

RACE IN EDUCATION, ANTI-RACIST ACTIVISM AND  
THE ROLE OF WHITE COLLEAGUES:  
LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS

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## **ABSTRACT**

MICHELLE JAY: RACE IN EDUCATION, ANTI-RACIST ACTIVISM, AND THE  
ROLE OF WHITE COLLEAGUES: LISTENING TO THE VOICES  
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN EDUCATORS  
(Under the direction of Dr. George Noblit)

This dissertation interprets the stories of five African American educators and the ways in which they *view* and *experience* manifestations of race and racism in schools. Guided by a critical race methodology that frames race as an analytical lens for research conducted on the work and lives of people of color, the researcher conducted in-depth, phenomenological interviews as well as a focus group with the educators to investigate their day-to-day experiences as they attempt to navigate the processes and discourses in schools through which racism often emerges. The study also examines the extent to which the educators acknowledge, and are critical of, structures that impede the academic progress of students of color. Finally, it explores their perspectives on the role of white colleagues in anti-racist work in schools.

Whereas other traditional research epistemologies, paradigms, and theories have explained the experiences of people of color in ways that have silenced and distorted their experiences with racism, these educators' racialized experiences are viewed as sources of resistance and strength. Consequently, in the tradition of Critical Race Theory, those experiences are presented as counter-narratives: narratives that speak against the dominant stories told about the impact and effects of racism. Those experiences also serve as the basis for a critical analysis of the daily

functioning of schools that centers the role played by race. While the counter-narratives reveal the diversity of microaggressions that influence the work and lives of these educators, the critical analysis exposes the ways in which racism and racist views are embedded into school structures, processes, and discourses. Working symbiotically, those structures, processes, and discourses serve as the instruments through which boundaries and barriers are created and maintained. Consequently, race-based inequities and exclusionary practices become institutionalize.

Concluding with a call to action, the study suggests that if we desire to address the issues illuminated by the educators' experiences in concrete ways that result in tangible, material benefits for both educators and students of color, it will be the responsibility of those most directly positioned to bring about such change - school administrators and schools and colleges of education.

To Tyler Wooden.  
In acknowledging how I failed you as a teacher,  
you continue to be a source of inspiration –  
a constant reminder to look harder and do more.

To Michaela Baskerville and Clifton Baskerville, III.  
May your own educational experiences bear witness to  
the changes hoped for in this work.

And

To Jackson Bryan.  
In as many ways as there are days.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

I don't think there is an interaction that I have during the school day where race is not a key factor...I think there is always an underlying current of race, and it's never going to go away because I can't change the color of my skin...I do not focus on that, because there are so many other key factors going on that if I focused on race, I'd probably be a crazy person. But it would be unrealistic to think that it does not, as a young African American female and being a principal, it plays out in everything.

~Natalie

This dissertation is a story about race. Or perhaps, more accurately, it serves as a medium for telling stories about race. It focuses on the stories shared by five African American educators about the ways in which their professional lives are shaped and impacted by race and racism. The dissertation is about their stories; but in the act of narrating those stories for you, they become my stories as well. Indeed, in illuminating the interconnectedness embedded in the experience of telling others' stories, Nash (2004) underscores the importance of acknowledging that we, as story creators, are incapable of standing fully outside our own writing. He suggests, "As an author, you are always an insider; not omnisciently removed from what you write, but caught up personally in every work, sentence, and paragraph...in every comma and period" (p.36). Consequently, the shared ownership of these stories then results from my attempts to re-articulate their words in such a manner as to convey a distinct view of the world that has, until recently, been absent from conversations in/about education, academic or otherwise.

Consequently, this dissertation is also a personal story. That story is a multifaceted tale about engaging in the world of research, about the process of creating the document you now hold in your hands, and more importantly, about the experience of crafting the narratives contained within these pages - narratives which ultimately bestow upon this study any worth it may possess. This simultaneous story-crafting and story-telling may appear rather complex at first; and, to some extent, that is indeed the case. But a closer look reveals that in the complexity lies the rich specificity of lives lived in such provocative detail and blatant honesty that it simply could not have been...cannot be any other way.

This dissertation is about the stories of five African American educators and their experiences working in schools. Specifically, it explores their interactions with, and challenges to, the racist structures, processes and discourses that shape the day-to-day existence of both educators and students of color in American schools (Solórzano, 1997)<sup>1</sup>. The stories offered here are important for several reasons, on several levels. As stories that shed light on an experience that many in the field of education have not yet heard, nor have been asked to listen to, they are valuable in their own right. Yet, they are more than just stories. They are, in essence, what critical race scholars refer to as “counter-narratives” – narratives or stories that challenge the dominant accounts and preconceived notions of how race and racism impact the lives of people of color. As such, they expose us to the tangible, material realities of racism and the ways in which discrimination, subordination, and isolation can shape the experiences of educators of colors. It is hoped that the stories

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<sup>1</sup> For this study, the terms “educators/teachers of color,” “students of color,” and “people of color” are defined as those persons of African American, Latino, Asian-American and Native American ancestry.

shared here might offer us a context for better understanding the personal and professional lives of people of color.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Racism and racist beliefs have inevitably shaped our nation - our ideas and philosophies, our sense of self, our ways of knowing the world<sup>2</sup>. Racist ideologies are fundamentally woven into the social, political, economic, and moral fibers from which the United States is constituted. In maintaining and transmitting those ideologies, perhaps no other arena has had a more profound and lasting impact than our educational system. Racism, and other forms of subordination, pervades American schools via school structures, processes, and discourses that appear “neutral,” “normal” and “objective,” but which, in reality, serve to marginalize students of color. Here, school structures refer to those structures and formations which produce exclusion and inequity by maintaining spaces where specific knowledge is imparted to certain students and denied to others. School processes encompass those sorting practices, often standardized, that guide certain students into certain school structures where they are granted access to specialized knowledge, consequently resulting in racial, gender, and class-based inequities (Yosso, 2002). Finally, school discourses refer to those unspoken and spoken narratives that serve to justify the unequal distribution of certain knowledges and educational opportunities to some students and not others. These discourses

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this study, racism is defined as, “a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power, grounded in a belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominate and oppress African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color.” This definition is a composite of those provided by Lorde (1992) and Marable (1992).

rationalize the discriminatory processes and procedures that end up marginalizing students of color (Armstrong, 1999).

Working symbiotically, these structures, processes, and discourses inform and comprise classroom interactions at all levels of education and serve as the instruments through which boundaries and barriers are produced and maintained, and power relationships are protected in schools (Armstrong, 1999; Yosso, 2002). Consequently, when we hear reports that lack of access and inequality continue to plague the educational experiences of students of color in America's classrooms, we are little surprised; and the longevity and persistence of those disturbing circumstances indicate that we may also be indifferent.

To be sure, Solórzano and Ornelas (2002) argue that students of color in general, and Latina/o students in particular, attend schools where educational conditions are among the most inadequate in the United States across nearly every level of education<sup>3</sup>. In these settings, minority students are subjected to a myriad of race-based educational inequalities such as high dropout rates, high suspension rates, low Advanced Placement (AP) course enrollments, tracking into remedial instruction, segregation inside and outside of schools, poorly-financed schools, differential access to information regarding college admissions, and a general lack of enriched curriculum in K-12 settings (Lynn & Adams, 2002; Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004).

In addition to these structural, procedural, and discourse-based inequities, students must also contend with individual-level racism in the form of name-calling,

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<sup>3</sup> For this study, Latina/o is used as a pan-ethnic term that is inclusive of all groups of Latin-American ancestry in the Western Hemisphere who are living in the United States.

harassment, interpersonal conflict, stereotyping and in taken-for-granted understandings and practices (Henze, Katz, & Norte, 2000; Ryan, 2003). Unfortunately, it appears that the adults in schools - teachers and administrators who we assume would be more aware and who we believe should generally “know better” - are the largest offenders. All too often they employ race and/or ethnicity as their starting point for “understanding” and “assessing” their students, as well as for analyzing students’ behavior. Such habits often result in what Yosso describes as “racist curriculum structures, practices, and discourses” which prevent students from obtaining the high quality education to which all are entitled (2002, p.93). And because a clear definition of what exactly constitutes racism is often lacking in schools, nailing down racial discrimination and racist practices often leads to confusion, and consequently, inaction (Henze, Katz, & Norte, 2000).

Subjected to the same school culture as that of their students of color, educators of color must also deal with issues of race and racism in their daily work. They struggle daily to negotiate their professional and personal identities within a web of socially-constructed notions of what it means to be a racial minority in the United States (Obidah, 2000). Thus, they are unlikely to escape the material consequences of the prejudice and discrimination embedded in their schools’ culture. More often than not, educators of color find that, despite their relative position of power within the school walls, they, too, are victims of marginalization and subordination.

While much research has been conducted on schooling in the United States, those studies that forefront the perspectives of the students, teachers, administrators, and others whose individual and collective experiences actually



constitute schooling remain in the minority (Seidman, 1998). Yet, even within the research that does focus on the experiences of those who *school*, and who are *schooled*, even less attention has been paid to the experiences of people of color. Racial and ethnic minorities bring a unique perspective, grounded in a long history of oppression, to the topic of race and racism. Yet, even when they have been the focus of research efforts in certain educational settings, their voices have largely been excluded from educational discourses in those settings. Further, critical race scholars argue that with regards to contemporary research on race, what continues to be noticeably missing from the discussion is a substantive engagement with racism. Expanding that assertion, Solórzano and Yosso argue that, “substantive discussions of racism are missing from critical discourses in education,” and suggest using critical race methodology<sup>4</sup> as a possible catalyst toward beginning those discussions (2002b, p.37).

Accordingly, I offer this dissertation as a step towards addressing not only these significant gaps in the literature, but also to intentionally inject race into those “critical” discourses in education.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to illuminate, and thus better understand, the experiences of educators of color vis-à-vis the ways in which they both view and experience manifestations of race and racism in schools. More specifically, it seeks to give voice to the perspectives of five educators regarding their experiences with, and also challenges to, the racist structures, processes, and discourses that shape

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of critical race methodology, see “Research Framework” in this chapter and in the third chapter on Methodology.

their day-to-day existence of people of color in schools. Further, in acknowledging those of their white colleagues who desire to struggle with them, it seeks the educators' perspective on the role of white colleagues in anti-racist work in schools<sup>5</sup>.

Using a narrative, in-depth, phenomenological interview method (which combines a life history approach with an examination of the day-to-day experience of a phenomenon under study), this study sought to understand:

- 1) How do educators of color view, and experience, manifestations of race and racism in schools?
- 2) If they do encounter racist structures, processes, and/or discourses in their daily work, do they attempt to work against them and, if so, in what ways?
- 3) Within the context of addressing issues of race and racism in school, what has been their experience working with white colleagues on anti-racist education efforts?<sup>6</sup>

However, early in the data-gathering process, it became clear to me that most of the educators had little to no experience collaborating with whites on anti-racist efforts geared toward addressing the educational inequities experienced by students of color, nor on addressing the racism and discrimination to which the educators were subjected. Consequently, in adjusting the study's focus to accommodate the

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<sup>5</sup> For this study, "anti-racist" or "anti-racism" refer to conscious and deliberate individual and collective action that challenges the impact and perpetuation of institutional white racial power, privilege and position (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> My motivation for asking this question, addressed in further detail in the next chapter, stems from a belief that those progressive whites who desire to address issues of race and racism, as well as other forms of oppression, in education could significantly benefit from an understanding of the manifestation of race and racism as seen through the lens of their fellow educators of color. Moreover, potential suggestions from educators of color as to how one might attempt to intervene in the processes which bring about unequal educational experiences for students of color could go a long way in providing needed guidance for progressive white colleagues.

experiences that were being shared, I chose to alter the last question to a broader question intended to explore their experiences working with whites more generally, and their perspectives on the necessity of white colleagues in advancing an anti-racist education agenda.

### **Research Framework**

This dissertation embraces, and is guided by, a critical race framework. Critical Race Theory has a rich history reaching back some thirty years to its origins in critical legal studies (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). At that time, several legal scholars of color had become dissatisfied with the field of critical legal studies, arguing that despite its critical lenses, critical legal theory did not adequately address issues of race and racial oppression in debates about the law, the legal system and American society. Seeking a new discourse that not only included race, but also placed it directly in the center of analysis, they conceptualized the current theoretical framework known as Critical Race Theory (CRT). Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw, a founding member of the critical race movement and major contributor to scholarship in the field, and colleagues assert that CRT embraces two major interests:

The first is to understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and in particular, to examine the relationship between the social structure and professed ideals such as the “rule of law” and “equal protection.” The second is a desire not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to change it (1995, p. xiii).

In essence, Critical Race Theory is characterized by its insistence on placing race at the center of analyses regarding how, in the United States, white people, and the dominant institutions they tend to control, assume “normative standards of

whiteness” which result in the ignoring of, and subjugation of, marginalized racial groups (Parker, 1998, p.45). These normative standards of whiteness underpin the tendency of American institutions (schools in particular, law schools specifically) to embrace liberalism, universalism, and neutrality. Subsequently, CRT critiques “traditional claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest of dominant groups in American society” (Solórzano, 1997, p.6). Further, it seeks broadly to describe and theorize about the individual, institutional, and societal causes that maintain racial minorities’ relative subordination in a post-Civil Rights American culture that lauds itself for its embrace of equality as the American norm (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

Over the past 15 years, Critical Race Theory has been taken up by educational scholars and researchers interested in the various forms racism takes in education and how schools assist in the maintenance of a subordinate status for students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 1999, Parker, 1998; Solórzano, 1997, 1998). In explaining the potential uses of CRT in educational contexts, Solórzano (1997) suggests that CRT can be viewed as, “a framework or set of basic principles, methods, and pedagogy that seek to identify, analyze and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of people of color” (p.6). Further, in considering CRT’s ability to critically enhance examinations of racial injustice in schools, Tate (1997) argues its usefulness for examining school discourses that are supported by abstract notions such as “neutrality,” “objectivity,” “meritocracy,” and “color-blindness.” Placing race at the center of such interrogations, Tate argues, reveals those rules, standards,

assumptions and norms that appear “neutral” on the surface, but which actually serve to systematically disadvantage or subordinate racial minorities.

Consequently the late 1990s saw an expansion in the education literature of analyses of schooling that were guided by a critical race theory of education.

Solórzano purports that a critical race theory of education, “challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (1998, p.122). Further, it possesses five major tenets. A critical race theory of education:

- 1) begins with the assertion that race and racism are endemic and permanent in American society and thus place race and its intersection with other forms of subordination at the center of the research endeavor;
- 2) uses race in research to challenge the dominant norms of objectivity, neutrality, meritocracy, color-blindness and equal opportunity prevalent in the education system ;
- 3) ensures that research is connected with the elimination of racism and racial subordination as well as larger social justice concerns;
- 4) validates the experiences of people of color and recognizes that experiential knowledge is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding and analyzing racial subordination in the field of education, and;
- 5) acknowledges the importance of trans-disciplinary perspectives that are based in other fields such as ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history and law to enhance understanding of the effects of racism and other forms of discrimination (Solórzano, 1998).

With respect to engaging in educational research, Lawrence Parker argues that conducting qualitative inquiry with a critical race lens is insightful and explanatory.

He argues:

The importance that Critical Race Theory places on historical links to contemporary social constructions of race also has implications for qualitative studies in schools and colleges...An area of future research linking qualitative studies to Critical Race Theory may, thus, involve tracing how racial ideology plays a role in shaping the experiences of African American or Latino-Latina students from high school to the post-secondary level (1998, p.51).

Thus CRT can be extremely useful in challenging dominant notions about race and racism in the context of education via qualitative research. And, I would argue that an additional area where such inquiry is needed is in an exploration of how race and racism play a role in shaping the experiences of educators of color in schools.

Recently, both educational researchers and practitioners have conducted critical race analyses that challenge the racism, racist practices and subordination tactics that exist in American schools. For example, Yosso (2002) uses CRT to examine the racist nature of curriculum and curricular discourses in schools. In particular, she notes that when CRT is employed in an analysis of school discourses, the ways in which these discourses serve to justify systemic discrimination against students of color become evident. Practices such as labeling students “at-risk” or “deprived,” she argues, serves to free teachers from the responsibility of actually having to teach them because the labels themselves effectively deem the students as unreachable. Consequently, if teachers can use their power to name and label students in such a manner, the students can “justifiably” be ignored, and thus destined to be lost in the cracks of the education system.

Further, there are other Critical Race Theory critiques of instruction, pedagogy, assessment, school funding, etc., all of which reveal the embeddedness of whiteness as the “norm” in schools and the standard by which all children are judged. These critiques and analyses reveal the ways in which schools are structured to simultaneously serve the needs of white student while subordinating the needs of their peers of color (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso, 2002). Indeed, white students have relatively open access to valuable curriculum that will advance them academically. Students of color, however, lack access to such curriculum (limited access to AP courses, gifted education, or even classes that challenge them to think critically) and are instead too often under-prepared to achieve their higher education goals. As Yosso points out, whereas white students are catered to and are prepared for leadership positions in society, students of color are prepared to assume positions that cater to whites.

I have come to understand Critical Race Theory, and thus conceptualize its use in this study, as a strategy – a strategy that is simultaneously conceptual, theoretical, and methodological which intentionally accounts for the role of race and racism in education<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, CRT seeks not only to identify and analyze, but to transform the structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions, both inside and outside of classrooms. Consequently, from the development of the study’s research questions to collecting, analyzing and presenting the data, I have been guided by a qualitative critical race

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<sup>7</sup> My adherence to an understanding of CRT as *strategy* is influenced by a definition of CRT provided by Solórzano and Yosso in their 2002 article, “Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research” in *Qualitative Inquiry*.

methodology for conducting research on the work and lives of people of color in ways that illuminate their day-to-day encounters with race and racism.

In elaborating on this methodology, as distinct from method, Solórzano and Yosso explain:

...research methodology is a theory and analysis of how research should and does proceed. We define methods as the specific techniques used in the research process...We define methodology as the overarching theoretical approach guiding the research. For us, methodology is the nexus of theory and method in the way praxis is to theory and practice. In other words, methodology is the place where theory and method meet. Critical race methodology is an approach to research grounded in Critical Race Theory (2002b, p.38).

Thus, as alluded to earlier, Critical Race Theory not only guides how I've approached this project, but influenced my choice in data gathering techniques and guided my analysis. Viewing CRT as both theory and method allows me to think holistically about the conditions for African American in the U.S. as a context for understanding the experiences of these five educators in the suburban schools where they work (Lynn, 2002). Consequently, I resonate with Solórzano and Yosso's assessment that, for critical race theorists, Critical Race Theory is comprehensive in that it frames what we do, why we do it, and how we do it (2002b).

I also acknowledge that one of the greatest benefits of employing a critical race methodology in educational studies is the challenge it poses to those traditional research epistemologies, paradigms, and theories that have been used to explain the experiences of people of color in ways that have silenced and distorted those experiences. Instead, it focuses on their racialized, gendered, and classed experiences and views those experiences as sources of strength and resistance (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b.) Moreover, using a critical race methodology affirms that the



experiences of people of color with, and responses to, racism and other forms of oppression both inside and outside of schools must be treated as “valid, appropriate, and necessary forms of data” (p.37).

### **Significance of the Study**

The absence of the voices of educators of color signals a significant gap not only in the research literature, but in both academic and localized discourses on race and education. Consequently, it is imperative that we solicit the views and perspectives of these educators if we wish to effectively tackle the educational inequities to which students of color continue to be subjected. Further, it may be extremely beneficial for active white allies<sup>8</sup>, for those who are new to allyism but are willing to try, and for teacher educators who are working to grow the ranks of white allies in schools, to listen to these educators’ stories if they wish to successfully enact the kind of allyism that will bring about material benefits for marginalized students of color.

Thus, while this study was born out of my own agenda and investment in equity work in schools, the actual need for the study is rather significant. I argue that the struggles we face now, and will continue to face in the future, are a product of a lack of communication with people of color generally, and with educators of color specifically. Further, if we desire to fully understand the ways in which racism and interrelated forms of oppression manifest themselves in schools, and intervene in the processes that bring them about, then we must develop a more comprehensive picture of their impact by broadening our inquiry to include the experiences of other people of color in schools, namely teachers, administrators, and staff.

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<sup>8</sup> Though an important aspect of the study is to understand the concept of white ally from the perspective of the study’s participants, I’ll define ally here as “a white person who actively works to eliminate racism and other forms of oppression. A white ally may engage in anti-racist work with other white allies or with people of color” (Castenada et. al, 2000).

I believe that effective change is necessarily dependent upon developing a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple oppressions found in schools and illuminating the experiences of those subjected to them. Consequently, we would do well to listen closely to the voices of these five educators, voices too often marginalized in the educational community, and allow their stories to move us to action.

In the next chapter, I review literature in the field that serves to provide a contextual framework for understanding the study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **CONNECTIONS TO THE LITERATURE**

Prior to beginning this study, I reviewed literature in education that influenced my thinking on the topic and helped to situate my study within larger trends and discourses in the field. I focused my inquiry on four inter-related subjects that, when viewed holistically, serve as a loose conceptual framework for the study. More importantly, they serve to explicate the various forces that I believe to be influencing the moment that gives rise to this study. Specifically, I began by reviewing research that centered on the lack of the presence of teachers of color in schools and the impact of their relative absence on students from both minority and majority groups. Recognizing that their absence from schools left a good portion of the advocacy and social/racial justice work in schools up to white educators, I then turned to an examination of the research on teacher education and the preparation of a largely white, middle-class female student population to deal with the challenges of teaching in multicultural educational settings. That body of literature led to an examination of the struggles of white teachers, pre-service and in-service, who desire to learn how, or are already attempting to address the oppressive structures in schools that marginalize poor white students and students of color. Finally, in determining that the struggles experienced by those progressive white teachers was due in large part

to a lack of communication and dialogue with their colleagues of color, I concluded that a review of the literature on black teachers and their experiences in schools was needed.

### **The Shortage of Teachers of Color**

In 1971, teachers of color made up 11.7% of the teacher workforce in America – a respectable number considering the fact that people of color comprised 12% of the population (National Education Association, 1997). At the time, teaching as a profession still held a respectable place in the hearts and minds of American minorities (not to mention a distinguished history of providing opportunities for professional and economic advancement when other professional options remained closed to them), particularly among African Americans. However, just ten years later, they had dropped to 8.1 percent of the teaching work force (but still remained 12% of the population) prompting the publishing of the first comprehensive research report on the preparation and employment of Black public school teachers (Witty, 2001). Written by Witty (1982), the report analyzed issues related to the decline in the number of African American teachers and offered recommendations to remedy the situation.

Since that time, reports that illuminate the disproportionate number of African American teachers in the teaching workforce, as well as teachers from other minority groups, have dominated the literature. Often emphasized in this literature is the fact that, in the last three decades, the percentage of teachers of color have remained steady, at or between seven and eight percent while the percentage of America's white teachers has fluctuated between 88% and 91%. The cause for alarm grows stronger when one examines the student population in light of the dominance of

white educators. Indeed, the student population in American schools is continuing to grow increasingly diverse. While minority students made up 28% of the school population in 1985, they comprised 34.6% in 1995 and are projected to become the majority by 2040 (Hodgkinson, 2000). To complicate matters further, rather than witnessing an increase in their numbers, the new millennium is likely to witness a decline of teachers of color to less than 6% (Nickolos & Brown, 1989; Wilder, 1997).

Recognizing the need for diversity in the teacher workforce, federal, state, and local education agencies, institutions of higher education, policymakers, foundations, local school boards, K-12 school administrators and teachers and professional organizations such as the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education and the American Council of Education have all undertaken teacher diversity recruitment programs, produced reports, and conducted conferences on the decline of minorities in the teaching ranks (Witty, 2001). Their concern is fueled by a wealth of research literature developed over the last thirty years that extols the benefits of the presence of minority educators in schools.

In a review of that literature, Carr and Klassen (1996) noted six areas of equity in education to which racial minority teachers are likely to positively contribute: enhancing cultural compatibility, demystifying the hidden curriculum, developing positive attitudes in students toward persons from a variety of backgrounds, expressing lived experiences, connecting with students, and connecting with communities. Carr and Klassen's findings have been echoed in the literature by others who argue that, rather than there being a distinctive characteristic (or characteristics) of minority group members that guarantees their effectiveness as teachers, minority teachers carry with them the lived experience of being a minority

group member which helps them to be more, “empathetic toward and skilled in crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries in school contexts” (Quiocho & Rios, 2000, p. 488). Moreover, minority teachers can also act as cultural brokers for their students because they often possess an understanding of, and subsequently support, the ties between school and home (Henze, Katz, & Norte, 2000). In essence, as Quiocho and Rios (2000) argue, minority teachers bring with them sociocultural experiences that make them more aware of the various elements of racism embedded in schools and are more willing to name them and enact an agenda to address them. Finally, teachers of color often have a greater sense of how to develop culturally relevant curriculums and to understand the overall human, social, and communal nature of teaching and learning (Foster, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The benefits of the presence of teachers of color do not just apply to students of color. White students also benefit from interacting with positive images of people of color on a day-to-day basis and benefit from their minority teachers’ understanding of multiculturalism in schools and the ways in which that multiculturalism manifests itself in the different learning styles which students of different backgrounds bring to the classroom (Quiocho & Rios, 2000). Thus increasing the number of teachers of color is important for all students, as teachers are undoubtedly an important factor in the lives of students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Consequently, Carr and Klassen (1997) find it not only troubling that a number of White teachers have a limited perspective on the contributions of racial minority teachers, but that, “many White teachers think racial minority teachers’ positive influence on students does not transcend racial lines” (p.80).

Yet, despite the obvious benefits of having teachers of color in schools, the groups and organizations mentioned earlier continue to experience problems in recruiting and retaining minority candidates. Much of the literature generated pertaining to the minority teacher shortage in K-12 education notes that low teacher wages, opportunities in other more lucrative professions, lack of prestige around the teaching profession, perceived racism in the institution of schooling, and the pressure to become “more than just a teacher” are among some of the reasons that more minorities are opting to bypass teaching careers (Gordon, 1994; Guyton, Saxton, & Weshe, 1996; Page & Page, 1991).

In terms of barriers to actually entering the profession, researchers often cite high school tracking that did not prepare them for the rigors of college, the cost of college tuition, and the lack of role models in college as significant issues (Page & Page, 1991). Wilder (1999) also notes that students’ perceptions of their own teaching experiences including their relationship with teachers, with teaching, with school knowledge, and with their peers can all influence minority students’ perceptions of the teaching profession and thus serve as a barrier to entering the profession if those experiences were negative. Quirocho and Rios (2000) note that barriers also exist in terms of teacher certification. Those barriers include inequities in testing and admission into teacher education programs and the incongruence of minority group teachers’ experiences with traditional teacher education curriculum. Moreover, once they are credentialed, they continue to face barriers from discriminatory hiring practices, culturally-discontinuous school climates, taboos about raising issues of racism, lack of promotion opportunities, and the failure of others to recognize their leadership skills.

The sheer volume of research literature on the minority teacher shortage and the flurry of activities engaged in by education professionals, groups and organizations in an effort to address the shortage testify to the fact that the relative lack of improvement in the situation over the years has not been a result of a lack of awareness or a lack of action. Rather, as Witty notes:

The challenge of advancing a diverse teaching population to teach a diverse student population has remained unresolved because existing programs and projects are largely one-dimensional. Complex factors have created a situation in which k-12 schools do not adequately prepare minority students for college; minority students do not select teaching as a first-choice career; teacher education programs do not invite minority students into teacher preparation programs and do not graduate an adequate number of those who do not enroll; states do not provide adequate incentives to outweigh the disincentives facing minority prospective teachers and communities do not demand and support the employment of minority teachers (2001, p.32).

Consequently, because of who teachers are and because what they bring with them to the classroom does indeed matter, concurrent with the efforts to increase the number of minority teachers, numerous strides are being taken to prepare the rising, predominantly white teacher workforce to effectively work with an increasingly diverse student body. Those in the field of teacher education have largely led those efforts.

### **Teacher Education and the Challenges of Advancing Transformative Learning**

Despite the challenges posed by forces both within and outside of teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Pullin, 2004), there is a cadre of progressive teacher educators who are seriously committed to a pedagogy and practice of *critical* multicultural education. It is important to note that multicultural education can take on different manifestations in both primary and secondary schools as well as in schools of education. These different forms are a reflection of



educators understanding of (or more often misunderstanding of) what true multicultural education means or looks like in practice. For critical, progressive teachers (and teacher educators), the goal is not your average “heroes and holidays” or “foods and festivals” multicultural education, but a multicultural education that possesses significant transformative possibilities to change the systems of inequality and inequity that exist in schools, and in society at large.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002b) note that currently, many teacher education programs draw on “majoritarian stories” to explain educational inequalities. These explanations are presented through a lens of “cultural deficiency” that subsequently portrays students of color as “culturally-deprived,” and who can only be “saved” through a process of cultural assimilation that dismisses their identity and sense of self. In contrast, transformative multicultural education (TME), also referred to as critical or emancipatory multicultural education, names the educational system as the deficient party and sees students of color and the ethnic and cultural attributes they possess as assets. Transformative multicultural education is viewed as a total school reform effort aimed at obtaining educational equity for a variety of ethnic, cultural, and economic groups (Banks, 1994, 1995; Varvuz, 2002). With a firm determination to make all aspects of schools and schooling equitable, advocates of TME take the *transformative* aspect of transformative multicultural education seriously. They view the transformation of teaching practices in ways that will benefit all children (i.e. culturally responsive teaching), and the transformation of social relations in schools in ways that will eradicate prejudice and discrimination as fundamental to the TME project. Transformative multicultural education is also consistent with the notion of providing students of all ages with an anti-racist/anti-

biased education that employs emancipatory and dialogic pedagogy and practice (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Brunson Phillips, 1997; Marulis, 2000). In order to effect such practice, transformative multicultural education compels teachers to interrogate school processes that maintain inequalities among students and to use the social context of education as a means to more holistically understand why and how some students are positioned for success while other are positioned for failure.

Transformative multicultural education challenges the notion that students need to assimilate into the dominant “American culture” and instead encourages teachers to view the cultural and linguistic resources that students bring with them to school as gifts to be capitalized upon for student learning. In addition, TME seeks to replace what James Bank’s (1995) calls “mainstream academic knowledge” with “transformative knowledge,” knowledge that is critical, liberating and co-constructed by students and teachers together. The mainstream versus transformative knowledge distinction is an essential aspect of Bank’s model of transformative multicultural education which has five aspects: transformative knowledge construction, content integration, prejudice/discrimination reduction, equity pedagogy and an empowering school culture.

Yet, in spite of the numerous potential benefits associated with transformative multicultural education and its liberating philosophy and praxis, the teacher education literature continues to be inundated with articles about the challenges faced by teacher educators who teach multicultural education and/or teach for social justice. A review of the literature reveals that there are two major areas of struggle for teacher educators engaged in this work: 1) addressing race and racism with their

students, and 2) facilitating the development of a critical consciousness within their students (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; Brown, 2004; Garmon, 2004; Goodman, 2000; Sleeter, 2001; Wallace, 2000).

Getting students to talk about race, racism, whiteness and white privilege continues to be the largest challenge facing teacher educators. For some teacher educators, simply getting their white pre-service students to understand that racism actually still exists is a challenge in and of itself. In sharing his experiences with this phenomenon in the college classroom, Gititi (2002) explains:

Part of the series of myths that pass for contemporary American identity is the myth of the death or disappearance of race as a central and controlling issue in American daily life. The white undergraduate and graduate students I teach routinely repeat the mantra of how far we've come, how much economic and social progress African Americans have achieved since the 1960s, or how education will soon have converted all racially prejudiced Americans into models of civic righteousness" (p.180).

Indeed, when confronted with the realities of racism for people of color, white pre-service students often experience significant "cognitive dissonance" which often evokes feelings of resentment and resistance in students that educators must carefully negotiate.

To some extent, part of the problem is the ways in which "racism" has been defined and understood in contemporary America (at least by whites) as the random, isolated acts of "racist individuals," rather than understanding racism as endemic to American society and as operating on institutional and societal levels (in addition to the individual acts) (Crenshaw, 1995). The "individualizing" of racism allow white students who view themselves as "good people," not to see or understand their complicity in a racist system. Nor do they recognize themselves as being raced

individuals. Accordingly, they fail to see their white privilege (Cooney & Akintunde, 1999; Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002; Henze, Lucas, & Scott, 1998).

In addition to possessing little understanding of racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression, white pre-service students bring to the classroom epistemologies that heavily influence their personal ways of knowing, understanding, and teaching – epistemologies that are far different from those of their students of color. And because they are often raised and educated in predominantly white communities and thus possess little firsthand knowledge of communities of color and their cultures and histories, white students often bring very little in the way of cross-cultural backgrounds, knowledge or experiences to the classroom. Moreover, the secondhand information they have obtained through textbooks, the media, or from family and friends has often been, “distorted by negative, stereotypical attitudes about people of color which are pervasive in American culture (Lawrence & Tatum, 1996, p.333). Consequently, stereotypical beliefs about students of color and poor students tend to proliferate.

Lacking a true understanding of the racialized, lived experience of their students of color, pre-service (and in-service) teachers often opt to approach their classrooms from a color-blind stance. Adhering to a color-blind perspective, white teachers argue, is the equivalent of promoting equality because, in their eyes, they believe that they view all their students as “individuals, not colors” and that every student in their classroom is the same (Allen, 1999). The claim of *sameness* here is of particular import because the color-blind construct necessitates the (incorrect) belief that being White in this society is really no different than being any other race or ethnicity.

Moreover, in mistaking the approach for educational equity, color-blind teachers end up de-contextualizing teaching and learning for students of color, ignoring the realities of racism in their day-to-day existence, and are more likely to gloss over their students curiosity about their own developing racial identities, thus ignoring the importance and significance of identity development for children (Jones & Derman-Sparks, 1992; Tatum 1999). Under the auspices of embracing equality, color-blindness often results in bolstering the very stereotypes it is intended to dispel and fosters an environment of ignorance, prejudice and bias (Cochran-Smith, 1995).

In the face of these challenges, teacher educators seek new and innovative ways to help their students to see, acknowledge, and interrogate racist systems and practices in society, but more importantly in school structures, school processes, and school discourses. A fairly recent intervention into this area has been the use of Critical Race Theory. One of the strengths of CRT is that, as a tool of analysis that allows people to see racism in schools in ways that they could not before, it acts as an intervention into those racist processes by revealing their hidden functioning. Teacher educators, along with their students, have been using CRT to investigate the ways in which racism manifests itself in school curriculum, in pedagogy, in instruction, in assessment, in school funding, in tracking and in other areas (Ladson Billings, 1998; Marx & Pennington, 2003, Nebeker, 1998; Yosso, 2002). In addition, CRT has been helpful in encouraging students to interrogate their personal assumptions as well as taken-for-granted norms and concepts such as merit, meritocracy, truth, knowledge, or color-blindness which are portrayed as neutral, but which actually serve as a means of policing racial boundaries (Lynn, 1999; Nebeker, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a).

Thus, despite the overwhelming challenges they face, it is small successes and the hope for/possibility of more success that propel teacher educators forward. Indeed, more recent literature in the field confirms that, in spite of significant obstacles, students who are provided with an opportunity to engage in critical conversations around issues of culture, race and ethnicity in education experience increasing levels of receptivity, awareness and understanding (Allen & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2004; Brown, 2004; Garmon, 2004). Moreover, such awareness and understanding motivates students to consider changes to their evolving teaching practices and pedagogy in ways that are more critical and culturally-responsive. Thus, keeping in mind that the creation of a new identity for our students, that of educator as ally (i.e. educator as an advocate for student of color and critic of racial and social injustice in schools) is a long term process (Lawrence & Tatum, 1996), we press on.

### **The Struggles of Practicing Allyism**

The dictionary definition of “ally” is commonly “one who is associated with another as a helper.” Often, when asking whites (white students in particular) what they think “ally” means, their responses are peppered with the notion of providing help or assistance. However, people of color, and those progressive whites who are allied with them, are quick to point out that the “helper” definition is not one to which they adhere. Indeed, such a definition fosters a notion of a “charitable approach” to working with people of color instead of a commitment to work with them in a genuine and responsible way. Thus, when looking at various definitions of “ally” that come out of the social justice literature such as the following:

Ally – a member of the agent group who rejects the dominant ideology and takes action against oppression of a belief that eliminating oppression will benefit both agents and targets;

White ally – a white person who actively works to eliminate racism (and other forms of oppression). This person may be motivated by self-interest in ending racial oppression or out of a sense of personal moral obligation or because they are committed to social justice as opposed to a “patronizing agenda of wanting to help those poor people of color.” A white ally may engage in anti-racist work with other white allies or with people of color (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Castenada et. al., 2000).

there is a consistent sense that “effective” or “dedicated” allies are not those individuals who join anti-racist projects to feel better about themselves or to be praised for their progressiveness. Rather, genuine allies are those individuals who arrive at the decision to become an ally as a part of their own personal development and sense of selfhood. These allies see their personal politics and their participation in anti-oppression projects as a way of reclaiming their humanity (Clark & O’Donnell, 1999). And for those in the struggle, how you arrive there and why you arrive there are not matters to be taken lightly.

How, then, do white allies conceive of what has been referred to as the *anti-racist project* and its objectives? A survey of the literature reveals several things. The most common expressions and sentiments are detailed below in the following manner: perspectives on the project’s objectives; perspectives on the actions through which the project should be carried out, and perspectives on the

characteristics and dispositions that one must possess to be an effective ally in the project.

1) Objectives: The most common objectives are to expose whiteness and critically examine it; to deconstruct the privileges and benefits associated with whiteness; to strip whiteness of its power to name and to control the racial discourse in America; to develop new versions of whiteness that are anti-oppressive, and to create a shared vision of a new racial discourse through which to promote racial equality. Additionally, one notices a bit of a “debate” between those who advocate for the elimination of whiteness as a racial category and those who believe that racial distinctions should be preserved but without the negative racial categorization that goes with it.

2) Actions: The project can be engaged and carried out by taking an active role in one’s daily actions and behaviors with regards to whiteness; by rejecting the benefits and privileges that accrue from whiteness; by rejecting participation in white racial bonding exchanges; by taking an active role in the dismantling of white supremacist structures and organizations; by taking an active role in anti-oppression organizations; and through the creation of conferences, organizations, websites, alliances, networks, etc. that provide an opportunity for allies to combat racism and reject whiteness. Within the context of schools, more specific steps have been outlined including efforts to inform and influence whites who hold positions of power and leadership in education; engaging and encouraging other whites to examine racist school structures and educational practices that subordinate students of color; working together with educators of color to engage educational equity



issues; and providing a space in one's classes for discussions for "taboo" topics such as racism, power and white privilege.

3) Characteristics and Dispositions: Finally, certain characteristics and dispositions have been noted as essential to enacting one's allyism including moral courage; possessing a willingness to speak up about, challenge, and fight against racism and racist structures; possessing a critical perspective of society that includes an acknowledgment and understanding of racism at the individual, institutional, and societal levels; possessing a critical consciousness of one's whiteness and unearned privilege; and maintaining a belief in the possibility for change and in mutual struggle for common political ends (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Castenada et. al., 2000; Clark & O'Donnell, 1999).

While the above information can be gleaned from a variety of sources from professional journals to websites, information regarding the hows and whys white allies actually come to enact those objectives, actions, and dispositions in their day-to-day existence is less tangible, particularly in the context of education. This lack of information regarding what it means to be a white ally, what it looks like in action, and how it can be done effectively is a rather significant issue for those of us who are trying to grow the ranks of white allies from a population of young, white teacher education students. And when one recognizes that despite the reality of white allyism's substantial history in the United States - a history that is largely missing from history textbooks and other mediums of the past - it comes as no surprise that we lack a firm, tangible understanding of lived experience of contemporary allyism (Hale, 1985; Brown, 2002; Dalmas Jonsberg; 2002; Tatum, 1994).

Undeniably, the fact that most Americans have trouble generating even a single name of an anti-racist activist, historical or contemporary, is a serious challenge that the project must address (Dalmas Jonsberg, 2002; Tatum, 1994;). If the average citizen (including educators) cannot name any anti-racist activist, any individuals who might be offered up as role models for young white students to emulate, then it is highly unlikely that they will find one on their own accord. In one of the few pieces on anti-racist activism written by a person of color, Beverly Tatum (1994), a professor of education and the psychology of race, argues that it is critical that we share with white students the history of the participation of white Americans in movements against a variety of oppressions in the United States. She argues that it is important that both white students and students of color be made aware of this history so that their understanding of progressive social movements, and who can be a part of them, is deepened<sup>9</sup>.

With regards to the literature on positively enacting and/or embodying white allyism, we might reasonably expect to find two perspectives: one from people of color willing to provide some recommendations and suggestions to help their white allies enact their allyism positively and effectively and another from the wisdom of white allies themselves who have been in the struggle for awhile. However, what we find is that the contemporary allyism literature is dominated by white voices.

Ironically, the lack of voices of people of color may explain why, by and large, the existing literature written by whites focuses heavily on aspects of enacting allyism

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<sup>9</sup> For white students in particular who have been brought to consciousness about their role and complicity in a racist and racialized society, Tatum argues that it critical that they are provided a model of white identity that they may pursue or take up that is not characterized by racial supremacy or mired in white guilt. Otherwise, they are left with one of the three more common white identities. Tatum calls these: 1) the white supremacist identity, 2) the “what whiteness” identity, and 3) the guilty white identity, none of which is appealing or desirable.

that are clearly to be avoided. I offer a brief description of four of the most common concerns/issues expressed by white allies in the literature.

### Self-aggrandizement

White allies caution against other so-called “progressive whites” joining the anti-racist project because it is “the cool thing to do” or because they want to be “friends” to people of color, thus making themselves unique and special. Doing so, these critics argue, reveal that your motives and intentions are not genuine, but self-serving.

### Exceptionalism

Similar to self-aggrandizement, exceptionalism makes “progressive whites” and white allies believe that they are somehow different from their other white peers and thus more special. While it is true that whites who are committed to anti-racist and other anti-oppression projects are indeed a unique group of individuals, giving too much attention to that “specialness” may lull them into a sense that the project is really about “those people” who need to be enlightened which exonerates them from having to do anymore work on “self.”

### Tokenism

Tokenism is about the difference between empty or self-serving “anti-racist gestures” and “anti-racist actions” that bring about meaningful or material change. Thompson (2003) provides an example by highlighting the difference between English professors who pepper their courses with a few writers of color to increase their own legitimacy in being able to claim themselves as “a progressive/anti-racist white” and those professors who have critically engaged the writings of people of color and who cite people of color in their own scholarship.

## Re-inscribing Whiteness

According to ally critics, there are a number of ways that the anti-racist project can be usurped to re-inscribe whiteness. For example, when white students get preoccupied with a version of progressive social change that is conceived of as whites, from their position of power and privilege, having to give up or be willing to let go of x, y, and z, rather than focusing on what needs to be done, whiteness gets re-inscribed. Additionally, people of color repeatedly point out that whites are too often preoccupied with the ideologies of anti-oppression or social justice, rather than the material benefits that they are supposed to bring about. In the process of clinging to, analyzing, and romanticizing the ideals and ideologies, white versions and interpretations of what change means and looks like re-inscribes whiteness. Re-inscribing whiteness is also a large problem in writing about anti-racist projects. Indeed, whiteness, white people, white issues, white guilt, white feelings, white identity development, and white sacrifices seem to dominate the literature on allyism, thus leaving one to speculate about impact of all this whiteness on the experiences of the people of color with whom these whites are allied.

In essence, all of the notions listed above are interrelated. In an essay titled, “Tiffany, friend of people of color: White investments in anti-racist education,” scholar and anti-racist educator Audrey Thompson (2003) illuminates that interrelatedness in her efforts to problematize white identity development theories/models. She calls attention to the literature on white identity development in which there is constant attention being drawn to what I call the “positivity factor.” The notion of possessing a “positive white identity” is an essential aspect of the literature. This need for “positivity” stems from what Tatum (1994) argues is the

need to provide some hope for the potential of change. In particular, she asserts that pushing students to acknowledge the reality of racism and their complicity in it can be demoralizing, unsettling, and baffling; and to leave students powerless to do anything about it is rather cruel. Consequently, the purpose of most white identity theories and models (Helms, J.E., 1990, 1995; Hardiman, 1979, 1982) is to show that, through a process, whites can create an alternative identity about which they can feel okay, and even good, about.

However, Thompson (2003) points out the fact that guilt is an inevitable part of white identity development. Moreover, it does not seem to Thompson that it is necessary or even desirable to have a “positive” anti-racist identity that you can “feel good” about. It is the desire to “feel good” about one’s identity, she argues, that causes whites to get too preoccupied with wanting to be and be seen as “good people” by people of color and other allies. Consequently, they inevitably end up making the anti-racist project more about themselves than the project’s goals. Moreover, taking on the alleviation of white guilt as part of the anti-racist project does the same thing. In general, Thompson argues that most white identity theories in general keep white people’s personal growth and quest for “goodness” the center of the anti-racist project.

What is most troubling about the need of white allies to alleviate their guilt, and more importantly, to focus on their desire to be and be seen as a “good people,” is that both desires are parasitic upon the racism that the anti-racist project is supposed to challenge. And when progressive projects get bogged down with various forms of re-centering whiteness, not only does it distract whites from the project’s goals, it diverts the energies of people of color who feel like they spend too much of

their time either assuaging whites over their feelings of guilt and anxiety or feeling as though they need to stand around applauding whites' efforts for having "got it" or for "being progressive."

### *People of Color and White Allyism*

By and large, whites have written nearly all of the existing literature on white allies or white allyism, whatever the aspect. The voice of people of color on white allyism is largely absent. However, a chapter in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* written by CRT scholar of color Richard Delgado may serve as a cautionary tale with which many folks of color in the project might agree, but which calls into question whether whites should have any role in the project at all. In "The Imperial Scholar: Reflections on a Review of Civil Rights Literature," Delgado (1995) explains that during an evaluation he conducted of the leading law reviews on civil rights, he discovered that all of the authors were white men. Moreover, they all tended to cite each other - none of them cited a legal scholar of color. To some, Delgado suggests, this would not appear to be an issue at all. Further, an argument could be made that it really does not matter who advocates for freedom and equality as long as it gets done. However, Delgado asserts that it does, in fact, matter if the scholarship about (and the activism conducted on behalf of) the rights of "Group A" are being produced, and thus influence the law, by "Group B." He lists his concerns regarding the generation of scholarship about Group A by Group B as follows:

- 1) B may not be an effective advocate for A or A's interests;
- 2) B may lack information and/or passion about A's experience to be effective and;

3) Even if B is effective, they may be advocated for the wrong things or have a different agenda than A.

Delgado goes on to list a few more concerns, but his major point is that it is not always in the best interest of, and can be downright harmful for one group to advocate for and/or write about another group's needs, desires, or rights.

Thus, in light of Thompson's assessment and Delgado's concern, I am left to wonder about the role of whites in the anti-racist project. In what ways are they "ineffective advocates" in the fight against racism and racial injustice? In what ways does their "lack of experience" of being a person of color (and thus their inability to truly understand what it is like to be one) prevent them from being true agents of change? And how do the different agendas of white allies and people of color who are partnered in anti-racist projects serve to undermine those projects? These questions are complicated by the fact that, despite some arguments to the contrary, the anti-racist project is indeed the responsibility of white folks too. Potentially, then, the stories offered by the educators in this study may provide us with insight as to how we might begin answering these challenging questions and thus move the project forward.

### **Black Teachers**

Within the enormous body of literature that is the field of education, only a small portion of it involves the actual perspectives of those who spend a substantial part of their lives inside schools. And of that portion, there is little representation of the voices of people of color. Ours has been a voice that has traditionally been ignored or discredited in the academy; consequently, research on African American teachers (or other teachers of color) is more often noted for its absence than its

presence. Traditionally, there have been few academic works that provide insights about black teachers' perceptions of their professional roles or practices as teachers. The majority of what has been available often turns to the past, to stellar historical examples of African American teachers in an effort to see how their successes might inform our work in the present. For instance much has been written on the life and work of such exemplars as Anna Julia Cooper, Septima Clark, and Mary MacLeod Bethune.

There are also a cadre of works that look more holistically at the education of African Americans (in specific contexts or locales) which illuminate the important role played by black teachers and other community leaders/educators of color. For example, Vanessa Siddle Walker's (1996) *Their Highest Potential* which chronicles an African American school community in Caswell County, North Carolina during its last year of operation under segregation is well-known. Yet, as Foster notes (1997), while these historical accounts and biographies of famous black educators of the past are clearly important, they do not encompass the experiences of thousands of Black teachers who, though not historically significant, have nonetheless played an important role in the education of Black children.

Consequently, in more recent years, an increasing number of researchers have begun to focus on the contemporary experiences of teachers of color in the American educational system. Perhaps one of the largest and most coherent bodies of literature developed by educational researchers on teachers of color in the last twenty years focuses on the reasons why so few people of color have opted for a career in the teaching profession. Indeed, having recognized the grave implications of having too few teachers of color in America's classrooms, particularly for those



schools with sizeable populations of students of color, diverse groups of education professionals have put forth substantial efforts to better understand this troubling phenomenon. Two of the more comprehensive works in this area come from King (1993) and Quiochos and Rios (2000) who reviewed the literature to summarize what we know about the causes and sources of the teacher of color shortage and what strategies have been employed to address it.

King (1993) examined the research in an effort to determine what was known regarding the reasons why African American teachers are important to the education of both minority and majority students and to explore relevant demographic facts and figures, entry and retention trends, as well as significant factors that influence the persistence of their low numbers. She concludes by positing a research agenda with specific questions (several of which are addressed by this study) that she argues must be addressed if we hope to increase their numbers<sup>10</sup>.

More recently, the earlier cited work by Quiochos and Rios (2000), is a comprehensive synthesis of literature published between 1989 and 1998 on the experiences of pre-service and in-service “minority group teachers” in public school contexts. They use the literature to examine both the teachers’ educational and professional schooling experiences and then employ a social justice framework to help guide administrators and researchers toward the construction of “robust recruitment and retention programs” (p.485). Among other topics, their review speaks to the experiences and perceptions of minority group teachers in terms of

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<sup>10</sup> King suggests that the following questions may help us to explore the multifaceted roles of African American teachers and improve recruitment and retention rates: 1) How do the experiences of African American teachers compare and/or differ from those of Euro-American teachers and other teachers of color?; 2) How do the experiences of African American teachers differ by school context (i.e. urban, inner city, rural, suburban?; and 3) How are the various educational reform initiatives incorporating the diverse experiences and the perspectives of African American and other teachers of color? (1993, pp. 42-43).

teaching preparation; seeking and gaining employment; school environment and climate; culturally responsive teaching practices; and professional development and reform.

The past few years have also witnessed a substantial increase in literature that focuses directly on the experiences and professional practices of teachers of color. Indeed, in her 2002 call for such a research focus, Irvine asserted that although recent demographic data pointed to an anticipated increase in research on teachers and students of color, too few researchers truly understand, “‘situated’ pedagogy and how teachers, particularly African American teachers, ‘make meaning’ within their classrooms and how they describe their teaching roles” (2002b, p.5). Thus, as this body of literature continues to emerge, greater attention has been placed directly upon examining the pedagogy and practice of African American teachers in an effort to uncover those “best practices” that have been successful with marginalized students.

For example, Jackie Jordan Irvine’s *In Search of Wholeness* (2002b) provides an analysis of the teaching practices of African American teachers. Simultaneously, theoretical and practice-oriented, Irvine’s work investigates how teachers’ cultural experiences and prior socialization affect the manner in which they view their profession and practice their craft. Specifically, Irvine’s text, generated by work that she and her colleagues conducted in association with Emory University’s CULTURES center, is an informative look at how African American teachers’ cultural experiences and ethnic identity influence their classroom practices. Focusing equally on their pedagogical practices and their perceptions of their professional lives, Annette Henry’s *Taking Back Control: African Canadian Women Teachers' Lives and*

*Practice* is an investigation of the world and consciousness of five African Canadian women teachers. The educators' narratives explore the contradictions in North American/Western education and the need for alternative standpoints and alternative, pedagogical strategies.

Yet, perhaps the most celebrated text in this developing genre is Gloria Ladson-Billing's *The Dreamkeepers* which integrates scholarly research with stories of eight successful teachers in a predominantly African American school district to illustrate that not only is academic success for all children possible, but that it is happening in classrooms today and the processes that are bringing about that success can, in fact, be replicated. Ladson-Billing offers examples from the classrooms of teachers (not all of whom were minority) who emphasize the cultural and social aspects of the issues in education as a whole. Essentially, the body of literature created by Ladson-Billings and others has demonstrated that teachers of color, and African American educators in particular, bring to their professional work the following: beliefs, opinions, and values; their prior socialization and present experiences; and their race, gender, ethnicity and social class identities (Irvine, 2002b)<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, they acknowledge the ways in which these cultural attributes shape how they view their profession and practice their craft, and thus utilize them as sources of strength.

Concurrent with the growth in literature on the pedagogical practices of African American educators, is the development of related body that specifically examines the pedagogical practices of black women teachers and the relationship of those practices to a womanist perspective. For example Dixson (2003) and Beauboeuf-

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<sup>11</sup> This is not to imply that African American teachers are the only teachers of color to do so, but to assert that the majority of research published in this area has focused on African American teachers.

Lafontant (2002) have recently published articles that explicitly examine that relationship. In “A Womanist Experience of Caring: Understanding the Pedagogy of Exemplary Black Women Teachers,” Beauboeuf-Lafontant suggests that womanism is part of a long-stranding tradition among African American women educators and argues that there is a particular form of womanist-based caring exhibited in the pedagogy of exemplary black women teachers. She suggests that we might better inform both pre-service and in-service teachers about the types of teachers that our students need through an examination of the practices of those teachers who adhere to a womanist perspective. Similarly, Dixon’s “‘Let’s Do This!’ Black Women Teachers’ Politics and Pedagogy” examines how the political mission of contemporary African American women teachers continues a tradition of political involvement (motivated by a quest for social justice) that black women perceive to be a part of their responsibility and commitment to the African American community. Using data taken from a qualitative study of two African American elementary school teachers, Dixon examines the inherent and overt politics in their pedagogy and situates their activities in a Black feminist tradition where politically-conscious teaching is viewed as a part of a broader conception of pedagogy.

Perhaps most closely related to present study is an evolving body of literature that looks specifically at the professional lives of educators of color from a first person perspective. Here, Michelle Foster’s book *Black Teachers on Teaching* (1997) remains the most well-known and cited work in the field. Noting that there had been surprisingly little that chronicled the experiences of black teachers and that their voices had not been adequately represented among first-person narrative accounts of teachers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Foster’s book offers a glimpse into the lives of

twenty African American educators as they reflect on their personal, professional and pedagogical perspectives. Utilizing a life history approach to illuminate the teachers' experiences, to document the constraints and supports in their professional lives, and to examine how their experiences have changed over their careers, Foster's work, like this dissertation, is an effort to shed light on the experiences of African American educators and to document the ways in which they've come to understand those experiences.

Two of Foster's earlier works addressed the experiences of black teachers with an eye toward the role played by racism in their professional lives. In "The Politics of Race: Through the Eyes of African American Teachers" (1990) and "Resisting Racism: Personal Testimonies of African American Teachers" (1993), Foster examines the perceptions and views of African American teachers (the majority of whom began their professional careers before desegregation) on issues related to race and education. Once again using open-ended life history interviews about their childhood, their family and community life, their schooling experiences, their current and previous teaching experiences, and their personal philosophies and pedagogies of education, the studies revealed how both encounters with racism in their experiences as school teachers and their understandings of racism's effects shaped and influenced their teaching practice and pedagogy. In concluding "The Politics of Race," Foster asserts that, throughout their professional careers, the teachers had "been exploited, victimized, and marginalized by society and the educational institutions in which they work" (p.124).

In "Resisting Racism," Foster explicitly attempts to fill what she argues is a void in the literature regarding the various individual and collective means by which

Black teachers have resisted racism and thereby challenged the status quo. Foster demonstrates how black teachers who taught during segregation actively resisted racism with a variety of tactics and explores the lessons they learned about teaching black children. Specifically, in contrast to depictions of black teachers that portray them as individuals who upheld the status quo, Foster brings to light the ways in which these black teachers fought against institutional racism throughout their careers in ways that challenged the social order and socialized black children into “a double consciousness” (p.287).

It is alongside Foster’s work, as well as more recent work by Marvin Lynn (1999, 2002) in which he uses Critical Race Theory to focus on the localized narratives of contemporary African American teachers in urban schools settings, that I situate this study.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter represents a review of literature that serves to help the reader situate the present study. It provides an overview of several issues to which I believe this dissertation speaks. As I analyzed my data, I reflected on this literature and the issues it raises in an attempt to examine the different ways, and the extent to which, these educators’ stories illuminated the problems highlighted, provided potential answers to those problems, and spoke to, with, and against the assumptions and understandings I derived from this material. During the analysis process, I also found the need to consult additional texts. While the majority of the literature that was later consulted is directly associated with the literature presented here, the few sources that were not are integrated into the concluding chapters.

In the next chapter, I provide an in-depth overview of the methods and methodologies that guided the data collection procedures used to capture the experiences of the educators. I also provide a detailed description of the data analysis processes engaged in to interpret that data.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain, in sufficient detail, how I attempted to capture, and then re-present, the voices of the educators in this study. In so doing, I discuss the means by which I collected the resulting data, and the process by which I analyzed its contents. Specifically, I address the selection of my participants, the interview and focus group processes, and the process of both crafting their stories and analyzing those stories for meaning – that of the participants as well as my own. As you will see, employing a critical race methodology influenced all steps in the data gathering and analysis process. Finally, this chapter is also meant to share with the reader issues and concerns I encountered along the way and the decisions and choice I made that led to the development of the final three chapters.

#### **Critical Race Methodology**

What continues to excite me about Critical Race Theory is its proponents' insistence that CRT is not just an analytical tool, but an "intervention into the ideological contestation of race in American" – an intervention that seeks to produce new, oppositional accounts of race (Crenshaw, 1995, p.xiii). Believing that such intervention might be accomplished through research, educational researchers have begun conducting qualitative inquiries that utilize a critical race methodology. In its



rejection of other methodologies that dismiss or minimize racism, and thus distort the experiences of those whose lives are affected by it, critical race methodology seeks to illuminate the multiplicity and complexity of the lives of people of color, centering race as the tool for analysis and critique.

Solórzano and Ornelas (2002) assert that there are five tenets of critical race methodology that are useful in posing research questions, reviewing relevant literature, analyzing data, forming conclusions and making recommendations:

- 1) Place race, and its intersection with other forms of subordination, at the center of research;
- 2) Use race in research to challenge the dominant scientific norms of objectivity and neutrality;
- 3) Ensure that research is connected with social justice concerns;
- 4) Make experiential knowledge central to the study and link this knowledge to other critical research and interpretive perspectives on race and racism;
- 5) Acknowledge the importance of trans-disciplinary perspectives that are based in other fields to enhance understanding of the effects of racism and other forms of discrimination.

As the fourth tenet indicates, vital to this methodology is the importance of affirming that the experiences of people of color with, and their responses to, racism (and interrelated forms of oppression), both inside and outside of schools, must be treated as “valid, appropriate, and necessary forms of data” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002b, p.37). Within the field of education, such “data” have been used to both expose and

challenge the deficit-informed research paradigms, methods, texts, and theories traditionally used to explain the experiences of students of color.

Guided by my desire for change that results in material benefits, I am especially concerned with the ways in which the experiential knowledge of these educators might be deployed to tell a different story, to provide a different perspective on the manifestation of race in schools that might challenge the more traditional and more liberal depictions that show up in common “critical” school discourses.

Consequently, my use of a critical race methodology is meant to illuminate the educator’s experiences, as well as to demonstrate how employing a critical race lens might encourage and empower others (researchers, administrators, teachers, parents, students, etc.) to actively and critically engage in an exploration of the multifaceted functioning of race in education in ways that maintain a marginal status for minorities.

### **Qualitative Research: Definitions and Rationale**

In their 1994 edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln open by defining qualitative research as:

...multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals lives (1994, p.2).

Further, Bodgan and Biklen (1992) identified five major features of qualitative research that include: a) serving primarily as descriptive research, b) a concern with the context of data gathering (naturalistic setting), c) a concern with participants

meanings and perceptions, d) a concern with the research process as well as its outcomes or products, and e) the emergence of theory as data are gathered and analyzed. Finally, in his consideration of the reasons why a researcher might conduct a qualitative study, Creswell (1998) offers the following:

- a) when the research questions starts with a *how* or *what* so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on;
- b) when a topic under investigation needs to be *explored* because variables cannot be easily identified and theories need to be developed
- c) when there is a need for a detailed view of the topic;
- d) when there is a need to study individuals *in their natural setting*, and;
- e) when you want to emphasize the researcher's role as an *active learner* who can tell the story from participants point of view rather than as an "expert" who passes judgment on participants (p. 17-18).

The research described herein, and the questions it sought to answer, speak directly to the definition and characteristics offered above. As my goal is to illuminate the perspectives of educators of color around their personal experiences with social phenomenon and social interactions - experiences and interactions that are not easily understood, intellectually or intrinsically – I determined that a qualitative study would be most useful in accomplishing this goal. Further, the aspects of qualitative research mentioned above speak directly to important facets of this dissertation. In particular, the unique emphasis on a concern for the research process and its outcomes, as well as the importance placed upon participants' perceptions and meaning-making are also essential aspects of conducting qualitative research from a Critical Race Theory perspective.

## **Role of the Researcher**

In most instances scholars view their work as moving beyond theoretical gymnastics towards righteous research: research that is representative of critical telling and seeks to facilitate and encourage individual change, collective transformation, and deep reflection (Carter, 2003, p.34).

### *Experiences and Biases*

As a result of our common African heritage – a heritage that includes core values regarding community, family, and self - I believe that black people and black societies share certain attributes and characteristics in common. Combined with this common heritage is our shared experience of racial oppression. These two factors combine to lay the foundations for current values, traditions, beliefs, ways of knowing, modes of expression, language attributes, etc. that exist among African Americans today (Hill Collins, 1990). We also share the experience of embodying what Jennifer Obidah (2003) calls, “living blackness,” which is the daily process of negotiating one’s humanity through a set of socially constructed notions of what it means to be black, and thus marginalized in American society.

Consequently, all of these common experiences speak to the development of a unique consciousness and a way of knowing and understanding the world that is very distinct from our fellow United States-ians (Zuniga & Machado-Casas, 2005). However, our ways of knowing and understanding have largely been missing from a variety of elite and academic discourses. Indeed, the traditional canon has not encompassed the experience of racial minorities, minorities who, “experience and know that discrimination is part of their daily lives, but who, because of our racial past, have also been excluded from the participatory process of formulating the academic canon and academic management structures” (Lazos Vargas, 2003, p.6).

Accordingly, I view this study as a means of giving voice to that consciousness and as a way of knowing the world that might lead to enacting social and educational change.

Living my life at the intersections of racial, gender and class identities (which serves as a unique standpoint from which to know and understand the world), I embrace a womanist perspective that acknowledges those intersections and seeks to understand how they shape the contours of my life. As a womanist, I also attempt to engage in an intentional type of politics, personally and professionally, that seeks to end oppression in whatever form it takes (hooks, 1981). In enacting a womanist stance in the academy, I continue to seek a theory, analysis, and praxis that can guide me in my efforts to struggle against ideologies of domination and systems of oppression that stem from race, sex, class, sexual orientation, ability, etc.

Unlike other scholars who pursue topics that interest them – topics that are not necessarily tied to any set of personal convictions or responsibilities, my own interests are informed by a personal belief regarding what is at stake for communities of color in a given moment; and I argue that what is at stake in the present moment are the futures of students of color in American classrooms. My desire to use research in the service of the greater good of our communities, rather than seek personal benefit, is what Cynthia Tyson (2003) refers to as “emancipatory research.” To engage in emancipatory research, I must accept the personal responsibility of focusing my scholarship in ways that will assist me in serving the greater good by effecting social change. Moreover, emancipatory research entails using research methods that, in my opinion, liberate rather than oppress – methods

that, as Tyson argues, are capable of encouraging and empowering participants to challenge and change the world.

Subsequently, my choice of a qualitative, critical race methodology for this study is intentional – a choice that is socially, politically and personally motivated. As a womanist concerned about the marginalization of communities of color and the ways in which they have been consistently portrayed in research literature as somehow “deficient” (Tillman, 2002), I see qualitative research as a means of empowerment for these communities, for it is through qualitative research that marginalized voices are heard, acknowledged and validated. Further, I intend to conduct this research from a culturally sensitive standpoint. Tillman argues that the use of culturally sensitive research approaches, particularly in research focusing on African Americans, can use the cultural standpoints of both the researcher and the researched as a framework for research design, data collection, and data interpretation. Thus in employing a critical race approach, I open up an opportunity for thinking about, conducting, and analyzing research from, “a specific position of color” (p.6). Moreover, such an approach allows me to privilege the cultural standpoints of my participants – educators of color who experience the political, economic, social and educational consequences of unequal power relations - over the “assumed knowledge of those who are positioned outside” of their experiences (p.6)

Creswell (1998) asserts that the point of employing theory in research is to describe human living from the perspective of interrelationships, complexity, and uncertainty, and thus to guide us to more complex understandings of issues. Conducting qualitative research with a critical race lens is one way of enacting emancipatory research as it challenges those who would use it to conduct work in the

service of the community and to avoid building research on the backs of our participants (Tyson, 2003). It requires of us, “a simultaneous commitment to radical change as well as to those individuals most oppressed by social and cultural subordination” (p.23).

### *Researcher as Instrument and Mediator*

In an attempt to resist the ways in which research has historically been usurped and misappropriated in ways that negatively impact communities of color, I undertook this project as a means of using research in an emancipatory, empowering way. Because they share a unique history of and experience with oppression, my participants, like all people of color, have a unique perspective on race and racism which is too often excluded from academic discourses. Thus, in keeping with the Critical Race Theory tradition of engaging research with the purpose of effecting social change, I desire to be a megaphone for these educators’ voices – a medium through which to amplify and project that which they wish to share.

If we desire a more just society, it is imperative that these voices be included in contemporary dialogues on race as well as contemporary dialogues on education in both academic and popular settings. Lopez notes that narratives from traditionally silenced and marginalized groups, often referred to as “counter-stories” are powerful not only as a means of providing “a different understanding of reality, but also as a means of opening up possibilities for understanding this reality in new and fundamentally different ways” (2003, p.76). Consequently, within the research enterprise, I view my job as providing a space where my participants are empowered to represent their worlds accurately and thoroughly, from their own viewpoint. In

essence, I see my primary role as providing a vehicle for the dissemination of these educators' stories.

Further, as the instrument of data collection, it was incumbent upon me to use my interview skills to illicit participant's *stories*. In a compelling piece on interview studies, Susan Chase (1995) raises the distinction between getting a person's "story" and getting a "report." She argues that stories are told to make a point, to transmit a message about the world that the teller wishes to share with other people. Chase argues that if we truly wish to receive a speaker's meanings, interpretations and understandings, then we must strive to shift the burden of responsibility of the import of the talk to the speaker<sup>12</sup>. Chase's notions provide support for one of the strengths of "race-based" methodologies, like critical race methodology, in that they intentionally shift the locus of power in the research process by "situating subjects as knowers" (Pillow, 2003, p.186). Tapping into that knowledge and making it available to my readers is my job.

It is my hope that the collection and communication of the rich and varied stories offered in this dissertation will allow my readers and myself to tap different ways of seeing how race functions in schools and to understanding the subjective experience of race for educators of color and their students. As Tyson notes, "The grounded theory that arises from the specificity of the day-to-day experiences of oppressed people can provide links with broader social and political solutions to educational problems" (2003, p.26). If that is true, then this study, which arises

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<sup>12</sup> I chose the word speaker here as opposed to interviewee to acknowledge a power relationship here. I'm suspicious of words that are created to position people in relation to some practice, especially when the end with "ee." Here, I'm thinking that the word interviewee sounds as though they are having the interview "done" to them. As such, I choose speaker to invoke the power of the speaker to speak his or her own truths in a dialogue with me.



directly from the experiences and knowledge of my participants, may hold recommendations for critical action to be taken by educators of all races, at all levels.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Individual consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experiences of people (Seidman, 1998, p.3).

Culturally sensitive research approaches use qualitative methods such as interviews (individual, group, life history), observation, and participant observation. These and other qualitative methods are used to investigate and capture holistic contextualized pictures of the social, political, economic, and educational factors that affect the everyday existence of African Americans, particularly in educational settings (Tillman, 2002, p.4).

#### *Interviews*

The above quotes by Seidman and Tillman provide a simple, yet powerful rationale for my choice of in-depth, phenomenological interviews as the primary method of collecting data for this study. Both speak to the ways in which interviews allow us to tap into the lived experiences of others. Interviewing assists us in uncovering and understanding the content and context of people's experiences, perceptions and behaviors and seeks to affirm the individuals who share them. Moreover, because the process of interviewing sheds light on both experiences and the meanings participants make of those experiences, the method yields a level of understanding and insight that others cannot quite match. Consequently, because the essence of this study is grounded in the experiences and perceptions of these five educators, I chose to conduct a series of in-depth, phenomenological interviews with them. In addition, four of the five educators participated in a focus group.

In-depth, phenomenological-based interviews, Seidman asserts (1998), combine life-history interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing that re-

construct the participants' experiences within the topic under study. The distinguishing feature of this model of interviewing is the directive to conduct a series of three separate interviews with each participant that seek not only to illuminate their experiences, but also to provide the context of their lives, "without which, there is little possibility of exploring the meaning they make of the experiences" (p.10).

The interview series begins with establishing the context of the participant's life and current experiences by having them recount their past life up until the present moment. The second interview allows for the participant to reconstruct the details of their experiences in the contexts in which they occur using the phenomenon under study as a lens. The third and final interview is intended to encourage the participants to reflect on the meaning their experiences hold for them. The interviews typically last from 60 to 90 minutes and are spaced three to seven days apart with the hope that, "the time in between will give the participant enough time to think over the preceding interview but not enough time to lose the connection between the two" (p.15).

### *Focus group*

In acknowledging the fact that knowledge is often constructed socially with others, focus groups have been utilized as a way of stimulating the social knowledge-making process to gather more information about a topic (Kruger, 2000; Patton, 2002). Focus group interviewing is one method of tapping into this co-construction of knowledge and meaning. Focus groups, or group interviews, are conducted with a small number of individuals, usually 6 to 12, and typically last for an hour. In my experience, the unique power of the focus group lies in the facilitation of a shared

opportunity for participants to hear the responses of other individuals to questions posed, and to share additional thoughts beyond their original responses as they hear and process what other individuals in the group are sharing. As Patton points out, the purpose of the focus group is to get high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others. Moreover, Solórzano and Yosso (2002b) hint at a further possibility for such sharing of stories and experiences, particularly as it pertains to people of color. They argue that those who have been affected by racism, “...become empowered participants, hearing their own stories and the stories of others, listening to how the arguments against them are framed, and learning to make arguments to defend themselves” (p. 27).

### *Journaling*

For purposes of data triangulation, I asked the educators to engage in a time-limited journal reflection activity. Specifically, I asked them to keep a one or two-week journal to document circumstances or events relevant to the study as well as to reflect on those occurrences and their meaning. My reasoning for this request was, as I mentioned above, for purposes of triangulating the data I received from both the interviews and focus group. Additionally, I was interested in how they might or might not represent issues or occurrences that had happened *that particular day* differently from the way they recounted them to me in our face-to-face interviews, which likely transpired one to several days after they occurred. I was interested in whether or not there would be any substantial differences in this kind of “on the ground” reporting versus an after-the-fact accounting.

Unfortunately, once the study began, I quickly realized how busy they were both professionally and personally, and acknowledged that the likelihood of their

keeping a reflection journal was not high. In an attempt to accommodate their hectic schedules, I suggested that they might just “shoot me an email,” when something happened as I assumed that sending emails would be a significant aspect of their day-to-day activities. While the educators seemed receptive to the idea and committed to trying, by the close of the study none of them had sent me any reflections, written, emailed or otherwise.

### *Triangulation and Validity*

While I am disappointed that I was not able to obtain this third piece of data, I am heartened by the fact that the interview series is structured intentionally to address concerns about validity and reliability of responses. For starters, qualitative researchers acknowledge both the implicit and explicit interaction between the interviewer (as data instrument) and the participant as a part of the interview process. It is in that recognition that we acknowledge our responsibility to and our limitations in minimizing that distortion; that is our participation in the process of a participant reconstructing his or her experiences. Further, the structure of the interview process incorporates mechanisms for validity enhancement. As Seidman suggests:

It places participants’ comments in context. It encourages interviewing participants over the course of one to three weeks to account for idiosyncratic days and to check for the internal consistency of what they say. Furthermore, by interviewing a number of participants, we can connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of another. Finally, the goal of the process is to understand how our participants understand and make meaning of their experiences. If the interview structure works to allow them to make sense of themselves as well as to in the interviewer, then it has gone a long way toward validity (1998, p.17).

Consequently, the affirmation above combined with my own epistemological view on what passes for knowledge, and what passes for knowledge in the opinions of other folks of color, satisfies my concerns about these issues<sup>13</sup>.

### **Site and Sample Selection**

The site selected for this study consists of three counties in central North Carolina. These counties were selected as a result of my ability to travel to and from them in a reasonable amount of time. Two of the counties are home to what is commonly referred to as the “Research Triangle,” an area of the Piedmont region of the state known for its high-tech research and development industries and the major research universities nearby.

Once the site had been selected, I applied to and received consent from the university’s behavioral division of the Institutional Review Board for research involving human subjects. Having obtained permission to move forward with the study, I began the process of generating a pool of potential participants. In reflecting on the study’s topic and focus, it was evident that a “snowball sampling” approach would be the best choice for yielding the “information rich cases,” “key informants,” or “critical cases,” (as we refer to them in qualitative research) needed for the study.

Informed by the work of Patton (2002) and Seidman (1998), I began the process of defining the parameters which would guide the selection of potential

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<sup>13</sup> As a black feminist, I employ a distinct approach to understanding and analyzing knowledge claims. In explaining womanist ways of knowing, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) notes that there are four key aspects of a womanist epistemology. The first entails a belief in experience as a criterion of meaning. Black women, Collins notes, place a high value on personal experiences as a way of knowing. Consequently, black women are more likely to believe a knowledge claim based on experience, rather than having read about it. The second, which I believe the focus group bore out, entails the use of dialogue in assessing a knowledge claim. Womanists acknowledge that new knowledge claims are rarely worked out in isolation by oneself; rather, they are more likely to be engaged through dialogue with others.

study participants. Both authors note that qualitative inquiries typically involve an in-depth focus on a relatively small sample of individuals or cases, purposefully selected. Focusing on a limited number of “information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Consequently, I settled upon a mixed purposeful sampling approach that combined criterion sampling and snow-ball (or chain) sampling.

In criterion sampling, one chooses to review and study cases or individuals who meet a pre-determined criterion of importance. In order to narrow down the range of educators of color with whom I might speak, I set two criteria. The first involved the geographic location where potential participants’ might reside. Due to time and resources limitations, I determined that I would only invite potential participants who lived or worked within a 60-mile radius of my own residence to be in the study. The second criteria involved determining what would make for an “information-rich case.” I decided to focus on educators who were currently employed at the secondary level<sup>14</sup>.

I had several reasons for targeting this group, all of which revolved around my own assumptions about schools, and my previous experiences in schools as both student and teacher. Consequently, I reasoned that secondary educators are likely to have more opportunities as well as different mediums for advocacy on behalf of students of color around issues influenced by/related to race than their elementary school peers. While elementary school teachers certainly have opportunities for such advocacy, elementary schools are more likely to let teachers make individual

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<sup>14</sup> No stipulation was set regarding the length of time a participant needed to have worked in schools to be in the study because the primary phenomenon under investigation is not necessarily time-influenced.

determinations about how, when, and whether or not they deal with race, and thus elementary teachers may not see advocacy around race as a broader role outside their classroom. Similarly, while early educational experiences are very important for students of color, the departmental organization and structure of middle and high schools afford more opportunities for issues of race to be openly discussed.

I argue that it is in middle schools and high schools where such race-based advocacy plays a fundamental role in a student's educational trajectory. I argue that the tractability of that trajectory gets more and more rigid as students move from elementary to middle school and even more so upon entering high school. High schools in particular function as the largest determining factor of which doors are opened to students of color and which are closed in terms of their post-secondary options. Concurrently, it has been my experience that as students mature and began to recognize the negative stereotypes and racist views held by some teachers, it becomes harder and harder to resist incorporating those views into their assessments of themselves. Finally, as this study will attest, what little discourse there is about race in education can be found most prominently in secondary schools, where it consistently emerges in the language of tracking, drop-out rates, high-stakes test score results, and the "achievement gap." Regardless of their quality or substance, it is within these contexts and arenas that conversations about race occur deliberately and openly.

Thus, using the following criteria, I decided to begin soliciting potential participants through a snow-ball sampling approach. Snow-ball, or chain, sampling involves asking a variety of "well-situated" individuals who understand the purpose of the study about whom you might speak to and then doing the same of those

individuals who are recommended (Patton, 2002). My first participant was identified as a result of an email solicitation sent to faculty of color at a high school where a participant in my pilot study worked. Diane, an African American female, is a 10<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher at Marydell, one of the five high schools in her county. She was the only person to respond to that particular email.

My second participant, Michael, came to me by way of a colleague in my doctoral program. As a former teacher in the local school district, this colleague had connections to/with several high school teachers of color in the area. She thought that Michael would be an excellent candidate for the study and provided me with his contact information. Michael, an African American assistant principal at one of the two high schools in his county, enthusiastically responded to an email I sent him about the study and agreed to participate.

Pleased with the balance in gender, I turned to finding another female participant. I felt that my study would benefit from the perspective from my colleague, Dana, as she possesses a unique point of view on education as someone who came to the field from technical career as an engineer. In the process of preparing to conduct her own dissertation, and thus appreciating the necessity of finding qualified study participants in a fairly short amount of time, Dana was more than happy to join the study.

About the time that Dana came on board, I was nearing the end of all of my other leads - my snowball was melting. A conversation with my advisor, George Noblit, led me to broaden my search to include more high school administrators and others who had worked or taught in high schools before, but were now elsewhere in



the field. I was more than happy to make this accommodation and was directed to speak with Dr. Kathleen Brown, chair of our Educational Leadership program.

Possessing a unique student enrollment that is nearly 50% minority, and with a plentiful number of program alumni currently working in local schools, the Ed Leadership program proved to be a fruitful resource. After patiently listening to me explain my study, Dr. Brown generously provided me with a list of ten names of principals and administrators working in one the three counties selected for the study. An email to those individuals yielded my next two participants. Lauren, a former high school assistant principal, was currently a curriculum coordinator in her school districts' central office. Natalie, a former high school assistant principal and AP chemistry teacher, was presently a principal at one of the four middle schools in her county.

Having garnered a generous number of female participants, I focused the last of my recruitment energies on finding two more male participants. It was my belief that an African American social studies teacher I had recently been introduced to, and a former colleague with whom I had taught at an independent school in Durham five years ago seemed to be the ideal participants to round out the study. However, despite repeated attempts to contact them, including emails, phone calls, and personal letters sent to their homes and places of work, my efforts were unfruitful. While I wanted to add more participants to the study, I was pleased with the representativeness of the educators that I had acquired in terms of their varied positions within the educational system. Thus, I decided to limit the study to those

five individuals<sup>15</sup>. Below is a chart that indicates pertinent demographic information on each of the participant.

**Table 1:**  
**Demographic data about participants**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Years of Experience</i>	<i>Grade Level/Subjects Previously Taught</i>	<i>Current Positions/ Job Title</i>
Dana	34	F	2	Algebra II Pre-Calculus	Math teacher
Diane	34	F	12	English, 9-12	English teacher
Lauren	36	F	13	Business Education Assistant Principal (HS)	Curriculum coordinator
Michael	33	M	9	Art (MS)	Assistant Principal (HS)
Natalie	28	F	8	Chemistry, AP Chemistry, Assistant Principal (HS)	Principal (MS)

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data collected for this study consisted of a series of three, 60-90 minute interviews with the educators, one 90-minute focus group with four of the five, and my personal reflections on these interactions. Below I describe the process of both collecting and analyzing this data.

#### *Prior*

The majority of the interviews took place either at the participant's home or workplace with one interview occurring at a local coffee shop. Prior to the first

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<sup>15</sup> Throughout the dissertation, I reference the experiences of “educators of color” generally, but acknowledge that as a result of the racial background of the individuals who participated in the study, the dissertation reflects, above all, an African American experience. The lack of racial diversity among the study's participants as a limiting factor in study is addressed in the “Research Recommendations” section of *Chapter VI*.

interview, all the participants were emailed a description of the study (Appendix C) as well as the IRB-approved consent form (Appendix D). I began the first interview by reviewing the study and having the participants sign the consent form.

### *During*

I opened each interview by posing to the participants a broad question intended to frame the conversation and then basically allowed them to take the lead<sup>16</sup>. Patton notes that the strength of *informal, conversational interviews* such as these is that while each interview is guided by an overarching purpose or frame, “the interviewer is free to go where the data and respondents lead” (2002, p.343). Thus, based on the flow of the conversation developed during the interview, I allowed myself to be carried by the stories that my participants decided to tell<sup>17</sup>. I did pepper the conversations with questions intended to get clarity about what they were saying, to ask for more detail, or to inquire as to what they thought about/made of a particular issue or recollection. But I generally tried to embrace the flexibility of the format and the spontaneity and responsiveness it generated. Each of the successive interviews were guided by a broad opening question, but were also influenced by questions that arose from participants’ responses in previous interviews. I also attempted to end (and to some extent open) each interview by providing the participants an opportunity to talk about anything on their mind related to the study.

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<sup>16</sup> The interview structure as well as specific topics that were covered over the course of the three interviews can be found in Appendix A. Within each topic area, specific questions were tailored to the individual circumstances of the participant.

<sup>17</sup> Though the interview structure is fairly firm in terms of what information is to be covered during each interview, I often encountered times when my participants moved into topics that technically “belonged” in another interview. For example, while the first interview is meant as an opportunity for the participants to review their life histories up to the present, nearly all of them spent some amount of time talking about their present lives. As researchers are encouraged to place the import of the talk on the participants, I rarely attempted to re-direct them and discovered no apparent harm in so doing.

The focus group occurred on a Sunday afternoon, three days after I finished my final interview. Four of the five educators were able to attend the session which took place at my office on campus and lasted 90 minutes. I believe that each of the educators were very open and honest with me and with each other. The dynamic was such that there was a substantial amount of head-nodding in agreement with the various school-related racial experiences that were being shared. However, they did interject when they disagreed with someone's assessment of a situation or had a different experience from the one being shared at that moment. Overall, the focus group functioned like others I had facilitated in the past in that it served as a comfortable space to share experiences, to have those experiences affirmed, to have certain assumptions challenged, and to enjoy a level of satisfaction in having participated in an important and worthwhile conversation with colleagues. I transcribed the audio recording of our conversation the following day.

#### *After*

As they say, data analysis really begins during data collection. For instance, riding home in my car after an interview, I reflected upon what had just transpired - asking myself what I had heard, what I had not heard, or what was the essence of the story I saw developing. Further, I would think of how I might summarize, in plain language, what I was hearing should someone (like my advisor) inquire. In making that thought-process more concrete, I would fill out a post-interview reflection form (see Appendix B).

The form served three purposes. The first was to record my own personal experiences, thoughts and reflections while in the field as a means of maintaining a reflective stance towards the data and as a way of monitoring my perspective,

positionality and voice in an attempt to keep them in check. The second was to have a space to jot down early ideas, notions, and lingering questions as those reflections served to help shape the focus of the study in terms of developing questions or probes to incorporate into the next interview. Finally, the forms would assist me in establishing a context for interpreting and making sense of the interview later on during the focused analysis process (Patton, 2002).

My post-interview process also included sending off the audio files of the interviews to be transcribed. In most cases, my transcriptionist was able to turn around a file in two to three days. Upon receipt of the transcript, I would read it over, correct any misspellings of names or places that I could identify, and then email a copy to the participant to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the data. Along with the transcript, I included directions for the participant to let me know if they felt that it was an accurate reflection of our conversation and whether or not any corrections or edits needed to be made. I also instructed them to let me know if there was anything that they wanted to have deleted. With the exception of the first few interviews, I was able to send them the transcript of our previous conversation before I arrived for the next one. Consequently, when I showed up, transcript in hand, I was able to ask them if there was anything about the interview transcript that they wanted to clarify or talk about in further detail.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is the process of organizing and storing data in light of your increasingly sophisticated judgments, that is, of the meaning-finding interpretations that you are learning to make about the shape of your study (Glesne, 1999, p.132).

After I had concluded my interviews and the focus group had taken place, I began a focused analysis of all of my data including transcripts and post-interview review forms. I determined that a holistic view of the data was needed before I began to deconstruct and reconstruct its parts. I began the process by reading over each of the interview transcripts and related post-interview reflections and then I read the focus group transcript. This holistic view of the study yielded a few rudimentary themes that I noted for later use. I was then tempted to go straight to ATLAS-TI but knew that for computer-based analysis to be useful, I needed to have a stronger grasp of each participants “whole story” first. So I decided to engage in a close, individual reading of each of the five transcript sets. After reading each set, I went back and performed what I’ll call “a loose process” of coding and looking for themes. By that I mean that I coded for things that stood out as possibilities for overarching themes that might reach across all of the transcripts. Once I completed that initial coding, I left the transcripts alone for two weeks before picking them back up again. Realizing that I could forget quite a bit in a two-week time period, I wanted to return to them with a fresh eye in order to determine how powerful the initial codes and themes were.

Satisfied that enough time had transpired so as not to be able to fully recollect my first run at them, I returned to the transcripts and loaded them into ATLAS-TI with the hope that two things would happen: 1) I would read the transcripts in a slightly different manner and make slightly different interpretations that would result in new codes; and 2) If during this second round of coding I coded a passage the same way I had the first time, then I would be satisfied that it was sufficiently salient. My ATLAS-TI coding process followed an intentional pattern. First, I

decided to code the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews first because they were structured to directly address the research questions that framed the study<sup>18</sup>. Second, for the purposes of developing a framework for my code book, I decided to code all of the 2<sup>nd</sup> interviews first, followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews. I determined that if I coded each participants' 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews together, the code book was certain to grow unwieldy. Thus, my process was as follows: I took the participants' 2<sup>nd</sup> transcript and mixed them up, picked from them randomly, and coded them. After I coded a transcript, I would print out the code list that I had created for it. After I coded the next transcript, I would look at any new codes that had just been created for that transcript and then go back to the previous transcript, keeping the new codes in mind, to see if they were applicable to any passages in the former transcript. I did this until I finished the last transcript of the 2<sup>nd</sup> interviews. At that point, I had 37 codes - a lot, but manageable<sup>19</sup>.

I began coding the 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews with a counter purpose – my objective was to refrain from creating any more codes unless I felt it was absolutely necessary. My reasoning was a sense that the existing 37 codes should have been able to capture much of the essential data that would serve as the meat of the study. Further, few, if any, “new” topics were introduced into the third interview; rather, its focus was on personal meaning-making. Consequently, I was comfortable with the results – only three new codes were generated during the analysis of the 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews bringing the total count to 40.

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<sup>18</sup> As the first interview was more biographical in nature, I valued it more for its ability to inform my analysis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> interviews.

<sup>19</sup> I also made good use of the comment function in ATLAS that lets you make notes about a code you've created so that I could keep straight in my mind what a code did or did not mean if I thought that I might have a question about it later in the process

With my 40 codes in hand, I began the process of trying to make sense of them. Many of them fell nicely under the broad themes that I had created earlier in the process when I did my first read-through. Other codes seemed to fit under new sub-headings. I also determined that several were too broad and needed to be broken down for specificity. Thus, by putting like-minded pieces of data together into clumps, I began to create an organizational framework (Glesne, 1999). The general issues and notions that guided these final readings of the data were “experiencing race in school,” “seeing race play out during the school day,” “activism” and “interactions with white colleagues.” Within those four themes, nearly all of the data fell into place. A subsequent area that developed late in the process revolved around the advice, suggestions, and hopes for education that my participants had conveyed (generated primarily from the focus group data as well as aspects of the 3<sup>rd</sup> interview).

It should be noted that I had always intended to present the resulting data in two distinct chapters: one taking a more narrative form and the other a more traditional, analytic rendering. In the next section, I discuss the process by the narratives (or “counter-narratives” in the language of Critical Race Theory) found in Chapter 4, were created. With regards to the critical analysis found in Chapter V, I was quite surprised by the ways in which my participants’ experiences spoke directly to critical race scholars’ assertions that, within schools, race and racism can best be understood as a part of a school’s’ structures, processes and discourses. Consequently, I use those three areas as a framework to present a substantial portion of the analysis offered.



## **Crafting (Counter) Narratives**

A profile in the words of the participants is the research product that I think is most consistent with the process of interviewing. It allows us to present the participant in context, to clarify his or her intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time, all central components of qualitative analysis. We interview in order to come to know the experience of the participants through their stories...by crafting a profile in the participant's own words, the interviewer allows those words to reflect the person's consciousness. (Seidman, 1998, p. 102)

### *From Profiles and Vignettes to Narratives*

According to Seidman, creating profiles most often entails working with those interviews that are "complete and compelling," have a beginning, middle, and end, and possess some sense of conflict and resolution (1998, p.102). A vignette then is a shorter version of a profile which covers a more limited aspect of a participant's experience. Consequently, the counter-narratives offered in the next chapter possess characteristics of both profiles and vignettes. While each story focuses on a limited aspect of the participant's experiences, that is they focus on a typical work day in the life of each participant using race as a lens, they also possess a beginning, middle, and end by the very nature of the work day itself<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, the stories are more than a little compelling in that, while they reveal a substantial amount of conflict, there is often little resolution.

In the process of crafting the stories found in the next chapter, I attempted to be as systematic as possible. Specifically, I began by reading through the transcripts for the second interviews, as the major questions which structured that interview

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<sup>20</sup> While I do attempt to provide an overview of each participant's day from start to finish, it is only a portion of the counter-narrative and does not structure its form in the way it does a vignette's.

asked the educators to walk me through a typical work day, from start to finish. They were then asked to go back and walk me through their day again using race as their reflective lens. Using that transcript as a base for creating the narrative, the story that evolved was enhanced by material from the first and third interviews. I read through those transcripts marking passages that related to, or dealt specifically with, the day-to-day experience of their workplace. I color-coded each interview so that when I assembled all of the passages into a single transcript, I would know from which interview each passage came. Doing so was critical to my ability to examine the impact of those acts of decontextualization on the overall story, and on the participants' intent and meaning. In their final presentation, I attempted to arrange the passages first by the chronology of a typical school day and then by the major structures, processes and discourses where race tends to show up the most for each of the educators.

To the best of my ability, what is presented here are the educators' own words. However, blending my commitment to be as faithful as possible to their words with a desire to make each story as smooth and as accessible as possible necessitated a few adjustments. Specifically, I chose to drop almost all of the ellipses that I had originally inserted to indicate those areas where material had been omitted from a paragraph, or a paragraph has been omitted or inserted, or a section had been rearranged. I also chose to delete from the stories a substantial number of the speech utterances, such as "uh," "ah," and "you know," for reasons of readability and flow. Finally, I used my own words in those places where it was necessary to provide a transition from one idea to another.

The counter-narratives are meant to give you a glimpse, a small taste if you will, of the daily experiences of these educators. They are in no way meant to be comprehensive accounting. In fact, their “representativeness” must be considered within the following context: for each educator, what is presented in their counter-narrative is, textually, about 13% (6 single-spaced pages out of roughly 45 total pages) of the data found in their interview transcripts.

### **A Note on Ethics, Power, and Reciprocity**

I find it necessary to remind myself that research is neither an intellectual endeavor designed to demonstrate my ability to understand and replicate specific practices and methods of inquiry nor is it a theoretical exercise that identifies but does not respond to racist and sexist epistemological perspectives. It is a call to illuminate and act (Carter, 2003, p.39).

In considering the ethical issues surrounding the conduct of this study, I have tried to attend to several things. By and large, ethical considerations in qualitative research have come to encompass issues of power in conducting one’s study, particular as they relate to the relationships developed between researchers and their participants and the emphasis on privileging people over process. Further, scholars of color like myself are keenly aware of the responsibility we bear as vehicles for other people’s stories (Carter, 2003). We are encouraged to think long and hard about the experiences that we expose and are implored to protect them from both theoretical and epistemological frameworks, and from individuals, who would attempt to de-contextualize our work and use our research findings in detrimental ways (i.e. to reinforce stereotypical understandings about people of color). Thus, because the fate of these stories is inescapably linked to the context in which they are told, conveyed, and interpreted, Carter insists that, “how we tell our stories is, at least, equally as important as where they are told” (p. 34).

To be sure, I have given considerable thought to these issues throughout this process. Specifically, I've focused on the potential power dynamic involved in this study and how they might have impacted its process and outcomes, as well as my responsibility to my participants during the study and after its completion. While I acknowledge the often mentioned "power of the researcher," and comprehend its relevance and import, I have had trouble envisioning what that power may have looked like during the interview and focus group exchanges. To the best of my abilities, I attempted to employ Patton's (2002) reflexive triangulation model which demanded that I continually ask questions of myself as researcher, and about my participants and my audience, with a variety of reflective lenses (i.e. culture, age, race, gender, class, values, etc) as a means of enhancing those exchanges.

By and large, I do believe that despite any significant differences between myself and my participants with regards to the categories mentioned above, our shared context of being educators of color, with all of its implied consequences, served to create a space for honest dialogue. Moreover, I detected that the honesty between us was facilitated by the context of this study. In other words, the majority of my participants were familiar with the world of the academy as at least three of them were working on, or had intentions to begin work on, an advanced degree in the field of education. Thus, they knew that my intention in interviewing them was for the purpose of finishing my doctorate and that their stories would show up in my dissertation.

Consequently, I detected a mutual understanding that, at worse, their stories would never be misused even if, as is the fate of most dissertations, no one besides my committee would ever read it. At best, I would do my best to make sure that their

stories were communicated to appropriate audiences within the field of education – particularly those in administrative positions within schools and those associated with schools of education. Either way, they understood that in the hands of a fellow educator of color, the stories that they shared were not likely to be used against them or their students, which subsequently freed them up to speak openly.

However, I do recognize that part of the power/privilege I did possess in this process was in my ability to “name” their stories and in such a way that, though their words and phrases are used, part of their final presentation is in an academic discourse that may not be their own. Moreover, at every step of this process, from data collection to data analysis to data presentation, I have had control over what information was deemed “useful,” “worthy,” “powerful,” “relevant” etc., and thus made it into this document. Consequently, the only way I could downplay this power to name was to invite my educators to work collaboratively with me as I constructed the final chapters. Each of them was sent a copy of the narrative I had crafted from their words and was asked to comment on it. All reported that they were satisfied that I had represented their experiences accurately.

I also wish to say something about the complications that arise from interviewing a colleague. Seidman (1998) and others caution interviewers, particularly those new to the practice, against using friends or colleagues as participants. Their concern centers on a perceived likelihood that a previously established relationship can lead the interviewer to assuming that they “understand” what the person is sharing. This understanding then leads to more assumptions and a tendency not to ask the “friend” to clarify events and experiences shared. Seidman

suggests that, “the interviewer and participant need to have enough distance from each other that they take nothing for granted” (p.36)

In light of the above concerns, I wish to say that I cannot be absolutely certain that my prior relationship with Dana did not impact our interactions during the interview process. However, I can say with certainty that I conducted those interviews quite mindful of these concerns, so much so that the actual impact may have been overcompensation in asking more questions than necessary. Moreover, the subjects and issues that we discussed during the interviews were not issues that ever came up in causal conversations over the course of our five year friendship. Consequently, I do believe that, despite the issues raised regarding interviewing friends or colleagues, I was successful in soliciting from Dana her honest reflections and perceptions about her experiences in school and that my interactions with her, and the dynamic that developed between us, mirrored that which evolved between myself and the other participants.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, it is often the case that when consulting literature on power issues in qualitative research, one often finds discussions about issues of power as they are related to their implications for potential negative impacts for study participants (Chase, 1995; Givens-Generette & Jeffries, 2003; Foster, 1997; Parker & Lopez, 2003; Tillman, 2002) . Ultimately, I hope that this study might, both directly and indirectly, positively impact the experiences of educators and students of color in schools. And though I assumed that my participants would welcome such impact (lest I assume they would have turned down my invitation to participate in the study), I decided to ask them specifically (during the focus group) what they hoped this dissertation would accomplish. Their

responses are shared in the final chapter. In addition, I placed a follow-up email during the crafting of the last chapters of this document to inquire of the participants about any concerns regarding potential negative impacts for them or for those whom the study was intended to help. There were none.

Finally, I wish to say something about the notion of reciprocity in research and its relationship to this project. Many research studies are of the sort where participants are compensated monetarily, or with some commodity of value, for their participation. In qualitative research, what we ask of our participants, particularly if our method of inquiry is interviewing, is to enter into an intimate relationship for which their own reward is very little. Despite our desire to not view people as a means to our own ends, Glesne (1998) suggests that researchers who conduct non-collaborative qualitative work invariably cultivate relationships in order to gather data for their own purposes. The simple fact is that we ask of our participants that which cannot be repaid - we ask them for their time, and with that time to share intimate details of their lives, neither of which can be returned in-kind. And because we lack the kind of relationship that puts us, "...in a position to have something that, typically, is of such consequence to them [our participants]" (p.127), I have tried to offer my participants what I could. I have listened carefully to their stories, making sure that they understood that I understood the weight of so doing. I have tried to craft narratives that accurately represent their worlds in the service of social justice. I have conveyed my deep appreciation for them as individuals and as educators and I hope that in the process of sharing their experiences, I provided them an opportunity to better understand themselves. And because it will never be enough, I

remain open to any suggestions that they may come up with in the future as to how I might repay their kindness and their courage.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **COUNTER-NARRATIVES**

First-person accounts have long been employed by individuals to encode and record the experiences of blacks, and such accounts have served as a valuable source of information for both scholars seeking to understand the black community and for the black community itself (Foster, 1998, p. xxi).

We define the counter-story as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told. The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse of race, and further the struggle for racial reform (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002b, p.32)

In this chapter and the one that follows, I offer two iterations of the study's findings. In Chapter V, I offer a critical race analysis of both the educators' experiences with racial "microaggressions," as well as the manifestations of race and racism in school structures, processes and discourses. That chapter also presents the educators' reflections on working with white colleagues and the role of whites in anti-racist work in schools. In this chapter, I offer counter-narratives crafted from the educators' own words.

Storytelling and the production of literary and narrative accounts of participant experiences have been used by qualitative researchers as valid and appropriate forms of data collection, interpretation, and presentation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Glesne, 1999; Tillman, 2002). Narrative analysis is an especially valuable approach to the analysis of qualitative data as the conversational exchange

of the research interview invites participants to recount stories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Consequently, like other critical race scholars before me, I have chosen to continue the tradition of story-telling, or more specifically, counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is sharing other people's stories or narratives about their experiences with and responses to race and racism – stories that have not often been shared, or if shared, they have not truly been heard (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002b). In so doing, I hope to contribute to the tradition of using counter-storytelling to strengthen social, political and cultural survival and resistance.

I wish to affirm my belief that these counter-narratives have power in and of themselves – a power that transcends the process of pulling their stories apart, examining the resulting pieces, and putting them back together again in a manner that suits my academic purposes (and garners me approval for adhering to a proper qualitative research process). Indeed, my forefronting of the counter-narratives is an intentional act meant to affirm the educators who participated in this study, affirm the value of their stories, and to deliberately position the educators as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado-Bernal, 1998; Pillow, 2003). Because stories are often told in order to advance some interest or cause, I have attempted to craft these counter-narratives in a manner that intentionally disrupt the racial status quo in schools in the name of social, cultural, and educational activism.

## **The Teachers**

### ***Dana***

*Dana, a 32 year old African American doctoral student, teaches at The Graham School, a day and residential school for students gifted in the humanities. Dana grew up in a predominantly African American community and attended a well-respected historically black university (HBCU) in her hometown. After undergraduate, she decided to pursue a master's degree in a technical field at a predominantly white institution (PWT). Currently she is completing her second year at The Graham School while she pursues a PhD in education.*

There is no typical day at The Graham School because we're on a rotating schedule, so each class meets at a different time every day. I'm not completely sure of the rationale for the rotating schedule...it may be because the school recognizes that different students have different peak times - some students learn better in the morning, some students learn better in the afternoon - so I think they try to do that to allow students to at least have one class meeting at their peak time. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays my day starts at about 6:00 a.m. and depending on how quickly I can get out of the house, I leave around 7:00 a.m. and I'll get to school around 7:20 a.m., which gives me time to grade last minute papers if I need to do that or record stuff in my grade book. I'll review whatever lesson that I've decided I'm going to teach that day and get my mind together before I go to class. On those days, my first class starts at 8:00 a.m. I have an 8:50 a.m. on Mondays and Fridays and on Wednesdays I have an 8:00, 8:55 and 9:50 a.m. I don't teach on Thursdays though; that was something that the department wanted to make sure of so that I have the opportunity to work on my doctoral studies.

I teach three out of the seven daily blocks, so I usually have time in between classes to plan. Sometimes there will be faculty meetings or faculty counsel meetings or summer reading meetings, something of that nature during my planning time, so I

don't always find that I get as much done as I would like. And that's partially because there are a lot of meetings, and partially because students will come to see me during their free periods to check in or to talk through assignments that perhaps they didn't get in class or to ask questions that they didn't have time to ask in class - things of that nature. I'm also the co-advisor for the junior chapter of the National Honors Society and so I find myself having to take care of a lot of that business during the day. There's also responding to emails from parents, responding to telephone calls from parents, etc.

My evenings are different also. At least once every two weeks I oversee the nightly tutorial session from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., but that's about to change. I'm actually the scheduler for the tutorial and it's just not working out really well because we have a couple of teachers who are half-time, and they can't have the same amount of responsibility as people who are  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, like me, or full-time, so that's changing. Then on Tuesday nights I try to incorporate a little bit of recreation into my evening. Some of the teachers have a book club, so we'll get together and eat and talk and that's a little bit of a release for me. So, on Mondays I usually get home around 5:00 p.m. On Tuesdays I get home about 8:00 p.m. because I have the book club. On Wednesdays we may have a department meeting or junior class meeting and I get home around 6:00 p.m. If I have tutorial, I get home around 8:00 p.m. And on Fridays, I'm done teaching at 12:15pm so I try to leave campus by 2:00 p.m. or 2:30 p.m. so that I can put in some time on my own work. However, there are days where I just close my door at school so the students aren't aware that I'm still on campus and I just study from there.

When I'm better balanced, I can get all of my planning done for the following day while I'm at school, so I come home and work on my doctoral studies after I've eaten dinner and taken a nap - I have to rejuvenate. And then I go to bed somewhere around midnight. When I'm not balanced, I bring Graham work home with me and work on it after my nap, but I still go to bed around midnight. So that's my typical day.

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There about 600 students at the school and currently about 70 of them are black students. There are five black faculty members out of about 70, and in administration, one of the three senior vice principals is African American. Of the black faculty, three are in the academic departments, one is in the art department and there's also an African American counselor. Several of the program assistants or administrative assistants are also black...The black faculty...we chat informally. Sometimes we'll have lunch together, you know, do social things. But if there is some type of concern, we'll call some type of meeting because we all sponsor...each of us sponsors one of the clubs that the minority students at the school participate in. So we'll call it a sponsors meeting but we may talk about more than just the activities that are going on in the clubs. We're also trying to put together a Minority Affairs Division at the school to address the different academic and social issues that the minority students have. We envision it as a formal support system that would help the students adjust, provide them with support to acquire skills beyond academics in terms of time-management and study skills, and actually help them to find ways to implement those skills so that they can be successful. I think a large part of it is really just being able to provide for them a structured support system so that they'll

have a place to go when they need assistance or guidance. Even if they don't know what they need, they'll have someone to talk to. I think informally we do it to some extent, but we just want to structure it a bit more.

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I don't think that I ever thought of math as something that was inequitable, because it is always promoted as this universal language; however, it isn't. Math is a language, but I think it's one that has to be learned, and I think that, depending on how they process information and the ways that it's taught, a student may or may not be able to make connections with it. In general, the way that a lot of teachers teach mathematics, I believe, is through rote memorization skills. It's not presented in any type of contextual form, so that makes it very abstract, and for some people, that's hard to grasp. And so when you try to put context around it so that the numbers aren't just isolated numbers and they actually mean something, whether it's dollars or feet or number of people going through a toll both or something like that, you also have to understand where students are coming from and the types of cultural capital that they bring with them. So if I make up a problem that talks about pitching tents and doing things of that nature, then I need to understand that some of my students have never been camping before and they may not understand all the details that are involved in putting up a tent. And so that's something that I think has become a challenge for me, because until recently, I just thought math was something that everyone could understand, and it wasn't as subjective as English or history or even foreign language.

I'm not sure that I engage in explicitly "anti-racist" education. What I try to do is incorporate the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Principles and

Standards into my classroom, which includes...you know there are different principles, all of which I don't know, but a lot of them focus on student-centered practices, open-ended classrooms and questions and assessments. And they emphasize communicating knowledge, having the students communicate what they know, not just in terms of, you know  $X=7$ , but how did you find  $X$ ? What does  $X$  represent? So I don't think that that is explicitly anti-racist education, but I think that the goal of it is to include as many student as possible in the learning process such that when they finish with it, they will be able to not only communicate effectively mathematically, but in general.

Personally, what I am trying to develop is either a set of activities or perhaps even a course itself that talks about cultural mathematics and looking at the ways in which people in other countries and other parts of the world use math, use their number systems, things like that, and looking at that and trying to put it in the context of how we use math. So I bought a couple of books on that, and of course I haven't had time to really read them yet, but one of my goals during the Christmas break is to try to look at those a little bit and see if I can start off maybe...like I said, with a small set of activities that will incorporate different cultures into mathematics to give some of the problems a little bit more context, to take things kind of away from Western math and to look at how numbers are used around the world. And it might not be calculus or pre-calculus or algebra, but because it still deals with numbers, it would be considered mathematics.

I think the biggest issue that all of the students face right now is the challenge of learning to learn. I don't fault them for it because they come to us from the public schools and most public school tend not develop deep thinkers. They develop

students who are very apt at being able to learn rules and apply those rules to similar situations as the ones under which the rules were introduced. They are very good at being able to remember information, and almost regurgitate that information, however they don't think...So, I try to teach my students ways of being able to evaluate and verify their own work, with and without the use of the calculator, so that when a student asks me, "Is this right?" my job is not to answer that question. My job is to say, "What is your solution method and why did you choose that one?" because that is part of critical thinking and creating an argument. So my concern is just their resistance to the learning *process* and I do not see that as a problem that's compounded by race, class, or gender because most students are that way, from all of the school systems. They've been coddled. I mean understandably so. They've been identified as gifted. So the teachers here have high expectations of them, and although they may be smarter than other students, they don't necessarily think harder than other students; they may think more quickly, but it may not necessarily be harder.

I think the fact that I'm not so far from being a student myself helps me relate to them better. I'm one of the younger teachers at the school, so I think they have a little bit of a better rapport with me, and so some of them feel a lot more comfortable talking to me because I'm younger and I've been where they are. I think they know I understand their situation because I graduated from a school similar to this one. But as a teacher, I also understand why you need to do things in a certain way, particularly because I've worked in a field that's heavily laden in mathematics, and so I understand what is necessary to be able to think critically in any area. You have to be able to provide reasonable arguments to justify your position on whatever it is.



And I've used the concepts and skills that I'm trying to teach them, so I think that actually give me a little bit more credibility.

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I think the main place where race is noticed is at lunch with regards to where the black students eat. That is one of the main things. I just notice that all of the black kids always sit in this certain area, and I don't know if it's an issue for the other students. I don't know exactly why it happens...I mean aside from the fact that with the breakdown of most of the classes, there are very few African American students, so through the course of the day, African American students don't see each other much, whether it's their friend who lives up the hall or their little girlfriend or boyfriend or whomever. So lunch is the optimal time for that socialization that does not occur during the school day.

In the classroom, I think it varies from class to class and discipline to discipline. In our department the students sit in small groups, and when they self-select, there will generally be at least two black students in a group. However, when I select, I separate them in an effort to help students adapt to working with different types of people. I think at some point I'll let them self-select again, but I think that part of the process of growing as a person and becoming a young adult is being able to deal with different types of people in different situations, particularly when you're forced to...when you have to work with them toward some common goal. And I want the students to experience that.

I know for a lot of the black faculty, when things such as grades come up, that's when race is an issue for us. And there are just day-to-day things...honestly when I see a boy with a do-rag on or when I see a girl with her hair wrapped as though she's

just come from the salon without combing it out, that, to me, is a racial...it sends up a racial flag for me. I'm not certain how some of the teachers address it, because they may not necessarily know how to approach a black student without that student becoming defensive. I mean, it's the same way that some male teachers don't say things to female students who may be dressed inappropriately because they don't know how it's going to be taken. So I think sometimes some of the non-black teachers let the black teachers verbalize whatever it is and I have no problem with doing that. No one comes to me and says anything. But in general, if I hear students, any student actually, who's going through the hallways yelling, talking loudly on their cell phone, and all those other things, I'll address them. But I think, for me, I take it more personally when I have to check a black student for those types of behaviors...perpetuating stereotypes, having to prove that students who some believe should not be there should, in fact, be there. But students, as teenagers, are generally a little bit self-absorbed and don't understand that their actions impact others.

There's a big research component at the school now...it's voluntary. Interested students have to prepare themselves if they want to participate in it, establish that they have a little bit of motivation, and find a faculty member who can help facilitate that research. And there was an African American student who is very smart and makes good grades. She demonstrates maturity. She participates in athletics. But when she inquired about research opportunities, there was apparently no research available for her. And it became a very big discussion among the black faculty that there's almost no benefit for her to attend the school if she can't get the research experience that she came to get. And she is one of the best students on the

campus...she's very bright. I mean, regardless of race, regardless of gender, she's a very strong student. And it was a little bit daunting, I guess, to find out that no one has sought her out to participate in research activities...There are lots of white students and Asian students who participate in research. I'm not familiar with the whole process, but what I've seen so far is that a lot of the students were already participating in some small scale research before they got to the school, so they had an idea of what they wanted to do when they got there. And that very well may not have been the case for this young lady. But when she inquired, she could not get a straight answer and it was very frustrating for her. So if that had been the case, if someone had told her that, I think she would have been...she would have understood. But because she was not aware of any prerequisites for participating in research and things of that nature, it just became frustrating for her.

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There aren't many conversations about race going on...There was a summer reading book assignment - there is a summer reading every year. This year it was Tim Tyson's *Blood Done Sign My Name* and I think they tried to use that as a vehicle to start those discussions so that we could begin to talk to the students about different people's perspectives, and things that have happened in the past, etc., but I had several issues with that, so I didn't fully participate. It was just...it happened at an inconvenient time for me, honestly. But at the same time, because there are so few black people who work at the school, in trying to create pairings for discussion groups, almost every black employee was tapped to participate, which I personally feel is a little bit unfair, because I don't think it's my responsibility to have to lead these discussions simply because there are no black people here.

Originally an invitation was sent out over email, but when people started looking at the time commitment, because there was maybe 4 or 5 discussions sessions and three training sessions, people didn't want to participate. So a good deal of teachers had the option of not participating. I was the only person from the math department who was actively "recruited" to participate in these discussions. I got a personal invitation. Someone came to my office and said, "Dana, da da da..." but when I saw the time commitment and the dates, they just didn't work for me with other things that I had going on, so I declined to participate. Yet there were other teachers who didn't get...didn't get "the visit." They didn't get that personal invitation. And then some teachers were more or less told that they couldn't say no...in a nice way, but they were told that they couldn't say no because they were needed to do this.

And on a similar note, there were not enough minority students to actually populate all of the groups. There were groups where there would be one or two black student among 30 other students. And there were some groups with none. So it's hard to create dialogue when you have one person from a group and everybody is looking at that person as the spokesperson of that group. Or there's no one in that group, so then they have to speculate...and so I'm not sure exactly how it could have been done so that it would have been a little better experience, but I think that the circumstances of the school just don't allow for it to be done well. The way they tried to do it...I just don't think was very productive.

I did make it to one training, though. The training, in and of itself, was fine for what it was; but I just I don't think that...I think it was a fine training on facilitating a

*book discussion.* I don't think it was as great of a diversity training as it could have been. Not to say that I pinpointed things that definitely could have made it better...it just seemed as though it was just information on how to facilitate, how to step back and let the students lead the conversation, how now to not put ourselves into it as much, which I understand, but in terms of facilitating the race part of the discussion, I'm not too sure how much of that was relayed to the faculty and staff who were asked to facilitate it.

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At my school, those conversations [about race] just don't happen. Okay, I know they happen with the black teachers. I just don't think they happen in mixed company. I don't think they happen in faculty meetings. I don't think they happen in meetings with the administrators. I don't think they happen enough because, again, I think the school tries to promote education for all students, which I think is an honorable goal. But in order to do that, there has to be a conscious effort made to recognize the differences and the different strengths and weaknesses that each individual student and each, I guess, set of racial students brings to the table. Some things are cultural, you know, some things are geographical, or regional, and then some things are, like I said, consistent with being 16 years old and being in a different type of learning environment. So, as a teacher and a student, I don't necessarily see race resonating as much as I did when I was a part of corporate America and I think it's because I work in an isolated environment. And as a graduate student, I was in an environment where race was such a big part of the discussion that I don't think anybody did anything...wanted to do or say anything that could be considered racial. Overall, I feel that I get the same treatment from all

of the members of my committee and all of the faculty in my department, whether they are black, white, male or female.

So the challenges that I've had in terms of being impacted, overtly impacted, by race and gender, have not happened in education for me. Wait, let me take that back. I taught in a community college once and no matter what I did for this group of students, someone was always complaining to the Dean. And I can't prove it, but I think it had something to do with me being a young, black woman, teaching older white adult learners. I think for them it was just a shift that they had problems dealing with, but, like I said, I can't prove it. But that was the one time where I felt as though I couldn't do anything right no matter what I did. So I did experience that. But that's my one bad experience in education. The majority of my experiences with gender and race came from being in a technical field, not being in education. I think that's where I was impacted the most.

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Because there are so many students that I know who may be equally as bright [as the students at Graham], but don't have the resources, I think its important for educators to be able to see that in the students and try to cultivate students who can think and can do, no matter how they're identified. So I think that's my drive. Teaching is great. I enjoy teaching, even on some of the hard days, and on what I would consider to be a bad days, there are still learning experiences for me.

### **Diane**

*Diane, a 34 year old English teacher at Michaels High School, grew up in an upper middle class, integrated neighborhood and attended elementary, middle and high schools with diverse student bodies. After receiving her degree from a HBCU, she returned to her hometown to teach at a technical*

*high school. She then moved to Florida where she taught for two years. Subsequently, she moved to North Carolina where she taught first at an affluent high school in Steeple Grove and then moved on to Michaels where she has taught for four years.*

The alarm goes off at 5:15 a.m. and I start thinking about getting up. I get out of the bed at 5:30 a.m., off to the shower, get dressed, and get to work by 7:00 a.m. Most of the teachers are there at 7am. I check the mailbox, get to the classroom, open it up, and do the daily work thing. Class starts at 7:30 a.m. Typical, Mondays are the most hectic, just trying to get with the kids who weren't there the Thursday or Friday before, and just trying to get yourself together and in the motion of a typical work day. We switched to a block schedule this year, so the first block I have regular English II which is really an inclusion class. Then I have my planning period second block. Third block I have English II honors, and then fourth, I have regular English II which is also an inclusion class. With the block scheduling (four classes a day, 90 minutes a piece), basically what you do in a typical class period is the equivalent of what you would do in two days on a regular schedule. So even though you have fewer classes, you're giving twice as much work but have half the time to get it back out to the kids. And that's very stressful, very stressful. So that calls for the staying up later and having to do work when you get home.

As I said, I teach regular English. We have classes that are considered regular English- kids that are basically on target – and then we have regular English classes that also are considered inclusion classes and I have two sections of those. Those are students who generally have learning disabilities or behavioral issues, and therefore require an extra teacher to be in the classroom to help assist with lessons and things

of that nature. A regular English class won't have an additional teacher, and you don't really have any students who have accommodations.

My honors classes are always generally large, generally full, and of course full participation and cooperation from students and parents alike, which, in and of itself, is always interesting to me because the regular inclusion classes are generally made up of minority students and the honors classes are generally just the opposite. This is the year that I've had the most minorities, specifically African American students, in an honors class and that's six. In years past, it's always been 3 or 4.

I have three inclusion students in my regular English class in the morning. They all basically have learning disabilities and they vary in terms of their accommodations which could just be a grocery list of things. And actually that's a small number. Some years I've only had one student. But then I've had some years where half of the class, and we're talking 10 to 15 kids, are inclusion. In the morning, my inclusion teacher has to split her time between me and another teacher because I guess there are just not enough inclusion teachers. In the afternoon, um, I think I have to about 5 students. The inclusion teacher I have in the afternoon, I have for the entire period. Both inclusion classes are, for the most part, black students. I have one student who is white in my last period class, who is an EC student, but that's it.

Ideally our class size is supposed to be about 25, but with the block scheduling we have this year, it's 30 and up. I myself have...let's see, my largest is 32, and I have 28 desks, and 22 books, and believe it or not, mine is not the largest class so I guess I should be grateful. I kind of just hope for someone to be absent so all of the kids have a place to sit. Getting more desks is just not going to happen because everybody needs them....What's interesting is that the kids that I have in the



morning have better grades than those that I have in the afternoon and I don't know why that is. In the morning, you can work with them and they're fine. I think may be because they're not quite awake yet, but you get the most work out of them. If you have them after lunch...my gosh, they are typically more wild. If I were to swap the two classes, I'm sure I would get the same result. So it just seemed to happen that way. I don't know why.

After the school day ends at 2:30 p.m., I come home, do more grading, work on dinner and then get comfortable and sit down for the evening. If there are deadlines like progress reports, for example, due the next day...well, I don't feel the need to have everything done, but I try to have as much done as possible. But when report cards are due, it's generally more of a chaotic time because you're staying up later, you're trying to figure out what you can move, and we only get one teacher work day and you usually spend that day just trying to get your grades done. And that's about it.

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This is my fourth year at Michaels. This semester, I'm teaching 10<sup>th</sup> grade regular English and 10<sup>th</sup> grade honors. Next semester, I'll be teaching 10<sup>th</sup> grade honors and, for the first time, African American Literature. And I heard that the African American Lit course was going to be offered, as I was told by my department head, for "political reasons." She didn't want anyone to be upset if we didn't have the course, even though a large number of students haven't necessarily signed up for it. I heard from the two teachers who taught it before that the students who sign up for the course, unfortunately, are the least interested in it. A lot of them are upper-classmen and have the attitude that "I don't need this class to pass so it doesn't

matter how I do,” but I’m hoping that they’re taking the course because they have a serious interest. You know they’ve gone to school for 12 years, and for some a few years extra, and they haven’t really read or seen themselves in the literature; you would think that this would be a prime opportunity. The last teacher decided not to teach English or African American Lit at all and so the course was up for grabs and it was up in the air in terms of whether someone in the history department was going to teach it or someone in the English department. And needless to say, they probably didn’t have to look too hard because out of 14 English teachers, I’m the only African American teacher there. There is one other teacher there, but she’s planning on leaving in December, so technically I’m it. But my department head told me that the course is in place, because they didn’t want to have to deal with any, as she said, “political issues that may come up if the class disappeared.” You know if it’s never offered, then you might have angry parents and things of that nature. She came right out and said that.

Right now in the English department there are only two of us [African Americans] who get stuck, as I put it, with the inclusion classes. And all of the other teachers - white teachers, even the brand, new, fresh-out-of-college teachers - get AP courses, honors courses, or a true regular English class that’s not an inclusion class and I find that to be very interesting. The other African American teacher teaches what they call...I forgot what they’re calling the class, but really its a reading class - kids who just don’t know how to read, been in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade who knows how many times, etc. Well, she does not enjoy teaching those kids and I don’t blame her. Again, she got stuck, and she said, “I refuse to teach this next semester. I’ve already told the principal and I’ve told the department head that I’m not doing this.” “If you

put this on me,” she said, “I will not be here.” So, they are trying to find someone who will volunteer to pick it up. No hands have gone up in the air yet...and since we’re supposed to getting a new teacher in the department, my suggestion was to give the course to the new teacher. I mean everybody has to be “initiated” somehow. And the department head said, “I don’t want to put that on a brand new teacher.” Interesting! She doesn’t want to do that to a brand new teacher. She’d rather give them AP classes, or honors level classes, or even regular English classes...basically classes that don’t have any challenges, classes that are going to reflect race of the teacher, and so they won’t have any issues. Interesting...but you want to leave it to minority teachers, which is really frustrating because I think the message that is sent is, “Well, they look like you, you must understand them because they’re your people,” you know. “The kids are black, put them with black teachers, and they’ll know how to handle them.” And my thing is I wasn’t raised like them. Just because we look alike doesn’t mean that we are alike. I think that’s a huge misconception and I think it’s unfair for them to do that. And I’m sure those who design the schedule every year don’t think about it consciously, but I feel like, to a degree, you have to. There’s some part of you that has to because all new teachers who come to Michaels don’t get this. I can see with me, where they put it on me because I was an experienced teacher, but you know, the other teacher I mentioned, she’s still relatively new, so I don’t see why they would put that on her. That’s what’s frustrating. And they’re oblivious. They are completely oblivious. And if they do know, they’d never admit to it.

What’s also interesting is that this other African American teacher has worked downtown in the central office. And I don’t know exactly what her job was there, but

she had the opportunity to look at the applications that would come across the desk and see which teachers had been hired, and which ones were going to go to which schools. And she has complained often, and in disgust, how there were a great number of minority teachers that were passed over at Michaels and are at other schools, schools that are not necessarily predominantly black schools, which was interesting. She said, "I know they're qualified. I know these are good teachers. Other schools are picking them up because they can see it, but Michaels won't." So that's another issue that we have and keep among ourselves. And it's so frustrating because this teacher knows that our department head knows there are qualified teachers out there and she's not hiring them.

So, besides the other African American teacher, I don't really know the other people in my department. She and I have that in common; we don't know them at all and they don't care to know us. They've formed their clique, we have ours, but ours is generally made up of the other black teachers in the school...And of a school of 1830 something kids, we have less than 10 academic minority teachers, and if I remember correctly, really only 8. To me, that speaks volumes...They [the other members of the English department] hide behind white privilege. They basically teach white kids, and have no desire to even begin to think about what it would be like to teach anything different. And I'm stereotyping now because these are typical American boys and girls next door that you just know have not had much black influence in their life, you know, no experiences with black folks. And so they can't form any connections because they haven't made any in their social lives, or in their academic lives, whether in high school and/or college. So they have no clue. And again, I think it has a lot to do with white privilege. And I think to acknowledge that

you have it...like there's a certain amount of guilt, I think, that comes with that. And I think because they have this privilege they say, "It's not my problem. I don't have to worry about this." And they don't.

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As far as curriculum is concerned, I have always taught works in my courses that I read in college, in conjunction with what is required by the district and meeting the Standard Course of Study, of course. ...it can be a tough work dealing with tough issues. I think I have a way where I can teach it so the kids get it. And I think that's what my whole goal is as a teacher. You know, no matter how hard it is, you will get it. I'll make it as easy as pie, but you get it. And that's just what's most important for me.

I remember that there was one year...I was teaching my freshmen at the time, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Even though it's an American piece and typically taught in 11<sup>th</sup> grade in American Literature, I thought it was ideal for my freshmen, because it's a situation that all people of all ages can at least understand, and relate to in some way because of all the different themes going on in the work. And I remember after I finished with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class and had released the kids, my 10<sup>th</sup> grade honors kids, predominantly white kids, started coming in and they saw some information that I had on the board about *A Raisin in the Sun*. And I was very surprised to hear one of the girls say, "Oh, I hope we're not reading that book. God, I don't want to read that." And I didn't take it as if she had read it before. The response seemed...and maybe I was being defensive, I don't know...but it just seemed like something that she didn't want to read about because it talks about topics that she didn't want to discuss, things that would make her feel uncomfortable...So there are

white students who don't want to read black works, and white teachers who aren't teaching enough of them.

When Black History Month comes around, the question inevitably comes up, often from white students, and I'll say, "No, we're not going to read anything special for Black History Month." And some get a little agitated...you know, black students will ask "Why not?" And I'm like, "Because we have Black History all year in here. We're not going to just dedicate it to the shortest month of the year. We're going to read it in January, we're going to read some in March, we're going to read it whenever." And I think that becomes food for thought for some of my kids. But I just get irritated when I hear white kids ask, "Well why do we have to learn about Black History Month?" And I remember when I was teaching at East, I was doing some activity where I chose a lot of questions that the students had to answer that had to do with black inventors and black pioneers - not the typical Harriet Tubman stuff, but folks that they'd never heard of who were the first to invent this or that. And a white girl asked me, "Well, does it really matter that we know who was the first black person to do this or to do that? I mean, why is that so important? Who cares?" And I'm like, okay, let me breathe, let me breathe. And so you know that's one issue, and then another issue that you have that I raise with some of my black students because, unfortunately, some of them think the same way is...well, I'll ask them questions, like who was the first president of the U.S., things of that nature. And they're very quick to respond to those questions, but when you start asking them questions about their own ancestry, they don't know anything, or know very little. And I'm like, "Now why should you know someone else's history better than your own?" So that becomes food for thought for them. So those are the kind of things

that I see that schools, curriculum-wise, across the board, that we aren't doing enough of, and that I find are missing pieces...As far as curriculum is concerned, I still have that issue, in terms of there's not enough works [by authors of color] that are accepted by students, and, I think it's fair to say, by teachers too.

I remember collaborating with one of the history teachers at the school where I taught back home. We were both teaching Booker T. Washington, and WEB. DuBois. He was teaching it more so from the historical aspect. I was teaching it from a literary. And so we would combine classes, so we could produce a product, if you will, which was the argumentation paper...Well, even though I thought it was a good idea, he thought it was a good idea, believe it or not, there were parents...it just really bothered me because the assistant principal called me in, and we had this conversation, and I think she was open even though she's white...The first thing that she said that the board was concerned about was why we were teaching about two black people, maybe not in those words, but these two black people from history? Why not someone white and someone black? And I said, "That's really interesting, because you know how we looked at it? We looked at it as academics versus a vocation, and considering that this is an academic/vocational school, and these are two viewpoints that we're trying to (inaudible) and see how does this fit here as looking how if fit then, does it still work now?" And then the question is like, "Oh? We didn't see it like that." I said, "Yes, you just saw the outside first. You didn't look at the content," and then even still, I didn't say this, but he's getting burned up about it...What's wrong if they're both black? If they were both white, I wouldn't be sitting here. There would never be a question. You know, and it's just funny, just really funny, I'm just looking at the content, and you're looking at the color of these two

men. And so of course nothing was said after, you know. I think she was just the medium - I don't think she was the voice per se - but she just had to find out and nothing more was said after that.

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Being that this an affluent area, you have a lot of people who insist on pushing their letters and their positions around to make doors open that are normally closed. And especially when I taught 12<sup>th</sup> grade, I found that parents would throw their weight around to make things happen for their kids. And things got to a point where the principal would ask teachers to change grades. And I simply was not for that. I figured, if you wanted that to happen, then you need to do it yourself. And I realized, this is not good...this is just not good. I mean the running joke of the community was that the parents ran the school, not the principal, and certainly not the superintendent. The parents did. So, at that point, it's like if you don't have an administrative support system to back you, even when you know you are 100 percent right, that's not where...I would not find that to be a safe place to be.

I think the parents here, again because this is such a political area, they place such demands on the teachers that I don't think are quite normal. Not so much about the course work, but in how you handle them. I honestly look at how I deal with my parents as common sense. If Johnny is not doing his work and here's the proof, what are you in here arguing with me for? My department head always gives into parents, but I don't. Again, it's that militant side of me trying to fight the system... but to me it's different because it's the difference between right and wrong. You want me to make life easier for you, and for Johnny to get into somebody's university. Well, I'm going to make sure that when Johnny is sitting in somebody's



university, that he knows what he's supposed to know. I'm not going make excuses for him...And this is where I think I differ from my white counterparts. When I know I'm right, I'll fight it tooth and nail. But my white counterparts, especially those who teach honors and AP classes, they will not go toe to toe with these parents. I overheard a teacher tell another, "Yeah, Ms So-and-so passed all her kids." And they laughed and started talking about how they know certain kids in the class that should not have passed, but their parents get on the phone or they show up and they want to get nasty, and so the teachers don't want to deal with the confrontation. So they just pass them.

### **The School Building Administrators**

#### **Michael**

*Michael, a 33 year old African American assistant principal at Steeple Grove High School, grew up in a predominantly African American community and attended predominantly African American schools until graduate school. Michael's first teaching position was in a middle school where he taught art. Two years later, he decided to pursue a master's degree in Educational Administration. Upon receipt of the degree, he moved to Steeple Grove where he has been with the district for the past five years.*

In the morning, I usually go in about 8:00 a.m. There's a 7:45 a.m. 1st period class, but those courses only have a few select number of kids in them. That period is pretty much exclusively for a few advanced classes like for honors, advanced art programs, advanced math courses, etc. So it's really...for a school of 1800 kids like Steeple Grove...that time of the morning you've probably got maybe 300 kids at the school, 400 at the most. So if I wanted to observe a teacher with a 7:45 a.m. class, I'd get up about a half hour earlier than usual up and do that observation. What officially starts the day is 2<sup>nd</sup> period class at 8:45 a.m. and then you've got 3<sup>rd</sup> period,

4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, so six classes throughout the day -four classes up front, a lunch period, and then two to end the day on.

When I get to school in the morning, I pretty much just kind of do rounds outside of the school, keep an eye on the kids out in the courtyard who are hanging out and talking about the latest gossip, the game over the weekend, whatever. So I kind of move around the crowd and do a little talking here and there. Usually, all of the administrators are out and present and we can talk about things. Then, classes start and I usually either have a meeting that's scheduled with a parent or a teacher, or I'm going into the classroom doing teacher observations. And if I'm not doing that, then I'm definitely sitting in the office pulling kids in on referrals and doing discipline. And that's, unfortunately, a big part of my job - school discipline. One of the assistant principals had a scenario take place that he asked me to investigate over the last two weeks. There were a bunch of students involved in that incident, a whole gang of students actually, and some threats were being communicated and so forth. So today I dealt with some of that. I also dealt with a referral for a student that had made some threats to a couple of young ladies.

So, with all that into account, it'll easily bring you up to lunch time, plus the fact that on Mondays and Wednesdays, we meet as an administrative team. Those meetings last anywhere from 1 to 2 1/2 hours. So again, you know, when I'm done, it's lunchtime. And I'll go out to where I've got my duty post. I go up to the amphitheatre area and just kind of sit and kids know they can find me there. And teachers know they can find me there, so while I'm out there a couple of teachers will probably stop by and we'll chat. Once that's done, you pretty much sigh in relief because you made it past lunch, hopefully, and we kind of ride it out from there.

In the afternoon, there's checking emails and returning phone messages. I had a lot of phone calls going on today. That's pretty typical. There was a parent that called because her daughter was hit in the face in the hallway yesterday and wasn't going to be in school today. Basically, it wasn't intentional. The halls were just crowded and packed and a student was flinging his arms....So she asked me to let the teachers know that they could reach her at such-and-such, and that she wanted her daughter's homework emailed. So you make those kind of phone calls. And there's usually a check-in with the wife....So that was a little piece of the day. And that leads up to your bus duty at the end of the day which means I'm out with the buses as they kids are rolling out. That lasts from about 3:35pm when school lets out to about 4:15 or 4:20 p.m. when the last bus runs. And once that's done, I head back inside and catch the last bit of email, wash up the dishes for the day, return calls if I need to or decide if they'll wait until tomorrow. And um, if I don't have an afternoon meeting, which is not too often for me, then I head home.

So there wasn't much time to relax today. It was just sort of non-stop running. That's the big difference between being a classroom teacher and doing administration. When I was in the classroom, although I found myself being pretty effective with the kids, it just killed me how slow time went by. It was like putting on the same show for six classes throughout the day and the clock went tick, tick, tick. And by the time you did your presentation for the fourth time, you were like, "Man!" I sometimes felt guilty for the kids that were coming the last two periods of the day, because they didn't get...the energy. But now with administration, I'm telling you, I get in at 8:00 a.m. and I look up and it's 2:00 p.m., and it's like "What in the world happened to the time?" you know. So I enjoy that about the job. I do.

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When I was hired for the job in 2001, I guess the biggest adjustment for me was going from having spent my entire life in schools that were majority African American to Steeple Grove which is 75% white students, so that was a bit of a scare for me. It's a very interesting makeup. When I started out, my principal made sure she sat me down and kind of drilled me on some of the things to look out for. One of the things she told me about was the history of the school and about how Steeple Grove High was pretty much merged with the old Jefferson High School, which was an all-black high school, some time in the 60s; and when the merger took place, it was pretty nasty....And you still see hints of that tension...it most definitely still plays out.

My start at Steeple Grove was pretty good though; at least I thought so. It was funny. I came in and of course I got the looks, from both inside the school and outside, because of the dreadlocks. There were just questions and concerns about that even before I was hired. When I first started, parents would come into the schools and they'd be looking for an administrator, and I'd walk up and go, "Can I help you, Ma'am?" or "Sir?" and they would say, "Yeah, I'd like to see a principal or assistant principal." And then I would just kind of smile and say, "Can I help you?" and they would say "I need to see an administrator." "I'm an assistant principal," I'd respond and then you kind of get that pause, and that look like...well, the looks varied. I mean sometimes it was like whatever it was they wanted was so important that they would just go whatever, and launch right into the problem they had. And other times, they would pause for like a good five seconds, and kind of do a double-take, and look. And you know I realize I don't fit the mold as far as hairstyle for the

typical assistant principal, but still, I'd be there in a suit and tie, and you know...it was just kind of hard to swallow.

And then there are times when I'm dealing with situations, and parents are a bit upset, and they really don't hear me. I mean I'll say it over and over again, but they don't hear me. And you know, Mr. English, another assistant principal who I work closely with who is white, he and I laugh because I'll get him to come in, and he'll say the same thing I just said and it's fine....But I'd be lying if I didn't say that it work both ways, because there are definitely situations where he comes to get me, and I go into the office where there's a black parent and do that thing, "You know, hey, this is the way it goes, blah, blah, blah," and then it's all good. And behind closed doors, Mr. English is like, "Mike, man, thank goodness I had you here today, because they weren't trying to hear me. I was the white racist administrator." So, it is what it is.

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Something I'm a pretty strong advocate for is teachers communicating with families of black students, Latino students, and I'd really like to see an improvement in that area. I think a lot of white teachers especially shy away from or are scared of the idea of even reaching out to black families concerning their children. And you know, it's kind of stereotypical. They believe that they are going to get yelled at and screamed on, and yes, it does happen. I make the phone calls as a black man, and it happens to me, so certainly I can understand, but that's in my opinion a big chunk of why we have an achievement gap, you know. If teachers aren't calling home and vice versa, parents aren't reaching out to teachers and there's no communication.

And it's amazing, but honestly, after doing this for a couple of years, you can tell, usually during a job interview, the teachers who have been exposed to a diverse populations of people from the ones who have pretty much been around just their own people. And it's a shame, but we still have teachers that come into the profession....and really they are coming in saying that those schools where students of color are increasingly growing in numbers are not the kind of schools they want to be in....You know I've interviewed teachers that come to Steeple Grove, and when I tell them, "Yes, we do have a black population here, and you'll begin with these students," you can see a reaction, you know. It's like they either come from the mountains or from some northern rural area, Northern Pennsylvania, or whatever you want to call it, and they get this look like, "Man, I thought I was getting away from that by coming to Steeple Grove!" And believe me, it's definitely a progressive school district and so forth, but you're going to get a taste of minority students. And even with the people who end up in this system, you've still got those who avoid it. They decide that "I'll only teach advanced classes, so that way if I get a black student, he'll be so 'whited out'..." I'm being kind of being straight up about it because it's so true. You know, I was uncomfortable surrounded by as many white people as I've had to deal with over the last five years at Steeple Grove...it's been the most I've ever had to deal with white folks to be honest. And that was me stepping out of my comfort zone. So I feel like if I could step it up and realize that this was an experience that I was lacking, then they can too.

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When I came to Steeple Grove in 2001, the school district had just contracted with an individual by the name of Lynne Doubletree, and she does diversity training.

I think her work is pretty well known across the country. Basically, there's a two-tier piece or component to her program: one is she deals with the administrators for the school district - central office as well as building administrators - and she places the responsibility upon the building administrators to develop what is called an *equity team* or 'E team,' for short, which I am a member of. And what we basically do is put into effect some of the techniques that she discusses with us as a group. She's only here about four times per school year, so a lot of the work is left up to us. We kind of take what she's telling us and putting it in motion. And just in the response alone you can kind of see the tensions that can still be so prevalent when the issue of "minorities in schools" is raised. I heard other schools had a rougher time with some of the information that Lynne was bringing to the table. Our school...for the most part, there was a small divide. I mean, there were people saying, "There's too much time and energy being spent on this particular cause," and "I don't think this is the right direction." But then there were those who were saying, "You know, this is fantastic" "It's a great idea," and "Let's move forward with it."

I think one of the best things that's happened so far from this training being brought to the district is that people are now more comfortable talking about things that they probably wouldn't have ever brought up amongst people of other races before. Don't get me wrong. There is still that black conversation that you have just amongst your black colleagues, and vice versa, I'm sure; but, for the most part, people have become more aware....One day I spoke to the staff as a whole and told them about an experience I had in a shopping store, and you know if you're a black person, it's like, "Oh, I've heard that a hundred times." But basically I shared that experience and a few other examples and afterward the [white colleagues] would

come up and they're like, "You know, I just don't think that way. I don't walk into a shopping mall and think about who's watching me and who's following me. That is just not on my mind, you know." I had a lot of white teachers come up to me and say, "Man, I just never knew."

And of course there's a term for that that's been coined *white privilege*. And it is very true; it definitely still exists. Although we'd like to say things have really changed, they actually haven't, not that much anyway. And I understand that there are some good people on both sides of the fence fighting for a good cause, and I think it's been that way for awhile. So I do appreciate the folks that are of another ethnic background, culture, or whatever who do recognize the struggle and try their best to participate. So we kind of take it with a grain of salt... we make sure they remain true to the cause, and we try to do what we can. But yeah, that white privilege...I can definitely go on for days about that. I mean we all deal with it every day.

For example, a lot of times what I've noticed is that, since I've been at the school, a lot of the white parents, specifically white parents with pretty good financial standings, they know the loopholes. They know the procedure, they know the drill, and when things happen, they really don't have a lot of trouble expediting certain things and making sure they take place, and making sure that their kids gets any assistance that's available to smooth the situation over. A lot of your minority kids, African American and Latino kids, especially ones from lower socioeconomic backgrounds...neither they nor their parents tend to know about these things, and if someone in the system doesn't step up and speak to them, then they just take whatever come down the pipe, and life goes on, you know.



From an administrative perspective, I like the idea that there's rarely confrontation with them [parents of color] and they really don't question your judgment. I also know that you kind of do them a disservice when you don't let them know what's available, and what other kids are doing. Because the bigger picture is, respect-wise, you kind of look at it and go, "You know what? That parent respects the school and respects our decision and understands that there has to be consequences," but at the end of the day they kind of suffer because their kid is 16, and might already have something on his records, whereas the other kid knew about some program like *Safe Pre-Trial and Intervention* and they go through that process and it pretty much takes them...they bypass the whole having a criminal record piece. So if you think about it like that, then its not a good thing in that respect.

What it boils down to is they've [white parents] been exposed to a variety of things. They have put themselves into situations where they have been able to rub elbows with the town mayor, with whatever governor...just numerous people in positions that basically carry a whole lot of weight and a whole lot of pull. And they don't hesitate to call these people. And if they can't help them, they most certainly can direct them to someone who can...It's a network. It's amazing to see how that works, and you see it all the time. You know, I mean, those kinds of things stand out...And lot of times we're quiet about it, but they definitely stand out. So, I think you've just got to put that much more energy into making sure that those opportunities are known and are made available to the kids that matter in that situation...And whatever you need to do to make that a fair process, do it. I certainly believe that if parents knew about it, any parent - if they knew it would help their child do better down the road - would most certainly want to take advantage of it.

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My thing is that I deal with the individual child. I think one of the things that help me keep my cool as an administrator is that I don't fall into the loop of "Why aren't these kids doing it?" I hear that so often from educators, you know, "I gave them a chance!" I kind of laugh when I hear it, and go, "A chance?" Man, if somebody gave me *A* chance, I'd have been in trouble. I've gotten chances and I'm still getting chances, you know. I mean, when I look at the way tests are designed...standardized tests really just don't cater to African Americans, they just doesn't. Hell, I just took the GRE and I was disappointed by my score....For the most part, the system still caters to the privileged...it really does and whether you want to say white, or just privileged period. I mean when you look at the courses that are set out there...like at Steeple Grove, it's no secret that we promote academics. We promote the Ivy League schools. And the kids who will go on to become hairstylists, or mechanics, or do woodworking...those aren't the kids that we're throwing a party for. That's just plain and simple what it boils down to. And we should, because how many teachers are booking out of the door on Fridays to go get their hair done? And believe me, the people who are doing their hair are making a whole lot more money than those teachers are making, you know....So again, we don't give them enough credit, and honestly that's where the extreme talent lies with a lot of minorities...*extreme talent*. And as a part-time entertainer, I hate the fact that people talk down not just to the arts in general, but to anything that relates to dancing or rapping or whatever the case...And my thing is our people, we've been known for being talented in those areas: entertaining and sports.

So that's my take, you know...the system we work under, the flag we put our blood, sweat, and tears into...I really just don't think it's a system that give us a fair shot. We don't start on the same playing field. It's almost like you're running track but you've got to start 20 paces behind...How do you make up for that? That's the gap. How do you make up for that? That, we haven't done yet.... You know, I personally hate the term "no child left behind." I ask people all the time, "Please name for me the one era in history when no child was left behind, and I'll get into a time machine and go there and live happily; because as far as I'm concerned, it just never existed." And it's not going to. You've got to just work within the system and I do it one child at a time. I mean, that's how you do it and survive in the system, and not burn yourself out or get stressed out, you know?

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But I think the majority of people at Steeple Grove are trying to fight the good fight. I think what people get lost in is the methods that people are using to fight the fight. And what I mean by that is that there's amongst some, definitely amongst the black and white staff, differences on how we approach children.... But if I had to sit here and tell you the people who aren't doing their job, the list would be short. It would be a short list of the people that I really feel are not about the cause and probably got a tinge of racism in them...but for the most part, a lot of people do want to see the improvements and they are about the cause. Anytime you can get those kind of folks to come along, especially in education, you've got to appreciate them. You've got to appreciate those kind of people, you really do....I don't see there being enough white allies, so we better get to work.

Final thoughts...I would encourage everyone involved in education to continue to believe in...to remind yourself that these children are a very delicate carvings, and to remember that the things we do will affect them. Whether you know it or whether they know it, it definitely will affect them in the future. And you want to, or you should want to, make sure that whatever effect you're responsible for is going to have a positive impact. I laugh and chuckle because I know 10 years from now, kids won't even remember my name. They won't remember it, but they'll be able to say, "That guy..." and hopefully that whatever comes next will be a positive response, and hopefully it will be something along the lines of "Now I see what that guy meant."

### **Natalie**

*At 28, Natalie is the youngest school administrator in her district. Natalie grew up in a mixed community, attending schools with diverse student bodies until college. Both her undergraduate and graduate degrees are both from PWIs. She began her teaching career as a chemistry teacher at an affluent high school in the Triad region of the state. Currently, she is completing her first year as principal of Mance Middle School while pursuing her EdD in Educational Leadership.*

My morning routine is very brief because I do all of my prep at night, so typically I can go from bed to car in 20 to 25 minutes and that's by design because I love to sleep. I like to get to school between 6 and 6:30 a.m. I call the time between 6am and 6:48am, when my teacher assistant comes in, 'the quiet hour.' I use that time to sign checks or to look at payroll or things that I need to do that require quiet. I'll check email and address anything that I may have left from the night before that I need to do on the computer. I answer the phones of course. Occasionally, I have teachers that call the school to say that they are going to be out or they're going be late. The teachers and administrators start rolling in around 7:00 a.m.

At 7:30 a.m. the building officially opens and my first bus arrives. Kids come in and they go downstairs: 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are in the gymnasium, 6<sup>th</sup> graders are in the cafeteria and we provide free breakfast to all of our children. 7:30 a.m. is also when my official duty time starts. All of my administrators, in addition to several teachers, have duties where they have to be in certain areas of the building by that time. Typically my duty has been the lower commons; however, that's also the time when many of my Hispanic parents will drop by. And even though we have grade level administrators, in their minds it doesn't matter what grade their child is in, they want to see the principal. And so most of the time I accommodate them if it's something that we can do briefly. I let parents know that if they want to have a conversation, I have to be visible when the bell rings at 8:10 a.m. because my kids have to see me. They really don't do well when they think, or know, that I'm not in the building.

I'm primarily responsible for 7<sup>th</sup> grade and they go electives at 8:28am, so at 8:15 a.m. I make my way into every 7<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom. I do the Pledge of Allegiance with them and make sure they can lay eyes on me. That's also the time that I pull those children who received referrals the day before. Once the bell has rung and my kids are transitioning to electives, I may have a couple of children who missed after-school detention or ISS, and I'll deal with those children quickly. After that, the rest of my day typically is ungoverned. By that I mean, after I've dealt with any children that have discipline issues from the previous day, I'll go ahead and start getting into classrooms and focus on being with my children. 7<sup>th</sup> graders go to lunch at 10:45 a.m., so I spend from about 10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. in the cafeteria. Usually

I spend longer a little longer than that because I get to see kids from all three grade-levels at lunch. And then I'm back into classrooms again.

However, I'm pulled out of classrooms if a child needs my attention. We have severe and profound EC children in the building and 22 multiple categorical handicapped children. I have 6 children in wheel chairs, children that are non-verbal, non-mobile and they are moved several times to standards. We have two feedings, those kinds of things. I have autistic children and children with diabetes, so sometimes there are medical issues with those children and I may be called out for something like that. We also have lots of IEPs. I have 133 total children that are served, so I may spend time in LEA at IEP meetings. I try to check email at least 3 or 4 times a day so that if there is something urgent, I am available to do that. Typically I don't take phone calls during the school day, unless it's someone from central office, or a family member and it's an emergency.

As we move through the day to the afternoon, dismissal starts at about 3:12pm so I'm out on duty. Dismissal for bus riders goes until a little after 4:00 p.m. And we're into basketball season so I may have to travel to an away game. Because of our high poverty level, my children are very connected by athletics so it is unacceptable for an administrator not to be at an athletic event, so I divide up our athletic schedule between the administrators. At least three of the four administrators have to be at home games...basketball, football, all home games. Away games, at least one administrator has to be there. If I am not the administrator assigned, I will still make an appearance at that away game. It's important for my parents and for my children, even if I'm just there for a quarter, to see me there. So depending on what we have going on that afternoon, I'll go do that. Games end by 7:00 p.m. Typically

I'm in the building until 8:00 p.m., I'd say four out of five nights during the week. I try not to stay past 9:30 or 10:00 p.m., because then I'm a little tired the next school day. But I try to leave around 8:30ish. I go home, watch BBC, go to sleep and do it all over again.

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We have about 740 children, 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We are 35% Hispanic, 55% African American, 7% Caucasian and a smidgeon of everything else. We're 82% free or reduced lunch. Most of my children live in home situations that the average American would be devastated by. Most of my families...this is probably at least the third generation that they have lived in poverty, and, for many, it's the fourth. A lot of my children are being raised by grandma or grandpa, or an uncle. Many of the children have a parent or grandma or sisters or brothers who are incarcerated for one reason or another. Most of my children don't have working telephones. They don't have school supplies. They don't have enough food at home which is why we provide free breakfast for every child in the building. This is just a very, very, needy population...my children are extraordinarily needy. I have the neediest middle school in our system, probably one of the neediest in the state. You know, my children require things that other children don't, and you have to understand that, and if you don't, you can't be here. And I'm OK with that.

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This school is mostly African American and Hispanic, so the majority of our children are from under-represented groups. Although I have a good number of under-represented group staff members, the majority of my staff is white. And the former principal, who was 15 to 18 years older than me, was a white female. So the

way race plays out in my school day...I think is very key because there is an adjustment factor for the staff because their supervisor now, in most cases, is the youngest person in the room and has the highest position power. And I say position of power because power plays out in lots different ways...but I do have a position power, and I think that plays out in the dynamic of every informal and formal interaction that I have. I don't think there is an interaction that I have during the school day where race is not a key factor...

So, with the exception of one or two, they [the faculty] feel comfortable talking about it [race]... I think that, again, because of the students who are here and us being very honest about the school and talking about race. ...Before I even meet you face to face, you know who we are. So they're not surprised when they look at a class of all black and Hispanic faces. They may not initiate conversations [about race], but they will participate. And I don't know if it makes sense, but I'm OK with that right now, because I have no problem initiating them.

You know, my teachers are comfortable in talking about it, but they're always more comfortable in masking it with just poverty. That's an easier way for them to talk about it. They will talk about it...they don't necessarily fire away, but the conversation always ends up turning itself to just poverty. And that's interesting to me. Because when you look at, for example. black males at Southern Middle, which is the completely opposite of us - very white, very rich - those black males aren't doing well either, and those black males come from middle and upper middle class families. So, it's not just poverty. *Black males* are not doing well, you know, let's talk about the issue. It's not just *poor* black males. It's *black* males. They're not doing well. More of them are identified EC, more of them are in the office. I don't



care what school they go to, it has nothing to do with...there are some issues that contribute, and being poor is one of those issues, but that's not it. And you know we have to get to the point where we're comfortable having those conversations.

And I think some of those conversations are more difficult now that there is someone in this position of power who is black, because of course they don't want to offend me...And they've also found out that I'm connected in our community, and so now there's this notion that, "Not only does she have some power here, but she has some power out there." And it's a different power than the previous principal had. And it does have a lot to do with race. There are things that I can say to children in areas where no one is going to ask me any questions because I'm black. And I'm not an idiot; I'm going to use that to my advantage when I have to. My minority teachers, they address it [race] and speak very openly about it in their classrooms ...sometimes more openly than I would like. But what I tell them if it is helping you connect to that child and ultimately that child is going to become more academically and socially successful, I'm OK with it. And if you say something that you think I need to know about because I'm going to be getting a phone call, just tell me.

The staff understands the needs of the children. Most of them understand the characteristics of a generational impoverished child. They understand that dynamic. They're sensitive and caring, but at the same time they won't make excuses for the kids. They realize that some students go home at night, and it's 20 degrees, and they're cold, and that because of that, the kids are going to come to school differently. But it doesn't mean that the teachers are not going to expect them to follow the rules.... There are some staff members who don't understand that dynamic, so we're doing some targeted staff development for next year because of

that. Those folks have not been able to connect and relate to the students and their families. And inherently...overwhelmingly, the reason they have not is because they are too used to that allegiance that people give them because they're white, especially white males...just that unwritten and unspoken power that white males have that has always been there for them. When someone does not give them the respect that they think they deserve, *not that they've earned*, but that they deserve because of their role as a classroom teacher or as an assistant principal or the principal, then you know, there's a disconnect in their mind...it just does not make sense. It's almost like they get an error message and that error message will sometimes translate into berating children, and I have had to formally address one teacher in particular because there are some things that I just refuse to tolerate. And so there's that fine line because you have to have those conversations with people about race, but you know it's just not something that people *want* to talk about.

My staff is very young. Two-thirds of them have less than 5 years experience. But they are very good. Most of them are here because they want to be. They care about our children and what we're doing here, and they're on board. It's a very...for the most part I would say, I have a stronger faculty than you would think would be at a school like this. So I'm really impressed. I'm actually proud to be affiliated with the staff. They do a good job. They work very hard. And those that have some areas of need are very...with the exception of a few, are very, very receptive. So, we have miles to go, but yes, they are...the staff is doing a good job. So it's a great place to be.

\* \* \*

The kids are...my children are more tolerant and accepting of different races and I think that has a lot to do with the fact that I have the MCH children here, so

they see kids with special needs. And they're not in class with all white people. You know, you are never the only minority student in the room and you're never the only majority student in the room. And usually you're in a classroom with several other...you know, our classrooms are more triangular...not quite one-third white children, but you've definitely got two thirds African American and Hispanic. And my multiracial children just kind of fit in wherever their parents guide them. Most of the time that's black, although I do have quite a few who identify as multiracial.

I've just always handled my dealings with children by being honest... There are children who will tell me, and it is typically just because of the color of my skin, they will say, "You know, Ms. Lewis, such-and-such is mistreating me." "Such-and-such is doing this." "Such-and-such is doing that." "Ms. Lewis, I don't like white people." And they will come out and say that. My black children will say that behind closed doors to me all the time. So, we do have race discussions. I have children that say they hate white people. I have quite a few. So we have to address that. You know, so it's about asking them questions and trying to get them to understand that we don't need to make those kinds of generalizations. We need to like people for people, and that kind of thing.

So if a child comes to me about something that's occurred, and it's a race issue, then I sit down and talk to that child about race, and how it has or has not impacted me in that particular circumstance. And I can use myself, and I can use my mom, and because I have done things that are...I mean, all of my degrees have been from majority universities. I've never lived in a minority neighborhood. So because my experiences are so different, I have to be bluntly honest and tell them the things that I have experienced, and how I've dealt with them. I tell them about how I've watched

my mother deal with issues being an African American woman who's a doctor in a small county. And just the reality that she's 62 years old, and that she's still experiencing some things, and that it's not going to go away. And what I really try to stress is that, ultimately you have a power...in terms of how you react to any situation that you're put in. So usually after we talk about the issue, it's about how are we going to react the next time.

I think kids are resilient. Kids really learn to adjust and navigate well, so I don't mind having those conversations with them. I encourage them. I think our teachers sometimes are shocked by the things that they realize kids pick up on. They know whether you care or not. They know if it's a race issue. They know...they just pick up on those things.

\* \* \*

I think overall, I have a good relationship with my parents. My Hispanic families, they feel comfortable calling me and writing me notes. I have a full time translator. My SRO is bilingual, so you know I make sure that I communicate with them and they feel comfortable. I don't think I've ever had a Hispanic family call in and set up an appointment though, ever. And it's probably...I don't ever expect my day to go as I plan it...that's not it. But you know its just frustrating because they will come in and you know they want to see me, and I may tell them that I'm observing classrooms and it will be 10 or 15 minutes and they'll wait. You know it's a cultural thing...they just never set up appointments. But you know, many of them work in factories and mills and on farms and this, that, and the other...so when they come in, that's when they have the time or the transportation to come in. So I just work with it.

My white families...I think that is the group, if I had to complain about one that has been more difficult...and it's not that they're more difficult so to speak, they just don't know how to communicate with me . They're scared to offend me, so they'll tiptoe around an issue and I have to get them comfortable enough to tell me what the issue is. And you know the bottom line is that I have to make them feel comfortable...

Most of the time, because of my population, and because my mother is a very successful doctor in this community, I have parents who come in who know my mother is so there's automatically a connection there. There are parents who automatically feel a connection because of race. On the same token, although I have less than 10 percent Caucasian students here, some of those parents are...well, threatened would be strong word, but I think there is some disconnect in their mind...for whatever reason. There is a disconnect in their mind that, "Yes, this is a school that is attended by mostly under-represented students," but in their mind, principals aren't supposed to be black women. It's like that just doesn't make sense. There's a...they don't make that...I don't know...it's just not how it's supposed to be. So you know there are all these issues...and I think that, ultimately, race is a key factor there too.

\* \* \*

I have some friends who are colleagues, and you know, they're at 98 percent majority schools, and they love it, but I would be insanely bored. I think it would be completely different from my experience now...but that's just not my fight. I have no passion for that.

I think there is always an underlying current of race for me, and it's never going to go away because I can't change the color of my skin. I think that has been prevalent in every step, whether it was when I was a teaching cadet at SAU, or as a teacher, or as an administrator...that dynamic of race does not change. It's there and unfortunately, I'm going to continue to be in a role that has traditionally been for whites, and usually white males. And although we have seen school leadership change, it has changed faster in the area of gender than it has in race. So the bottom line is...I don't know that there's going to be any aspect of my life, past, present, or future that race has not had some kind of role. Blatant...true blatant discrimination, I've been very fortunate to have avoided most of that. But the underlying day-to-day issues that you deal with in terms of communication, the verbal and non-verbal perception, especially in a leadership position, a position of power...it's evident in everything here, and I don't see that changing any time soon.

### **The Central Office Administrator**

#### **Lauren**

*At 36 years of age, Lauren is entering her 13<sup>th</sup> year in the field of education. Raised and schooled in Virginia in a mixed community, she is now a central office administrator in a North Carolina college town. A former high school assistant principal, Lauren is completing her pursuing an EdD in Educational Leadership while she works full-time for the district.*

Well, I live about 5 minutes away from work which is great because I like to sleep, so I get up as late as possible. I schedule just enough time to take a shower, and get dressed. So in 35 to 40 minutes, I can be out of the house and at work. I don't eat breakfast, but I do drink coffee - a lot of it. Every day is different. I guess my day starts with just checking emails and voice mails as well as figuring out if

there are any crises of the day that I need to take care of right away. But with this job, it's really just meetings. ...One of my biggest challenges is trying to balance all the professional development opportunities there are outside of the district that I'm encouraged to attend with having enough time in this office to be available for my teachers and other colleagues, as well as enough time to actually implement the work that I'm learning outside of the building.

So a typical day would be about 50% meetings if I'm in the building. If not, it could be easily filled up with this training, or this workshop, or being in the schools with teachers. I'd say I may be out of the building about 40% of the time, so 60% of the time I'm here and of that time, half of it's spent in meetings. And these meetings could be with a variety of people. Most of our collaborations are done with people inside this building, whether that be testing folks...like this morning I was in a meeting for 2 ½ hours with the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, both high school principals, and all the high school AP's, and we talked about a new local board policy requiring that end-of-course exams be passed in order for students to pass a class which is going to be a state requirement next year. The meetings could be with folks in Instructional Services. We...that is the Math/Science coordinators, the Gifted Ed coordinator, AVIDS, student services, anyone that has something to do with instruction, we meet every other Monday. Within my area, we have meetings monthly. We also have an administrative interns sessions that happen about every six weeks...

But there are a lot of things I do that take me out of the building. Most of the things I have to go to are just because of my role. This year it's a little bit different because our secondary director is serving as the interim principal for one of the

middle schools and she's been there since the end of October. But since we haven't hired anyone yet, we kind of divvy up her responsibilities, so this year I get a lot more emails, phone calls, messages from my assistant superintendent saying, "Lauren, I need you to go to this. We need a warm body there to be the eyes and ears for the district. We can't be out of the loop on these things."

I'd say most days I'm out of here by 5:30 p.m. I mean there are meetings, high school advisory board meetings, regular school board meetings, local team meetings, etc. and since registration is going to kick up at the beginning of next year, there will be lots of informational kind of nights coming up for middle school parents of rising freshmen to promote career and technical education, the different academies we have, things like that. But it's not over-bearing because they don't happen every week. I'd say that on average I have at least one night obligation every other week which is good because from being in the building as an assistant principal, you could bank on at least 3 nights a week.

I work really hard not to bring work home. My work style is such that I'd rather stay late at work until 10:00 p.m. and do it there, rather than bring it home. And I try to do that mentally as well as in reality. Home is my sanctuary...I really don't want to contaminate it with other stuff. I want work and home completely separate.

\* \* \*

This is my third year in the district, and I believe the fifth year the district has been working with Lynne Doubletree and *Equity and Beyond*. It's a two-day intensive training for administrators and school building team members on



achieving equity in schools<sup>21</sup>. And really the gist of *Equity and Beyond*... to me the biggest thing is to be more conscious of examining things through a race lens, and paying attention to how other things that we look at that we think aren't about race, like culture, or SES, or region or whatever, really are about race and that's very different. I've taken multi-cultural workshops and classes before, but this is very different, and some of the parameters are: You will not find closure today; you will feel uncomfortable; it will be unsettling; you must speak your truth; you can't intellectualize or say, "Well, my friend says..." or "I read..." or "I saw..." You know, it's about you and your life and your experience, and that's really hard...staying on topic, examining things through race, and examining whiteness, which is something that I had never really thought about before. It's like, "Yes, white is a color," but still, we don't look at whiteness the same way we do as being black or Asian, it's just kind of taken for granted that being white is like water to fish, it's just there.

So I'd say out of those two days of training, those are probably the two hardest things: examining whiteness and staying on race and not all these other things. So it's mandatory for all administrators...new principals or APs, you have to attend those two-day trainings. And then principals invite other folks on their staff to be on their building's equity team. I'm on the district equity team, and each school building has a school building equity team, and the model revolves around building the capacity to staff develop yourselves into all of this, not just always having to have Doubletree come in from the outside, but to build capacity within the district and within your school buildings to pick this up and carry it on.

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<sup>21</sup> Lauren says the *Equity and Beyond* program defines equity as, "Raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students; and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories."

So when I was talking about my day I guess...as a district equity coach, we have lots of things that we have to do. In fact, I have so many conflicts sometimes that I don't get to go to all of the meetings. Our district equity coach's meeting is once a month...So there's a lot of time commitment with being an equity coach because I have schools that I'm assigned to. Sometimes they call me and say, "Lauren, I'd like for you to facilitate something I'm doing with my staff regarding equity at this faculty meeting," so things kind of spawn from that.

When I was at an assistant principal at West, I think that I was just assigned as an equity coach...I think most principals, I guess...you know, being an African American woman, of course, that's going to give me a few stars towards being equity coach, and because there's not as much diversity here as we'd like...so I think anytime you have a staff member of color, they are going to be a prime candidate in this district. But I liked it and found that I was very comfortable with leading discussion groups and when I came over here to the central office, I was on the list as an equity coach...so you know, again, from my experience at West, but also as administrator, as an African American woman, I guess they thought, "Well, she held her own, she didn't make anybody too mad, so we're going to keep her as a coach." And that's just how it's worked out.

With *Equity and Beyond*... well, no one really openly resists to this. I mean they're smart enough to know you can't just say things that—its' not politically correct. But, I think folks are all over the place. I think, whew, some people are very resentful of it. I mean examining race is ugly, and once you scratch the surface and really start thinking about why some people hold stereotypes so near to them...it can get ugly. So I think people are faced with that, and it's easy just to kind of push it

down and appear on the surface as though we're all together, everybody has pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. We're really all the same! But *Equity and Beyond* does not allow you to do that. I mean you have to look at inequity and it's very difficult to say that race does not have anything to do with that. And Lynne is very good with making things personal, local. ...Some times people that are not so happy with what's going on and they may be the most vocal in the community, arguing that, "This is hurting our kids." Like if we're paying more attention to equity, and the under-served black or brown kids are being focused on, then some folks see that as "That means you've taken something away from me." It's not seen as a win/win. It's seen as a... who's losing. It's a...zero sum game.

I think the stage that we're in right now is the hard part, because folks kind of—we've gone through a phase where it's not going to go away. I mean people can be excited about things in the beginning because there's an assumption that "Oh, in 3 years it will be done, so we can hang with this." But it's not going away, and so it's almost that we're in a position where there almost could be a backlash in terms of why are we doing this, this isn't important, it offends people.

I think it's definitely made an impact on policy, and how we do things, you know just equity for example regarding just our school's schedule. You know, some folks can afford to get to school an hour early for special courses and some folks can't. That's not right. And what does that look like to the kids...so you can call that SES or whatever, but when it comes down to race, it's a big divide there. Also, field trips, supplies, summer school, I mean we've just paid a lot more attention to equity.

Those conversations are just a lot more common. You know, No Child Left Behind helped with that so it's not a shock to people that we have very point blank conversations about race and how it's playing out in terms of achievement. There is more dialogue with people, with our student government association, our parent/teacher organizations where discussions take place. You know I hear from different equity team members that people do say, "Well, that's an equity issue. We can't do that. We can't have a field trip where in 30 days you've got to come up with \$200 to go on the trip. That's not OK." And I'm not sure before this work began if people would have thought like that. It would be more like, "The majority of the kids can, so what?" ...But I think there is still a lot of misunderstanding, misinformation, even though the goal over and over again is to erase the predictability of race and achievement in this district. That's said over and over again. Whenever you see a classroom full of black children, you should not be able to predict that it's a remedial class.

\* \* \*

You know I'm often in places with assistant superintendents, and research people - people that make a lot of changes, a lot of important decisions in school districts - those are the folks that I'm with a lot of the times, and many times I may be the only African American. And many times I may be the only person under 50. So both of those together...it's like I'm very, very, very different. I feel it. There are very few places I go where I feel like I'm in an average group, or in the majority. I just don't....I mean I feel black all day. You know, I don't forget it. I think the people I work with are great, but there's something about the climate of this district that makes things a little more intense than what I'm used to. And I think maybe a lot of

it has to do with the work we're doing in equity. I mean we're so hyperconscious. We're not allowed to just not think about it. I mean you're going to have a meeting or a reading or something and it is just woven into the dialogue of how we talk all the time...race and equity.

But it's also an uncomfortable position to be in too, because there are so few of us that, oftentimes, you're put in a position of being the "spokesperson for Black America," and that's not a good position. And some people [minority educators] may use that as an opportunity to pounce, because you know, we're not too happy about a bunch of things, and in this type of forum, where you can speak your mind, some people may not be conscious of...they may be pushing people back. And therefore white folks are afraid to speak up because they're afraid of being misunderstood, and labeled a racist and all these other things. ...So I think with for people of color, I think it's a blessing and a burden. It's a blessing because finally we can talk about this, especially with those staff member that have been here for decades. And in this environment where it's just so white, I think it's been a relief for them. But at the same time, because this work is so hard and because there are very few minority staff members, and because this is a difficult subject to even communicate effectively...if you choose the wrong words, or you have the wrong tone, or if your voice gets a little loud because you're passionate about it, you know, people just shut down. And so it's hard, difficult work, and you can get that "race-fatigue" that [Julianna] Malveaux talks about, because you are just worn out.

Even though I think I held my own fine, you can develop some insecurities in a place like this, because the parents and the teachers that you interact with kind of come from a place of, "I'm great, I'm smart, I know everything, and who are

you?"...you know to the point where they see your degree from a respected university and they say, "Oh, you went to there?" "Yes." "Really?" You know, not anything intentional, but a lot of "Oh!" and these are intelligent people. They are not ignorant people at all. So I think just the climate of this community is so white and so high achieving, you're going to stick out like a sore thumb...And just the normal pressures of just being in a predominantly white environment where it's assumed if you get the job, it's because they were trying to fill some spaces with some minorities, not because you may be the most qualified. I mean these are not things that are spoken, these are just things that I feel, whether they're real or not.

I think most of these houses in Steeple Grove, the average price is \$400,000. You have to have money to live here, therefore that's going to shade what your population is like, and here at this district, I would guess you know that's probably 70 percent of our population. And that drives a lot of what is deemed important to our community, and so issues such as equity, and needs are very...they have to be communicated very differently to our public. Because our public sees things through the eyes of their child, their family, their income, their educational level. I have found the white community to be much more cutthroat in terms of, "Yes, I like what you have going on here, but I want to make sure my child is at the top...I want them to have more. I want them to have better." I mean, it's all about rank, percentile, competition, preparation for the next step, so they are very much more on the offensive with everything. They want to be on the right committees, they want to hand-pick their teachers, you know not in a direct way, but in a very indirect way. So, and it's just a different set of rules. I mean, it's almost as if...hey, I'm about to get my doctorate and these people absolutely amaze me. I've been a part of education all

my life, and I would not even think, if I had a child, to take this avenue to get this. It's almost like a cult. It's mean, "Do you all meet and decide this is what you have to do or what?" ...but it is different set of rules that they have created that may not be verbalized openly, but there is a method to their madness in terms of getting what they want.

And it's overwhelming for me as an educator. I can't imagine how our black and Latino families could navigate through that, unless they have someone coaching them every step of the way. Yeah, it's just a different set of rules...I mean I think culturally we just have a very different, and I'm learning more about the Latino community as well, but just a very different world view of what the role of school is in a child's life and there's a lot more trust, I think, within the black community. [They see] that, "Those are school people. They're doing school and unless something bad happens, I'm assuming that they're making the best decisions in terms of how the school is designed to support my child's experience."

But in this community, everything is seen as, "Well, what am I going to have to give up if we do this?" And it's challenging because you know, I think this community prides itself in on being very liberal and open-minded..."Free Tibet," and "Let's buy coffee from Free Trade," but when it comes to our Latino and African American children aren't doing very good and maybe we need to do some things differently so all children can succeed, it's like "No, we don't want to change anything. Everything is just fine. I like my kid taking 7 AP's and on anti-depressants, and as long as he gets into Harvard, who cares?" You know, that type of thing...so that has been an eye-opening experience and I don't think that if I had

come here...I don't think if anyone had described this to me, I would have believed it. I really don't.

I just try to have an outlook on life where I see everything as an opportunity for growth, reflection, and learning. That's one of the great things I love about education, it's like a bit psych lab, every day. You know watching how people cope with change and motivation and all these things, which is fabulous. That's why I love it. So it's not...sometimes I get angry, I mean, about specific things that happen that I'm not happy about. And I think this training in *Equity and Beyond* has made me more conscious of certain things, patterns I see regarding hiring... political stuff at the building. When I was an assistant principal, I could always kind of put a wall around myself and just deal with my teachers, my kids, my parents. It really didn't matter to me who was superintendent. It didn't really matter to me who was principal, as a teacher. I mean give me the resources I need to do my thing, and that was it. It really didn't matter who those people were in the office. And in this role I get to see a much bigger picture...I get to see patterns of things, you know. So I can get angry sometimes, but I don't let it eat at me...I just use it as a tool for growth.

### **Challenging the Master Narrative**

Parker and Lynn (2002) state that Critical Race Theory evolved through alternative interpretations of traditional legal documents, as well as through intentional legitimization of narrative and storytelling as a means of presenting a different interpretation of how U.S. law has traditionally been used in the justification of ideologies of racism against people of color. Consequently, supporters of Critical Race Theory have advocated for the legitimization of narrative



and storytelling as a means of challenging the dominant accounts of, and preconceived notions about, race and racism.

The counter-narratives in this chapter are valuable for a number of reasons. First and foremost, they provide us access to an experience that has largely been missing from discourses in and on K-12 education. Moreover, when viewed holistically, the stories paint a larger picture of the existence of racism in schools on individual *and* institutional levels. In so doing, these stories reveal the “structural conditions that continue to limit the professional lives of African American teachers and strangle educational possibilities for African American pupils” (Foster, 1990, p.132).

Further, as counter-narratives, they *speak against* the master narrative in American society – a narrative that is based on the social and cultural history of the dominant race. As Bell (2003) notes, this master narrative is evident in those stories, frequently told by whites, that convey “a sense of history as progressive, depict a U.S. society that is basically fair and meritocratic, and assume a trajectory of forward progress in which injustices are eventually recognized and rectified over time” (p.4). In contrast, the counter-narratives told by people of color reflect an awareness of the discrimination that affects every aspect of their lives.

Consequently, because education in the United States was founded on a Eurocentric epistemological perspective grounded in white privilege, the master narrative in education (as a rendition of the larger societal narrative) upholds notions of “democratic” ideals such as meritocracy, objectivity, individuality, neutrality and color-blindness, while simultaneously portraying people of color as deficient and deprived (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002).

The master narrative in education is supported and sustained through several mechanisms including its reification in teacher education programs. Indeed, as was previously mentioned, Solórzano and Yosso argue, many teacher education programs draw on “majoritarian stories” to explain educational inequities through a cultural deficit model and thereby pass on the belief that students of color are culturally deprived (2002b, p.31). And even when more progressive teacher education programs encourage their students to examine the hegemonic ideology that undergird the structure of schooling, such efforts are thwarted when their students hit “the real world” – i.e. schools dominated by teachers and administrators who are “captives of their own sociocultural experiences consonant with the hegemonic ideology” (Quióchos & Rios, 2000, p.486).

And when it comes to race and racism, the master narrative in education is consistent with the societal narrative which affirms the inherent goodness of all but a few overly racist whites. Consequently, when people of color (or their white allies) challenge the master narrative by exposing and naming racism and racist acts, they are often viewed by whites as paranoid and overly sensitive. Yet, while both the education and societal master narratives have served to constrain and suppress such naming, they are not, nor have ever been, uncontested. Indeed, as is evident in the stories of these educators, counter-narratives reveal an examination and interrogation of those unexamined assumptions made by the dominant race. Below, I list some of the assumptions and beliefs that sustain the dominant narrative on K-12 education and schooling - assumptions against which these counter-narratives scream.

- We have made progress towards diversifying school faculties;

- There are no essential differences between students of color, and between students of color and their white peers, that require concerted attention on the part of teachers;
- Most academic subjects, math and science in particular, are objective and are not influenced by culture;
- Teaching all students in the same manner is an effective method of instruction;
- Students of color have equal access to the same educational opportunities as their white peers;
- Though tracking may exist, it is not an intentional process and merely reflects the academic capability of students;
- Class is more powerful or more important or plays a larger role than race;
- Hiring practices in schools are not biased, nor influenced by race;
- Children do not acknowledge race and therefore do not want to talk about it;
- Racism is not perpetuated through a hidden curriculum that devalues the knowledge, ways of knowing, and resources of people of color;
- Blatant, overt racism does not take place in schools because such acts are not condoned, nor are they politically correct;
- People of color welcome opportunities to be representatives of, spokespersons for, and/or resident experts on, their “race” or other minorities;
- There is no such thing as white privilege, nor does it impact every aspect of schooling and;
- If we just ignore racism, in time, it will go away.

## **Chapter Summary**

In a very recent piece on the evolving role of Critical Race Theory in educational scholarship, Ladson-Billings (2005) expresses the following concern:

I sometimes worry that scholars who are attracted to CRT focus on storytelling to the exclusion of the central ideas such stories purport to illustrate. Thus I clamour for richer, more detailed stories that place our stories in more robust and powerful contexts. (p. 117)

I believe that the counter-narratives found in this chapter do just that. Moreover, they add to a growing collection of scholarship that provides alternative interpretations of educational practices and documents the challenges that people of color face in schools (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). As a critical race scholar, I view experiential knowledge as an asset and have thus drawn on the lived experience of these African American educators to counter the dominant educational discourse about people of color. I believe that narrative and storytelling are instrumental for exposing Whites to the tangible realities of race and racism and the ways in which they shape the experiences of people of color, and the experience of educators of color in particular. It is my hope that, in listening to these educator's stories, we might become more conscious of their current reality and that such consciousness might encourage us to challenge racism and other subordination found in schools; and thus dismantle the master narrative in favor of a different kind of story.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **RACE AND RACISM: A SCHOOL STORY**

In this chapter, I use a significant portion of the study's data to offer a response to the three research questions that guided this study<sup>22</sup>. In the following chapter, a subset of the data is offered in conjunction with my own thoughts in an attempt to flesh out the potential consequences and implications of the findings presented in this chapter.

In addressing the first research question regarding the ways in which these educators both experience and view manifestations of race and racism in schools, I have divided my discussion into two parts. The first focuses on the ways in which the educators personally experience race in schools. Employing both Pierce's notion of "microaggressions" and Cose's conception of the "dozen dozens," I offer an analysis of the different circumstances and scenarios in which educators discern that they are being "raced." In the section that follows, I concentrate on the educators' descriptions of the daily manifestation of race and racism in schools. Here, I invoke the concepts of school structures, processes, and discourses to frame the analysis.

The discussion of the daily manifestation of race and racism is then followed by an overview of the ways in which these educators attempt to deal with, or specifically work against, those manifestations. This section is

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<sup>22</sup> The data that I draw from includes quotes from the narratives in *Chapter IV*.

particularly concerned with conceptions of “activism” and “advocacy” as they are engaged by the educators as appropriate responses to the circumstances in which they find themselves<sup>23 24</sup>. The chapter’s final section speaks to the study’s third question regarding the educators’ experiences with white colleagues and their perceptions of the role of white colleagues in advancing an anti-racist education agenda.

### **Being Raced**

In this section, I attempt to illuminate the five educators’ experiences of “being raced” in schools. Specifically, I explore those experiences in which the educators detect that race is being invoked in interactions between themselves and others. The experiences shared by the educators in this study are very similar to those experienced by African American educators in a study conducted by Madsen and Hollins (2000). That study analyzed the experiences of African American educators using Cose’s (1993) “dozen demons” to interpret the educators’ responses to working in a predominantly European American school system. The “dozen demons” refers to 12 racially-influenced themes that Cose argues affect the majority of African Americans professionals. He asserts:

In the workplace, the continuing relevance of race takes on a special force, partly because so much of life, at least for middle class Americans, is defined by work, and partly because even people who accept that they will not be treated fairly in the world often hold out hope that their work will be treated fairly...What most African Americans discover, however, is that the racial demons that have plagued them all of their lives do not recognize business hours...(1993, p. 55.)

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<sup>23</sup> I define activism as “the vigorous and politically-minded activities of individuals and groups aimed at correcting or highlighting inequities, problems in societal institutions or communities” (Brayboy, 2003, p.12).

<sup>24</sup> I define advocacy as follows: 1) the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, i.e. an idea, a policy, or a case; 2) the act of speaking on someone’s behalf; and 3) active support.

Because Madsen and Hollins (2000) refashioned Cose's original demons (which applied to all African American professionals) to intentionally reflect the experiences of African Americans who work in majority white education settings, I use three of their adapted "demons" to help name the experiences shared by these educators. In addition, I provide four of my own.

Further, the experiences of the educators in the present study illuminate the ways in which they are frequently subjected to "microaggressions" - those subtle (or semi-subtle) insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) that are directed towards people of color by whites, often in an unconscious or automatic manner (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).<sup>25</sup> As Pierce points out:

In fact, the major vehicle for racism in this county is offenses done to blacks by whites in this sort of gratuitous never-ending way...Almost all black-white racial interactions are characterized by white put-downs, done in automatic, pre-conscious, or unconscious fashion" (1974, p. 515)

To demonstrate that microaggressions are not just inflicted on African Americans, Solórzano (1998) conducted a study which brought attention to the ways in which Chicano and Chicana students, in addition to their black peers (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000), are subjected to microaggressions, both inside and outside of the classroom. In concluding his findings, he notes that, "...even at higher levels of accomplishment where educational conditions might on the surface appear to be equal, the forms of inequality and discrimination can be more subtle and harder to see" (p.132).

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<sup>25</sup> While *microaggressions* and *demons* certainly overlap, I see microaggressions as being less "situational" than demons.

In reframing his assertion, I argue that, not only are forms of discrimination harder to see at “higher levels of accomplishment” within the educational system, but at higher levels of authority within the K-12 system. Indeed, one might expect to find relatively better circumstances for teachers of color than for their students of color because of their relative position of power and responsibility inside schools. However, as these educators’ experiences attest to, that is simply not the case. Thus, in answering Solórzano’s declaration that, “We need to continue to search for and document additional voices and other subtle and unrecognized forms of racism and sexism throughout the educational pipeline,” (1998, p.132) I offer the following.<sup>26</sup>

*Hyper-visibility/Invisibility\**

One of the most intriguing, and more frequently cited, phenomena experienced by the educators was the sense that their race made them hyper-visible in one moment, yet invisible in the next. In describing this feeling of “hyper-visibility,” Lauren explained:

I mean I feel black all day, you know (laughs). I don’t forget it...You know, I spend a lot of time with superintendents, assistant superintendents, research people...people who make a lot of changes and a lot of important decisions in school districts and many times I may be the only African American there, and many times I may be the only person under 50...so yes, I feel it. There are very few places I go where I feel like I’m in an average group, or in the majority. I just don’t...I think the climate of this community is so white and so high achieving... you’re going to stick out like a sore thumb.

Providing the counter experience of simultaneously being seen and not seen, Diane talks about being “invisible” to her colleagues and students:

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<sup>26</sup> Those themes with asterisks represent my own themes, those without are Madsen and Hollins/Cose’s “demons.”



One thing that has never changed in every school that I've been in, and I don't know if it's cultural or not, but black teachers...we just look at each other as black folk first. And when we see each other in a group or down the hallway, we always speak...And that is something I have heard white folks say they don't understand and it's something that they themselves do not do. They would much rather look the other way, look down, anything but acknowledge that you are there and speak...And it's just amazing how they will go out of their way and speak to other white folks, whether they know them or not, even students; and the students do the same thing. Students that you've had or have now will not speak in the hallway. They will look the other way, pretend you're not there. It's like they don't look...like you're not there.

When asked what she typically does in that situation, she responded, "Well, you get to a point where you get tired of making people speak, and making people acknowledge you, and sometimes you have to say, 'Well, you know what, I don't see you either,' and go on about your business." In keeping with these experiences, Michael shared his frustration with the following scenario:

When I first started, parents would come into the schools and they'd be looking for an administrator, and I'd walk up and go, "Can I help you, Ma'am?" or "Sir?" "Yeah, I'd like to see a principal or assistant principal." And then I would just kind of smile and say, "Can I help you?" "I need to see an administrator." "I'm an assistant principal," I'd respond. And then you kind of get that pause, and that look like...and the looks varied. I mean sometimes it was like so important, whatever they wanted, that they would just kind of go "Whatever..." and go right into the problem they had. And other times they would pause for like a good five seconds, and kind of do a double take, and look. And, you know, I realize I don't fit the mold as far as hairstyle for the typical assistant principal, but still I'd be there in a suit and tie, and you know...but it was just kind of hard to swallow.

In explaining the "invisibleness" felt by the Chicano scholars in his study, Solórzano (1998) linked their feelings to those of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The negativity of such invisibility stems from the fact that white parents do not acknowledge Michael, not because he is invisible, but because, like the Invisible Man, they do not expect him to know anything.

### *Intersecting Identities\**

An interesting aspect of this hyperawareness of self as raced, particularly for the female educators, is the frequent uncertainty as to which aspect of their identity is perceived as dominant during their day-to-day interactions in schools. Noted in Lauren's quote above, this notion of multiple, intersecting identities is encapsulated by Natalie's assessment of how other people make sense of her professional trajectory.

I think there is always an underlying current of race, and it's never going to go away because I can't change the color of my skin. I think that has been prevalent in every step, whether it was when I was a teaching fellow at SAU, as a teacher, as an administrator...the dynamic of race does not change. And it could be—there are times when people will discuss things with me in reference to...mostly in reference to gender and age in terms of how my career has progressed. And in my mind I say they're probably thinking race as well, but it's never stated, and because gender and age are areas that would still, whether I was a white female, would still be something that would stand out in terms of career progression.

Natalie and Lauren's experiences lend credence to the contention that critical race scholars must focus on those spaces where race intersects with other identities because, as is often pointed out, the lives of women of color are both quantitatively and qualitatively different from those of men of color or white women or white men (Solórzano, 1998; Wing, 1997).

### *Shattering Images\**

Both Michael and Natalie's comments above speak to their sense of not quite "fitting the mold" for their professional role. Indeed, as a 28 year old, African American principal of a middle school, Natalie has grown use to the looks on people's faces when they first encounter her. In reflecting on how she often challenges white parents' assumptions, she remarked:

Although I have less than 10 percent Caucasian students here, some of their parents are...I think there's some disconnect in their mind. For whatever reason, they see that, "Yes, this is a school that is attended by mostly under-represented students..." but in their mind principals aren't supposed to be black women. It's like that just doesn't connect for them. There's a...they don't make that connection and I don't know...it's just not how it's supposed to be.

These experiences speak to one of Cose's (1993) demons, *Inability to Fit In*, but do not quite match it (Madsen & Hollins, 2000). Where as the *Inability to Fit In* theme deals with the expectation that, to be worthy of a professional position within an organization controlled by the majority group, African Americans have to measure up to an idealized model of majority group values and behaviors, Michael and Natalie's experiences speak more directly to white parents' inability to even *envision* African Americans as top administrators in schools, which is a necessary pre-cursor for questioning their abilities.

#### *Challenges to Authority\**

While Natalie, Michael, and Lauren's experiences demonstrate how they pose a challenge to the common assumptions about who is supposed to be a teacher, or administrator, or supervisor, their clientele have a habit of challenging them. In particular, Lauren and Natalie's experiences reflect a kind of indirect questioning of their credentials. Here's Lauren:

You can develop some insecurities in a place like this because the parents and the teachers that you interact with kind of come from a place of, "I'm great, I'm smart, I know everything, and who are you?" You know, to the point where they see your degree from UVA and they say, "You went to UVA?" "Yes." "And where are you going now, Carolina?" "Yes, I am." "Really?" You know, not anything intentional, but a lot of "Oh!"

In the same vein, Diane commented on being challenged by her white parents in this way:

You still have whites challenging black teachers. I've had other issues with parents and I know it has to do with race. You know, if I were white, this would not be an issue. You would not challenge a white teacher... You know, and so you just deal with it accordingly... it ticks you off tremendously, but you deal with it.

Whether it is real or all in their minds (as several of the educators speculated), there are more than enough scenarios and interactions that transpire during the school day that keep them wondering as to whether or not, had they been white, things would have gone differently.

### *Pigeonholing*

At least four of the five educators can trace their own “hyper-visibility” to the fact that they work in environments where they are one of a limited number of educators of color. Consequently, three of them talked about being subjected to what Cose refers to as “pigeonholing.” Another of the “demons,” pigeonholing refers to the act of placing African Americans into circumstances or positions where their only relevant expertise concerns African Americans and other minorities (Cose, 1993, Madsen & Hollins, 2000). In relating her own “pigeonholing” experience, Diane seemed very frustrated by the following:

The minority teachers, and there are only 2 of us in the English Department right now, get stuck, as I put it, with the inclusion classes. The inclusion classes...classes with students who have learning disabilities or behaviorally issues...are generally made up of minority students with less than a handful of white students. And all of the other teachers, white teachers, even the brand, new, fresh out-of-college teachers get AP courses, honors courses, or a true regular English class that's not an inclusion. But you want to leave it [the inclusion classes] to minority teachers...and it's really frustrating, because I think the message that is sent is, “Well, they look like you, you must understand them because they're your people,” and my thing is I wasn't raised like them! You know. Just because we look alike doesn't mean that we are alike. And I think it's unfair for them to do that.

Dana expressed similar sentiments when she received a “personal invitation” to lead a discussion group for faculty and students at her school on a summer reading text that dealt with race relations. She commented:

Oh, yes. I got a personal invitation... Originally an invitation was sent out over email,...but someone actually came to my office and said, “Dana, da, da da...” And there were other teachers who were more or less told that they couldn’t say no, in a nice way, but they were told that they couldn’t say no because they were needed to do this...And because there are so few black people who work at the school, almost every black employee was tapped for that which I personally feel is a little bit unfair because I don’t think it’s my responsibility to have to lead these discussions simply because there are no black people here.

In reflecting on how she became an “equity coach,” for her school, and then for the school district, Lauren responded:

When I was at the high school, I think I was just assigned as an equity coach...I think most principals think...I guess because I’m an African-American woman... that’s going to give me a few stars with regards to being an equity coach. ...because there’s not as much diversity as we’d like, I think anytime you have a staff member of color they are going to be a prime candidate in this district.

...When I came over here to the central office, I was on the list as an equity coach, so you know, again, from my experience at West, but also as an administrator, as an African American woman, you know, I guess they thought, “Well, she held her own, she didn’t make anybody too mad, so we’re going to keep her on as a coach.”

While Lauren’s experience demonstrates that the outcomes of pigeonholing are not always negative, all of the stories illuminate that the real issue lies in problematic assumptions made by whites, and the ways in which whites act on those assumptions with little to no deliberation on the implications for the people of color on whom they subject them.

### *Presumption of Failure*

One of the more common features of microaggressions is the ways in which they can significantly affect the confidence and psychological well-being of the person of color subjected to them. Indeed, in acknowledging that she is one of only two African Americans in her department, and the only one who has ever taught an honors course in the department's history, Diane talks about feeling pressure to prove herself and believes that at least one source of her feelings of inadequacy are the students themselves. Moreover, Diane asserts, she is not alone in her sentiments. Apparently, she and another colleague, who is Native American, share those feelings.

We have talked about how we kind of sort of have this thing to prove, not to be the hardest teachers, which we are (laughs), but to prove that we are good teachers, and that, "Yes, we can teach 'your children.'" ...Sometimes I feel like these white kids discount me because I'm black. I always feel like I have to work so much harder to prove that, "Yes, I am worthy." And sometimes I feel like the kids don't realize that until they move on to another teacher.

Madsen and Hollings (2002) found that the *Presumption of Failure*, another of Cose's demons, was related to the visibility of the minority educators in their study. Such visibility within a majority organization, they note, often leads to performance anxiety related to the presumption of their failure by their white peers and administrators.

### *Low Expectations*

A common microaggression, as well as one of the "dozen demons," is low expectations. The *low expectations* theme, which is related to *presumption of failure*, involves having to cope with the low expectations to which others subject you, presumably because of your race. In reflecting on her experiences teaching

in an affluent, predominantly white high school in the Triad region, Natalie recalled:

And even in that setting amongst those parents...and I'm sure they were thinking, "Well, I'm a little concerned about this young, dumb, black teacher...She's teaching what? Chemistry? Huh? And where did she go to school? ...Oh, so she didn't go to A&T?"

Natalie's reflection combines two experiences: that of being subjected to whites' low expectations because of her race; and, as alluded to earlier, not fitting into the space/place associated with those expectations (i.e. the assumptions about her attending A&T, an HBCU, rather than the respected PWI she did attend).

### *Coping Fatigue*

Ultimately, people of color can be assaulted by so many microaggressions that they become both literally and figuratively tired. As Pierce (1995) notes, "In and of itself a microaggression may seem harmless, but the cumulative burden of a lifetime of microaggressions can theoretically contribute to diminished mortality, augmented morbidity, and flattened confidence" (p. 281). Thus, in reflecting on both the benefits and detriments of her districts' equity work for her peers of color, Lauren speaks to Cose's notion of *coping fatigue*,

And I think with people of color...I think it's a blessing and a burden. It's a blessing because finally we can talk about this, especially those staff members that have been dealing with this for decades in this environment, where it's just so white, you know. I think it's been a relief for them. But at the same time, because this work is so hard and because there are very few minority staff members, and because this is a difficult subject to even communicate effectively... if you choose the wrong words, if you have the wrong tone, or if your voice gets a little loud because you're passionate about it, you know, people just shut down...So it's hard, difficult work, and you can get that race fatigue that [Julianna] Malveaux talks about because you are just so worn out.

Indeed, despite being in a relatively supportive setting when it comes to addressing race, the constant encounters with low expectations, presumptions of failure, pigeonholing (and a host of other demons and microaggressions to which they are subjected) serve to deplete not only their personal energy, but for some, their aspirations as well (Madsen & Hollins, 2000).

Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) argue that racial microaggressions, in both academic settings and social spaces, have “real consequences,” which become most visible in people of colors’ struggles with self-doubt, frustration, isolation and pure exhaustion. As these educators’ experiences reflect, racial microaggressions are not anomalies in their day-to-day encounters with colleagues, students, and parents; rather, they are a frequent part of their daily interactions within their work environment. Perhaps, then, those who are particularly concerned with the recruitment and retention of educators of color would do well to critically examine their educational institutions. Such efforts would be most effective if time is not wasted on checking for the *presence* of microaggressions, but on an evaluation of their number and extent, and most importantly, their impact on those educators of color are already there.

### **Race and Racism as Manifested in School Structures, Processes, and Discourses**

#### *School Structures*

Either unrecognized or seen as “natural” because of their familiarity as part of a school’s culture, school structures refer to those structures and formations, both tangible and intangible, which produce exclusion and inequity by maintaining designated and undesignated spaces where specific knowledge is



dispensed to certain students and denied to others. For example, Yosso (2002) asserts that magnet or Gifted and Talented programs; and accelerated, honors and Advanced Placement (AP) college preparatory programs, all of which offer wonderful resources to the students that they serve while simultaneously structuring racial inequality that impacts students well beyond college, can be understood as examples of the “curricular structures” found in schools. And though the educators in this study did not necessarily name them as such, they were more than able to provide similar examples from in their own schools.

For example, both Michael and Lauren, who work in the same school district, talked about the “zero period” that was a part of districts high schools’ daily schedule. In recounting the events of a typical work day, Michael mentioned that,

We offer a Zero Period before school...It’s pretty much *exclusively for a few advanced classes* [italics added] like for honors, advanced art programs, advanced math courses, symphonic band...just anything in that category, and they all happen at 7:45 in the morning...*which only some kids are going to take advantage of. You know, some kids have transportation to get there and some kids don’t* [italics added].

In providing an example of how the districts’ equity work was impacting schools, Lauren also mentioned the zero period, specifically the efforts underway to try to address its “inequitableness.” In her remarks, she noted:

I think it’s [the districts efforts to address equity issues] definitely made an impact on policy, and how we do things, you know, just equity regarding our schedule for example. You know, some folks can afford to get to school an hour early and some folks can’t. That ain’t right. And what does that look like to the kids you know. In this community...brown and black kids must go, ‘You know, there are some folks who can’t and they usually look like me, and the folks that can, often are white...’

The zero period, as a representative piece of a school structure (the daily schedule) demonstrates the ways in which such formations serve to place certain students at an academic disadvantage. Moreover, it demonstrates the complexity of the inequity of certain school structures. Not only is the timing of the period problematic in that certain students can make it to school at 7:45 a.m., but the fact that the courses are designated as “advanced” (and thus is exclusionary) constitutes them as “structures” in and of themselves. Importantly, what is obvious, yet is often unstated, are the differences in the racial and class identities of the students who can attend and/or who are enrolled in the zero period courses.

Another of Michael’s comments, this one regarding course offerings (and the curriculum they entail) illuminates the ways in which school structures can effectively *define* a school and in so doing, defines the population it sees itself as serving (which inevitably reveals who gets left out). In summarizing his outlook regarding the educational opportunities that his school, and more broadly his district, provided to some students and not to others, Michael criticized:

When you look at the courses that are set out there, even in Steeple Grove, as a district...it’s no secret that we promote academics. We promote the Ivy League schools. You know, the kids who go on to become hairstylists, you know, mechanic, woodworking...those aren’t the kids that we’re throwing a party for. That’s just plain and simple what it boils down to, you know.

The nature of educational structures, particularly the ways in which they limit some students’ options while opening up opportunities to others, is evidenced in one of Dana’s reflections about her school. She pointed out that one of the unique things about The Graham School was the opportunity available to

students to conduct formal research. However, she noted that gaining access to that opportunity appeared easier for some students than others. She notes:

There was an African-American student who is very smart, makes good grades...When she went to inquire about research; there was apparently no research available for her... There are lots of white students and Asian students who participate in research. And it was a little bit daunting, I guess, to find out that no one had sought her out to participate in research activities... When she inquired she could not get a straight answer, and it was very frustrating for her...if someone had told her that [about potential prerequisites], I think she would have been...she would have understood. But because she was not aware of any prerequisites for participating in research... it just became frustrating for her.

We might infer, from the example provided, that what set off Dana's "radar" was her sense that when white and Asian students seek out research opportunities, they are not met with the troubles experienced by this young African American girl. Though Dana does point out structural/structuring factors (i.e. pre-requisites) that may help to explain the situation in which the girl found herself, they are not enough to dismiss the suspicion that race is playing a role in the dynamic.

One of the more complex structures found in some of the educators' schools revolved around social networks, sustained by the economic, cultural and social capital of wealthy white parents, that are used to advantageously position their children. Part of the complexity of this particular structure, I believe, result from both its intangibility as well as the fact that while the effect of the structures directly impact what transpires inside schools, the "activity" of the network often takes place outside school walls. Michael brings greater clarity to this notion when he explains:

You know, really what it boils down to is they [white parents] have been exposed to a variety of things. They have put themselves into

situations where they've been able to rub elbows with the town mayor, with whatever governor, whatever...just numerous people in positions that basically have a whole lot of say and a whole lot of pull. And they don't hesitate to call these people. And if they can't help them, they most certainly can direct them to someone who can...It is a network. It is a network. It's amazing to see how that works though, and you see it all the time.

Both amazed and amused by the phenomenon, Lauren lamented:

I mean, you know, it's almost as if...I'm about to get my doctorate and these people amaze me. I've been a part of education all my life and I would not even think, if I had a child, to take this avenue to get these things. I mean it's almost like a cult. I'm like, 'Do you all meet and decide this is what you have to do, or what?' But it is different set of rules that they have created for themselves...That may not be verbalized openly but there is a method to their madness in terms of getting what they want.

When asked whether or not the same type of network existed in the African American community she responded:

It exists. I think there are some key individuals...I'm not sure I could say that there are families that are influential to the point where people perk up and go, 'We better listen to what they have to say,'...but from my experience, I don't think anybody is scared of them. You know they may be unhappy about the selection of a principal or the central office leadership, but I don't really think anyone...no one is scurrying to make them happy I don't think. So no, I think people listen, but they definitely...I would not consider them having the same clout anywhere even close to the clout that the white community has in terms of monopolizing school board meetings, getting certain agendas pushed, all of that.

In the analysis at the end of this section, I analyze this structure and in so doing invoke the notion of whiteness as property to help explain its existence and purpose.

### *School Processes*

School processes tend to encompass those practices, standardized and un-standardized, that serve to maintain racial, gender and class inequality. I begin with an example, in which Michael expands on his above reflection, which

highlights an important reality: the line that divides a process from a structure is often blurred. In the following example, my interpretations of this phenomenon are inserted in brackets:

A lot of times what I've noticed is, and this is probably something...well, it's nothing new, is that a lot of the white parents, and specifically white parents with pretty good financial standings, they know the loopholes [*structure*]. They know the procedure [*process/structure*], they know the drill [*process/structure*], and when things happen, they really don't have a lot of trouble expediting certain things [*process*] and making sure they take place, and make sure that their kids get [*process*] any assistance [*structure*] that's available to kind of smooth the situation over.

He continues with an assessment of how the network, as both process and structure, is engaged differently (or not at all) depending on the race and/or class of the parent. He asserts:

A lot of the minority kids, African-American and Latino kids - especially ones from low social/economic backgrounds - they tend to not know, and their parents don't, and if someone in the system doesn't step up and speak up, then they just kind of take whatever come down the pipe, and life goes on, you know.

Those school processes which negatively impact marginalized students are most commonly manifested in the sorting procedures that direct certain students into school structures wherein they are presented with specific knowledge and information. Of course, the most well documented process is that of "tracking" certain students into certain educational courses or tracks. For example, in the process of explaining her typical work day, Diane made a distinction between the "regular 10<sup>th</sup> grade English courses" offered by her department and the courses that are "called 'regular English' but are really 'inclusion classes,'" because of the large number of students with learning disabilities and behavioral issues enrolled

in them. Of the two English honors courses she teaches and the two 'regular inclusion' courses, Diane observes that

...the regular inclusion classes are generally made up of minority students and the honors classes are generally just the opposite...Both of my inclusion classes are, for the most part, black students. I have one student who is white in my last period class, who is an EC student, but that's it.

When asked if she thought that all of the students in her inclusion classes belonged there, she remarked, "You find a lot of students of color are misplaced. But, unfortunately, they don't always speak up or have parents that speak up and say, "Okay, we've got to get you in the right class." Diane's response speaks to Michael's earlier assessment and points to the complicated link between race and advocacy (broadly defined) in schools.

Another discussion with Diane on the phenomenon of tracking (and the processes and procedures of which it consists) revealed other concerns regarding how, and why, students get placed into certain courses. In her reflections, she commented:

Generally I find that white teachers lack of discipline in the classroom, and if they were to have a really unruly class, they wouldn't know what to do. So, I guess because the kids are black, the sentiment is put them with black teachers, and they'll know how to handle them. And that's I think is a huge misconception, and I'm sure those who designed the schedule every year don't think about it consciously, but I feel like, to a degree, you have to. There's some part of you that has to.

Diane's assessment takes issue with those who would argue that tracking in schools is merely a reflection of students' academic capabilities. Rather, the decisions that are made regarding which students are placed into which classes are grounded in the subjective assessments of teachers, counselors, and administrators that often times have little to do with academic abilities or

performance. Indeed, they may have more to do with the inadequacies of white teachers to work effectively with students of color.

Interestingly, the educators in this study noted that there are just as many ‘processes’ that directly affect them as there are those that affect their students. In particular, Diane makes a connection between her tendency to get “pigeon-holed,” to the hiring practices and processes at her school which keep the number of teachers of color low. She relates the following story of the African American colleague in her department.

She’s worked downtown at [name of the central office]. And I don’t know exactly what her job was there, but she had the opportunity to look at the applications that would come across the desk, and you know, which teachers had been hired, and which ones were going to go to which schools, and she has complained often, and in disgust, how there were a great number of minority teachers that were passed over at Michaels and are now at other schools, and not necessarily predominantly black schools, which was interesting. She said, “I know they’re qualified. I know these are good teachers. Other schools are picking them up because they see it but Michaels won’t.” And so it becomes very frustrating because this teacher knows that our department head knows that there are qualified teachers and she’s not hiring them.

Lauren highlighted similar (perceived) discriminatory hiring practices in noting an important anomaly in her district – the existence of a school where both of the top administrators were African American. She remarked:

I saw that as a sign that the district is moving, because that’s just been kind of an unspoken rule - that if you have an African-American principal... you can’t have two black people running the school. Somebody’s got to be white. It’s okay if they’re both white, but you can’t have two blacks because...you know, the white folks need to feel comfortable with someone.

The above examples highlight the influence of race on school processes – processes that have significant implications for both educators and students of color in schools.

### *School Discourses*

Finally, school discourses refer to those spoken and unspoken narratives that often serve to justify why some students have access to certain knowledges while others are denied that access. As was noted earlier, discourses are often employed in ways that mask the inherent inequities in school structures and processes and rationalize the discrimination in those processes and procedures that end up marginalizing students of color.

As the top administrator for her school, the stories that Natalie shared about her daily work life were peppered with her struggles to engage her staff in critical conversations about the students they serve. In the following statement, Natalie talks about the ways in which her faculty avoids conversations about race.

Since I've been here, and I've been here for 3 years, (inaudible) haven't done anything focused on race. We have tiptoed around the issue using data focusing on EC and ESL. OK, most of my EC children are black and my ESL children are Hispanic. It's an issue of race. But we talk about it in terms of subgroups and the legislative standards because it's easy to do that.

As a result, she observes,

And you know there's that fine line, because you have to have those conversations with people about...you know race is not something that people want to talk about. They want me to talk more about poverty. And there is an issue of poverty here. But when we're talking about looking at discipline data, and you know my top 15 kids are all black and Hispanic males. It's an issue of race. There is an issue of gender there, and there are some issues of poverty, but it's an issue of race. There is one white male student in that top ten list. You know, of course to me it's clear. You know, and I'll present the information and let them draw conclusions, but those won't be the conclusions that they will draw. The conclusions they draw first are gender, you know. And of course it's just obvious...You know, teachers are comfortable in talking about it [race], but they're always more comfortable in masking it with just poverty. That's an easier way for them to talk about it. They will talk about it...but the conversation always ends up turning itself to just poverty. And that's interesting to me.



Natalie's frustration lies in complex manner in which attempts to name, highlight, or call attention to issues involving race in schools get derailed/sidetracked by, or subsumed in, a move to re-name the issues as something other than race. Interestingly, just like critical race theorists, Natalie acknowledges the interrelationship of race, gender and class as a significant factor in this issue. However, she knows that if she lets the conversations evolve into a "poverty" discussion, race will inevitable get de-centered, which is exactly what she wants to avoid.

In another example, Diane explains the 'regular/inclusion' distinction with regards to her English classes in greater detail. In so doing, she reveals that ways in which language (and in particular the process of naming) gets deployed to paint a particular picture that is meant to mask the racial (and/or class) identities of the students who make up the classes.

See, on the surface it's called regular English. But you also have your regular English Inclusion. But to everyone else, if you didn't know any better, you'd just have kids that are in regular English and honors and AP. That looks lovely, looks sound politically, and wonderful, and of this wonderful stuff. But really when you get in there you have your regular English classes for kids that are on track. And your honors and AP (inaudible) but then the regular English inclusion classes where they clearly have an additional teacher present in the room, just screams you know, I don't want to say remedial, but you almost have to go there with these classes.

Particular school discourses revealed themselves when language is deployed to make a school's "progressive efforts" appear as beneficial to the marginalized groups they are supposed to be addressing, but in actuality, end up benefiting the majority group. Lauren brings clarity to this concept with the following example about the equity work in which her district is engaged:

We try to really analyze everything from a race lens...whether that be expense for field trips, whether that be how we do summer school programming...we ask, “Is this going to be more of a remediation program or is this going to be an acceleration program for white kids to get caught up on things so they can take more AP course. I mean, you know, if you change the focus of certain programs and certain things then you’re still not really serving African- American/Latino kids.

A critical race analysis of the above scenario invokes the legal notion of interest convergence, which I address shortly. Briefly, the example demonstrates how efforts to address educational inequalities and thereby advance the position of students of color often get manipulated and repositioned in ways that advantage whites.

There are also those discourses in schools that unfairly position students of color in a negative light. Lauren recalled the time when the publishing of the school’s yearbook caused a major uproar. The yearbook’s cover featured pictures of the students, organized so as to resemble a Monopoly board. However, as Lauren recalled, “the only two black faces on the board was a policeman saying “Go to Jail” and then, in the jail, there was a young black man wearing a baseball cap giving a peace sign...and I’m like, ‘how did that go through?’” Lauren also shared another example involving white teachers’ interpretations of student behavior. She recalled participating in a conversation with some colleagues about students who weren’t coming to class.

...a lot of minority students would be late to class or skip class and be in the hallways. And a teacher brought the subject up and said, “Why are students in the hall? These are the very students that need to be in our classes learning!” But the ironic part is that a lot of kids in that category were white students, but they had cars to go off campus and a lot of times teachers didn’t take that into consideration...they weren’t real hard nosed on those kids because those were “good students. They did their work.” So it’s was a kind of inequity where tardiness is this value that we want to correct...but if a white kid who’s making A’s does it, then it’s OK. If

a black student or a Latino does it, then they're "lazy" and "don't care about their education"...but it's was the same behavior.

Coming full circle, Diane provides an example of "curricular discourses" that determine what types of curricula get deemed acceptable and are therefore valued. Indeed, as Diane observed, in her department, not only were there very few works "black works" being taught by colleagues, but oftentimes, her white students were resistant to her decision to read black authors. In particular, Diane's frustrations tend to rise during Black History Month when she is frequently asked, often by her white students, "Well, does it really matter that we know who was the first black person to do this or to do that? I mean, why is that so important? Who cares?" In responding to a question about how she deals with such comments, Diane responded that she focuses on reminding herself, "Okay, let me breathe, let me breathe. And then I remember to breathe."

As the above experiences suggest, school structures, processes and discourses work symbiotically to inform and comprise classroom interactions at all levels of education. Further, they serve as the instruments through which boundaries and barriers are produced and maintained; and power relationships are protected in schools (Armstrong, 1999). Holistically, they make up what every educator in the study referred to as "the system," about which Michael summed up by noting, "Yes, overall, the system still is advantaged for the privileged."

### *Analysis*

In "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," a well-known article by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) often cited as having begun the critical race

movement in education, the authors argue that an examination of the intersection of race and the legal notion of “property” can serve as an analytical tool for understanding educational inequity. Using the language of critical race legal scholarship, the authors assert that notions of property relate to education in explicit (i.e. the genuine relationship of property taxes to school funding) and implicit ways. It is this implicit understanding of property that is relevant to our understanding of racism inherent in school structures, processes and discourses.

For example, as the Ladson-Billings and Tate argue, curriculum represents a form of “intellectual property.” Moreover, “the quality and quantity of the curriculum varies with the ‘property values’ of a school” (p.54). Indeed, it is no secret that wealthier schools, often found in suburban areas, have more to offer their students not only in material resources (i.e. computers, etc.), but in the amount and type of intellectual property that is available (i.e. the number and variety of honors and Advanced Placement (AP) course offerings, number and variety of advanced foreign languages courses, etc). However, despite the availability of such intellectual property, access to it is not distributed equally across students. As we see in stories of the educators in this study, the intellectual property that is (or can be found in) AP courses, research opportunities, and “zero periods” are not made accessible, and are often closed off to, the majority of students of color.

A justification for this differential access to valuable intellectual property (as well as other advantageous structures, processes, and discourses) can be found in another interpretation of the legal notion of property. Drawing on work by critical race legal scholar Cheryl Harris, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argue

that, in American society, the ultimate piece of property is not real estate, but whiteness. In other words, whiteness - which only whites possess – is valuable and is considered property. In education, possessing whiteness is highly valued as it facilitates social, cultural, economic and academic privilege (McIntosh, 1997). Not only is this evidenced in Michael and Lauren’s stories about the privilege wielded by wealthy, well-connected white parents, it is evident in the tracking practices described by Diane. Indeed, tracking practices, which often serve to disadvantage students of color, serve as an excellent example of one of the most powerful, and fundamental results of possessing whiteness: property begets property. White students are able to use the property of their whiteness to obtain more property, intellectual and otherwise.

In the case of AP and honors courses, into which the majority of children tracked are white, whiteness “purchases” valued intellectual property – property which students of color, who get tracked elsewhere, are denied. Throughout their high school careers, white students tend to accumulate more and more intellectual property until they reach a point where they can “cash it in” for an even more valuable form of intellectual property – that which is “sold” in American colleges and universities, where the cycle of property begetting property continues. And, as was evidenced in the educators’ stories, should a white student come up against a barrier in their quest to accumulate needed intellectual property, they can call on a related (literally) form of property – their parent’s whiteness.

The most pernicious aspect of the education system, in my opinion, is that the majority of the time it is not necessary for white students to obtain outside

help to get access to valuable intellectual property in schools because their whiteness usually “buys” them the benefit of the doubt. Moreover, as we have seen, I argue that the structures, processes, and discourses in schools, which serve as the framework on which the process of schooling is built, are crafted in such a manner that merely possessing white skin is the only real piece of property one needs to be successful. Indeed, as every indicator of academic success is based on a white standard, white norms, white ways of being, and white ways of knowing, possessing skin of any other color effectively locks those students in a perpetual state of disadvantage. As is evidenced by the disproportionate number of African Americans placed into special education, labeled BEH, and sanctioned for disciplinary infractions (to name just a few), African American students do not get the benefit of the doubt.

This critical race analysis of school structures, processes, and discourses makes use of another legal notion that is of particular relevance to Lauren’s stories about struggling to do equity work within a community of privileged whites resistant to efforts to improve the educational experiences of students of color. The critical race legal conceptualization of *interest convergence* is one of the most useful contributions made by the field’s founding father, Derrick Bell. Stated simply, the notion of interest convergence entails the idea that “the interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interest of whites” (p.22). Set in an educational context, then, the notion translates as follows: any answer, solution, or “remedy” for achieving educational equity where said remedy threatens the superior social status of middle and upper class whites, will not be allowed, authorized, or supported.

Indeed, when we look back at the following comments made by Lauren:

It's like if we're paying more attention to equity, and the kids are being underserved are black or brown, some folks [whites] see that as "That means you've taken something away from me." It's not seen as a win/ win. It's seen as a [what are whites] losing.

And it's challenging because you know, I think this community prides itself on being very liberal and open-minded, 'Free Tibet,' and "Let's buy coffee from Free Trade," you know, but when it comes to our Latino and African-American children who aren't doing very good, maybe we need to do some things differently so all children can succeed, "No, we don't want to change anything. Everything is just fine. I like my kid taking 7 APs and on anti-depressants, and as long as he gets into Harvard, who cares?" You know, that type of thing. It's hard for me because I just see it as hypocrisy on many levels.

We try to really analyze everything from a race lens...whether that be expenses for field trips, whether that be how we do summer school programming, we ask, "Is this going to be more of a remediation program or is this going to be an acceleration program for white kids to get caught up on things so they can take more AP course. " I mean, you know, if you change the focus of certain programs and certain things then you're still not really serving African-American and Latino kids.

we realize that unless she, and those who work with her, can figure out a way to make improving the situation of students of color seen as something beneficial for whites as well, their efforts will be thwarted or usurped.

Consequently, it is in the failure to address the inequities found in school structures, processes, and discourse, highlighted by the educators experiences and by the analysis above, that conversations regarding differences in educational outcomes go awry (Yosso, 2000). When we look at the inequalities in educational outcomes and start blaming the students who do poorly without interrogating the conditions that brought about those outcomes, we do a terrible disservice to the students who did not perform well; and those students are most often the ones who lack the property of whiteness. Consequently, the work of

critical race scholars is to call those inequities to the attention of those who cannot (or refuse to) see them.

### **Activism and Advocacy**

#### *“Active” Advocacy*

By and large, as educators, the participants in this study were much more concerned with addressing the structures, processes, and discourses that impeded the progress of their students than they were about the ones that affected them. Consequently, the majority of their activism and advocacy (as I have previously defined them) was conducted on behalf of their students. For example, Diane, who spoke pointedly about the tracking that takes places in her school, sees part of her responsibility as a teacher as intervening in those processes. In one example, Diane talked about actively working to get a Latina student moved from Diane’s regular English course into an honors class. Diane felt that her assessment of the young girl’s writing skills warranted such a move. She explains,

I said [to her], “Well, you don’t need to be here. And I’m going to do what I have to do to get you out of this class.” And so within a day, I was able to get her into an honors class and as far as I know that’s where she stayed, because she hasn’t never returned to the regular English class ...I don’t think I’ve even seen her since.

Responding to a question about how she ended up in Diane’s class in the first place, she remarked:

I don’t know why she couldn’t be placed in an honors class to begin with. She arrived here in the summertime so school hadn’t started yet. You’ve got white kids that moved here from Michigan in November and got right into the honors class. So I don’t know what happened with that. This girl does not have bad grades either. I don’t know...so we just worked it out and everything has been fine since.



Diane was quick to point out that such advocacy efforts are not restricted to her students of color. She stated, "...I've had students, black and white, that if they were in a situation where I thought that they were mistreated or misrepresented or whatever, I just advocated for that student. I didn't necessarily look at it as black or white." Moreover, Diane's advocacy also embodies the notion of arguing in favor of an idea or policy and thus extends into interactions with her colleagues. For example, in responding to her disappointment that the other teachers in her department do not (in her opinion) teach enough texts by authors of color, Diane decided to indirectly raise their consciousness on the matter:

I went to those teachers, they're all white, and I asked, "What African American literary novels do you teach, because I don't want to teach something you've already done." So I found it interesting when I talked to those teachers that they found it very hard to come up with some titles that were by African Americans that they incorporate into the American Literature course. And you know, I don't think they were ready for the question. And here I am, an African American, asking about "What do you teach and incorporate in your lessons?" and then it's like, "Well...", without saying, "I really don't teach a whole lot." So I thought that was interesting and I'm sure it was just a passing thought after I left, but you know, I was hoping they would think, "Well, maybe I ought to...", but I don't expect things to change you know.

I categorize the examples above as "active" advocacy because they speak to a form of advocacy that requires teachers to actively bring issues or circumstance to the attention of others on behalf of their students, and, in some cases, on behalf of themselves. Such advocacy is slightly different from the next set of examples, which, while still "active," are conducted, I argue, with and for rather than on behalf of their students.

### *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*

By far, one of the most effective vehicles for school-based advocacy and activism, particularly for African American teachers, is through their beliefs and ideas about the best ways to educate (and treat) their students of color (Irvine, 2002a). Consequently, the majority of educators' reflections on the matter invoked their educational philosophies, pedagogical beliefs, and teaching practices. For example, when asked about her activism and advocacy regarding students of color, Dana relayed the following:

I try to encourage them not to underestimate themselves and encourage them to use all of the resources that are available to them...I encourage them to do different things and try different things, not only so that they can expose themselves, but also so that they can expose others to their experiences because I think that they're amongst teenagers, and amongst a lot of Americans in general, who are self-absorbed; and therefore we only understand things as they occur within our world and happen to us.

When it comes to her African American students, Dana's educational philosophy embodies several aspects of what Vanessa Siddle Walker (2004) believes to be African American teachers' unique form of caring - caring that is directed at all aspects of a child's life rather than just interpersonal notions. The broadness of Dana's caring is evidenced through the encouragement and direction she provides her students about how to effectively engage, and benefit from, the world *outside* her classroom.

Natalie's broad conceptualization of caring is visible in her educational and teaching philosophies as well. In the comment below, she talks about the challenges of motivating students who are having difficulty learning, and the unique difficulties of doing so when parents are "not on board."

When I realize that that parent, for whatever reason, is not going to be on my team with that issue, then I have to get another person...If you're not going to be a part of my team on that issue, then I'm not going to bother you with that issue any more. I'm going to do my job in terms of communicating to you, but bottom line is, if you're not helping, then I have to come up with something else. I don't have time to...I'm not going to try to convert that parent. I have to make a connection to that kid so that kid feels like and knows that it's important...So we have to figure out how to make that happen for that child.

Moreover, Natalie talked at length about the importance of building relationship with students (another essential aspect of Walker's notion of caring). Developing a firm understanding of her students as individuals, as well as an awareness of their personal circumstances, represents a significant aspect of her pedagogical beliefs and is evident in the following comment:

Children have to go into an environment to do homework in order to complete homework. If there are 5 or 6 people living in my house, plus another family, which is the case for many of my Hispanic families...if there's 6 or 7 other children living in a 2 bedroom apartment, that's not necessarily an environment where I'm going to be able to do homework.

Here, Natalie makes the connection between a student's home life and their experiences at school, something teachers who are less culturally responsive tend to ignore. Natalie's educational philosophy is also heavily cognizant of the role of race in the lives of her students. She believes that it's important not only to acknowledge race, but for teachers to talk with their students about race. She notes:

My minority teachers address it [race] and speak very openly about it in their classrooms, sometimes more openly than I would like. But what I say to them is, if it is helping you connect to that child and ultimately that child is going to become more academically and socially successful, I'm OK with it.

Acknowledging race is an additional element in African American teachers' unique sense of care in that it speaks to the necessity of being honest and truthful

with students about the challenges that they face, particularly as they are related to being a minority in American society.

### *Culturally Responsive Teaching*

When asked to talk about how her district's equity work is intended to impact teachers, Lauren exclaimed:

Our charge as educators is to educate children and prepare them for the next step. Anti-racist policy examination is critical to good instruction. So we're not just doing this because we want to be Mother Teresa, we're doing this because racist practices affects effectively educating minority children, and so I'm not sure if that's really said in a clear way over and over and over again, but that is the intent, to improve instruction.

Indeed, culturally responsive teaching practices and instruction were a frequent factor in discussions about activism/advocacy with the educators. Dana cites her doctoral studies in the field of education as having helped her become a more reflective practitioner who intentionally examines the different cultural dynamics that affect her classroom. In reflecting on a prior teaching experience with a summer program for African American middle school students, she recalled:

I think what I enjoyed most was establishing relationships with the students...I also enjoyed giving them a little bit of information about their own culture, even though it's probably nothing that they would ever be tested on. Other people might not have been interested in understanding the contributions that African Americans have made and I enjoyed learning the material myself because that was work that I had to do so that I could convey the information to the students.

When asked to talk about some of her current teaching practices, Dana talked about how she tries to "create a classroom in which all students are successful." Specifically, she invoked the notion of "cultural capital" and the importance of acknowledging the different types of "capital" that students bring with them to her classroom.

So if I make up a problem that talks about pitching tents and doing things of that nature, then I may need to understand that some of my students have never been camping before and that they may not understand all the details that are involved in putting something up.

When asked whether or not she engaged in “anti-racist” education, she responded:

I don’t think that that is explicitly anti-racist education, but I think that the goal of that is to include as many student as possible in the learning process such that when they finish with it, they will be able to not only communicate effectively mathematically, but in general.

In our conversations, Lauren mentioned that one of the aspects of her equity work is helping teachers to “read” their classrooms with a “race lens.”

Dana has been working on this skill as well and in doing so she recently discovered that some of her black male students were having trouble but were not speaking up about their struggles. Dana recalled:

So in an effort to make our experiences better...the black male student that I’ve spoken with, I’ve asked them to make sure that they speak up when there are things that are not clear, because in the past they’ve been able to figure it out, even if it was not clear immediately.

Overall, as Irvine noted about the successful African American teachers she observed for her book, both they, and the educators in this study, “look introspectively at how their ethnic identities, classroom practices, and their beliefs are related to the achievement of their African American students” (2002a, p.139).

### *Analysis*

In one of the more popular and frequently cited definitions of Critical Race Theory in education, Solórzano (1997) affirms that it is, 1) a framework or set of basic perspectives, 2) a method, and 3) a pedagogy. Highlighting the third

aspect, we could define CRT as “a pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain a marginal position and subordination of students of color.”

Consequently, when we reflect on the educators in this study and their culturally specific pedagogy, and more directly, the ways in which their pedagogy is sensitive to and attempts to address the different barriers and structures that affect their students’ educational success, then we could indeed consider them what Lynn (1999) refers to as “critical race pedagogues” (as well as transformative multicultural educators as described in Chapter 2).

In examining the transformative possibilities of schools, Lynn (1999) speculates that the pedagogical definition of Critical Race Theory creates,

...a theoretical starting point from which to begin to think directly about the possibilities that lie in connecting CRT to a broader discourse on pedagogy, particularly the emancipatory teaching practices of people of color attempting to utilize such liberatory strategies as a vehicle for counteracting the devaluation of racially oppressed students (p. 611).

He goes on to define a Critical Race Pedagogy as “an analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly on the perceptions, experiences and counterhegemonic practices of educators of color” (p. 615).

Utilizing this definition as a framework, Lynn takes the reflections of eight socially active African American teachers who taught in urban public schools and attempts “to build a Critical Race Pedagogy from the ground up” (p.615). In so doing, he determines that “Critical Race Pedagogues are concerned with four general issues: the endemic nature of racism in the United States, the importance of cultural identity, the necessary interaction of race, class, and gender; and the practice of a liberatory pedagogy” (p.16).

The experiences of the educators in this study lend ample support to Lynn's notions of Critical Race Pedagogy and the critical race pedagogue. In the beginning of this chapter, we saw ample evidence of the endemic nature of racism in America, and in particular, the manifestations of that racism within the work environments of each of the five educators. In the section that followed, the race and racism in school structures, processes and discourses were highlighted. In the present section, we gleaned a deeper understanding of the educators' acknowledgement of the importance of cultural identity (their students as well as their own) and the manner in which such acknowledgements are manifested in their culturally relevant pedagogy and practice, particularly through the use of curricular tools that speak to, and capture the experiences and history of, African Americans.

In the narratives chapter, we learned of the educators' perceptions and reflections on the complex relationships between, and interactions among, class, race, and gender. Both Lauren and Michael's narratives shed light on the complex dynamic of race and class as an integral aspect of the social network system that heavily influences what goes on in their school district. We also saw a different manifestation of the class/race dynamic in Diane's story and how the administration's inaccurate and monolithic view of "blackness" fails to take into account the differences in Diane's class background and that of the African American students in her classroom. Indeed, it was the failure to appreciate the implication of those class differences that lead her to remark on several occasions about the unfairness of the notion, "Just because you look like them, doesn't mean that you are like them." While Natalie's story embodies the complex

negotiating of multiple race, class, and gender identities which, for her, lead to the ever present phenomena of “never being quite sure which one is dominating at any given moment.” Finally, this section addressed the liberatory pedagogy of these educators as encompassing a wide range of ideas, beliefs and perceptions about the best ways to education students of color, and African American students in particular (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Irvine, 2002a, 2002b; Gay, 2000).

### **In Search of White Allies**

As I mentioned in the “Introduction,” it became evident early on in the interview process that only a few of the educators had any experience engaging in critical dialogue with white colleagues around issues or situations that involved race. Because of their district’s commitment to *Equity and Beyond*, and their subsequent work on equity teams, Lauren and Michael had had the most exposure to such interactions and thus had more experiences to draw from when discussing the topic. Within the context of her role as principal, Natalie spoke more broadly about conversations she engaged in with her faculty which attempted to address issues of race. Unfortunately, those conversations, Natalie laments, are too often “hijacked” by faculty members and are re-cast as “poverty discussion.” Neither Dana, nor Diane had engaged in conversations with white colleagues regarding race, but offered pointed commentary regarding the reasons why they believed such conversations had not taken place.

Subsequently, in addition to questions about critical dialogues, I also inquired more specifically about the educators’ experiences with, and perceptions of, their white colleagues. Overall, their responses to questions posed during both their interviews and the focus group reflect the different ways they view and



interact with their white colleagues as well as their opinions about the role of those colleagues in the struggle for educational equity.

### *White Allies I Know*

In our conversations, I discussed the concept of white allies with all of the participants; only two of whom asked me to provide a definition or example. Based on their comments, it seemed generally understood that, at the very least, white allies were those white educators who are conscious of racism and the ways in which it impacts the lives of people of color, and, in particular, students of color. Further, they were characterized as folks who either “challenged the system” or who were “down for the cause.” In the comments below, the participants talk about the few folks they would consider white allies. Although they only offered a limited number of examples, the examples still provide us with a glimpse of what the educators perceive to be some of the characteristics of a white ally.

When I engaged Michael in a conversation about white allies in his life, he offered up his former boss as an example and alluded to her advocacy on his behalf.

My principal, who just left the district, she was a white ally...I credit her with my being at the school. You know there were definitely white folks who didn't...and when I tell this story some people are shocked, but she pretty much said, “Okay. I’m putting him on this team!”...so she would fall into that category, most certainly. And it hurts when you lose people of the caliber because they are diamonds in the rough.

He continues this thought by clarifying his image of a white ally:

...I think...a white ally...I just got this image of Dr. King and the March, and the few white faces you see beside him you know...because they put so much into it. First of all by wanting to understand something that's different, you know... a different group of people, and then not being afraid

to step out...and I don't know...I just think it's a beautiful thing. And I would like to think my white colleagues would see me in the same light, you know, as somebody that's very open to learning about what it is that makes you tick and how to make relationships better, you know. So anytime you can get those kind of guys to come along, especially in education, you've got to appreciate them. You've got to appreciate those kind of people, you really do. *White allies*.

When asked about folks that she might consider as white allies, Natalie also mentioned her former boss and how she handled race.

Well, I'm a black female and she was a white female. So I think I admire her a lot and she is always going to be one of my mentors. I think that she handled it [race] very well, and I don't know many other white females who would address the issues of race as eloquently and delicately as she did...It's a rarity.

When first asked, Diane's responded that she didn't know any white allies; however, over the course of our conversations she did bring up two examples of white teachers who "surprised her" or "impressed her." In one example, she talked about a conversation she had with a colleague at Michaels who was considering leaving there to go work at the affluent school in Steeple Grove where Diane had previously taught. Here, Diane talks about her colleague's decision:

And I was very surprised by her response, because she said, "You know, I just don't know if I want to go because I visited my friend at West and he teaches..." oh, I don't know, like AP Calculus, something like that. She said, "I don't want to teach those upper crust white kids in every single class. I'm used to teaching multicultural classes or at least more diverse classes. And I don't necessarily want those cookie cut-outs." I was shocked! I was like, "OK, good for you." So I thought that was interesting ...And I was just very surprised to hear that from a white teacher.

Inquiring about white allies in Lauren's life brought about an immediate response:

[Name of colleague], our mentorship program coordinator. I'd say he's...he definitely shows signs of really being passionate about this [equity work]. He has a biracial daughter, you know, so some things in his life experience are different from a lot of other white people's. He's very

passionate, sending articles to the leadership team listserv, volunteering... you know to go above and beyond assignments that we're given as [equity] coaches. He does a lot of deep thinking about it.

*"Good" Teachers as White Allies?*

In listening to the educators' reflections and commentary on white colleagues whom they consider to be "good teachers" or the opposite, I wondered about the implications of their "goodness," specifically its characteristics, for revealing potential qualities of a white ally. For example, in Natalie's description of the "competence" of her white faculty members, we find that competence, in her mind, is directly related to understanding "the characteristics of a generational impoverished child." Continuing, she notes,

They understand that dynamic...most of the staff. We really do have some that are here that have a good sense of how to connect, and for me it's all about how you connect and develop those relationships with the kids and families so that you can help, and so that you can be an advocate and an ally and share with people...

The ability to develop relationships with students and parents was just one of several characteristics the educators saw in white colleagues they considered "effective" teachers. In discussing his experiences observing teachers, Michael addresses the importance of understanding cultural differences and acknowledges the impact of body language on students:

I think that when you talk about...working with minority kids, it goes back to the cultural differences. I think that there are white educators who are just as effective...their numbers are very small and few across the board but they are there. It has a lot to do with...when the student walks into the room, make eye contact. I talk to teachers about their body language, like eye rolling in frustration, in the classroom...The difference is there and it's cultural and some people go the extra mile to close that gap and it's hard work...If you are truly about it, the kids will pick up on it.

Michael's comments also reflect a sensitivity to teacher/parent dynamics where race is a factor. He asserts:

Something I'm a pretty strong advocate for is teachers communicating to families of black students, Latino students, and I'd like to see an improvement in that area. I think a lot of white teacher especially shy away from or are scared of the idea of even reaching out to black families concerning their children. And you know, it's kind of stereotypical. They believe that they are going to get yelled at and screamed on, and yes, it does happen...but if teachers aren't calling home and vice versa, and parents aren't reaching out to teachers, there's no communication.

### *White Colleagues Reaching Out*

Curious about that lack of dialogue between potential white allies and their colleagues of color, which was reflected in the ally literature, I asked the educators if any of their white colleagues had ever approached them to ask for advice or guidance on a racial issue in their classroom; there was a resounding "no." In their clarifications, however, they offered scenarios that they felt "came close." Diane said that she had "never been asked a direct question," but that white teachers will often ask her how she keeps her classroom quiet in light of the fact that some of Diane's students are students that the inquiring teachers had had before and who had been "off the wall" in their classrooms. Diane asserted that the difference between herself and these teachers was that she creates "structure and order" in her classroom. "I am strict, I am orderly, and the students know the rules. So I give them what my white counterparts don't provide."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The "firmness" and "directness" reflected in Diane's comment is viewed by Irvine (2004) as another characteristic of effective African American teachers. Such teachers are thought of as "warm demanders."

Michael intimated that a good deal of his experiences talking to white colleagues about racism have been dominated by their “Man, I never knew...” testimonials. Clarifying, he explains:

Over my years in education...when they [whites] hear a minority get up in front of a group and talk about...just the day to day struggle, it's hard for the average European to connect with that. When they hear African Americans or Hispanics talk about wondering if they are going to get pulled over or followed in the store...they [whites] come up to me and are very honest about how they don't have those experiences. They'll say, “You know, I just don't think that way. I don't walk into a shopping mall and think about who's watching me and who's following me. That is just not on my mind, you know.” ...Those are the kinds of questions that I get...well not questions really, just “Man, I can understand what you guys are saying...” and that's very interesting and what a lot of them are genuinely saying is “What can I do the help?”

In thinking through why it was that so few of her white colleagues had reached out to her, Lauren offered the following:

...in terms of white allies...I think it just takes a lot of trust. Even though I've trained in diversity and worked in two other districts before where we've dealt with diversity, I can count one hand the number of times that a white person has directly asked for help or advice. And I don't know if it's my role as an administrator and perhaps people have thought, “Well, I don't want to show any weakness in front of this person.”...I don't think, informally, a lot of that is coming up where White people are seeking help or advice from people of color because its just too... tense for them.

### *Barriers to Allyism*

The discussion that evolved amongst the educators at the focus group revealed their thoughts about why there were not more white allies in education in general. Their reasons can be broadly categorized as *fear, denial, lack of exposure and white privilege*. Below, I offer some representative comments:

In my six years, there have been about a handful, one fist full of whites that can be put on the plateau of white ally...The average white person would sit here and after hearing this dialogue walk away trying to discount the stories, feeling attacked, and crying, “Well it wasn't us...how can you

blame us for what our forefathers did.” But you’ve got to be able to talk about it to deal with it.

They [whites] don’t want to talk about it because they think if they are not using the N-word or anything close to it, then they’re not racist. But it hits too close to home because when they hear these conversations they realize that they do have white privilege, and maybe they do say some things that aren’t cool.

White folks are afraid to speak up because they’re afraid of being misunderstood, and labeled a racist and all these other things. I think they are afraid of some of their own thoughts or what they might say or have said, so they just don’t go there.

...they [whites] have not had much black influence, no experiences with black folks. They just can’t form any connections because they haven’t made any...so they have no clue.

I still think it has a lot to do with white privilege. And I think to acknowledge the privilege you have, like there’s a certain amount of guilt I think that comes with it. And I think because they have this privilege they say, “It’s not my problem. I don’t have to worry about this.” And they don’t.

I just don’t know why white folks are so insecure about the subject at all. It’s their world. You know, we only make up 12 percent, and we’re under Hispanics. Why are they so intimidated? I really don’t know.

### *Hoping for the White Ally*

During the focus group, the educators were asked to speak directly to their opinions regarding whether or not white allies were needed to improve the educational experiences of students of color and advance educational equity. And, if they thought so, what would be their role? All of them agreed that they were indeed necessary and had a role to play. Moreover, there was a general hope that they “were out there” or could be developed. Encapsulating that sentiment, Dana responded,

I think they’re necessary because I think that at some point, and I don’t know how this will happen, but I think at some point we need to have students enter school and leave school with the same confidence and skills and abilities, and that will only come through people who have an idea of

what equality really looks like and who are willing to implement that in their school no matter who their students are or what they look like or where they come from or where they don't come from, and give them all that same opportunity.

While Diane agreed with her peers, she still expressed a doubt as to whether or not whites possessed the desire to move beyond their own privilege to become allies:

So there are pockets I think of those who recognize the privileges that they have, and truly want to make a difference by interacting with a more diverse group of students, but nonetheless they still have that option and choice that everyone else doesn't necessarily have.

Lauren, who possessed the most experience working with whites as a result of her equity efforts, seemed the most optimistic and talked at length about the important work of white allies in helping other whites to "do self-examination in safe environments with those who look like them." She explains,

And oftentimes with race, where the person is white...they need another person with the same experiences to help them see the world differently. And some people maybe can do without that, but I think for the majority of people, if you really want to change their heart, their head, their limbs, their worldview, it's going to take someone else just like them, or similar to them to help push them along, because...they may not be able to be as verbally open with people of a different race while they're going through those processes. It may inhibit them from speaking their truth and working through it...The work is hard enough on its own, but if you're also trying to figure out what's appropriate to say, and you're not really speaking your truth...the real growth is not going to be there.

### *Analysis*

In conducting a close reading of the ways in which these educators talked about their white peers, I was able to glean from their reflections and perceptions, characteristics and qualities that a white ally in K-12 education might possess. Accordingly, a white ally:

- see themselves not only as an advocate for their students of color, but for their colleagues of color as well;
- are willing to use their power, position, and voice to positively impact and influence the professional and personal lives of their colleagues of color as well as the academic and personal lives of their students of color;
- acknowledge race and racism and the role they play in the lives of people of color;
- understand their students' backgrounds and familial situations and acknowledge and understand their implication for the students' academic success (or lack thereof) ;
- are capable of forming good relationships with parents of color and make concerted efforts to connect with and understand them;
- acknowledge and appreciate cultural differences;
- possess a genuine interest in learning about/from people who are different from them;
- welcome honest dialogue and are willing to listen intently to the experiences of others;
- have a desire to work with a diverse group of students and colleagues;
- have, and seek out, experiences with people of color, both inside and outside of schools;
- possess a vision for and ideas about how to begin achieving educational equity;
- are reflective practitioners;
- teach multiculturally regardless of their students' race;



- are prepared to deal with the ramifications of going “against the grain” and;
- are willing to work with and develop other allies.

With respect to the literature on white allies in education, these characteristics are by no means unique. Indeed, they are rather consistent with the literature, and with what committed white allies know to be essential to effectively enacting their allyism. However, where I do believe that these educators’ perspectives depart from the literature is in their apparent willingness and desire to have white colleagues engage them in these critical conversations. Whereas the literature tends to highlight the likelihood that educators of color lack the time, desire, and energy to “educate whites” about race, these educators seemed open to engaging white colleagues interested in open dialogue.

Interestingly, such enthusiasm seems incongruent with what we’ve learned about their day-to-day experiences dealing with racism. One might surmise that, in light of those experiences, they would be less enthusiastic about having such conversations. However, a closer analysis of their comments reveals that certain pre-conditions, while not necessarily required, would go a long way toward making these hypothetical discussions much more fruitful; and thus their apparent enthusiasm may have been influenced by the educators’ envisioning that the pre-conditions would have already been met. Those pre-conditions included a genuine and sincere willingness to talk openly and honestly about race; a willingness to acknowledge and interrogate their own racist views and beliefs; a willingness to acknowledge and interrogate white privilege – their own

as well as that of other whites; and a willingness to acknowledge personal guilt, but not waste valuable time dwelling on it.

Consequently, with regards to my original intentions in engaging the educators in this discussion, I believed that my success was partial. I wanted to solicit their perspectives to uncover whether or not they held an active understanding or conceptualization of “white ally,” and indeed they do. Moreover, I now have a better understanding of what such individual might “look like” based on their opinions. However, what I was unable to obtain was a deeper understanding of the tension, problems, contradictions, and concerns that they had about white participation in struggles for racial equality in schools that were based in *prior experiences* working with white colleagues on such efforts. Regardless, I am confident that both developing and practicing white allies will benefit from hearing the stories of these educators and may subsequently develop a deeper, more complex understanding of the ways in which racism plays out in schools. Moreover, I intend to use these stories with my own education students as I strive to do my part in developing the kind of white allies that these educators seek.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I present a summary of the study, implications for policy and practice, recommendations for future research (my own as well as others), and concluding thoughts. The summary recaps the study via its relationship to the five major tenets of Critical Race Theory. The implications provided speak directly to two specific audiences: school administrators and schools and colleges of education. Through the research recommendations and personal reflections, I bring the study full circle to remind myself and my readers why it was that I engaged in this endeavor.

#### **Summary**

The primary purpose of this study was to illuminate, and subsequently better understand, the experiences of educators of color regarding the ways in which they both view and experience manifestations of race and racism in schools. Further, it sought their reflections on responding to those manifestations as well as on working with white colleagues and their beliefs regarding the role of those colleagues in anti-racist education efforts. Every aspect of this study, from its conceptualization to the presentations of its findings, has been guided by Critical Race Theory. Consequently, the study hangs on a framework structured by the five major tenets of the theory.

First and foremost, Critical Race Theory's assertion that race and racism are endemic and permanent in American society was central to this entire research endeavor. Not only do my own personal experiences bear witness to this reality, but it was clearly bore out in the experiences of the study's participants. Consequently, race was intentionally placed, and remained, at the center of the project. Second, focusing on race, specifically the facets of racism evident in the participants' stories, challenged dominant notions of objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, and normality (read *whiteness*), particularly as those notions are adhered to and embodied in educational settings. Third, this research was conducted with the intention of shedding light on larger social justice concerns within society. Indeed, not only do schools represent a "microcosm" of American society, the racism, discrimination, and subordination maintained in schools serve as powerful explanatory factors with regards to how and why schools continue to reproduce societal inequities. Fourth, the entire study relies on, and in so doing, validates the experiences of people of color. In fact, the power of these educators' experiential knowledge, conveyed through the counter-narratives, may indeed be the only thing that stays with the reader upon finishing this dissertation (which is fine by me). Finally, in an effort to enhance the analysis of the educators' experiences, I tried to use disciplinary knowledge from the fields of law and sociology to enhance our understanding of the effects of racism (and other forms of discrimination) from a more interdisciplinary perspective.

## **Implications for Policy and Practice**

### *Implications for School Administrators*

The educators in this study hoped that this research would be most useful in providing school administrators with important insight about their schools regarding the day-to-day experiences of their students and faculty of color. In particular, those genuinely interested in improving the educational experiences of their students of color, and the professional experiences of their teachers and administrators of color, may benefit by drawing on the results of the study to inform their leadership.

First and foremost, school administrators should consult educators of color before they decide to implement initiatives related to diversity. In contrast to the pigeonholing they usually experience, the educators in this study suggested that seeking advice and guidance before such projects are undertaken would be a welcomed gesture. While they may not have “all the answers,” engaging these educators in conversations about initiatives in which they will be expected to play “key roles” is not only effective, but professional. As collaboration is a popular buzzword in contemporary school reform efforts, inviting faculty of color, parents of color, and other community members to sit on advisory boards for diversity initiatives and related endeavors was viewed as more than appropriate. Moreover, the educators suggested that both students and faculty may benefit from having experienced consultant come in to help facilitate the school’s goals with regards to diversity.

Second, any diversity initiative undertaken by a school should include a component that examines white privilege. Indeed, of all of the topics that were discussed throughout the study, what seemed to fire the educators up the most was their white colleagues' inability to see their own privilege, and the ways in which whiteness placed them in an advantageous position relative to the peers of color. Further, their colleagues' assumption that whiteness is not a race, and therefore need not be addressed, was viewed by the educators as a privilege in and of itself.

Third, the educators asserted that school administrators need to become sensitized to both the covert and overt forms of racism to which their faculty of color are subjected. Most importantly, when issues of racism are brought to their attention, school administrators must NOT "sweep them under the rug," nor should they try to explain away or attempt to minimize the experience that their faculty members of color share with them. Indeed, some of the educators in this study were still upset about, and discouraged by, the past responses of administrators who had blatantly dismissed accusations of racism or let them go unaddressed.

Fourth, it was strongly suggested that administrators be much more thoughtful about, and critical of, their assumptions about black teachers and black students. Indeed, shared "blackness" is not a guarantee that a teacher will be an effective instructor of African American students. Moreover, such unexamined, "unofficial" policies may speak to a larger problem regarding white teachers' inability to effectively work with students of color. Rather than masking this reality by facilitating processes that allow white teachers avoid their

responsibilities, assistance should be put into place to help those teachers to develop the skills necessary to be successful with all students.

Finally, with regards to addressing educational inequities, the educators agreed that a school's ability to do so effectively demands strong leadership, particularly as it pertains to communicating with different school constituencies about those efforts. Such communication is necessary to ensure that critical "buy-in" is obtained. In particular, any school-based efforts undertaken that are intended to improve the situation of marginalized students of color must be understood (and/or "characterized") in such a manner as to convey the message that such efforts are *good for all students*.

#### *Implications for Schools and Colleges of Education*

The educators also felt that the results of this study should be shared with faculty of teacher education programs. Viewing teacher education programs as potential sites for "thinking otherwise," the educators expressed hopes that changes in programming could redirect the educational experiences of pre-service students in ways that helped them develop a greater appreciation for the saliency of, and role played by, race in schools specifically and in society more generally.

Regarding *required* coursework that could help facilitate that process, the educators saw instruction that focused on the necessity of teaching multiculturally and which assisted in the development of a knowledgebase that drew heavily on the contributions of people of color in the United States as fundamental to pre-service students' education. Moreover, courses that specifically address the discrimination and inequalities to which people of color

have been, and continued to be, subjected was also viewed as extremely necessary.

Finally, the educators asserted their belief that a strong teacher education program was one in which the curriculum was structured to facilitate as many opportunities as possible for pre-service students to “be” in diverse school settings. Exposure to diverse groups of children as well as to a variety of instructional methods used by a diverse group of teachers was viewed as critical to the students’ future success in working with students of color.

Overall, it was the opinion of these educators that the primary task of teacher education programs is to produce teachers capable of effectively teaching *all* students. Consequently, rather than “hoping” that their students will be successful in teaching students of color, programs need to be much more proactive in ensuring that outcome by re-evaluating required coursework for their students. The development of the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively teach all students, and in particular those students who have traditionally been marginalized in school settings, should become a mandatory *competency*, not an optional bonus.

#### *Implications for Teachers and Others Interested in Anti-Racist Work in Schools*

The experiences of the educators in this study speak to an important reality: our efforts to advance the cause of educational equity and improve the experiences of students of color in schools will necessarily entail cross-race alliances. However, the necessary space(s) to prepare for and develop of those alliances remains in questions. Both teacher education program and schools themselves serve as logical sites to foster such efforts. However, neither arena in



their current state facilitates the creation of those spaces. Consequently, it may be the case that those interested in creating genuine change in schools through racial and social justice work will have to muster the courage to actively reach out and extend an invitation to others to join them in this work. Indeed, if the willingness of these educators of color (despite having to continually cope with racism and discrimination in schools) is in any way indicative of the sentiments of even a few of their peers in other educational contexts, then there is hope that the necessary critical conversations required to begin the process of developing those alliances can, and will, take place.

Indeed, only when we begin to understand that the responsibility for promoting educational equity (which requires anti-racist activism) is a collective one can we truly begin to bring an “otherwise thought of” world into existence.

### **Further Research**

This dissertation has served as a vehicle for telling the stories of five African American educators about their experiences dealing with race and racism in schools. Through their stories, we have gained access to a very different view of schooling than we normally encounter. However, further research into these experiences, particularly through the eyes of additional educators of color, would go a long way toward developing a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the manifestations of racism in schools and the intersection of racism with other forms of subordination. Briefly, I offer a few suggestions for future avenues of research as well as some reflections on my own pending research agenda. The

suggestions made here also reflect, directly and indirectly, some of my thoughts about the “limitation”<sup>28</sup> of this study.

### *Research Recommendations*

The most obvious avenue for future research may be an exploration of how different educators of color experience race and racism in different contexts; consequently, there several different possibilities. For example, while I had hoped to have a Chicana or Chicano educator in this study, I was unsuccessful in my search. I believe that the experiences of these educators are sorely missing from the literature on K-12 education. Consequently, until their stories have been added to this discourse, our understanding of the myriad ways race and racism are manifested in schools will be incomplete. Moreover, with particular respect to my home state of North Carolina, I believe the voices of Native American educators are indeed lacking as well.

Further, I wonder about how the stories we heard might change if the focus shifted to elementary educators. I believe that while their experience with racism in schools may be some what similar to those of the educators in this study, I think there would be some very interesting differences in how they see race play out in school based on the age of the students with whom they work. Moreover, as elementary school faculty are more likely to be organized around “grade-level” teams, I anticipate that such conditions would bring about a different experience with regards to working with white colleagues around issues of race and equity.

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<sup>28</sup> Here, I do not wish to imply that this work is flawed or defective in some way. Rather, because of limiting factors associated with time, place and contextual space (i.e. conducting research for the purposes of writing a dissertation), this dissertation could only accomplish so much.

I also wonder about the possibilities of conducting a similar study in unique or specialized educational contexts. I imagine that there are schools, charters perhaps, that may have genuine racial and social justice missions in which they are actively and intentionally engaged in anti-racist work. Indeed, the equity work underway in Lauren and Michael's school district makes it an even more unique district than it already was. Consequently, a case study, or even a narrative interview study conducted exclusively with educators of color from that district, would be a worthwhile undertaking.

Finally, I'm wondering about the differences that might arise from conducting a study similar to this one in a different geographic location. With that thought, I turn to my future research agenda.

### *Reflection on My Research*

As for me, I shall start my career as an academic at The University of South Carolina by conducting a similar study with educators of color in Columbia, S.C. While I have not yet decided whether I'll engage elementary or secondary educators, I have decided that I will focus on either teachers or administrators. The present study convinces me that there is an importance difference in those experiences that warrants a deeper, more thorough examination. I am also interested in exploring the perceptions of school counselors who, by virtue of their specialized roles, must see addressing racism and advocating for students of color in a uniquely different manner. Finally, I am extremely excited about the possibility of engaging a colleague (or colleagues) with whom to do some collaborative, comparative research around anti-racist activism in schools. I'm particularly interested in a project where research would be conducted in an

educational setting where educators of color name and identify certain of their white colleagues as “allies.” I think it would be most enlightening to hear from these educators, as well as the colleagues they identify as allies, about how they advance an anti-racist agenda in their school and about how they make meaning of that experience.

### *Reflections on the Impact of My Research on My Teaching*

In the opening chapters of this dissertation, I alluded to my own work as a teacher educator and the challenges that I face in working with a pre-service teacher population largely made up of white, middle-class females who have had limited exposure to people of color. In particular, I struggle to bring them to a critical consciousness about the role played by schools in reproducing societal inequities. Yet, I believe that my greatest challenge really lies in getting those students to “think otherwise.” Indeed, the essence of my struggle is getting them to see the “taken-for-grantedness” of the structures, processes, and discourses which constitute schooling. And as Bowers (1998) notes, once the products of humans (i.e. ideas, rules, institutions, values, interpretations, etc.) take on the quality of “thingness,” we often forget that they were our creations to begin with. Consequently, caught up in the day to day functioning of life, we lose sight of the fact that we “have the power to change them when they cease to serve a useful purpose” (p. 61).

Thus, I see the use of narratives in teacher education as an important vehicle for re-presenting the different stories told about what goes on inside school. It is my hope to use the counter-narratives of these five educators to help my students see schooling from a very different perspective. In so doing, if I can

help my students to see that differing identities cause both students and adults to experience schooling in drastically differently ways--if I could help them understand that the experiences of the children they will go on to teach will be very different from their own--then, perhaps, as their minds begin to expand and their thinking begins to evolve, I could slip, into those cracks and fissures, the idea that school, or for that matter our entire world, could be otherwise.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In studying race and racism, the use of experiential knowledge shared through personal narratives can be transformative. Indeed, as Sylvia Lazos Vargas explains:

Narratives yield insights that are important to the dialogue of race because “outsider knowledge” and perspectives can help racial minorities and non-minorities acquire a deeper understanding of how race functions in society. Narratives help bridge the cognitive racial divide by exploring the racial experience at a personal level. (2003, p. 8)

If she is right, then there is reason to be hopeful. As I mentioned above, I am excited about the possibilities for using these educators’ narratives in education courses to broaden students’ understandings of the endemic nature of racism in society and its manifestations in schools. I am also excited about the potential changes that may come about by school administrators who are willing not only to listen to these stories, but act on the racism, discrimination and subordinations they illuminate. And I’m am hopeful that these stories might reach white teachers as well, for as Madsen and Hollins (2000) note, “European American teachers might also benefit from serous examination of their behaviors toward ethnic minority teachers” (p.28).

Finally, and, for me, most importantly, I hope that in sharing their stories with me and with each other, the educators who participated in this study felt affirmed throughout the process. If Solórzano (2002) is indeed correct, and my participants, as targets of racism, have become empowered by hearing their own stories and the stories of others, then this endeavor, which has been simultaneously powerful and painful on so many levels, will have been worth every minute, every effort.

## APPENDIX A

### Interview Structure with Topics

#### **First Interview:**

*Tell me as much as possible about your past life up until the time you became a teacher at your school.*

Possible Topics –

- Schooling experiences (elementary through undergraduate or graduate)
- Family
- Professional teaching experiences
- Early experiences with race

#### **Second Interview:**

*Tell me about your day-to-day experience as a teacher and, if relevant, the ways in which you see race play itself out in those events/processes/activities throughout the day.*

Possible Topics –

- Experiencing race
- Race in schools
- Race and the students
- Race and the faculty
- Race and parents
- Working against race in schools

**Third Interview:**

*Given what you have shared about your experiences as a teacher and your perspective on the ways that race plays out in school, how do you understand or make sense of anti-racist activism within this context and within your own life?*

Possible Topics –

- Race in school today
- Making sense of experiencing racism
- Making sense of racism in schools
- Racism in other environments
- White Colleagues/White Allies
- Challenging the system



## APPENDIX B

### Post-Interview Reflection Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview #: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Lingering Questions

*A. From your thoughts and reflections:*

*B. From your notes:*

#### Areas for Exploration Next Time

*A. From your reflections:*

*B. From your notes:*

Contextual Notes

*A. Where did the interview occur? Anything significant about the location?*

*B. Under what conditions did the interview take place?*

*C. How did the interviewee react to the questions?*

*D. How well do you think you did asking questions? What issues did you encounter?*

*E. How was your rapport with the interviewee?*

Notes on the Interview Process

*A. How do you feel about the quality of the information?*

*B. Did you find out what you really wanted to find out in the interview?  
If not what was the problem?*

All About You

*A. What was your state of mind before, during and after the interview?*

*B. Is there anything of significance that should be noted about your and your interactions during the interview?*

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Description of the Study**

Dear Fellow Educator:

My name is Michelle Jay and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As partial fulfillment of the doctoral requirements, I am conducting a study on the perspectives of educators of color regarding the role of race in schools and the role of white colleagues in antiracist education efforts. The purpose of the study will be to provide educators of color an opportunity to give voice to their experiences working on racial justice in schools and to provide insight and guidance as to how their white peers can most effectively assist in that effort. Your participation in this study is being requested because of your professional occupation and subsequent work and service at your school.

You will be one of eight participants asked to join this study. Participation in the study will require approximately 6 hours of your time for a series of four 90-minute in-depth interviews. The interviews will be arranged at a mutually agreeable location at a time of your convenience. All interviews will, with your permission, be audio-taped and transcribed.

In addition to the interviews, you will be invited to participate in a 90-minute focus group with other participants in the study. During the focus group no questions will be directed to you as an individual, but instead will be posed to the group. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. The focus group discussion will also be audio-taped so I can capture comments in a transcript for analysis. Prior to the start of the focus group session, each participant will be asked to sign a separate focus group consent form.

Finally, in addition to the interviews and the focus group, I may ask you to keep a journal for one to two weeks to document issues and occurrences relevant to the study and to record your reflections on them. Ideally, journaling will take place after the second or third interview.

Participating in the focus group and keeping a journal are both optional aspects of the study. Choosing not to participate in the focus group and/or choosing not to keep a journal will not prevent you from being in the study.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide not to participate at any time or may elect not to answer specific questions posed to you. Should you have any questions or desire further information, please call me at (919) 923-1610 or email me at [cjay@unc.edu](mailto:cjay@unc.edu). You may also contact Dr. George Noblit, faculty advisor to this study at (919) 962-2513 or via email at [gwn@email.unc.edu](mailto:gwn@email.unc.edu).

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. The Behavioral Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB\_subjects @unc.edu

Thank you very much for considering my study. If you are interested and willing, please respond to this invitation at your earliest convenience. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

*Michelle L. Jay*

Michelle L. Jay

## APPENDIX D

### Study Consent Form

#### University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

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**IRB Study #** EDUC 05-035  
**Consent Form Version Date:** 09-30-05

**Title of Study:** Yours in Struggle? Educators' of Color Perspectives on the Anti-racist Education Project and the Role of Whites within It

**Principle Investigator:** Michelle Jay, Doctoral Candidate  
**UNC-Chapel Hill Department:** School of Education  
**UNC-Chapel Hill Phone Number:** 919-966-7000  
**Faculty Advisor:** George W. Noblit, Ph.D.

**Study Contact telephone number:** 919-923-1610  
**Study Contact email:** [cjay@unc.edu](mailto:cjay@unc.edu)

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#### ***What are some general things you should know about the research study?***

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason. Your decision to participate or not participate will be kept private and will not affect your status with your school/organization.

Details about the study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the investigator named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

#### ***What is the purpose of this study?***

The purpose of the study is to provide educators of color an opportunity to give voice to their experiences working on racial justice in schools and to provide insight and guidance as to how their white peers can most effectively assist in that effort.

#### ***How many people will take part in this study?***

If you decide to participate, you will be one of approximately eight educators in this study.

#### ***What Will Happen During the Study and How Long Will It Take?***

Participation in the study will require approximately 6 hours of your time for a series of four 90-minute in-depth interviews. The interviews will be arranged at a mutually agreeable location at a time of your convenience. All interviews will, with your permission, be audio-taped and transcribed. You have the right to skip any questions

that you may be asked for any reason. You also have the right to ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time for any reason.

Sample interview questions might include the following:

*Tell me as much as possible about your past life up until the time you became a teacher at your school.*

*Tell me about your day-to-day experience as a teacher and, if relevant, the ways in which you see race play itself out in those events/processes/activities throughout the day.*

*Given what you have shared about your experiences as a teacher and your perspective on the ways that race plays out in school, how do you understand or make sense of anti-racist activism within this context and within your own life?*

In addition to the interviews, you will be invited to participate in a 90-minute focus group with other participants in the study. During the focus group no questions will be direct to you as an individual, but instead will be posed to the group. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. The focus group discussion will also be audio-taped so I can capture comments in a transcript for analysis. Prior to the start of the focus group session, each participant will be asked to sign a separate focus group consent form.

Finally, in addition to the interviews and the focus group, I may ask you to keep a journal for one to two weeks to document issues and occurrences relevant to the study and to record your reflections on them. Ideally, journaling would take place after the second or third interview.

Participating in the focus group and keeping a journal are both optional aspects of the study and choosing not to participate in the focus group and/or choosing not keeping the journal will not preclude you from being in the study.

***What are the possible benefits from being in this study?***

Research is designed to benefit society by creating new knowledge. This particular study will provide you with an opportunity to give voice to your experiences addressing/dealing with issues of race and racism in schools and to provide insight and guidance as to how white peers can most effectively assist in that effort. The knowledge and understanding gained from this study will be useful to a broad educational audience.

***What are the possible risks or discomforts involved with being in this study?***

You may feel discomfort in being asked to reveal your attitudes about and conceptions of race, racism, and whiteness. As race remains a controversial and “touchy” subject, discussions around race may evoke strong emotional responses.

Consequently, there is a possibility that you may experience some personal discomfort related to the topics discussed.

I intend, to the best of my ability, to create an environment where open discussion of discomfort is welcome. As I not only want to explore your conceptions of race, racism, and activism, but also to help facilitate self-awareness and self-knowledge, it is anticipated that the actual act of sharing your stories with me may help open up a dialogue that will enable you to explore and address any potential discomfort.

***How will your privacy be protected?***

In an effort to maintain confidentiality, you will not be identified by name on any tapes. I will be transcribing the tapes and they will be kept in a locked box in my office. I will also replace the names of any school, organization and/or community you may mention with different names to protect your identity. During the focus group, you will be asked to choose your own pseudonym. At the conclusion of the study, all notes and records that contain your name or the names of any school, organization or community you may mention will be destroyed.

In addition, you will be offered a copy of the tape(s) of your interviews as well as a copy of the transcript of your interviews and a transcription of the focus group. Only study participants and I will have access to any tapes containing their interviews.

***Will you receive anything for being in this study?***

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

***Will it cost you anything to be in this study?***

There will be no cost to you for being in this study.

***What if you have questions about this study?***

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, you should contact the investigator at (919) 843-7878 or email her at [cjay@unc.edu](mailto:cjay@unc.edu). You may also contact Dr. George Noblit, faculty advisor to this study at (919) 962-2513 or via email at [gwn@email.unc.edu](mailto:gwn@email.unc.edu).

***What if you have questions about your rights as a research subject?***

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to [IRB\\_ subjects @unc.edu](mailto:IRB_subjects@unc.edu).



**Participant's Agreement:**

I have been informed about this study, and I have asked all the questions that I have at this time. I agree to be a participant in this research study.

I give the researcher permission to audio-tape the interviews.

I do not give the researcher permission to audio-tape the interviews.

With my signature I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

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Signature of Research Participant

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Date

---

Printed Name of Research Participant

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date

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Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

## APPENDIX E

### Focus Group Consent Form

#### University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY FOCUS GROUP

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**IRB Study #** EDUC 05-035

**Consent Form Version Date:** 09-30-05

**Title of Study:** Yours in Struggle? Educators' of Color Perspectives on the Anti-racist Education Project and the Role of Whites within It

**Principle Investigator:** Michelle Jay, Doctoral Candidate

**UNC-Chapel Hill Department:** School of Education

**UNC-Chapel Hill Phone Number:** 919-966-7000

**Faculty Advisor:** George W. Noblit, Ph.D.

**Study Contact telephone number:** 919-923-1610

**Study Contact email:** [cjay@unc.edu](mailto:cjay@unc.edu)

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#### ***What are some general things you should know about the research study?***

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason. Your decision to participate or not participate will be kept private and will not affect your status with your school/organization.

Details about the study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the investigator named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

#### ***What is the purpose of this study?***

The purpose of the study is to provide educators of color an opportunity to give voice to their experiences working on racial justice in schools and to provide insight and guidance as to how their white peers can most effectively assist in that effort.

#### ***How many people will take part in this study?***

If you decide to participate, you will be one of approximately eight educators in this study.

#### ***How long will your participation in this study last?***

Your participation in this focus group will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

***What Will Happen During the Study and How Long Will It Take?***

During the focus group, the group will be asked to discuss their experiences with race and racial injustice in schools, how they address/deal with those injustices, and the role that they see white colleagues playing in anti-racist activism in schools. No questions will be directed to you as an individual, but instead will be posed to the group. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. The focus group discussion will be audio-taped so I can capture comments in a transcript for analysis.

***What are the possible benefits from being in this study?***

Research is designed to benefit society by creating new knowledge. This particular study will provide you with an opportunity to give voice to your experiences addressing/dealing with issues of race and racism in schools and to provide insight and guidance as to how white peers can most effectively assist in that effort. The knowledge and understanding gained from this study will be useful to a broad educational audience.

***What are the possible risks or discomforts involved with being in this study?***

You may feel discomfort in being asked to reveal your attitudes about and conceptions of race, racism, and whiteness. As race remains a controversial and “touchy” subject, discussions around race may evoke strong emotional responses. Consequently, there is a possibility that you may experience some personal discomfort related to the topics discussed.

In addition, even though I will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the focus group session should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. Therefore, I encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of the limits in protecting confidentiality.

***How will your privacy be protected?***

In an effort to maintain confidentiality, you will not be identified by name on the focus group tape(s). At the beginning of the session, you will be asked to choose your own pseudonym. I will also replace the names of any school, organization and/or community you may mention with different names to protect your identity. I will be the only person transcribing the tape(s) and they will be kept in a locked box in my office. At the conclusion of the study, all notes and records that contain your name or the names of any school, organization or community you may mention will be destroyed.

***Will you receive anything for being in this study?***

For participating in the focus group, you will receive a copy of the transcription of the focus group conversation.

***Will it cost you anything to be in this study?***

There will be no cost to you for being in this study.

***What if you have questions about this study?***

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, you should contact the investigator at (919) 923-1610 or email her at [cjay@unc.edu](mailto:cjay@unc.edu). You may also contact Dr. George Noblit, faculty advisor to this study at (919) 962-2513 or via email at [gwn@email.unc.edu](mailto:gwn@email.unc.edu).

***What if you have questions about your rights as a research subject?***

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to [IRB\\_ subjects @unc.edu](mailto:IRB_subjects@unc.edu).

**Participant's Agreement:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

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Signature of Research Participant

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Date

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Printed Name of Research Participant

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Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

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Date

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Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

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