black experience that subverts the centering of whiteness.

**Race and Gender**

Kishonna Gray’s work in *Intersectional Tech: Black Users in Digital Gaming* (2020) examines how race and gender in digital places impact marginalized populations’ gaming experiences. Gray’s exploration of different Black gamers’ real-world experiences offers grounds for examination within the contexts of *Affirmations 2.0*. With the rise of digital games, gaming cultures, and the popularized experience of playing video games, being labeled a gamer was prescribed under specific games as prerequisites to gain access to specific space and gaming communities. Tracing the history of games and their development in western culture from the 1970s to games being released now, there has been a shift in game studies and the concept of
games came to encompass digital games as the standard. In other words, games as we know them have become synonymous with digital games. In this way, the types of games that we have access to and how we interact to play in the gaming context equals social and academic capital based on structural whiteness. This capital can reward and be used to gain legitimacy and access to gaming spaces. And yet, within the context of games, play also functions as a tool for disrupting institutions, events, and structures. If as Paula Saukko (2003) argues that “research is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonization” (p. 1), I approach research through game design as “contesting the ridge structure of play and academia” (Sicart, 2014, p. 40). With games and play practices functioning within the bounds of race and gender, *Affirmations 2.0* plays and rebels against these contextual boundaries.

In particular, *Affirmations 2.0* plays and rebels against the racial and gendered boundaries around pleasure and rest. As Wendy Chun (2012) situates, race is “conceived either as biology or as culture, organizes social relationships and turns the body into a signifier” (p. 43). In *The Bluest Eye* the reader follows the narrative of a young Black girl who is neglected by her community and believes the only way that her problems will disappear, and life will get better is if she adheres to society's idea of whiteness by acquiring blue eyes. Through the young girl’s journey to getting blue eyes, we see the effects of structural and systemic oppression as well as the neglect of the young girl and Black girlhood. Throughout the course of the novel, anger in the narrative is used as a tool for community disruption and a barrier to care and vulnerability. Toni Morrison’s work at the intersects of race and gender explores the harms of centering white culture and the impact it has on Black girls in the context of systemic oppression. As Paula Saukko (2003) similarly alludes toward, the west colonize, extract, and monetize the thing we
create, produce, and know while simultaneously rejecting the people who created and developed those ideas by furthering them from opportunities to be creators and hold academic or social capital (Saukko, 2003, p. 1). Under this context, oppression makes us believe that pleasure is not something that we all have equal access to. As Audre Lorde notes (2000), we settle for suffering and self-negation because of oppression.

As such, pleasure is political in a Black body. Rest is political in a Black body. In *Pleasure Activism* (2019), adrienne maree brown argues that disenfranchised and marginalized person’s reclamation of joy and pleasure is political activism. brown defines pleasure as “about pure aliveness and being present for the world around you. Where we build a world in which many worlds fit. In order to do that, we need to feel what our goals and needs are inside of that world on an individual level and on a collective level” (p. 5). Drawing upon the works of Black feminist scholars, brown critiques the “politics of healing and happiness that explodes the dour myth that changing the world is just another form of work” (brown, 24). As brown advocates, activism and changing the status quo should not fall into our institutionalized systemic understanding of work. Centering joy and reclaiming pleasure in everyday life for Black bodies is radical because of historical barriers of heteropatriarchal and capitalist white supremacy.

Informed by *Pleasure Activism*, pleasure in the context of *Affirmations* centers collective rest and joy, and it is activism about being able to attend to joy within a community that collectively has access to resource and time. This emphasis on collectivity and community echo’s Sasha Costanza-Chock’s *Design Justice: Community-led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need* (2020), which explores how marginalized communities utilize design to dismantle structural inequality. *Affirmations 2.0* utilizes this framework of design justice to explore
disability studies and community health through game design, and it explores playing with player avatars as collective care and how avatars inform our identity in and out of gaming environments. In this way Affirmation 2.0 offers one alternative for Black girls to be vulnerable and engage in community care in a digital landscape. Creating works like Affirmations centers justice, community, and representation because reclaiming the pleasure and joy in the process of creation is liberatory, especially when pleasure is often lost under the weight of systemic oppression and white supremacy.

Furthermore, Affirmations builds on Sicart’s idea of play not being intrinsically linked to games and enjoyment to help better situate community care and digital boundaries enacted through game design. By putting Sicart’s (2014) frameworks of plays as a space for exploration in conversation with adrienne maree brown’s Pleasure Activism (2019), I was able to engage in practices of healing centered on rest and pleasure through the production of Black-women-centered games research for Affirmations 2.0. For example, in problematizing conventional game design processes, I look towards Mary Flanagan’s Critical Play (2009) that critically analyzes game design by exploring historic instances of different game genres as well as how art and social movements have impacted play and game design. The author emphasizes the more nuanced aspects of game design, whereby play is bounded by the people participating in the game. This is seen through different game genres, such as cooperative games where two players traverse a level for a common or oppositional goal, and multiple online games. But this understanding of contextual play bounded by player participation is tied to the ways people engage with games and the communities that arise out of games. Partaking in gaming
technologies and considering the different ways that people interact through them, play creates communities.

But how are these play communities created? In the design of games, it is expected to have win and lose conditions mechanics that encourage conflict as a form of domination. Amanda Phillips’ (2020) exploration of play in games as tied to adversary forces or agon also informed my development of the enemy attack system in *Affirmations 2.0*. Agon is a mode of play, where “combat in which equality of chances is artificially created, in order that adversaries should confront each other under ideal conditions, susceptible of giving precise and incontestable value to the winner’s triumph” (p. 173). However, *Affirmations 2.0* pivots from play conditions of domination rooted in colonialism and instead utilizes community and pleasure activism as a basis for designing game mechanics. In this instance, gender and race as factored into the research and development for *Affirmations 2.0* can be understood as a form of mediating experiences and navigating social and political systems at play. Play at the intersects of Black women’s experiences then become rebellious.

As shown above, putting Sicart’s framework of play in conversation with adrienne marie browns’ pleasure activism and Costanza-Chock’s design justice allows for the pushing boundaries of play to shift the center from whiteness to Black bodies. In sum, *Affirmations 2.0* centers the pleasures and healings of Black women and children under the framework of pleasure activism to dismantle the internationalization of systemic oppressions.

**Knowledge and Power**

Games are critical sites for discourses surrounding innovation and technological advancements that intersect with dominant understandings of both race and gender. Yet, video
games as infrastructures digitalize systems of oppression. As argued by Tare Fickle (2021),
games borrow and reskin racialized frameworks and power relations undergirding ways of
organizing worlds into digital environments. Characters within game and gaming spaces are not
inclusive. Instead, they tend to reflect racialized understanding of Black people and digitize
systemic oppression within new technological advancements. This is done through centering
whiteness within game development and outside of gaming experiences. Game development as
understood to be centered on learning technical skills and designing mechanics catered to the
stereotypical gamers is not a new instance throughout my game design and creation process.
Appealing to the wider and often whiter audience has been a tenant in my academic experience
and game design training.

As highlighted by Adrienne Shaw (2017), white supremacy structures whiteness to be
used as a standard for assessing what types of representation and gaming identities are attached
to academic and monetary capital, especially in marketing. Often non-white characters are
utilized in the background or work to perpetuate the violence of the police state through the death
mechanics that places Black bodies as the enemy or barrier towards progression in a game level.
Situating digital black bodies in the contexts of knowledge and power it becomes clear that the
historical barriers of race and gender factor into development decisions of narrative and
gameplay mechanics. When games include Black bodies in the background as non-playable
characters (NPCs) with no real narrative importance to showcase, they gatekeep what character
experiences and stories are deemed valuable. Black bodies, as props that are not intrinsic to the
narrative or game progression, echoes historical elements of antebellum South, replicating the
systems of power and white hegemony.
Yet, the emphasis on marketability has also been extended into performative representation in games. Representation of mass media as well as in digital games has become monetized and used as a type of buzzword to do performative work, which negotiates the acceptable type of Black people portrayed in video games that also continue to uphold white supremacy. This negotiation that legitimizes only certain types of media consumption and experience under structural oppression conversely delegitimizes the wider experiences and portrayals of Blackness and Black culture. As Joe Turow (2006) examines point as data mining practices, he argues that these practices in turn create a different type of consumer citizenship that gives a distinct capital that is marketable across digital economies. In conversation with Turow, Simone Brown (2015) examines how datamining “practices classify, sort, and evaluate populations that in turn reproduced the same type of structural inequalities and racial inequalities by generating different and more adaptive racial discriminatory practices within surveillance technology as well as within gaming production and gaming communities” (Brown, 23). Black pain and trauma are the gateway that whiteness deems acceptable for representation. Pain is often repurposed, especially in the case of Black people as a means for economic production.

In examining the production of knowledge and the circuits of power, I put Brown’s (2015) works in conversation with Katherine Ibster’s (2015) work on how games move our emotions by design. Specifically, I situate Affirmations 2.0 away from Ibster’s framework of games as a tool for empathy, whereby Affirmations moves away from Ibster’s usage of “grounded cognitive theory” (Ibster, 22). This theory emphasizes when a game changes the range of emotional experience possible for the player. This theory is often grounded in when a player takes on an alternate identity or encounters a social situation during play. In Ibster’s work,
the commentary of design examples is theorized through a white feminist perspective and
doesn’t look past the surface level of the implications of some of the concepts discussed. When
viewed through a disability justice and anti-racism framework, Ibster’s reading takes away from
the nuances necessary when talking about games in the current socio-economic landscape. Read
alongside Brown’s critiques and Piepzna-Samarasinha’s call for care work, Ibster’s book offers a
linear perspective of games through an idealized player at the expense of the experiences of
Black players and Black player communities. In this way, it reaffirms technology in mass media
as well as in video games to utilize and center the white gazes to gain empathy and invoke
artificial solidarity.

I challenge this by centering my Black woman-ness in my works and creative practice.
Given, the way Black people interact and use technology point towards the different politics
ingrained within the technologies (Brock, 2020). In Distributed Blackness (2020), Andre Brock
centers Blackness to develop the theory of Black techno culture matrix that provides a
framework for scholars to forgo white experiences as the main point of entry into technologies.
As Gray (2020) alludes to with the hypervisibility of Black bodies as anchored through
whiteness, the authority of “whiteness as the social default setting perpetuates the proliferation of
racialized stereotypes in both virtual and real spaces, the distinction, as mentioned already, being
discreetly irrelevant” (Gray, 35). By playing with this framing of identity and communities in
 techno cultures, Brock’s matrix removes whiteness as the anchor points into techno cultures.
Similarly, Affirmation 2.0 seek to rebels against “the work of structural white supremacy in
gaming” (Wu, 2022, p. 6) by building places that “denaturalize male centric whiteness as the
universal common sense and highlights the racial gatekeeping work of structural whiteness” (p.
9). I do this in *Affirmations 2.0* by questioning the centered white experiences and gaming cultures and redesigning the structures of game development. Simultaneously, I explicitly orient the content of the game towards being legible and authentic to my Black experiences.

Furthermore, this thesis builds disability justice’s knowledge and position that “to exist is to resist” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 10). In *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (2018), Leah Piepzna-Samarasinha explores the interconnectedness of community, care, and disability justice. She argues that access can be an offering of collective joy that we give to each other. This framework informs my practice and contributes to how I approached the production and development of *Affirmations 2.0*. *Affirmations 2.0* utilizes this disability justice approach of community health as the core theoretical foundation. Specifically, I put Andre Brock’s framework of Black techno culture in conversation with Piepzna-Samarasinha’s framework of care work as disability justice to explore Black techno cultures’ usage of different types of play for care and healing.

For example, critical grieving is a concept I deploy within the second and third level of *Affirmations 2.0*. Unplaying disruptions allows for playing with normative understandings in game play. This allows us to examine how we can reframe our understanding of our whitewashed techno culture. Within the frameworks enacted with pleasure activism and intersectional tech, Brock's argument for diverging from centering whiteness in knowledge production of Black experience highlights the contributions of *Affirmation 2.0*. As a work centering Black experiences and incorporating pleasure activism detailed by adrienne maree browns, *Affirmation 2.0* subverts normative production for game developments and gameplay experiences. As Brock argues, we are “never free from white racial ideology but no longer
materially coerced by it” (2020, p. 56) if we subvert the technology ingrained with white supremacy logics as black scholars and creators. I further argue that decentralizing whiteness by highlighting Black experiences as grounds to explore radical healing through the medium of digital games for collaboration with technology is critical to remake representation of Black bodies and portrayals of the Black experiences.

In conclusion, through examining these gaming practices, I seek as a game designer to center Black experiences by utilizing a more collaborative game production process rooted in care and exploration of the self for and by Black women. Through this way of rebuilding mechanics, violent transgression and traumas can regress the bounds of digital and physical realms. At the same time, my research on centering Black techno cultures that rejects the centering of whiteness has opened my creative process up to works not strictly within the bounds of academia. It is known that the current systems of power overwhelmingly cater to whiteness and seek to erase and delegitimize works often created by Black and brown women. By centering Black scholars who move away from the ridge bounds of legitimized publishing with rebellious formats and publishing and different forms of epistemology, such as the work Toni Morrison and adrienne maree brown, I have been better able to encompass the experiences of some Black women and children.
CHAPTER 3
DESIGN PROCESS

As mentioned earlier, the main drive for my creative practice is centered on creating the games that I wanted to see as a young Black girl. Drawing on Constanza-chock’s (2020) framework of design justice, I center the creation of Affirmations 2.0 on the idea that the people most impacted should lead the call for justice.

In the production and development for Affirmations 2.0, I combine different methodologies and game design techniques, including critical making and play to reflect on and deconstruct my Black experiences. Critical making in my practice is defined as engaging with technologies and mediums that are then combined with critical thinking that often extends social reflection. Furthermore, I center pleasure activism and joy to structure the critical making process of producing and developing Affirmations 2.0.

Production and development practices for game development often prioritize technological advancement and mechanical expertise over the concern and health of production workers. In Affirmations 2.0, I approach the pre-production phase of the development process as meditative practices that center the health and healing of myself. I did this by allowing a period of rest and reflection. A typical week of planning, storyboarding, and repeating assets was worked on a two-by-two ratio. In this system, I worked for two days on necessary components of the game. Then, I allowed for rest and reprieve by not working on the game for two days. I allow this process to be flexible. Some weeks I utilized more rest time, or I would distance myself from my project by re-reading the works of Toni Morrison and Alice walkers. These periods of reflection and healing through engaging with Black scholars and my care network allowed my
thesis production work to become more clearly entangled with my broader creative practice. By utilizing and making explicit an approach that centers the healing and wellbeing of the game developer and designer in the game development process, players and readers will be able to critically interrogate the standard practice of game development that adversely centers the completion of the game over the wellbeing of the creators.

The core mechanics of the game are the character identity customization options, the player dialogue options, and a non-lethal combat function. Players can customize the positive and negative versions of their avatar identities as well as choose which version of the avatar the story will focus on. This emphasis on the character creator and dialog perspectives troubles traditional narrative structures and character avatars in games. Furthermore, players are offered opportunities to rehabilitate the perceived enemy through in game actions and dialogue cues. This lack of option to annihilate the enemy offers a critique of the traditional and conventional combat options in games and gives the player a space in which they reconcile with the perceived enemy. At the same time, this mechanic diverges from neoliberal approaches of manufactured empathy that orient towards an external other.

The flow of the game is structured linearly for the first playthrough. Then, it opens so any level can be accessed in any order via the hub world. The hub world is the connecting point between all levels and features the journaling prompts. This world is designed to replicate a childhood dreamscape realm with floating cardboard castles and stuffed animals. Scenes from my childhood were also prominent points of reference. The color palette for the levels and hub world replicates the passing of day to night, with level one being early morning and the night sequence being the player's entrance into the hub world. Once entered, journal prompts open and
journaling is available in the hub world. There are three main levels in the game. The game’s run time is structured to be 10 minutes, with the level narratives reflecting my personal experiences that revisits these sites of trauma and leans on positioning them as “healing justice space” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 99). Piepzna-Samarasinha’s work on healing justice spaces introduced me to the language for the community care and work that was already prevalent in my Black community. These healing spaces were digital and physical places I have been cultivating with friends through the years to combat unsafe environments.

The narrative for the first level is modeled after the three elementary schools I went to as a child. The main objective available is to turn in a tardy slip and pick up missed homework. However, players will be prompted to run away from the negative thought enemies, which will primarily be microaggressions in level one. The player can try to interact with other students and teachers around to avoid the enemies, but the enemies will always find a way to get to the player. After the main objective is met, players will be sent back to the hub world where a journaling prompt will appear, and a reflection period will be advised.

The narrative for the second level is set within a suburban neighborhood that includes a convenience store, laundry mat, and rental furniture store amongst the living dwellings. The main objective for level two is to buy candy for a barbeque happening later that day as well as to give a classmate homework answer. Like level one, the player will have to complete the task while avoiding negative thought enemies. However, the enemies in level two will include an additional non-playable character that helps the player avoid the enemies by shouting affirmations. The goal is to nonviolently deal with negative thoughts. The negative thoughts in this level will focus on institutional and environmental factors of mental health.
The narrative for level three is set at a family barbeque, where the player feels out of place due to lack of interest. The objective for the player is to check in with their mom and dad. After walking around the barbeque, the player will encounter negative thoughts but will have more available options to use the affirmative non-playable characters and connect with the community members present. The focus here is on community impact, care, and healing. The focus of this level is to learn how to live with these negative thoughts and how to lean on care networks and peers.

The dialogue system is intrinsic to the core of Affirmations 2.0. Each of the dialogues and narrative concepts are drawn from personal experiences and traumas, as these encounters became the grounds for critical making during the production and development process for Affirmations 2.0. For example, the limitation of this development process is the environment and politics of space afforded in game development space. According to a 2021 survey by the International Game Developers Association, Black people make up only 4% of game developers, and only 30% of all developers identify as women. It’s unclear how much of that intersection includes Black women developers. Creating the script necessitates reliving and evaluating monumental periods and impactful experiences that shape my understanding of identity around race and gender. The act of production and the experiences of the player interacting with each narrative dialogue element emphasize the practices of community connection across digital boundaries at the intersects of Blackness and the far-reaching effects of white supremacy. Hegemonic whiteness as the default structural tenants actively devalues and scripts what interpretations and dialogues are valued or prioritized. In this way, structural whiteness devalues games that do not
reinforce and center whiteness while also placing a hierarchy on the types of games and experience that are deemed valuable.

A vital part throughout the coding and core mechanic building of Affirmations 2.0 is healing and leaning on my care networks. I utilize Constanza-chock’s (2020) design justice framework as a tool to reframe the functions of community in my build process. Utilizing this development process necessitates community care and healing being a central value in the production space, and it prioritizes people over product. As Ruha Benjamin (2019) argues, story and narrative inform how we design everything from technology to social systems. They shape the norms into which we perform our identities, even perhaps the mutations of our DNA and perceptions of reality (p. 7). Stories provide us with ways to playfully investigate structural oppression. Through this framework, I design the mechanics as well as bounds and constitutions for play in the game mechanic codes.

Furthermore, I situate Affirmations 2.0 as a form of queergaming. As outlined by Edmond Chang (2017), queergaming is a “refusal of the idea that digital games and gaming communities are the sole province of adolescent straight white cisgender males’ bodies and desires are the articulation of investment and alternative modes of plays and ways of being” (p. 54). In this way, I disrupt the normative understanding of gaming development by centering game development as a type of critical making that plays with the possibilities of non-competitive and nonviolent mechanics. Given, critical practice in game design happens when designers reflectively engage “both in terms of where and how they create and the larger socio-economic and cultural contexts that surround them” (Marcotte & Khaled, 2017, p. 206). The creation, production, and development of Affirmations 2.0 acts not only as a critical making technology but also as an act
of care. To do so, I draw on Sasha Constanza-chock’s theory of design justice that interrogates how the design of objects and systems influence the distribution of risk, harm and benefits among various people. I actively critique every step of the game design and production process to center how my experience as a Black woman intersects with game design choices as well as spatial and environmental storytelling through the medium of digital games. As Paulo Freire (1970) states, “if the structure or system does not permit dialogue the structure must be changed” (p. 23). Under this context, Affirmations 2.0 centers dialogue function as the primary vehicle for level and narrative progression.

The creative works that have influenced my project include Tamagotchi (1996), Child of Light (2014) and Depression Quest (2013). Tamagotchi works as the core inspiration for the critical making process of this project. The core function of Tamagotchi is the replay-ability and easy mechanics that allows for a diverse range of players to interact with the game in multiple ways. Because Affirmations 2.0 is set to be 15-20 minutes, it is important to emphasize the replay ability of the game. As such, Affirmations 2.0 utilizes a reflective journaling prompt that players may use again and again throughout each playthrough of the game. Child of Light informs my aesthetic interpretation of the game world. As this is a game with a target audience of Black women and children, the aesthetic of the game world factors into the overall experience and longevity of the game. Child of Light is a popular game among children. However, the player experience is complicated as the characters are coded as white cis-gender women in a narrative that centers strong women. Affirmations 2.0 advances the work of Child of Light by including the character customization options with an explicit focus on diverse representation of Black women and children. Finally, Depression Quest acts as a starting point for deconstructing neoliberal
ideas and rampant game design. I diverge from the idea that health is individualized under neoliberal approaches to self-care and emphasize the necessity for more community-based health approaches. I utilize a journal prompt system within the core mechanics of Affirmations 2.0 to play with the ludology frameworks of the magic circle. The magic circle is a game state that seemingly suspends the constructs of sexism and racism, which essentially suspends reality. For Black people in gaming settings, the construct of the magic circle is rendered null. The reality of those realities still exists inside and outside of that circle. Instead of the magic circle suspending systems of oppression, in gaming settings racism and sexism are repackaged and enacted by the dominant discourses under calls for technological advancements.

Spatiality is also one of the defining qualities of digital environments. Digital environments offer the possibility of navigating different spaces that the medium of games presents, which alters how we perceive and experience the game. Digital games usually incorporate spatial design often known as environmental storytelling. In this way, Affirmations 2.0 utilizes environmental storytelling, and there are spaces that encourage the player to construct a story of their own by exploring the spatial design of the game environment. Specifically, the three levels in game offer players to digitally navigate the possibilities of interactions within those spaces. As a game designer, I hope for Affirmations 2.0 to disrupt the idea that players are just a visitor making sense of a space and to transition the players into active participants and collaborators within the digital realm of the game. The emotional landscape of the game centers Black women’s struggles over feelings of inadequacy within the confines of structural whiteness to bend the conflict in game from being perceived as individual to a more community and systemic approach.
Signs of the different levels in *Affirmations 2.0* encourages narrative gameplay through designing culturally relevant spaces for the intended audience and provides the tools for players to enact and create important discussion places while collaborating with the game designer. In this way, *Affirmations 2.0* uses a type of indexical storytelling, which makes the game more of a story building tool. This emphasizes and creates a tangible relationship in the digital realm by providing each individual player the place to add the culturally relevant experience that they bring with them when taking on the role as a player and to integrate that into the main story depending on which parts they're exposed to. It is important to note that when using indexical storytelling players will often have different interpretations, which provides a multiplicity of ways to interact within the history of the space. This also challenges the idea that there's only one way to play and interact with the game, which is also a structural tenant often found in game design. I hope to diverge from this ideal of categorizing and legitimizing one form of play over another by including the players’ experience to be of multiples and not denoting the correct ending as the game designer. *Affirmations 2.0* hopes to utilize environmental and indexical storytelling to position players to co-construct narratives as a collaborative process with the designer.

In sum, *Affirmation 2.0* was designed to contest the ideas that Black experiences are illegitimate, precisely because they are illegible to whiteness. This work is adding to the larger conversation around how structural whiteness in gaming acts as a central tenet of white supremacy. This game actively works to challenge the centering of white cis-abled male bodies by unpacking the need to make that which is illegible under structural whiteness palatable for the white audience and the sake of being legitimized within academia. My ideal audience for this
project is Black children and women. As such, the next steps for this project include posting it on Itch.io. Itch.io is a website that hosts indie games and allows for community comments to be made under the game’s community board. I will utilize the community board systems to connect and interact with collaborators in *Affirmations 2.0*. I will address them as collaborators, as this project is also meant to be a participatory art with the players. I plan to exhibit *Affirmations 2.0* in the communities I grew up in and collaborate with community centers to host journaling and play sessions surrounding exploration in digital games and community healing. Finally, I plan to showcase this thesis at the Video Game Art Gallery (VGA), which showcases video game and new media art, and the Allied Media Conference (AMC), which centers media production in BIPOC communities.
CHAPTER 4

GAMEPLAY EXPERIENCE

The Gameplay experience is intrinsic to the themes and frameworks discussed in the previous section. The gameplay experience of Affirmations 2.0 will differ from player to player as each play through and player is situated within that player's context in and out of the game space. Affirmations 2.0 is hosted on itchio website, and upon clicking the game title the player will be navigated to the itchio page seen in figure 19. The itchio page for Affirmations 2.0 includes the game motivations, controls mission objectives, a brief overview of the project as well as information about updates and community forum. Upon downloading and opening the Affirmations game files, players will be greeted by the main menu that hosts three options to interact with. This can be seen in figure 18.

When interacting with the start button, the game will begin, and the player will be brought into the main hub world of Affirmations 2.0. The next button, below the start button, is the how to play button. When clicked the player will see a screen that lists all the controls and mission motives for Affirmations 2.0. The third button on the main menu is the credits button which is below the how-to-play button. When clicked the player will be navigated to an end screen that showcases acknowledgements credits and a short message for players who have completed Affirmations 2.0. The final button on the main menu is the quit button. Once clicked this button will close the game and accompanying program. Beginning the game play experience, the player may either click the how-to-play button to gain a better understanding of goals and motivations for the game or refer to the itchio page which also lists game controls and motivations.
Upon clicking the start button players will be dropped into the hub world of *Affirmations 2.0*. The player will then be greeted with a mystical night themed landscape that has whimsical particles of gold and blue floating through the space with oversized castles, crystals and stuffed animals placed in the area. This can be seen in *figure 10*. As the player is looking over the landscape, they will be prompted with a text prompt and music cue that will briefly set the scene for the hub world. Also included in the text prompt is the option to view or skip the introduction cutscene. Guiding the player's progression through the level is the cardboard castle that is set in the center of the player's focal point naturally guiding the player through a variety of scenes towards the center of the map. As the player navigates towards the cardboard castle, they will encounter different scenes accompanied with text prompts. This can be seen in *figure 11*.

Once the player navigates to the castle, they will have access to two areas. The area on the west side of the cardboard castle on the map hosts the mystical stones allowing the player to traverse through all three of the levels. This can be seen in *figure 12*. The area on the east side of the cardboard castle on the game map hosts the journal prompts as well as a robot non-playable character (NPC) that the player will interact with in the other game levels. The player then has the option to either head directly to level one with a text prompt or speak with the robot NPC. On interacting with the robot NPC, players will be asked a series of questions ranging from game controls to accessing game prompts. It is advised by the NPC robot that the player completes the level then returns to the hub world to interact with journal prompts. The player then will go back to the west side of the map and interact with the first mystical stone to be transported to level one, the school level. The player will view a short loading screen while the level is loaded. Once loading is complete the player will then be placed on the edge of the map for level one.
Level one’s structure is based around an elementary school. This can be seen in figure 13. Once landing the player will receive the mission object with a text prompt and audio cue. After navigating away from the start area, a timer will begin counting down noting the time the player has to complete the mission objects. Directly in the foreground of the school structure which naturally prompts the player to head towards the center of the map. As the player navigates to the center of the map, they will encounter small conversations and scenes with NPC. The player may choose to interact with the NPC conversation or continue heading towards the main school building. Once arriving at the school building the player will be prompted to engage in conversation with a NPC designed to be the principal for the elementary school. The principal NPC prompts the player to turn in a tardy slip to the front office and pick up missing homework from her teacher. As the player receives additional instructions and prompts from the principal NPC, the player will face the first negative thought enemy while also facing the micro-aggression from the principal NPC. To avoid the negative thought enemy the player runs away from both the principal NPC as well as the negative thought enemy into the school building.

Once entering the school building the negative thought enemy will disengage. With one minute left the player then navigates further into the school to the reception desk turning in the tardy slip upon completing the first task. The player will receive an audio cue signaling completion as well as an additional conversation prompt from the receptionist. With 30 seconds left the player can then choose to navigate to the classroom and complete the second mission prompt of picking up missed homework from a teacher NPC while exploring the elementary school and NPC class mates or navigate back outside to explore the playground and other areas of the map and potentially encountering more negative thought enemies. After 30 second the
player will receive a pause menu that prompts them to return to the hub world. Upon returning to the hub world the player will start at the southern end of the map as seen in the map sketch in figure 2. The player will then navigate to the eastern side of the map just past the castle.

Once arriving the player will see the robot NPC and will be prompted to interact with journal prompts for level 1. The first text the player encounters for the journal prompt are instructions for how to set up a self-reflective space and gather materials necessary to reflect the journal based on the experience of playing through level one. After clicking next the player will encounter three journal prompts and be advised to pause the game and take five minutes to answer the three prompts as a free write. After completing the journal prompts the player will then move towards the western side of the map that hosts the mystical stones. Once arriving at the mystical stone, the player will receive text prompts that guide the player toward either level one, two or three.

Upon interacting with the mystical stone for level two. The player will view a short loading screen while the level is loaded. Once the level finishes loading the player will be transported to level two which is structured after a suburban town. This can be seen in figure 15. Upon arriving in the level, the player will receive an audio cue and text prompt detailing the mission objects. The objective is to deliver homework to a peer NPC and pick up candy for a barbeque happening later in the day. Once the player receives the prompt a timer is placed on the player's screen interface and will begin counting down noting the time the player has to complete the mission objects. Level two is the largest of the mission levels and encourages the player to explore as they complete mission prompts. As the player navigates towards the northern half of the map, they will encounter the convenience store where the player can then attempt to buy
candy. Before the player can complete the purchase, they are chased by a negative thought enemy in 15 to 30 second intervals. Entering the convenience store is the only way to get away from the negative thought enemies. Upon entering the store the player will be able to walk amongst peers and adult NPC in the store to find the correct candy to purchase. This can be seen in *figure 14*. Upon finding the correct candy a text prompt will appear on the players interface stating that the candy is outside of the player’s budget. As the player is not able to purchase the candy the objective is then complete.

With one minute left the player can then choose to navigate to the town center in the western half of the map to complete objective two or explore the town NPC and text prompts all while avoiding negative thought enemies. With 15 seconds left the player will then encounter a parallel version of herself that contrasts the negative thought enemies by blocking and working in tandem with the player to confront all 4 of the negative thought NPC. After time runs out the player will receive a pause menu that prompts them to return to the hub world. Upon returning to the hub world the player will start at the southern end of the map navigating again to the journal prompts and interacting with the reflective area. After completing the journal prompts the player will then move towards the western side of the map that hosts the mystical stones and interact with the third mystical stone leading to level three. The player will view a short loading screen while the level is loaded. Once the level is done loading the player will be placed on the southern side of the third level.

Level three is structured as a family barbeque as seen in *figure 16*. As the player moves away from the start area, she will receive mission objects with sound cues. The two mission objects are to tell her father about not having enough money for candy and check in with her
mother. As the player navigates the barbeque party there will be conversation prompts for peers and adults. The interval for enemy encounters will increase and every 15 seconds the player will encounter and run away from negative thought enemies. As the player navigates toward her father at the grilling area, she completes the object with a sound cue and will be prompted to engage in a conversation that is dismissive of her feelings. After completing the first object the player will have 30 seconds to further explore the level or complete the objectives. Upon choosing to explore the level the player will be able to engage with a peer NPC, modeled after my sister sapphire, as a supportive friend and member of the player's care network that validates the player’s feeling and offers a space to unpack the events of the level thus far. As the player engages with text prompts with the peer NPC, positive NPC will intercept the negative thought NPC to offer the player a further chance to interrogate feelings regarding both the negative thought enemies and the contributing factors for the negative thoughts manifesting.

After time runs out the player will receive a pause menu that prompts them to return to the hub world. Upon returning to the hub world the player will start at the southern end of the map navigating again to the journal prompts and interacting with the reflective area. In the journal prompt area, the player will then interact with the journal prompts for the third level, once again setting aside five minutes to journal and free write around the proposed questions. Once the player is done with the journal prompt, they are encouraged to further explore any of the previously visited levels, the hub world, or exit to the main menu to view the end credits. The game play experience for Affirmations 2.0 is not set up to be strictly linear. As such the player can play levels in any order and utilize the game as a tool for facilitating a conversation with the positive and negative version of themselves within the players contexts.
CHAPTER 5

DOCUMENTATION

Figure 1. The enemy encounter in *Affirmations 1.0*.
Figure 2. First sketch of the hub world setting and level design planning.
Figure 3. Sketch of player’s encounter with the negative avatar during production phase.
Figure 4. Storyboard of the introductory cutscene in *Affirmations 2.0.*
Figure 5. Storyboard of the introductory cutscene in *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.
Figure 6. Storyboard of the introductory cutscene in *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.
Figure 7. Storyboard of the introductory cutscene in *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.
Figure 8. Storyboard of the introductory cutscene in *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.
Figure 9. Dialogue programming for non-playable characters in level one.

Figure 10. Screen capture of the Hub world level in *Affirmations 2.0*. 
Figure 11. Screen capture of the Hub world level in *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.

Figure 12. Screen capture of the Hub world level in *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.
Figure 13. Screen capture of the school setting in level 1 of *Affirmations 2.0*.

Figure 14. Screen capture of the neighborhood setting in level 2 of *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.
Figure 15. Screen capture of the neighborhood setting in level 2 of *Affirmations 2.0*, continued.

Figure 16. Screen capture of the backyard setting in level 3 of *Affirmations 2.0*. 
Figure 17. Screen capture of the backyard setting in level 3 of Affirmations 2.0.
Figure 18. Title screen for *Affirmations 2.0.*
Figure 19. Screen capture itch.io page for *Affirmations 2.0.*
CHAPTER 6
REFLECTION

Affirmations 2.0 is a short game about healing, care, and the exploration of community. I created Affirmations 2.0 to visualize and reflect on my personal coping mechanism by facilitating an encounter with both the negatively and positively attributed versions of myself as a Black woman. Affirmations 2.0 complicates the player's knowledge of the self and works as a flexible artifact that facilitates critical making, reflection, and self-care for Black women and children. I am the person in my family to attend college. These facts are important because they contextualize my work as I navigate both academia and the politics of space within a system that was, quite frankly, not built for me. My mother, as my primary caregiver, instilled in me the importance of community. So, as I progress across these different systems and navigate my placement within them, I utilize art and game design as a communicative medium to find community. In my work, I strive to educate and advocate for marginalized voices that are not often represented in mass media. I do this through utilizing digital games as a communicative medium. Digital games function as epistemological artifacts that allow for me as the game designer and the player to have an open dialogue about the existing relations of power at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality. Creating Affirmations was a love letter to myself, my Black community, and all the women who have nurtured and guided my growth. The insistence on new technologies and technological advancement negates the politics in grained and coded into technological artifacts. New technologies, such as digital games, instill their own political, moral, and social beliefs through the process of manufacturing of those technologies, thus highlighting how no technology is neutral. Throughout my time as a graduate student, I have
worked to experiment with different media beyond digital games to better understand the nuances of digital games and how digital environments impact everyday life. *Affirmations 2.0* as a project examines the dynamics of structural whiteness and its effect on Black bodies by situating the exploration of healing through community within the larger cultural, political, and historical context.

Across all my works, be it research, game design, creative work, or teaching, I frame them all as a type of critical making. My works focus on self-reflection as a type of critical making, and my creative practice centers around three main categories: Black culture and communication, cybercultures and fandoms, and narrative and representation. Specifically, I explore the politics of space and gender in different environments by creating art that experiments with the limitations and affordance of digital games. I center my personal experiences navigating the many spaces I inhabit and seek to capture the nuances of my intersecting identities through creating complex narratives and exploring the politics of space and gender in different environments. I have been an active collaborator in various research collectives, including the Studio for Mediating Play, the Narrative Systems Research Lab, and Fashioning Circuits. Participating in these spaces was critical to my understanding of how aesthetics, emerging technology, and traditional art practice inform my creative practice. As a graduate student in ATEC, I learned how to structure my creative practice around activism, community, and care through the medium of digital games. Through the continued expansions and adaption of my creative practice as an artist, educator, and game developer, I can give thanks to my ancestor, named and unnamed but never forgotten, for seeing hope for our children, and I can center Black children and Black culture. Through the creation of *Affirmations 2.0*, I was able
to digitally revisit past traumas and experiences of girlhood as a Black child in order to investigate the necessity for community and care for and as a Black child. Through reexamining the development process for game design and rethinking how to center people over product, I also learn, again, how to lean into care networks and pleasure activism. Drawing from these experiences, *Affirmations 2.0* is a love letter to my community and that young Black girl who was told she is not smart enough, not important enough, not valued, and is not welcome in spaces not built for her.
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Diamond E. Beverly was born in Atlanta, Georgia. After completing her schoolwork at North Mesquite High school in Mesquite, Texas in 2015, Diamond entered Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas. She received a Bachelor of Science with a major in digital media technology and a minor in film production in May 2019. In August 2019, she entered the Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication graduate program at The University of Texas at Dallas.
CURRICULUM VITAE

DIAMOND E. BEVERLY
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I am an artist, game designer, and researcher based in Dallas, Texas. Through individual and collaborative projects, I discovered the power of environmental storytelling and the transformative properties of a well-designed game. My work engages with cultural studies, multimodal representations, and narrative storytelling through the medium of digital games.

EDUCATION

MFA
University of Texas at Dallas, Creative Practice
May 2022
Committee: Dr. Hong-An Wu (Chair), Dr. Josef Nguyen, Dr. Kim Knight

BS
Tarleton State University, Digital Media Technology
May 2019
Thesis: “Paper: Revisiting identity and community through game design”
Advisor: Knut Hybinette
Minored in Film Production
Graduated Summa Cum Laude

HS
North Mesquite High School, Electrical Engineering
May 2015
Graduated Summa Cum Laude
Completed +80 community services hours

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The Studio for Mediating Play, Richardson, Texas 2021 to Present
Creative Director of SMP Mural
- Direct and complete multiphase creative mural project.
- Organize and lead workshops among collaborators for creative input.
- Deliver robust, focused design concepts promoting the launch of a new collaborative space.

The Studio for Mediating Play, Richardson, Texas 2019 to Present
Researcher
  • Participate in workshops and talks with game and trans media scholars while critiquing play practices at the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

**Narrative Systems Lab**, Richardson, Texas 2019 to Present
Researcher
  • Analyze the significance of narrative design in digital games while comparing digital games’ rendering of narratives.

**ArtSci Lab**, Richardson, Texas 2019
Researcher
  • Research the practice of creative resilience via the interplay between mental health and video games across the arts, sciences, and humanities.

**Tarleton State University**, Stephenville, Texas 2017 to 2019
Researcher with Dr. Jason Latouché
  • Research traditionally underrepresented groups in video games.

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**University of Texas at Dallas**, Richardson, Texas May 2021 to Present
Teaching Associate, Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communications
  • Instructor of record for Design 1
  • Responsible for a variety of pedagogical tasks, such as grading papers, meeting with students, structuring the syllabus and online learning platform.

**University of Texas at Dallas**, Richardson, Texas May 2019 to Present
Teaching Assistant, Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communications
  • First Year Seminar, Motion Graphics, Design 1, and Project Management 1
  • Improve student participation in the classroom through integration of creative role-playing exercises and peer review sessions.
  • Collaborate with a team of faculty at weekly meetings and actively contribute new pedagogical ideas for teaching.
  • Structure the class lectures, online learning portal, and accommodations.
  • Grade students’ work and provide feedback on assignments and projects.

**PUBLICATIONS**

**Book Chapters**

Beverly, Diamond. “Hashtag.” Tarleton Anthology (volume 23), Tarleton state University, 2018

**Journal Articles**


**Podcast**


**Media**


**Exhibition**

Beverly, Diamond. *All together now*. Virtual art installation at the SP/N Gallery, The University of Texas at Dallas, 2020.

Beverly, Diamond. *What was lost?* Participatory art installation for the Creativity as Social Practice Exhibition at The Edith O'Donnell Arts & Technology Building Lobby, The University of Texas at Dallas, 2019.


**PRESENTATIONS, WORKSHOPS, AND INVITED LECTURES**


**Town Hall Presentation and Discussion**, “Pretty for a Black girl: How the intersection of microaggression and misogynoir Black women face impacts development.” *Southwestern Black student leadership conference*, 2018.

**Diversity Workshop**,


**HONORS AND AWARDS**

President’s Teaching Award, Nominee. The University of Texas at Dallas’ Center for Teaching and Learning, 2021.


Festival Official Selection for short film Key. The Ocular Obstinance Moving Media Festival, Brazos Drive-In Theater, 2018.

Festival Official Selection for short film Air. The Ocular Obstinance Moving Media Festival, Brazos Drive-In Theater, 2018.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

ATEC Teaching Assistant and Teaching Associate Training Seminar, The University of Texas at Dallas, 2019-2022.

Green Dot, Tarleton State University, 2019.

Ally Training, Tarleton State University, 2019.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Graduate Peer Mentorship Program, University of Texas at Dallas Graduate Mentor

- Peer mentor for incoming graduate student cohort at the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communications.

Gay-Straight Alliance, Tarleton State University President (2019), Vice-President (2018), and Secretary (2017)

- Organizer for Texas A&M Systems 2nd chance prom that worked with a $5000 budget by securing funding and donations.

Leaders4Diversity Conference, 2017 to 2019

Executive Planning Member

- Organizer for a statewide diversity conference that worked with a $21,000 budget.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
**Black Women’s Studies Association** 2021 to Present
General Member

**The smART Project**, Dallas, Texas 2021 to Present
Teaching Artist

**DSA North Texas**, Collin County, Texas 2019
General Member and Racial Justice Working Group Member

**BlackGirlGamers**, Dallas, Texas 2018
General Member

**LANGUAGES**

- **English** (native).
- **Spanish** (novice).

**COMPUTER SKILLS**

- **Programming**: Python, Java, C++, Kotlin, HTML, XML
- **Applications**: Maya Autodesk, Unreal Engine, Adobe suite, Microsoft Suite, Audacity
- **Platforms**: Game Mechanics, Level Design, Game Development, Gameplay

**REFERENCES**

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