VOICES CRYING OUT FROM THE WILDERNESS:
THE STORIES OF BLACK EDUCATORS ON SCHOOL REFORM IN
POST KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

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ABSTRACT

DANIELLA ANN COOK: Voices Crying Out from the Wilderness: The Stories of Black
Educators on School Reform in Post Katrina New Orleans
(Under the direction of George W. Noblit)

Using the epistemological lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), this study recounts the

stories of African American educators in regards to how they understand the sweeping

school reforms in post-Katrina New Orleans. As an analytic tool, it will expose and

hopefully undermine the ways in which race, racism, and power affect the structural

conditions of schooling in post-Katrina New Orleans. As a methodology, I explore and

expand the use of composite counterstories in education research. Using the tool of

composite counterstorytelling, this dissertation research seeks to answer and explore what

Black educators say about what is happening in the New Orleans Public Schools after

Katrina.

The data reveals a conflict between the stories of key education elites and the Black

educators regarding reform in New Orleans after Katrina. While education elites articulate

the reforms occurring after Katrina using a "language of opportunity", the composite

counterstory articulates the feelings of loss, anger and isolation in regards to the reforms in

schools. Using Adkin's (1997) concept of reform as colonization and CRT's notion of

whiteness as property to frame my analysis, I concentrate on the educators' understandings

of reform in schools post Katrina. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the contradictions

between the composite counterstory and majoritarian story and the implications for urban

school reform.

DEDICATION

To my cloud by day and pillar of fire by night.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BESE   Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

CCS   Composite Counter Story

CRT   Critical Race Theory

MS   Majoritarian Story

NOPS   New Orleans Public Schools

RSD   Recovery School District

UTNO   United Teaches of New Orleans

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"There is an almost biblical quality about the devastation."
Lisa Delpit, returning from New Orleans after Katrina

As Pharaoh drew near, the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they became very frightened; so the sons of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."
Exodus 14: 11 - 12

"…we are voices in the wilderness, trying to talk to the powers that be… that some of the issues that you must take care of, we need to have some input into…"
A veteran African American educator

The words spoken by a Black educator in New Orleans call into memory the images of the Children of Israel wandering in the wilderness after 400 years of slavery in Egypt. In the Biblical passage from Exodus, the newly freed Israelites are venting their anger and fear about being led into the wilderness by Moses. In many ways, this captures the plight of Black educators in New Orleans after Katrina. Like the children of Israel being led to the Promised Land, the wilderness experience tested their faith and belief.

The wilderness in Biblical texts represents a place of remoteness and isolation. From one perspective, the wilderness is a place to be avoided or a sign of being out of favor with the powers that be. Yet the wilderness was also a place of miracles. In the Biblical account,

over forty miracles happened during the wilderness journey. In this sense, the wilderness is a place where miracles can happen, where a people can be restored. Black educators in New Orleans after Katrina are voices crying out in the wilderness of school reform. It is my hope that listening to the voices of Black educators in the wilderness of school reform in New Orleans can lead us toward a vision of public schooling the restores. Black educators in New Orleans know something about the wilderness of school reform, something school reformers wish to ignore – the role of race and racialization in the New Orleans schools. Thus, this study begins with listening to those Black educators walking this journey.

The post-Katrina changes in New Orleans public schools can affirm our darkest fears about the education of African American children in the United States, or with thoughtful and reflective attention provide a path of hope. To understand any phenomena requires a thorough knowledge of how it operates at various moments and with various actors. Black educators are a part of the community and a part of the schooling structure. They are intimately affected by what happens in both. The stories of African American educators are an important starting point for seeing and understanding the complexities and nuances of schooling in New Orleans after Katrina.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina slammed into the city of New Orleans, not only wiping out a major US city but completely decimating a public school system. The Orleans Parish School Board placed 7,500 school employees on Disaster Leave without pay on September 15, 2005. 4,500 teachers lost their jobs, resulting in the largest single displacement of African American educators since desegregation. Pre-Katrina, New Orleans had a strong black teaching force. The United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO) was the first integrated teachers' union in the South and the first to win a collective bargaining agreement in the state without the protection of a state employee's collective bargaining

law. The creation of UTNO represented the first time that an all-Black organization in the South had become integrated by accepting whites (Dingerson, 2006). At the heart of the rebuilding effort in New Orleans is the public school system where Pre-Katrina 80% of the city's school age children attended public schools (Dingerson, 2006).

> *"If the corn don't grow, nobody don't ask what's wrong with the corn."*
> Grandparent of a Head Start student in Louisiana (Perry, 2003, p. 9)

The equity issues and challenges facing New Orleans have implications for every urban system in the United States. New Orleans has been characterized as a "green field of opportunity" (Dingerson, 2006, p. 13) for those seeking to dismantle public education and replace it with charters and other forms of privatized public education. Understanding how those issues have changed or been exacerbated since the storm is important to understanding how to better advocate for a meaningfully rigorous education for all kids, especially those Black and Brown children who have been underserved in our public schools. Often unwittingly, research addresses African American achievement from a deficit perspective that undermines how we see African American students and more importantly how they see themselves (Perry, 2003). Seriously addressing African American achievement must begin with an "understanding of what the nature of the task of achievement is for African Americans as *African Americans*" (Perry, 2003, p. 4). Addressing the ways in which the practices of schools and districts (structural challenges) participate in the achievement of African American youth requires an intimate understanding of the learning contexts of schools. Having an intimate knowledge of what is happening requires starting smaller and deeper. This project reflects my desire to know how Black educators understand and articulate the challenges in the New Orleans Public Schools before and after Katrina.

Although there are many ways to approach understanding what is happening in schools in New Orleans, it is important to include viewpoints from both the community *and* the schools that lead to insight into the effect of the reforms on the classroom, kids, and the community. Therein lies the importance of Black educators. Research has documented the importance of educators as agents of change and as necessary partners in any school reform. Black educators are both powerful and powerless: as educators, they have access to traditional hegemonic constructions of schools; as black folk in America, they have perspectives from the bottom (Matsuda, 1995).

The educators in this study will have a "perspective advantage" that allows them to see and speak not from a place of disadvantage but rather one that allows the "wide angle vision" (Ladson Billings, 2000, p. 262). Research that meaningfully takes into account the strategic role of Black educators must not be left only to those who study twentieth century desegregation-era schooling but must move into the very real and complex racial realities of twenty-first century public schooling. Given the possibilities of improving the academic achievement of black students by utilizing Black teacher pedagogical strategies (Siddle Walker, 2001; Jeffries, 1997; Foster, 1993, 1997), this study seeks to begin to directly address the gap in knowledge specifically by recounting the stories highlighting the perspectives of African American educators regarding urban school reform efforts in New Orleans.

Purpose & Significance of the Study

Using the epistemological lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), this study recounts the stories African American educators tell about school reform efforts in post-Katrina New Orleans. It is necessary to not only guarantee all students access to quality teachers but also ensure that teachers are meaningfully included in reform. Thus, the purpose of the study is

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three-fold. The main purpose of this project is to share the stories and perspectives of Black educators in regards to how they understand the sweeping school reforms in post-Katrina New Orleans. As an analytic tool, it will expose and hopefully undermine the ways in which race, racism, and power affect the structural conditions of schooling in post-Katrina New Orleans. Arguably, urban school reform has become synonymous with raising the academic achievement of students of color, particularly Black and Latino students. Secondly, this study will add to the literature on African American educators by focusing on their voices and stories. There is also a scarcity of information on how African American educators view and understand urban school reform efforts. It is important to understand the perspectives of African American teachers working within urban environments to gain a fuller picture of what is happening in schools, particularly in regards to students of color. Finally, this project seeks to add to the literature on how to use Critical Race Theory as a methodology. As a methodology, I explore and expand the use of composite counter narratives in education research. If context is informed by the position, and thus perspective, of the teller, then I choose to understand what is happening in New Orleans from the perspective of those at the bottom (Matsuda, 1995), at least in terms of hierarchy of actors in school reform.

The significance of this study is in both the stories it tells as well as the ways in which the stories are told. This project analyzes the stories of African American educators who are a part of the largest single displacement of Black educators since desegregation using the CRT method of composite counter narratives. Given the history and role of Black educators[1] (and my identity as one), it is important for me to begin this research with them and add their stories to the education literature. This is my starting point. This dissertation research seeks to answer and explore what Black educators have to say about what's

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[1] Black educator refers to teachers, administrators, counselors and school social workers.

happening in post-Katrina New Orleans public schools. I will focus on two research

questions:

1. What stories do these educators tell about schooling in pre and post Katrina New Orleans?
2. What are the implications of these educators' perspectives for urban education reform?

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in criticisms of critical legal studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged

in the 1970s following the Civil Rights Movement. Critical Legal Studies (CLS) scholars

wanted to reclaim the merits of legal realism particularly the notion that history and culture

influence law and legal jurisprudence (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas, 1995). This

notion contradicted the popular belief of the law as objective and removed from the

influence of society. Although many scholars of color found utility in acknowledging the

socio-cultural aspects of legal jurisprudence, they were dissatisfied with Critical Legal

Studies' lack of full engagement with the question of race. The desire by legal scholars of

color to have a framework with the explanatory power to convey the lived experiences of

people of color resulted in the emergence of Critical Race Theory.

Informed by criticisms of Critical Legal Studies, the framework of CRT asserted that

race and the experiences and narratives of people of color must be the center rather than the

margins of any serious critique and understanding of the American legal system, thus

placing the realities of the oppressed at the center of analysis (Cook, 1995; Matsuda, 1995;

Delgado, 1995; Crenshaw, 1995). Critical Race Theory emanated from a need and yearning

for "…an adequate critical vocabulary for articulating… an alternative account of racial

power…" (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas, 1995, p. xxi). Although the message

from Critical Legal Studies "...that legal ideals are manipulable and that law serves to

legitimate existing maldistribution of wealth and power (Matsuda, p. 64, 1995)" resonated with scholars of color, it did not adequately theorize the role of race, racism, and white supremacy. In this sense, it was important to develop a discourse of race that was intentionally self-conscious and critical, both acknowledging and analyzing experience (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller and Thomas, 1995). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1995), a founding scholar of CRT, acknowledges that although there is no one set doctrine or canon for Critical Race Theory, there are two driving interests that undergird the scholarship:

> 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 that 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. (p. xiii)

In Critical Race Theory, race must be the center of the analysis of societal structures given the history, legacy and permanence of racist practice in US society (Lynn and Parker, 2006; Crenshaw et al, 1995). In other words, Critical Race Theory is concerned with making visible "…the material and ideological manifestations of racism" (Lynn and Parker, 2006). Although Critical Race Theory is multi-epistemological (Tate, 1997), there are three suppositions that inform it as an analytic tool:

1) Race is a significant factor in the construction of inequity in the United States.
2) In the United States, property rights were chosen over human rights
3) Race and property are key analytical tools for understanding how oppression and hegemony operate in the United States.

Critical Race Theory provides an epistemological lens to understand the ways in which the protection of property rights—with the understanding of whiteness as the ultimate property— interacts with race to maintain systems of oppression. Thus, the struggle is to

understand how race, particularly white supremacy, operates within structures and institutions (Crenshaw, 1995).

The recognition that the struggle against racial oppression lies *within* structures is an important conceptual point emerging from CRT. Since knowledge and its production are not a neutral undertaking (Crenshaw, 1995), Critical Race Theorists contest the terrain and terms of the racial discourse in order to change the "…vexed bond between law and racial power" (Crenshaw et al, 1995, p. xiii). The use of narrative is an important tool utilized by CRT to dismantle hegemonic knowledges and discourse (Bell, 1987; Crenshaw et al, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 2000). CRT scholars' use of narrative originates with Derrick Bell, often referred to as the father of CRT. Bell (1987) asserts that narrative corresponds more closely to how the human mind makes sense of experience.

A particular set of narratives, emerging from the experience of dominant groups, informs institutions charged with the creation, maintenance and exchange of knowledge. Thus, the creation and exchange of stories about individual situations not only collectively creates social reality (Delgado, 2000) but also informs our understanding of that reality. The stories, or narratives, of the dominant group justifies its power and privilege by the creation of "a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural" (Delgado, 2000, p. 60). If "…stories create their own bonds, represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings" (Delgado, 2000, p. 60), it is necessary to create stories to counter the dominant narratives.

Stories, according to CRT, are important in challenging traditional explanations of power relationships via an emphasis on the role of context in meaning-making (Guinier and Torres, 2002). Context is informed by the position, and thus perspective, of the teller. In this sense, narrative can provide the perspective of those at the bottom, and thus potentially

challenge normative assumptions about power relationships (Matsuda, 1995). Narratives

that look to the bottom both acknowledge that "…those who lack material wealth or

political power still have access to thought and language, and their development of those

tools …differs from that of the most privileged" (Matsuda, 1995, p. 65). This way of

storytelling is grounded in the experiences of those with the least advantage and privilege.

It is important to note that stories in and of themselves don't change institutions—people

do. The power to change and affect structural racism is in the narrators of the stories. This

understanding of storytelling serves many purposes including (1) psychic preservation by

not silencing the experiences of the oppressed and thus exposing neglected evidence

(counterstorytelling); (2) challenging normative reality through an exchange that overcomes

ethnocentrism and the dysconscious conviction of viewing the world one way; and (3)

listening to the voices of people of color as the basis for understanding how race and racism

function (Delgado and Stefanic, 2001; Delgado, 1989). In essence, story serves to relate

theory and experiences of the oppressed in such a way as to challenge the dominant and

normative narrative of white supremacy. These dominant and normative narratives of

white supremacy can be seen in education theories, especially those that explain Black

under-achievement.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Education theories do not clearly contradict the assumption of many educators that

Black people are fundamentally inadequate (Ladson Billings and Tate, 1995). This is

displayed by deficit models of education reform that locate the problem within individuals

and communities of color rather than oppressive structures and systems. The influence of

CRT in education began over a decade ago with Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), an

interdisciplinary, multi-epistemological form of scholarship focused on the complex and

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multiple ways in which race is connected to create predictable outcomes in the education of students of color in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Solórzano (1998) identifies five characteristics that describe CRT in education:

(1) CRT in education centers its analysis on race and racism with attention to how race intersects with other forms of oppression (gender, class, etc.).

(2) CRT in education challenges customary notions such as of meritocracy, objectivity, color-blindness and equal opportunity.

(3) CRT in education is committed to social justice.

(4) CRT in education recognizes the critical role of the experiential knowledge of people of color in theorizing race.

(5) CRT in education is utilizes inter-disciplinary methods to provide historical context in its analysis of race and racism.

Thus, within education CRT functions as a framework "…that challenges dominant ideology, [that] supports deficit notions about students of color"(Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 3). CRT in education as a framework is utilized to "theorize and examine the ways in which race and racism impact on the structures, processes, and discourses" within an educational context (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 3). Critical Race Theory in education has been used to explore teacher education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), the lives and experiences of Black males (Duncan, 2002) and the cultural wealth of Mexican American students (2002). Dixson and Rousseau (2006) in their review of CRT research in education found direct links to the legal CRT literature specifically in regards to attention to voice, challenging notions of colorblindness in education and exploring how restrictive and expansive views of equality are constructed in schools.

A feature of the current wave of CRT in education literature is a call to return to the roots of Critical Race Theory. Dixson and Rousseau (2006) contend

> That we have made progress toward a critical race theory of education is evident from a review of the scholarship published since 1995. However, that the legal literature still offers much in the way of a framework on which to build is illustrated by the CRT analyses of the *Brown* decision and the affirmative action cases. We assert that constructs such as interest convergence and the property value of whiteness are powerful to education. Despite the powerful analytical lens that they provide, we would argue that the constructs outlined in CRT scholarship in the law have yet to be used to their full potential in education. (p. 50)

What attracts me most to the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory is its existence as an active theory. The possibility and necessity of translating analyses into active resistance against oppressive and racist structures appeals to me as a working class, African American woman and scholar. Matsuda (1995) calls for "…grassroots philosophers who are uniquely able to relate theory to the concrete experience of oppression" (63). In this sense, scholars are not passive producers of knowledge; they must become active in the struggle for social justice within education. Ladson-Billings' call to those "adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity" to both "expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it" must be moved into the realm of action by scholars (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Thus, CRT offers education researchers the opportunity to be intellectuals who are not only interested "…explicating an unjust social order" but who will also be active participants "…in reconstructing a just community" (Cook, 1995, p. 85). The fundamental attraction of Critical Race Theory is its insistence both on the necessity of theorizing race and that researchers be *active* participants in the struggle for social justice and equity.

Key Conceptual Ideas

In this section, I will define two key concepts that I use to connect the CRT Framework to my analysis. The notion of fictive kinship (Fordham, 1996; Chatters, Taylor and Jayakody, 1994) and Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995) offer additional conceptual tools in my articulation and analysis of the experiences of Black educators in New Orleans.

Fictive Kinship

Fictive kinship is used by anthropologists to refer to people not related by birth with whom a person shares essential reciprocal social and economic relationships (Fordham, 1996). Fictive kinship networks are sources of informal social and psychological support (Chatters, Taylor and Jayakody, 1994). Fordham (1996) expanded this definition of fictive kinship in the African American community to include a political and prestige function, asserting "this porous system enables members of the community to gain prestige, obtain status, survive, and in some instances, thrive in a social context filled with obstacles and impediments to success" (p. 35). The essence of the African Americans' imagined community of fictive kin is its focus on the survival of the group rather than the individual. Fictive kinship encouraged an emphasis on the "value of cooperation, collaboration and solidarity" (p. 76-77). It is important to note that these values centered on sharing among kin in the Black community are not shared or embraced in the American system of schooling.

Whiteness as Property

CRT scholars ground the origins of racial domination in the United States in property rights. "Historically within U.S. society, property is a right rather than a physical object" (Dixson and Rousseau, 2006, p. 32). Harris (1995) articulates the early oppression of Blacks and Indians as grounded in the how race and property were understood. The exploitation of Black labor was possible by treating Black folks as objects of property. The

conquest, removal and extermination of Native American life and culture were accomplished by affirming the property rights of whites. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) assert "the ability to define, possess and own property" has been a central aspect of power in America. They discuss the implicit and explicit ways that property relates to education in the form of property tax as the primary means to fund schools affording the affluent access to better and more resources and making the curriculum as a form of intellectual property.

A necessary part of the analysis in this project is an analysis of the functional aspects of whiteness as property (Harris, 1995). This includes (1) the rights of disposition, (2) the rights to use and enjoyment, (3) the right of reputation, and (4) the right to exclude. Within education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) articulates these property functions of whiteness as

(1) Students are rewarded for conformity to White norms, rendering White property as transferable.

(2) Whiteness confers specific cultural, economic and social privileges .

(3) Legally, to harm a person's reputation affects his or her personal property. To identify a school or program as nonwhite is damaging as is the case of bilingual education programs having lower status than foreign language learning of white students.

(4) If whiteness is construed as the absence of the influence of blackness, the segregation of schools, white flight from desegregated schools, and tracking within schools all create barriers to opportunity to learn for non-White students.

For this project, I explore how these four functional aspects of whiteness apply to the composite counterstories of Black educators.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

In many ways, Payne's (1984) admission that "… [there is] a great deal of hostility toward teachers and that hostility was built into how he [Payne] defined the problem"…highlights a deep-seated belief in urban education reform. In particular, the notion that teachers are *the* problem, only preceded by the children themselves, is the cornerstone of often-contradictory (liberal and conservative) reform aims. If part of the problem in urban education is the enmity directed at teachers by those who write about schools (Payne, 1984), then it is imperative to take a fresh look at how teachers are a part of the *solution*. African American teachers are an important and strategic part of this perspective.

For the purposes of this dissertation, the literature review will focus on urban education reform with a special emphasis on the inclusion, or rather exclusion, of African American teachers in the research literature by (1) reviewing the research on Black teachers; (2) establishing a working definition of urban; (3) providing a brief history of urban reform; (4) examining the how teachers are often positioned outside of reform; and finally (5) reviewing the importance of an African American philosophy of education for understanding the urban school reform.

Teachers Matter

In school reform, it is necessary to both guarantee all students access to quality

teachers and to ensure that teachers are meaningfully included in the reform effort.

Regardless of the specific reform, teachers are essential agents of change (Payne, 1984;

Anyon 2005; Rothstein, 2004; Perry, 2003; Noblit, 1986; Fruchter, 2007; Mirón & St. John,

2003). Although often seen as part of the problem, teachers are necessary to implement

policy. Not only must administrators have a commitment to improve schools where they

work (Anyon, 1997), they must also be willing to broaden the base of decision makers to

include those affected by decisions (Payne, 1984). As "street-level bureaucrats," teachers are

solely responsible for the effective delivery of any reform (Lipsky, 1980; Noblit, 1986; Payne,

1984; Fruchter, 2007). Noblit (1986) argues that if school reform truly desires excellence and

quality, it must cultivate and attend to issues that affect teaching and teachers, providing

additional flexibility and ownership of the school direction, process and climate.

Investigating the relationship between school resources and student behavior,

Eskenazi and Beam (2003) found that teacher qualifications had the strongest and most

consistent association with students' behavior and achievement within those schools.

Schools with more qualified teachers had students who performed better and stayed out of

trouble. Furthermore, the study found that as the proportion of Black and Hispanic students

increased as average teacher qualification decreased. This was, in turn, accompanied by an

increase in suspension rates. This finding is especially troubling for Black and Latino

students since it is possible to see the residual effects of relatively ineffective teachers from

prior years measured in subsequent student achievement scores (Sanders & Horn, 1998).

According to an expansive longitudinal study in Tennessee, the effectiveness of the

teacher is the major determinant of student academic progress (Sanders & Horn, 1998). The

1997 study by Wright, Horn, and Sanders investigated simultaneously the effects of teachers, intraclassroom heterogeneity, and class size on achievement gain. It revealed that "the two most important factors impacting student gain are differences in classroom teacher effectiveness and the prior achievement level of the student" (p. 4). The study strongly proposed that if schools were to seriously confront improving academic achievement they must begin with improving the effectiveness of teachers working with all students (Sanders & Horn, 1998). Teachers matter and are vital to creating school contexts that not only facilitate learning but support high achievement.

Connectedness with students is important in establishing relationships that facilitate learning. Given the political and social context in which education takes place, Valenzuela (1999) posits that caring about children from marginalized communities means interrogating the relational interactions between student and teacher as an integral part of the learning process. In essence, teachers embody the values of the school. How they practice those beliefs directly affects school culture and thus the success, or demise, of any reform effort.

The Absence of the Voices of African American Educators

Although the role of teachers as agents of reform and change is being acknowledged, there continues to be a conspicuous absence of Black educator perspectives in reform discussions. Payne (1984) asserts that "It is not surprising while race relations is among the most studied of all topics, we have very little in the way of systematic analysis of how Blacks relate to each other…The deemphasis on intraracial relations necessarily means that we lose touch with a vital key to understanding change"(p. 22). Although there has been an increase of urban education research and work on increasing the achievement of and

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effectively working with African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Howard, 1999; Delpit, 1995; Lewis, 2004), insufficient attention is paid to African American teachers. Of course there are exceptions, notably the work of Foster (1991; 1993; 1997), Siddle Walker (2001) and Delpit (1994).

Historically, teaching has been highly respected in African American communities and a major source of employment for educated African Americans (Dilworth 1988; Cole, 1986; Sizemore, 1978). In 1950, nearly half of Black professionals were teachers, compared to less than one quarter of Whites (Cole, 1986). The large concentration of African Americans in teaching was due in large part to segregated schooling in the South (Cole, 1986). Narrative accounts of African American teachers in the South before desegregation revealed "intimate portrayals of the school [where] the African American teacher is a critical figure in a web of caring adults who placed the needs of African American children at the center of the school's mission" (Siddle Walker, 2001, p. 752). In this sense, education was more than the transmission of formal school knowledge, and the teacher functioned as a community activist on behalf of African American children (Jeffries, 1997; Siddle Walker, 2001).

Until the 1960s Black children were most likely to be taught by Black teachers, yet educational literature has not included their voices and experiences (Foster, 1993). Without an accurate account of Black teaching and its effects on African American children, the pedagogical traditions emerging from African American educators will remain unexamined and disregarded (Siddle Walker, 2001).

The 1954 Brown decision simultaneously reversed the notion of separate and equal education while irreparably damaging the Black teaching force. The mass dismissal of thousands of Black teachers and principals was a result of the consolidation of Black and White schools to meet school desegregation mandates (Cole, 1986). Bell (1983)

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acknowledges that "too many of us embraced school integration with our hearts and ignored the pragmatic considerations that might have become apparent had we approached the whole matter with our heads" (Bell, 1983, p. 291). Specifically, he is referring to the view that all-Black schools were "educationally bad and morally evil" (p. 292). Sizemore's (1978) claim, "the child is no longer the center of the controversy, desegregation is. The means have become the end" (p. 62 - 63), captures the ways in which the educational needs of black students and the knowledge of Black children held by Black teachers, were subverted to further support the broad civil rights goal of desegregation.

The legal strategy employed by civil rights attorneys and organizations did not include Black teachers and their experience as part of the desegregation discussion due to a belief that the self-interest of Black teachers protecting their jobs would outweigh the desire to serve the educational needs of black children (Bell, 1983). Yet, the challenge against separate but equal schooling has been to simultaneously "fight against segregated schools and to honor black teachers" (Foster, 1993, p. 372). Robert Carter, former NAACP General Counsel acknowledged that:

> …we had neither sought nor received any guidance from professional educators as to what equal education might connote to them in terms of their educational responsibilities. If I had to prepare *Brown* today, instead of looking principally to the social scientist to demonstrate the adverse consequences of segregation, I would seek to recruit educators to formulate a concrete definition of the meaning of equality in education, and I would base my argument on that definition and seek to persuade the Court that equal education in its constitutional dimensions must, at the very least conform to the contours of equal education as defined by the educators. (Bell, 1983, p. 290)

Siddle Walker's (2001) call for a more full account of African American teaching echoes the sentiment of Robert Carter. In essence, there must be a deeper analysis of how Black

teachers understood and continue to understand their roles as it relates to the education of Black children.

Research has begun to examine the role of the Black teacher in raising the achievement of African American children. Stewart, Meier & England (1989) linked the proportion of Black teachers to equal education opportunities for Black students, illustrating that higher percentages of black teachers in schools lowers the number of black students expelled, suspended, or placed in special education (Ware, 2002). Yet, research must not only examine the importance of black teachers on "improv[ing] the quality of education provided to Black students" (Ware, 2002, p. 34) but also come to a deeper understanding of how Black teachers understand and thus perform their work.

Foster (1991; 1993; 1997) provides some of the earliest examinations of black teachers. Her scholarship has focused on reviewing the literature on African American teachers as well as analyzing effective Black teachers. Successful teachers of African American students are defined as being "proficient in community norms – that is, they are able to communicate with students in a familiar cultural idiom" (Foster, 1993, p. 391). Countering scholarly treatments of teachers that tend to portray Black teachers negatively, her research illustrates the ways in which effective African American teachers use their situated understanding of community norms to work with students and teachers. The success of these teachers can also be contributed to their understanding of "the current as well as historic social, economic, and political relationships of the community to the larger society. These teachers are not merely educating the mind – they are educating for character, personal fulfillment, and success in the larger society as well as for competence in the local community" (Foster, 1993, p. 391).

The work of Jeffries (1997) offers an examination of the ways in which African American teachers' cultural performances have played out historically in segregated schools and the changes in these performances after desegregation. Three archetypes embodying the cultural performance traditions emerged from the analysis of key phrases and patterns of African American teachers: the trickster, the matriarch, and the preacher (Jeffries, 1997). All teachers used the various performance traditions to enhance the education of their African American students, yet the performance of each of these archetypes changed with "desegregation creat[ing] the need for renegotiated archetypes with which to analyze the education practices and performances of teachers today" (Jeffries, 1997, p. 44).

The role of the trickster evolved into the warrior. In both performances, African American teachers focused on building the self-esteem and confidence of the students, which was considered a necessary first step before education could begin. Yet, after desegregation, teachers spoke of their frustration with holding a belief in high expectations for their students within an educational environment mired in discrimination and racial inequality.

The matriarch developed into the caretaker. During segregated schooling, the matriarch functioned to "…aid the African American students and their families in their collective struggles for racial, social and economic equality [and] help students learn to survive in a time when life could be overtly threatening for African American people" (Jeffries, 1997,p. 61). For African American teachers, building resilience and a sense of humanity was a key responsibility (Dingus, 2006). In this way, African American teachers fostered a nurturing environment in schools that entailed giving students the financial, emotional and social support needed to facilitate learning. The matriarch developed into the caretaker after desegregation, functioning to attend to student needs as best they could. A

consequence of desegregation was that "it became more difficult for African American teachers to adopt the multifaceted and protean roles of admonisher, urger, and meddler" (Jeffries, 1997, p. 93).

The preacher, the last archetype explored by Jeffries (1997), transformed into the enforcer. Prior to desegregation, teaching was in this sense more than a vocation; it was a calling to instill the holistic goals of education into the schooling of African American children. Teachers accepted full responsibility for students with the goal of "…impart[ing] to African American students the ultimate purpose and use of a good education – social, economic, and emotional equity" (p. 110). The enforcer, after desegregation, maintained the philosophical ideals of the preacher while being viewed as the "strong-arms of law at school" (p. 100). Yet for these teachers, discipline was connected to students being loved and both giving and receiving respect. Jeffries exploration further revealed the abundance of knowledge within the African American teaching community regarding the ways to effectively educate children of color.

Siddle Walker's (2001) analysis of the ways in which African American teachers in Georgia between 1940 and 1960 understood and articulated their professional beliefs and activities sheds further light on the pedagogy of Black teachers. According to Siddle Walker (2001), five principles describe the beliefs African American teachers held about their teaching including (1) the importance of teachers having a relationship and familiarity with Black communities; (2) commitment to professional excellence regardless of extra hours or work needed; (3) expanding the notion of caring to encompass high expectations in and outside the classroom as well as supporting non-academic needs as necessary; (4) adapting curriculum to make it relevant to African American students; and (5) using community and school supports as needed. This research is key in helping pose the question of what was

lost during desegregation when the "…voices in the conversation about how to teach children" never included "…those who knew the most about how to teach African American children"(2001, p.774). As Foster (1997) maintains:

> Black teachers' unique historical experiences are either completely overlooked or amalgamated with those of white teachers. In those few instances where black teachers are visible, their cultural representations are biased by society's overarching racism. For the most part, these cultural representations continue to render black teachers invisible as teachers of students of their own or of other ethnic backgrounds, while casting white female teachers as heroic figures. (p. xlix)

The teaching beliefs and practice of Black educators can shed light on the specific ways to support the academic achievement of Black students (Foster, 1993; Ware, 2002; Siddle Walker, 2001). Particular attention should be paid to the ways in which African American teachers challenge students while simultaneously acknowledging (and teaching their students to cope with) racism (Ware, 2002).

Defining Urban

Urban education is a broad and often ambiguous field of inquiry due in part to the notion of urban as a synonym for city. Mirón (1996) argues "…the concept of urban has no inherent definition or meaning. Its meaning is derived from its social context and is inextricably bound to dominant social and power relations, especially to the political uses of knowledge and official knowledge"(p. 3). Many research texts don't even bother to define what they mean by urban or inner city particularly when discussing children of color the large percentage of whom reside in urban areas (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings,1994 ; Valenzuela, 1999 ; Perry, 2003 ; Kincheloe, hayes, Rose and Anderson, 2006). For example, in

Getting What We Ask For: The Ambiguity of Success and Failure in Urban Education,
Payne (1984) interchangeably uses inner city and urban with little distinction.

Arguably, if urban is synonymous with city then research examining urban
education must have an understanding of the dynamics of cities. With the continual growth
of people living in urban areas in the United States, the definition of city has changed
(McClafferty, Torres and Mitchell, 2000). Simple definitions of urban rely on numbers with
certain population sizes denoted as an urban area. Wirth (1938) takes issue with defining
urban in such a way as to rob cities of their significant social characteristics. Building on
Wirth, Gans (1991) further divides the notion of city into inner city, outer city, and
suburban. His notion of inner city corresponds with Wirth's notion of city. For the purposes
of my dissertation, I will define urban as including the city of New Orleans in its entirety,
thus encompassing more than the inner city. I define it thus because focusing only on the
inner city often isolates the poorest citizens from those who benefit most from urban centers.

The representation of cities as crime ridden, degenerate and economically
underdeveloped directly affects the national perception of urban schools. Urban
schools are often characterized by their urban environment, which is often linked to
social problems such as poverty, violence, gangs, drugs and decay (Noguera, 1996;
Engvall, 1996; Anyon, 1997). In many ways, the challenges of urban schooling must
be understood in the context of the relationship between the school and the larger
urban community. This relationship between the school and larger urban
community is contextually influenced by the history of each particular city. In
chapter 4, I will examine the particular history of New Orleans to set the stage for
the contrast of a majoritarian and counterstories.

Urban Education Reform

If urban represents the epitome of all that has gone wrong in American society, schools are the chosen vehicle to deal with the problems created in urban spaces in regards to heterogeneity of the population. Schools provide both academic training and socialization. In this sense, schools serve dual, and often contradictory, functions. The evolution of American high schools illustrates the tensions between providing equal opportunity to learn while simultaneously socializing students to accept dominant values grounded in inequality.

According to Tyack (1974), fewer than 10% of 14-17 year olds were enrolled in high school in the early 19th century. With a relatively homogeneous high school population, individual differences among students was not an educational concern so there was no need to practice ability grouping. Compulsory school laws produced an increase of 711% of the high school population between 1900 and 1920. In this period, calls for social efficiency dictated a need for high schools to not only sort students by future vocation but to deal with the social ills of society brought on by the increasingly diverse population (Cremin, 1961; Kliebard, 2004; Tyack, 1974). By 1909, 59% of the high school population in the nation's 37 largest cities had foreign-born parents (Tyack, 1974).

During the same period, the development of widespread use of intelligence testing supported the notion of measurable differences. The policy elites responsible for educational progress reforms of the early 20th century, coined "administrative progressives" by Tyack (1974), pushed for what Oakes (1985) called the new equality – a comprehensive high school that offered something for everyone. Administrative progressives merged a belief in progressive education principles with the supposed "science" of social efficiency. This new comprehensive high school would meet the needs of different students by tailoring their

educational experiences based on their perceived ability. In essence, a student would be assigned to lower tracks of education if the school considered them of low mentality.

There was also widespread belief in the infallibility of standardized testing as a tool for bringing forth a new era of efficient and equal education for the masses. These new high schools would fix the social ills of society, Americanizing diverse students to take their respective place in the social order. Under the banner of new equality, administrative progressives designed high schools around the principles of unification within stratification (Oakes, 1985). In other words, students would all have access to education without the guarantee of equal education. The underlying assumption that heterogeneity and diversity helped produce educational challenges in urban high schools continues to permeate urban education reform.

Defining Reform

Although education reform is a highly diverse field encompassing multiple methods and viewpoints in order to improve educational outcomes, "it is nevertheless organized by a general professional perspective about reform, namely that it is necessary, it is possible and practicable, and, unfortunately, it is still largely work-in-progress" (Adkins, 1997, p. 41). Adkins's (1997) literature review of education reform discovered three prevalent patterns: an examination of the failure of reform, a focus on implementation of reform efforts, or a critical analysis of previous studies of educational reform. According to Adkins (1997), these patterns inform the guiding assumptions of reform research. The belief that "reform is progressive, rational and purposive" (p. 66) influences the types of questions asked and the answers sought to educational challenges. Adkins (1997) understands education reform as colonialism in that it creates "the colonial condition [which] is the condition in which the

Colonized find themselves… inferior to the Colonizer and dependent upon him to overcome their inferiority. The colonial condition, though, seems insurmountable because the Colonizer controls the terms, and, as such, he is a shifting target" (p. 109 - 110). Reform is used as a neutral term although it has significant political, social and racial meanings.

Along a similar vein, Sizemore (1978) begins her analysis of desegregation with an analogy of Kenyan independence to construct a counter narrative about the ways in which White America defined the terms of desegregation.

> When a reporter asked one white affluent Kenyan why [the White minority in Kenya did not fear revenge during independence], the Kenyan said, "We gave them the parliament and we kept the banks." For African Americans in the diaspora, the colonial experience has often been used as an analytical framework for the interpretation of our condition. James Turner explains it this way:
>
>> Those who apply the colonial analogy to the Black American ghetto define colonialism in terms of the domination of one group of people by another for the latter's material benefit. Basically, the colonial analogy views the Black community as underdeveloped areas whose economics, politics, and social institutions are controlled externally by a different racial/cultural group which dominates the political economy of the society.
>
> Just as the white Kenyans retained control of the banking institutions to maintain their power to confine and define, so white American retained control of the definition of integration in the struggle for school desegregation. They gave us busing and they took the jobs. (p. 58)

Sizemore reminds us that the history of reform for African Americans has always been steeped in the colonial condition. Yet, since colonialism "traditionally refers to the establishment of domination over a geographically external political unit, most often inhabited by people of a different race and culture, where this domination is political and economic and the colony exists subordinated to and dependent upon the mother country"(Blauner, 1974, p. 83), the notion of internal colonization more accurately captures the relationship between educational reform and African Americans. Internal colonialism

(IC) aims to expose, analyze and critique racism in contexts where the "dominant and subordinate populations intermingle" (Bohmer, 1998, p. 2). Thus, IC serves the interests of the dominate group through a structured relationship of domination and subordination defined along ethnic and/or racial lines (Bohmer, 1998). Given that many urban school systems serve Black and Brown communities, the reality that many of the teachers, administrators and education policy elites are from other communities – both racially and geographically- make public schools a site of internal colonialism.

Urban education reform in the 21st century has been influenced by the history of education reform, particularly the legacies of desegregation, which presupposes the belief in reform as inherently good, necessary, and reasonable. I assert that any review of reform must take into account the ways in which reform, particularly within urban education, is socially constructed and particularly who controls those constructions.

Brief Overview of School Reform

The crisis in urban education seems centered in its heterogeneity (Anderson, 2006). Researchers have offered their understandings of how urban schools have responded to the challenges of diversity. Mirón and St. John (2003) identify four types of reforms: the courts and urban school reform, federally initiated external reforms, independent adopted research based reforms, and community based reforms. Race and class are viewed as central to understanding urban school reform given the racial politics of urban communities. They also note the shift in reform from "equalizing opportunity to mandating excellence" beginning with "A Nation At Risk" (NCEE, 1983). In this latter discourse, the answer to inequality lies in active attention to commanding excellence.

Tyack and Cuban (1995) provide a useful framework for understanding the history of school reform grounded in the notions of regress and progress. The political nature of schooling and thus school reform has led to schools "…easily shift[ing] from panacea to scapegoat" (p. 14). To the degree that schools are agents of reform, they help move society forward. On the other hand, schools as public institutions garner the cynicism and distrust of all government entities. Within notions of progress and regress, there is also the contradiction of "…people favor[ing] giving all children a fair chance, but at the same time they want *their* children to succeed in the competition for economic and social advantage" (p. 29). Schools that appear integrated reveal that the majority of students in regular classes are students of color while Advanced Placement, Honors and magnet programs are overwhelmingly White (Barnes, 1997; Kohn, 1998; Anyon, 1997; Oakes, 1985). The notion that schools should seek equality has been an espoused principle, but it is less clear how schools should deal with inequality.

Tyack and Cuban's (1995) political and institutional analysis of school reform provides a lens for understanding the historical role of the 1983 report *A Nation of Risk: the Imperative for Educational Reform*. Emerging during a time of intense scrutiny of American public education, the report was grounded in "the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system" (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), showing "…regress, not progress, [as] the trend in public education" (Tyack and Cuban, 1995, p. 14). *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983*)* concluded that American public education's failure to educate students would lead to the economic decline of the country and an inability to compete in the global marketplace. To stem "the rising tide of mediocrity" (p. 4), the report made recommendations in five areas: content, time, teaching, leadership and fiscal support, and standards and expectations. The explicit linking

of the health, welfare, and improvement of society to schools has clear political implications

for how researchers not only approach reform but the objects of reform—the students. A

unifying theme between urban school reform of the early 20th century and those of the late

20th/early 21st centuries is the idea that increased diversity in schools threatens effectiveness

(Fruchter, 2007). In short, the evidence of urban school ineffectiveness is the failure of its

students.

Fruchter (2007) begins his analysis dismantling the myth of public schools

failing students. His analysis does not dispute the challenges in urban education, or

the reality that students of color—particularly African American students—have

been underserved. Rather, his articulation of the failure of public schools is that this

notion of failure is but a symptom of our nation's racial belief structures. Fruchter

argues "…this myth, [is] propagated to reduce the discomfort that has accompanied

our failure to institutionalize the integrated schooling that the *Brown* decision

mandated" (p. 6). Thus, he sees the national belief in the failure of public schools, as

exemplified by *A Nation At Risk*, as the outgrowth of the nation's choice to *not* fully

integrate and also the choice to allow class and race stratification in schools.

The Era of Standards Based Reform

A detailed review of the major urban education reforms since desegregation is

beyond the scope of this review. However, the major waves of reform since the release of *A*

Nation at Risk (NCEE, 1983) can be characterized as promoting standards and accountability.

Borman, Overman and Brown (2003) understand reform in the last half of the 20th century as

swinging "from one fad to another with little evidence of national progress" (p. 125). The

1970s were dominated by issues of equity specifically the use of "desegregation… to solve fundamentally political and economic problems" (Noblit & Johnston, 1982). The first wave of desegregation is distinguished by judicial intervention; the second begins with the Office of Civil Rights review of compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Noblit & Johnston, 1982). The courts mandating school desegregation emerged as an important force in the 1970s' (Noblit & Johnston, 1982). Yet, the 1970s desegregation reform contributed to the growing racial isolation of inner city students due to the failure of most of the major players in the school desegregation process—including judges, attorneys, political leaders and policy makers—to appreciate the overwhelming impact of 'white flight' on school desegregation plans (Fossey, 2003). The 1970s were also influenced by the belief that students would be better served by school wide reforms as evidenced by the effective schools research of Edmonds (1979).

The 1980s were characterized by "competing and often contradictory reforms" that combined top-down centralized efforts with decentralized school based management (Borman, Overman & Brown, 2003, p. 126). Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) was a mechanism by which funds were made available to schools adopting proven comprehensive reforms with target schools being those that were high poverty with low-test scores. The mid-1990s saw the concept of school wide and systemic reform emerge as the prominent strategy for improving the educational outcomes of students at high poverty schools. CSR efforts include a diverse array of program designs, understandings of the problems and the solutions offered by such disparate reforms as the Comer School Development Program and Success for All (Borman, Overman & Brown, 2003).

The 1990s witnessed the return of standardized achievement as measured by testing as the major avenue to improve academic achievement of students and effectiveness of

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schools (Noblit, Berry and Dempsey, 1991). Arguably, there is not a consensus on the

content of standards and the mechanisms of accountability for meeting standards. Some

feared and continue to fear that standards-based reforms will narrow curriculum, reduce

teacher creativity, increase top-down bureaucracy; others argue that standards-based

reforms will give parents and communities, particularly those with failing schools, a

mechanism to create quality schools for their children (Karp, 1997). Wells and Oakes (1998)

attribute *A Nation at Risk* (1983) with asserting the notion of "simultaneous centralization

and decentralization," evident in reforms that advocate for choice and freedom from

bureaucracy in a heightened era of high stakes standardized testing.

Standards-based reforms directed efforts towards the development of high school

exit exams, the alignment of curricula and state-mandated testing and student and teacher

accountability linked to performance. The continuing rise of the standards movement in the

1990s culminated with the 2002 passage of No Child Left Behind, ushering in the era of the

tyranny of numbers. Although specific reforms (Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools, the

Small Schools Movement, Core Knowledge, Comer's School Development Program, A+

Schools, etc.) had varying foci, the reforms emerging in the 1980s and continuing into the

21st century are all similar in their disregard and silence regarding the experiences and

knowledges of educators of color, particularly African American educators (Borman,

Overman & Brown, 2003).

From (In) Equality to Excellence

Oakes (1985) asserts that after the desegregation of schooling and the gains of the

Civil Rights Movement, the rhetoric regarding schools in the late 20th/early 21st century

shifted from one of equality to excellence. The significance of this shift must be understood

as part of the reaction to and backlash from the Civil Rights Movement. The order to desegregate led to the widespread development of public school alternatives, such as an increase in private schools and White flight to the suburbs. As resources, due to property tax base shifting, dwindled in urban areas, public schools began to re-segregate. Public schools needed to not only attract white parents but also build confidence in the schools' ability to prepare students.

In this section, I will analyze how urban education reform research addresses the inequality existing within urban schools. The last 25 years of urban education reforms can be understood via their understanding and articulation of the root causes of urban school failure. In an earlier section, I described the ways in which high schools were used to affect society in the early 20th century. After Brown there was a shift in the ways in which we understand the relationship between schools and society.

Given that the purpose of education is contested, whether and how inequality should be addressed in urban schooling poses a challenge to reformers. Payne (1984) moves the discussion in urban education reform from analysis of failure to attempting to understand success. He sees researchers and those who write about schools as part of the problem in their creation of a "cult of failure" which spends more time articulating failure rather than understanding success in urban schools. Payne argues that school leadership and ethos is more important than methodology. If "how we choose to see educational inequality is related to how we see inequality itself" (Payne, 1984, p. 7), then those who wish to improve urban education must have a better understanding of inequality, particularly disparities by poverty and race.

The works of Anyon (1997), Warren (2005), and Rothstein (2004a; 2004b) call for a broadening of the education reform to include addressing the economic conditions that

create the challenges for and to urban schools and children. Anyon (1997) understands reform as addressing challenges such as district bureaucracy, low student expectations, and teacher isolation. Yet she contends that in the urban context of the school, the *real* challenge, and thus solution, lies in the political and economic isolation of urban communities.

Rothstein (2004) argues that social class affects student achievement in ways that schools cannot address alone. He argues that social class differences in child rearing affects the ways in which children engage in school. Furthermore, he argues that high mobility (due in large part to the unavailability of affordable and safe housing) and access to healthcare (regular dental and vision care) highly influence student academic achievement.

Warren (2005) maintains that successful school reform must be connected to community revitalization. Identifying three approaches (service, development, and organizing), he articulates a framework for understanding the social capital and relational power in urban education reform. Of particular relevance to this review is his articulation of how reform must link communities and schools. There are four reasons why this linkage is important: (1) the inability of children to learn well "…if they lack adequate housing, access to health care, nutrition, safe and secure environments, or if their parents are experiencing stress due because of their low wages and insecure employment"(p. 134); (2) the inability of teachers, and thus schools, to effectively teach children without an understanding of the students' cultures, lives, and communities; (3) the necessity of transforming the culture of schooling; and finally (4) the lack of adequate funding of schools connected to their location in poor communities (Warren, 2005).

The shift to excellence away from equality focuses attention, for example, on successful high poverty schools, thus moving away from addressing the conditions that created the economic poverty of students in those schools. Thus, a major challenge within

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contextualizing the discussion of urban education reform within larger frameworks of social reform is the implicit deficit characterization of economically impoverished communities. Urban communities are more than a collection of social problems (Warren, Thompson & Saegert, 2001). In his articulation of school reform connected to community revitalization, Warren (2005) explicitly articulates the importance of shifting from a deficit view to "…an appreciation of their [urban children, their families and their communities] potential strengths and contributions" (p. 135), distinguishing him from Rothstein (2004) and Anyon (1997).

The current wave of urban education reform situates such reform efforts within a larger political context. Schooling and efforts to reform schooling are not neutral but rather inherently ideologically driven. An examination of urban school reform must take into account the values informing perceptions and thus the needs of urban schools and students. Tyack and Cuban's (1995) notion of progress and regress is useful in thinking about the waves of reform in the 20th century, yet they lack the socio-cultural grounding found in Fruchter (2007). Both Fruchter's (2007) and Mirón and St. John's (2003) frameworks lack an adequate historical understanding of school reform. However, while Mirón and St. John's (2003) critical empirical perspective does call for understanding the specificity of particular reforms historical contexts, they fail to provide an overarching historical context in which to understand the shape of urban school reform in the United States. Only Fruchter (2007) grounds his analysis in the work of African American scholars. His attention to the ways in which scholars of color articulate their understanding of urban school reform as a basis for his work is an example of counter hegemonic account.

Understanding Black Achievement and Reform from the Perspective of the

African American Education Tradition

Drawing on African American educational scholarship, Fruchter (2007) describes the conditions that must exist to change the culture of schooling. The culture of schooling is an outgrowth of choices made by society in how it "…structures, organizes and implements its educational system" (p. 26). Fruchter asserts that the culture of schooling is easier to change than the family, parent, and community cultures. Changing traditional cultures of schooling into places where students of color can learn and thrive will combat school failure. Synthezing the work of Perry (2003), Ladson-Billings (1994), Wideman (1984), Gilyard (1991), and Siddle Walker (2001), I argue for restructuring the culture of schooling to create an environment that supports African American academic excellence. This notion of "reshaped culture" (p. 44 – 45) must (1) be responsive to the differences between black culture and dominant culture and the need for black children to negotiate both cultures; (2) instill and demand high standards and achievement for all students; and (3) secure quality teachers for all black students. The hope is to not only effectively counter deficit model beliefs but also to articulate a philosophy of achievement that is the African American education tradition.

Often unwittingly, research addresses African American achievement from a deficit perspective that undermines how we see African American students, and more importantly, how they see themselves (Perry, 2003). Seriously addressing African American achievement must begin with an "understanding of what the nature of the task of achievement is for African Americans as *African Americans*" (Perry, 2003, p. 4). Addressing the ways in which the practices of schools and districts participate in the achievement of African American

youth requires an intimate understanding of the learning contexts of schools. This philosophy proposed by Perry (2003) understands the knowledges and understandings of Black educators as an asset to supporting the achievement of Black students, which is in stark contrast to viewing school community relations, and those vested in them, as a *problem* for reform (Noblit & Dempsey, 1996, p.194).

Emphasizing the traditions in the African American philosophy of education can help transform urban school reform efforts. According to St. John and Cadry (2004), a strong emphasis on care and community is found in the African American education tradition. These qualities were enhanced in schools controlled by African Americans. Research (Irvine & Irvine, 1983; Foster, 1993, 1995; Jeffries, 1997) has delved into the evolution of this tradition in desegregated school contexts. Research must also specifically attend to the ways in which the African American education tradition emphasizes care and community in the context of urban education reform. Research has also documented how the desegregation process systematically disregarded conceptions of school quality valued by African American community (St. John & Cadry, 2004; Noblit & Dempsey, 1996).

Research, and arguably public opinion, often sees teachers as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. The voices, knowledges, and experiences of Black teachers are not explicitly included in urban school reform practice and research. The voices and experiences of Black teachers will be the focus of my analysis as I seek to offer an alternative to the dominant narrative of school reform. Focusing on the voices and experiences of Black teachers counters the historical legacy of education research that silences and marginalizes the pedagogical knowledge and practices of African American teachers. Given the possibilities of improving the academic achievement of black students by utilizing Black teacher pedagogical strategies (Siddle Walker, 2001; Jeffries, 1997; Foster, 1993, 1997), this

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study begins to address the gap in knowledge specifically by recounting the stories

highlighting the unique experiences of African American educators to urban school reform

efforts in New Orleans.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative inquiry typically centers on relatively small samples selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth (Patton, 2002). This study does not seek to generalize findings to all African American educators in urban districts or even in New Orleans. I am interested in collecting the stories of self-identified Black/African-American educators working in post-Katrina New Orleans—specifically their perspective of the current school reforms—to see how these stories compare to the "majoritarian story" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Qualitative research sheds light on understanding in such as way as to guide an increased knowledge about a particular narrative. What matters most is the quality of the insights, not the quantity (Patton, 2002). Its multi-disciplinary lineage prevents the creation of an umbrella or catch-all definition. Thus, fundamentally, qualitative research is the quest to discover meaning within a particular narrative or story with particular concern to the nuances of the story to deepen meaning and understanding. The stories and experiences of these educators resonated with me as a teacher, woman, activist, and African American Southern Yankee (born in the North, but raised by Southern parents). As other researchers have found, "my role continuously shifted from asking questions to answering them, from facilitator to participant, and from listener to interpreter" (Bettez, 2007, p. 18).

Qualitative researchers use different approaches, analytic strategies and methodologies (grounded theory, life history, oral history) while utilizing the same methods of collecting empirical evidence (i.e. case studies, in-depth interviews, participant observation, focus groups, document collection and analysis) in their quest to understand how people construct their social realities and meaning (Glesne, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As researchers select the methods and questions, what we choose says something about "what qualifies as valuable knowledge and your perspective on the nature of reality" (Glesne, 2006, p.5), which is closely connected to how we understand and interpret the world. Thus, many researchers are attracted to qualitative research in education due to the symbolic link with representing the oppressed by including the voice of the other in scholarly research (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004).

The symbolic alliance between qualitative research and the oppressed challenges not only notions of objectivity in research methodology (Lagemann, 2000), but also the theories undergirding the practice (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004). My attraction to qualitative research lies in its potential to embrace the historically specific, subjective, and contextual nature of knowledge production (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Glesne, 2006). Methods of research cannot be neatly separated from the researcher or theoretical paradigms informing the research question (Glesne, 2006; Ladson Billings, 2000). Noblit, Flores and Murillo (2004) state it this way, "Methods are ideas and theories in themselves. They have histories, are best understood as tentative, and are not separate from the theories they are used to test or explore. Method and theory are linked by people in concrete historical and ideational contexts" (p. 3). In this sense, using counter-stories or counter-narratives links theory to methods of CRT in one important aspect --- the stories of the marginalized are foundational to both its method and theory. According to Solórzano

and Yosso (2002), CRT scholars generally use three forms of counter-storytelling: personal stories or narratives, other people's stories or narratives, and composite stories or narratives. Those choosing to represent oppressed people must be wary of creating a homogenized version of the marginalized that does not account take into the diversity and complexity of those "at the bottom" (Matsuda, 1995, p. 65) with the least privilege and advantage.

My experience as an organizer informed this understanding of the importance of altering the relations of power by winning concrete improvements in the lives of people without sacrificing people on the alter of normative assumptions about solidarity. Solidarity with the oppressed must not be grounded in shared victim status but on shared strengths and resources (Hooks, 2000). In organizing, this means our methods and theory must acknowledge the power (in this case knowledge) we have and then make strategic decisions about how to use that knowledge to alter relations of power. This project uses composite stories to discuss themes of loss/anger, isolation, and the importance of education that emerged from data as a way to critically engage the stories, and thus experiential knowledges, of African American educators. If counter-stories are the narratives that challenge the normative narratives, composite counter narratives provide a means to organizing the voices of the marginalized without essentializing their stories. The challenge in relaying these stories lies in my power to represent/present the experiences and stories of African American educators in New Orleans.

Speaking *with* the oppressed, rather than for, comes with the additional challenge of representation of the other. A central tenet of critical epistemology is theorizing the ways in which "symbols are used to represent reality, how this changes and how power is implicated in symbolic representation and changes in symbolic representation" (Noblit, Flores & Murillo, 2004, p. 5). A critical perspective in research refers to identifying and

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unmasking beliefs and practices that limit freedom, justice, and democracy (Glesne, 2006).

In this sense, the researcher is positioned to work with the researched to create meaning as

well as to construct knowledge that utilizing epistemologies that contrast with dominant

epistemology (Ladson Billings, 2000). In short, methods matter to the degree that the

theories driving them are grounded in legitimating knowledges of marginalized people.

Given that epistemology, as a system of knowing, is linked to worldview (Ladson-Billings,

2000), I understand qualitative research as an exploration of a narrative in the journey to

find meaning in a socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing reality.

This project seeks to shed light an often neglected aspect of urban school reform in

general and in particular resonates in New Orleans – the Black educator. As an African

American educator, I have often felt ignored with my experiences, knowledges, and

understandings marginalized in larger conversations about education and schooling. The

massive restructuring of the public school system in New Orleans has overshadowed the

largest single displacement of Black educators since desegregation, potentially resulting in

their knowledge, understanding, and perspectives being lost. Using the tool of composite

counterstorytelling, this project seeks to address the absence of Black educators' voices in

conversations about urban school reform. This project seeks to answer two basic questions:

What do Black educators have to say about what is happening in post-Katrina New Orleans

schools? Specifically, I explore

1. What stories do Black educators tell about schooling in pre and post Katrina New

   Orleans?

2. What are the implications of these educators' perspectives for urban education

   reform?

The narrative experience of African American educators, particularly the construction and use of composite counter-stories, is useful in exploring how racism operates in education reform. Understanding the current school reform efforts in New Orleans is inextricably linked to how the protection of property rights—with the understanding of Whiteness as the ultimate property— interacts with race to maintain systems of oppression. For this reason, Critical Race Theory as an epistemology and theoretical practice asserts the use of counter-story and counter narrative as its methodology.

Narrative is the manner in which most humans come to their understanding of social reality (Bell, 1987) and is thus an effective vehicle for constructing new knowledge and insight that challenges dominant discourse and epistemology. Narratives are also a form of psychic preservation (Delgado, 2001) for people of color. It is through the sharing of story that their reality is affirmed and, more importantly, their sanity maintained. Narrative is also a way to understand experience as lived and told through the eyes of the storyteller. CRT Methodology uses narratives to counter the dominant narrative that "distorts and silences the experiences of people of color" (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 29). In essence, this project centers its analysis on the stories of African American educators as a way of seeing and understanding the complexities and nuances of urban school reform from their standpoint. The educators in this study will have a "perspective advantage" allowing them to see and speak not from a place of disadvantage but rather one that allows "wide angle vision" (Ladson Billings, 2000, p. 262).

Participant Recruitment & Selection

Since October 2005, I have been working with a group of national researchers on the issue of education reform in New Orleans post-Katrina. My New Orleans contacts were

people who I had met and worked with in my role as the project coordinator for the

National Coalition for Quality Education in New Orleans (NCQENO) (see Appendix A for

more information on NCQENO).[2] Specifically, coordinating two equity conferences during

the summers of 2006 and 2007 and serving as the communication conduit for the group with

people concerned about equity in post Katrina schools led to my building relationships with

key people involved in education, including educators, activists, and organizations in New

Orleans.

After receiving IRB approval in August 2007, I sent out a flier (see Appendix B) with

an email to various contacts in New Orleans. The email informed potential participants that

I was an African American educator who was concerned about the displacement of African

American educators. It also described the study and my interest in hearing African

American educators' thoughts on pre and post Katrina challenges in the New Orleans

Public Schools. I used purposeful sampling in recruiting and choosing participants. Patton

(2002) states that the usefulness in this sampling strategy is that it involves actively seeking

those participants that provide "information rich cases…from which one can learn a great

deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (p. 230).

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[2] As project coordinator for The National Coalition for Quality Education in New Orleans (NCQENO) my duties included:
1. Coordination of two mini-conferences during the summer of 2006 and 2007. The mini-conferences addressed issue of equity in schooling (differential teacher pay, access for special education students, etc.) as well as research based-strategies for raising academic achievement of African American students.
2. Serve as a communication conduit for communities (parents, teachers and students) to express their educational needs as the basis of the research agenda including overseeing development of website, creating an archive of all op-eds, articles and speeches by NCQENO members, coordinate communication among NCQENO members but more importantly maintain communication with people on the ground in NOLA on behalf of NCQENO
3. Research and write a report on the "Landscape of Current Education Reform in New Orleans" which will document the most recent changes and issues in New Orleans

I quickly discovered that circulating information via email to contacts was not yielding the desired results – after 3 – 4 weeks, no potential participants had contacted me. I had forgotten how overwhelmed people were on the ground, especially with requests from "outsiders," albeit well-meaning ones, as well as the daunting task of rebuilding their lives, communities and city. I planned a specific participant recruitment trip to New Orleans in September with the sole purpose of recruiting – not interviewing—for the study. I met with organizers of United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO), attended community meetings such as the weekly Downtown Neighborhood Improvement Association Education Committee, and sat in on Student at the Center-led writing classes in two high schools. During this trip and while attending a community meeting, my first participant was recruited. He then recruited an additional three educators. During subsequent trips to New Orleans to interview participants, I continued to have lunch, dinner, and dessert (I gained 10 pounds) with various contacts that referred an additional four educators for the study. All those who contacted or were referred to me met the selection criteria of having worked in New Orleans Public Schools prior to Katrina and during the 2006 – 2007 school year. Of the eight people were recruited (via referrals, emails or personal contact), seven agreed to participate in the study.

Participant Overview

Seven self-identified African American educators participated in the study, including two men and five women whose experience working in the schools ranged from ten to thirty years. All but one of the seven participants were from Louisiana with five being "born and raised" in New Orleans. The other was from Mississippi. All of the participants attended public schools with six graduating from public schools. One participant attended

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public schools through middle school and graduated from St. Augustine, one of three private all-Black Catholic schools in New Orleans. Participants' working experience in schools represented diverse positions including social workers, K-12 teachers in the Arts, Science, Math, English, and administrators. Although they all attended college in Louisiana, all but one of the participants attended and graduated from a Historically Black College & University.

Data Collection & Site Overview

During September - November 2007, I traveled to New Orleans four times for 2 – 3 days each. I conducted a total of ten 45 – 60 minute interviews. Before and after each interview, I recorded field notes to capture my thoughts, perceptions, and further areas to consider for my study.

Prior to the initial interview, I answered any questions about the study, obtained consent (See Appendix C) and gave the types of questions that would be asked. I interviewed three participants twice, and the other four only once for a total of ten interviews. Initially, I planned to interview all participants twice for 60 – 90 minutes using a life story approach modified from the model proposed by Seidman (2006). However, after reviewing the transcripts and field notes from the first and second round of interviews with the first three participants, it became apparent that participants fully addressed my research questions in the first interview; thus, despite my attempts to have them elaborate further, the second interview responses repeated what they had previously stated without additional depth or breadth. In short, I felt like the second interviews lacked the richness of the first. One probable explanation for this could be my giving participants the research

questions ahead of time. Thus, they were able to develop their thoughts fully in preparation for the interview.

The site of the interview was chosen by the participant with my only request being that the space be semi-private and suitable for recording. Interviews were conducted in homes, coffee shops, classrooms, auditoriums, and school offices. I revised the original research design of 60 – 90 minute interviews for one primary reason. Four of the seven participants were interviewed during their planning periods, which lasted only 45 minutes. After conducting the first three interviews, which occurred during planning periods, I reviewed the taped interviews and field notes, and made notes of which questions resonated with participants. In short, I discovered that relying on the interview guide (See Appendix D) stifled the quality of data. I focused subsequent interviews on three questions:

1. How did you come to be an educator?

2. Tell me what you think about the challenges in NOPS before Katrina.

3. What do you think about the challenges in New Orleans schools after Katrina?

Interviews were transcribed within 3 – 5 days after each interview. I sent interviews electronically to a paid transcriber at the end of each interview day. After receiving the first set of interview transcriptions, I noticed the transcriptions had several errors. To address this issue, when sending future audio files, I also included a list of names, locations and other words that a person unfamiliar with local dialect and pronunciations would have a hard time understanding for each interview. I generated the list during the interview (jotting down words that may not be clear) as well during field notes after the interview.

Follow-up questions emanated from the responses. I also probed using data from earlier interviews. For example, in earlier interviews the theme of anger was often talked about in regards to how students felt after the storm, how teachers felt about being

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terminated and the overall emotional state of folks who had survived. When an opportune

moment opened up in later interviews and the participant had not yet addressed theme of

anger, I would say something like, "Other folks have spoken about the anger felt by

students and teachers in the schools after Katrina. What are your thoughts?"

Except for one telephone interview, I conducted all of the interviews in person. I

wanted to capture the nonverbal cues in communication – body language, stance, hand

movements – as well as get an overall sense of the person's style. This was an important

element in the construction of the composite characters which will be discussed later. If I

needed additional clarification or had follow up questions, I called participants. Since I was

unable to arrange a time with one participant during the dates I was in New Orleans, we

agreed to conduct a telephone interview.

Data Analysis

After I received the transcriptions, I coded for themes emerging from interviews

regarding participants' pre and post Katrina schooling experiences. After coding all the data

pre-, post- or both in regards to education/schooling experiences in New Orleans, I mined

the data for what questions were answered or addressed in this data. Three major themes

emerged from the data: loss/anger, isolation, and the importance of education. I went back

and overlaid these themes over historical/temporal codes (pre/post/both Katrina) to

develop the thematic story emerging from these participants. These thematic stories would

provide the foundation for the composite counter-stories found in subsequent sections.

These emerging themes were then analyzed for if and how they corresponded with

the tenets of CRT specifically counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism and whiteness

as property. Of particular interest in this analysis were counterstorytelling and whiteness as

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property. This was due in part to the call for education research to "focus on other aspects of CRT" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004) and "ground CRT scholarship in education within the legal literature preceding it" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006).

According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), CRT scholars generally use three forms of counter-storytelling: personal stories or narratives, other people's stories or narratives and composite stories or narratives. Counter-storytelling as a methodology "aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). A CRT analysis of the permanence of racism will examine the ways in which "racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic and social domains" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). An analysis of the functional aspects of whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) including the rights of disposition, use and enjoyment and exclusion is a necessary part of the analysis. Of course, the challenge with this etic approach was the possibility of privileging my interpretation and understanding. I countered this by trying to stay close to what the interviewees said.

This project uses composite stories to discuss themes that emerged from data. Using CRT methodological framework, counter stories were developed from interviews, literature and professional and personal experience (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). While coding the data for themes, I also wrote the story of each participant. This was important step in creating the composite characters used in following chapters. Given that story is understood and constructed out of exchanges, experiences and observations (Goodall, 2000; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995), I wanted to make sure that I could capture the essence of each individual before constructing composite characters. Although stories are always partial, CRT methodology challenges dominant narratives by intentionally centering analysis on the

marginalized voices, which, in this project, are the experiences and insights of African

American educators.

New Orleans is a small big city and given my intent to share the stories with various

stakeholders on the ground, it was necessary to employ a method that would to protect the

identity of my participants. Thus, I chose to use composite characters in the counter story.

When analyzing the individual interview data, I asked myself questions such as: What

relationship does this person have to schools pre- and post- Katrina?; and How does this

person talk about and understand what is going on in the schools? Participants' individual

stories were used to create composite characters by taking elements of intersecting stories to

create the foundation for a character. These composite characters were then placed in social,

historical, and political situations to discuss loss/anger, isolation, and the importance of

education using larger CRT theoretical understandings of race, racism, and whiteness as

property.

The literary approach was embraced because of my belief that the counterstory

should also reject the abstracted reality of the majoritarian story. My voice as a researcher

was influenced by my love of literature and influenced my decision to present the data in

literary form (especially the work of Ellison and Morrison). The power of literature to

convey emotions seemed to suit this approach well. As a scholar of color it is important to

me that my work is accessible to the broader community not just to those who work within

academia. As a researcher, a literary approach to counterstory gave me the room to not only

weave a storyline but embrace the complexities and paradoxes of the characters without

judgment. It was crucial that I to the best of my ability let the stories of these educators

speak in such a way that judgment and critique is temporarily delayed. Often, it seems that

as scholars we are quick to critique and slow to listen. A literary approach forced me to listen.

The composite counterstory *speaks 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 overtime" (p. 4).

Some of the assumptions and beliefs that sustain the dominant narrative on K-12 education and schooling that particularly resonate in the New Orleans context include:

1. Reform is neutral and progressive and therefore not racist.

2. Reform is beneficial and inherently good.

3. Reform does not devalue the knowledge and resources of Black people.

4. Issues of poverty, and thus class, are more important than race in rebuilding.

5. There was nothing in the schools worth saving.

6. Since the schools were failing, anything would be better than what was there was before.

7. Knowledge about specific communities and neighborhoods does not matter or add any value to education.

8. Hiring practices in schools are not racially biased.

9. All students need the same thing.

10. Teacher testing is an effective means of determining teacher quality.

These themes were based on documents that described the "official" story of what was happening in New Orleans. These appear as the majoritarian story in Chapter 3.

Positionality

> "Work" is a more self-defined, dynamic notion that has less to do with station
> and more to do with commitment and contribution; less to do with product and
> more to do with process. Doing good work is more demanding than building an
> illustrious career, because one's work is judged by tougher, more complex
> standards. Work must contribute not only to a person's development and
> growth, but also to transforming and improving society.
>
> <div align="right">Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994, p.400</div>

I am fundamentally and unequivocally concerned with "doing good work" that will contribute to concrete improvements in the lives and educational experiences of Black and Brown children. In my experience, quantitative data has been presented as unbiased and the *Truth* while any evidence that would contradict the numbers or taken-for-granted knowledge is seen as anecdotal evidence. A necessary component of qualitative research is the researcher pursuing a self-reflexivity that assists in analyzing her/his bias and/or issues. Although being encouraged to pursue a self-reflexive approach to research is attractive, it requires a different challenge that consists of acquiring skill and observation in collecting data that can be intimidating.

How does one go about investigating and studying a community in which you are a part of? Positivist notions of objectivity do not adequately take into account the assumptions, bias, class, race, and gender locations of the researcher. My class position remains fluid given my strong roots in my working class upbringing and middle class education/work experiences. My faith guides my life, my choices and, my beliefs. On some days more than others, I feel the strain of living a double consciousness. Deciding to train as a researcher both added another lens and barrier in my examination of this strain.

Patton (2002) argues that good qualitative research involves becoming a part of the community as to gain important insights while at the same time remaining separate. He fails to acknowledge that this is not always a choice for some researchers. (In reality, it never is a choice.) Yet, CRT offers researchers a way to "operate in a self-revelatory mode, to acknowledge the double (or multiple) consciousness in which she or he is operating" (Ladson Billings, 2000, p. 272). The CRT method of Composite Counter-Stories as an analytical tool offers one way for me to acknowledge the multiple levels of consciousnesses in which I operate as researcher.

In particular, for scholars of color, it is important to both seek to understand the nuances and meaning within a story while honoring the knowledge of the community. My momma is fond of saying, "Baby, you were born an original, don't die a copy." Those words have guided, challenged and inspired me not only to strive for personal excellence but also to contribute to something bigger than myself. For the most part, I have accepted this challenge or calling full of hope and joy. Critical qualitative research requires me in my role as researcher to examine and re-examine my relationship with my community, the majority culture and the academy. According to Ladson Billings (2000) the "gift of CRT is that it unapologetically challenges the scholarship that would dehumanize and depersonalize us" (p. 272). I mediate and cross many boundaries – race, class, religion, ethnicity, and gender – as part of my daily life. It makes sense that I must mediate and cross boundaries in my research.

In my work as a high school teacher and activist, I was constantly forced to reflect upon my positionality in the world and the privileges, responsibilities and burdens that accompany it. In hindsight, it seems somehow easier to navigate the African American community, my community, as a teacher activist rather than as a researcher. I was awarded

a certain respect as a young, intelligent and energetic teacher that allowed me to fluidly exist as both an intellectual and member of the community. In my work and research, I hope to gain insights that will lead to folks asking critical questions and searching for creative and just solutions to the challenges in educating children of color in our public schools. But what will I do when those insights "air the dirty laundry" of my community? Although tone, language, style, and preemptive statements offer some control over the findings, ultimately the researcher cannot control how the research is used. That is both problematic and refreshing. The diversity of the African American community poses another interesting opportunity and problematic in my research. Everything I produce as a researcher will be connected to my very public work as a policy analyst, activist, organizer, progressive, Christian, Black woman. In many ways, my transparency has been and will be both a freeing agent and jailer.

I struggle constantly with balancing *my* language and voice in the variety of contexts in which I find myself. While I value complexity in thought, idea and interpretation, I welcome clarity and simplicity in communication. The challenge of this project will be balancing both the need for complexity and simplicity in my communication. Yet I believe that "it is possible to wear the multiple hats of participant, educator, and scholar in the implementation of a single research project and that doing so can enrich the quality and impact" of my research (Nygreen, 2006, p. 16).

In some ways, my work in the mystifying world of policy has given me the opportunity to actively mediate the role of truth-teller, pragmatist with the privilege to speak truth to power as the marginalized worker woman of color in a white, male dominated arena. The art of negotiating my work and myself within my work requires me to actively choose "when and where I enter" and embrace the consequences of my choices

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on the communities to which I belong and serve. My community will judge those choices by a harsher, tougher standard.

My role as researcher built upon my previous experience and contributed to my examination and reexamination in order to "build upon the notion of making my relationship with the [African American] community [my community] problematic" (Villenas, 1996, p. 721. Actively embracing the notion of "the researcher being shaped by the participants and the dynamics of their interactions while at the same time shaping the participants and their environment" (Villenas, 1996, p. 721) will be the key to negotiating my multiplicity of identities. Yet, it is dangerous for me to assume that because I am an African American teacher in the South that I can presume to have emic knowledge of the African American teacher experience in New Orleans (Narayan, 1993).

I can never completely understand the experiences, emotions and hurt felt by black, brown, and poor people abandoned by our government when the levees broke. My history as the daughter of Alabama sharecroppers is different from those Black people raised in the Big Easy with its jazzed mixture of French, Creole, African, and European culture. Yet, it is my humble desire to use my "insider status" as a scholar of color to alert me to the ways in which oppressed peoples both protect themselves and challenge the dominant paradigm by withholding and altering data (Ladson Billings, 2000). This is also my commitment to use my energy towards "reconstructive theorizing and struggle" (Cook, 1995, p. 101). Reconstructive theorizing requires me as a scholar and intellectual to move beyond simple critique towards a commitment to build a more just and democratic community. In this sense, "the vocation of intellectuals is not simply to turn up at the right demonstrations at the right moment but also to alienate that advantage which they

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have had out of the system, to take the whole system of knowledge itself and…

attempt to put it at the service of some other project" (Rooney, quoting Hall, 1996, p.

210). To do this, I must insert myself as researcher into my research; not as a

narcissistic move but as a way to acknowledge my own subjectivity thus alienating

the privilege of my invisibility. Ladson Billings (2000) reflecting on her breaking

with standard research practice acknowledged, "My research is a part of my life and

my life is a part of my research" (p. 268)

CHAPTER 4

RELEVANT NEW ORLEANS BACKGROUND

Public education in New Orleans has been shaped by the racial, cultural and economic complexity of the community. Understanding dynamics in post-Katrina New Orleans requires understanding the historical context of the city. For example, one defining and unique aspect of the city is it being a largely Catholic city in a Protestant state and country. The non-Americanness of this American city is also evident in the vestiges of ecclesiastical governance such as parish, rather than county like in the rest of the United States, being used as a geographical and jurisdictional marker (Rasheed, 2006; Devore and Logsdon, 1991). There are 66 parishes in the state each with an elected school board (Rasheed, 2006). To the east and west of Orleans Parish is Jefferson Parish, to the southwest St. Bernard Parish (not to be confused with St. Bernard Projects in Mid City) and to the north, St. Tammany Parish (see Figure 1). For the purposes of this dissertation, I will (1) provide a brief overview of the major geographical markers that would be useful to understanding my data if you are not familiar with the geography of the city (2) overview of pre-Katrina public schools and (3) review characteristics of post-Katrina public schools.
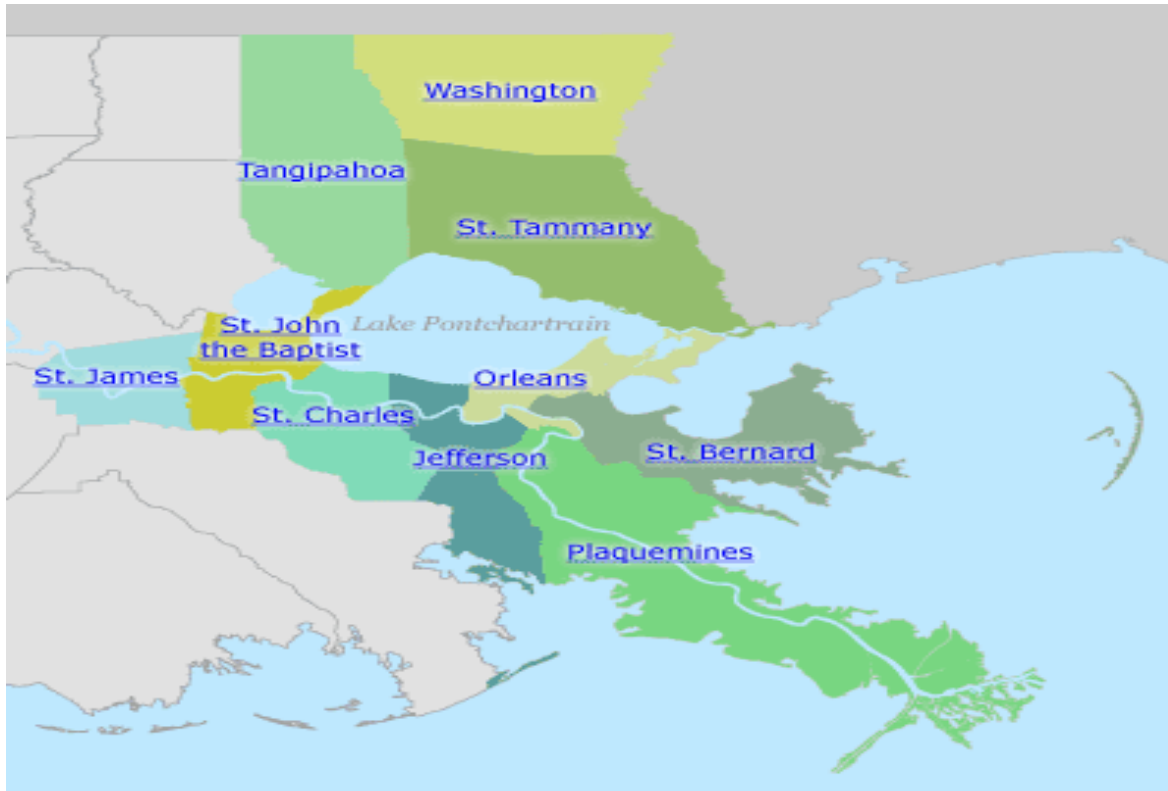
Figure 1: Parish Map (Greater New Orleans Data Center)

Located in the Mississippi River Delta on the east and west banks of the Mississippi River and south of Lake Pontchartrain, New Orleans has a rich cultural tradition emerging from the various art forms (music, visual, performance) woven throughout the fabric of its communities. However, similar to the rest of the nation, New Orleans has a history of racial division. According to the 2000 Census, the population of New Orleans was 66.6% Black and 26.6% White (which coincidently is the opposite of the racial composition of the state of Louisiana, which was 62.6% White and 32.3% Black).

Geography is a key aspect to understanding the racial dynamics of the city and an important factor in how the communities were structured. The city of New Orleans and Orleans Parish are geographically identical (Figure 2). Historically the two units had different political functions but were consolidated in 1870. Louisiana schools are organized into parish districts with schools board responsible to the state not the city (Inger, 1990). The

city of New Orleans is divided into 17 wards (voting districts) nested within 13 planning districts with 72 neighborhoods. For example, the Mid City planning district encompasses 7th Ward, Gert Town, St Bernard Projects and Treme. (See Appendix E: Detailed Map of New Orleans Neighborhoods & Wards).
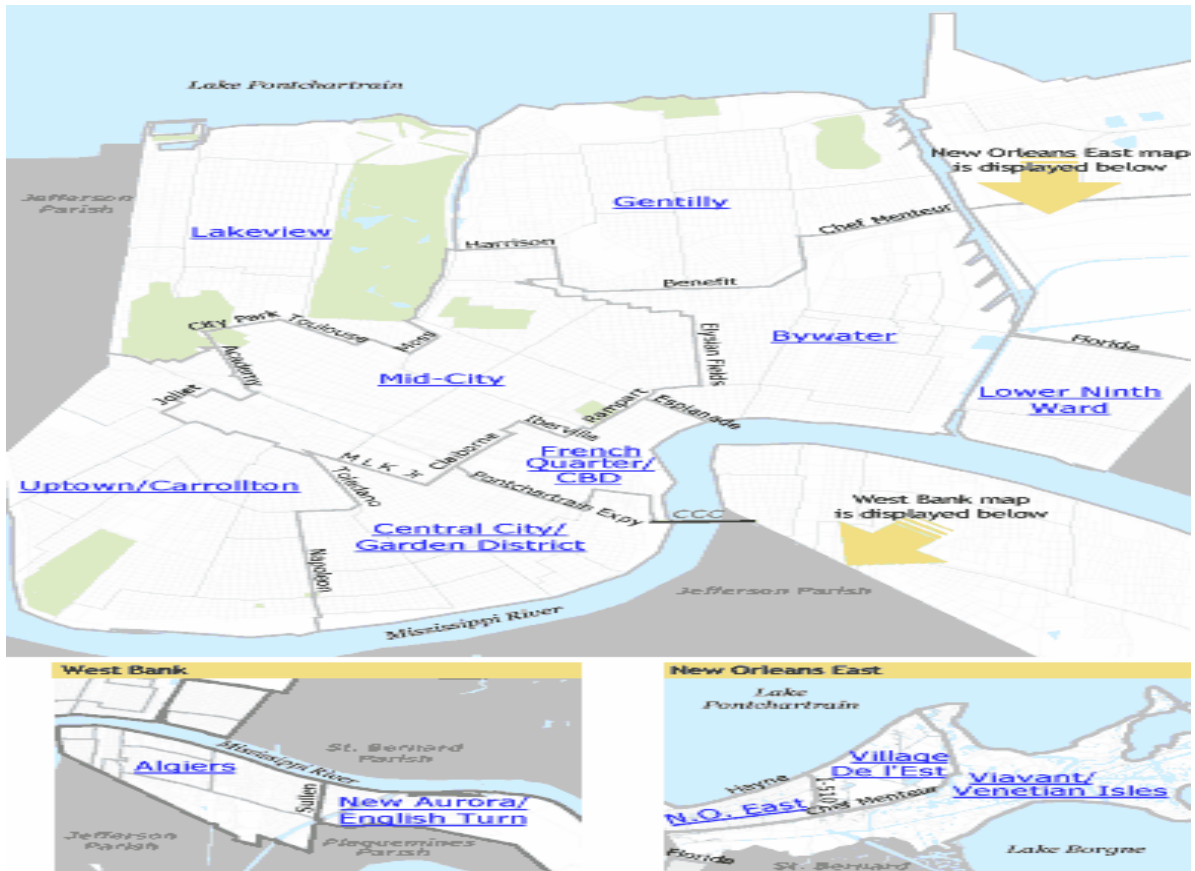
Figure 2: Map of Orleans Parish Neighborhoods

Canal Street serves as the dividing point between the northern and southern sections of various streets (e.g., South Broad becomes North Broad upon crossing Canal Street into downtown). Downtown means "downriver from Canal Street" while Uptown means "upriver from Canal Street." Downtown neighborhoods include The Vieux Carré or French Quarter, Treme, the 7th Ward, Faubourg-Marigny, Bywater (the Upper Ninth Ward), and

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the Lower Ninth Ward. Uptown neighborhoods include the Warehouse District, the Lower

Garden District, Garden District, the Irish Channel, the University District (Audubon),

Carrollton, Gert Town (Mid-City), Fontainebleau, and Seventh Ward. Historically, Uptown

neighborhoods were home to the White, wealthy, and powerful. Downtown was home to

American and Creole Blacks with Creoles settling in the Seventh Ward. Although the bonds

of race, activism, and music blurred the divide between Creole Blacks and American Blacks,

geographical and cultural distinctions remained (Landphair, 1999).

Complex race relations in antebellum New Orleans make it difficult to draw

generalizations about the history of race in the city. This complex racial history emanates

from many factors including (1) the heterogeneity of the black population, especially the

role of free Black Creoles (gens de couleur) (Landphair, 1999), (2) the absence of racial

segregation with White and Free Blacks living alongside each other, and (3) the integration

of the Catholic church (Blassingame, 1973). Similar to the rest of the United States, social

classes were racialized by complexion. For example, in 1860, 77% of free Blacks were

mulattos, 74% of slaves were Black (Blassingame, 1973). The racial intimacy in New Orleans

was due in large part to Louisiana being one of the few Southern States which permitted

interracial marriages, and which outlawed segregation in schools and places of public

accommodation after the Civil War (Blassingame, 1973). The indifference to the established

race rules led to a social milieu in which as evidence by "free Negroes and whites drank,

danced, gambled, and caroused together in many bars and restaurants in the city in spite of

regulations against such activities and houses of prostitution often had an integrated

clientele and an integrated staff" (Blassingame, 1973, p. 17).

Three unique features have shaped the development of public schools in New

Orleans. The late establishment compared to other cities (not until 1841) of public schools in

New Orleans reflected the reliance of early French and Spanish colonists on the Catholic Church to educate their children. The presence of a large private and Catholic school system was another unique feature of education. Finally, the growth of the public school system that was underwritten with a private endowment by John McDonogh. McDonogh, a wealthy businessman and philanthropist, left over $1,000,000 million to public schools in his will which led to the building of 36 schools (thus the large number of McDonogh named schools, i.e. John McDonogh, McDonogh 35, etc.). Finally, unlike other major U.S. cities, immigration did not play a factor in the shaping schools until after 1870s; thus, the question of Americanizing was not an issue (Devore and Logsdon, 1991).

Free Blacks used their wealth to establish private schools in late 19th century. Most Blacks recognized that ignorance and lack of education was the "greatest threat to their freedom" (Blassingame, 1973, p. 108). Although New Orleans was unique among cities in the levels of intimacy between Blacks and Whites, it was in many ways a city of contradictions. Although New Orleans was "a chink in the wall of the South's resistance to change" as a "Catholic, tolerant, cultured and residentially integrated" city, education and schooling provides some of the most glaring contractions (Inger, 1969, p. 70). For example, the Catholic Church was a leader in desegregated worship (free Blacks owned half of the pews in St .Augustine Catholic Church) (Blassingame, 1973), and the parochial schools in New Orleans desegregated before the public schools (Inger, 1969). Although the history of race in the city could have led to an embrace of integration, the exact opposite happened. Despite this history of residential integration and tolerance, the schools remained segregated until the 1960 desegregation of Lusher Elementary school (Devore & Logsdon, 1991). White families moved into surrounding parishes, Jefferson or St. Bernard, to avoid integration (Rasheed, 2006).

Schooling Pre-Katrina

Pre-Katrina, Louisiana schools had a population of 724,000 students in 68 districts over 66 parishes. Although the overall State population is 64% White and 33% Black, the state public school student population was evenly split between White (48%) and Black (48%) students. In contrast, the New Orleans Public School student population was 93% African American. Pre-Katrina, 80% of the city's school age children attended public schools (Dingerson, 2006). The New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) had been plagued with problems facing any large urban district with a large percentage of economically poor students.

The system consisted of 117 public schools, of which 102 were underperforming. 75% of students were receiving free or reduced price lunch. Before the hurricane, the school buildings were in disrepair, teacher salaries were low and state school spending had declined. The New Orleans Public Schools were plagued with financial mismanagement with the New York firm of Alvarez and Marsal being hired by the State to takeover finances of the district (Dingerson, 2006). There was a new Superintendent every year for the preceding 5 years before Katrina. The Recovery School District (RSD) had been established prior to Katrina to operate failing schools. Only one charter school, P.A. Capdau, during the 2004-2005 school year, was under the RSD.

Schooling Post-Katrina

There is no longer *a single* public school system in the city of New Orleans. This was made possible by action taken by the state legislature on November 30, 2005. Legislative Act 35 made Recovery School District the operating entity for the 107 New Orleans Public Schools that performed at or below the state average in 2004-2005. Act 35 changed the definition of a failing public school by raising the bar for what was considered failing,

expanding state authority to take over entire districts rather than just single schools and redefining what constituted a failing district. First, the definition of a failing SPS score was defined as "below the state average" which substantially raised the passing score. In the 2004-05 school year, the state average School Performance Score (SPS) was 87.4[3]. Second, Act 35 expanded the state's takeover authority to entire school districts (rather than individual schools). Act 35 defined a failing school district as one that had more than 30 failing schools, or one where at least 50 percent of students attended failing schools (Dingerson, 2006; Boston Consulting Group, 2007).

The passing of Legislative Act 35 is evidence of the importance of state politics in shaping schools. After Katrina, twelve of fifteen Orleans Parish legislators voted against the state takeover of the schools. The governing body for the Recovery School District is the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), a partly appointed, partly elected board that meets in Baton Rouge. Only one of the eleven-member board is elected by the citizens of New Orleans (2 of the 3 appointed representatives are from New Orleans) with only three of the eleven board members being African American. In essence, the governance of New Orleans schools is not representative of the community being served by those schools.

Rather than rebuild one school system, the education power structure created a system of schools within the city. The system of schools is comprised of three entities: The Recovery School District (RSD), the New Orleans Public Schools (NOPS) and Charter Schools. The federal government unilaterally supported a decentralized charter school system marked by the September 30, 2005 announcement by Secretary Spellings of a $20.9

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[3] The School Performance Score (SPS) is a composite score based on a school's performance on student exams, dropout rate and attendance rate. Before Act 35, a school was considered academically unacceptable if the score was below 60. Act 35 made schools performing below the state average academically unacceptable.

million grant to Louisiana for charter schools. The rebuilding of the schools has served as the proxy for rebuilding the entire city. Only 20 schools were open six months after Katrina, and only 53 were opened a year after the storm. Of the 53 schools opened during the 2006-2007 school year, 21 different entities (each charter school functions autonomously) operated schools with 10 using selective admission policies (Dingerson, 2006). For example, The New Orleans Parents' Guide to Public Schools (Rasheed, 2007) includes the Einstein Group Inc., French and Montessori Education, Inc., the Algiers Charter School Association, the Pelican Foundation, Dryades YMCA, Advocates for Arts Based Education (just to name a few) as operators of public schools (Rasheed, 2007). Of the 80 schools opened during the 2007 – 2008 school year, over 19 different entities operated schools (See Appendix F).

The Majoritarian Story

> "In the case of post-hurricane New Orleans, American school planners will be as close as they have ever come to a 'greenfield' opportunity"
> Paul T. Hill, Center on Reinventing Public Education
> (Dingerson, 2006, p. 13)

Grounded in the cultural and social norms of the privileged, the majoritarian story (MS) is the story the privileged tell about the nature of power and status in society. Specifically, white privilege is the major tool used to construct these stories about race (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Not only does White privilege confer unearned advantages to Whites, it allows those who reap the benefits of this advantage to acknowledge the disadvantage of others without believing they are themselves over privileged (McIntosh, 1991). In New Orleans, the insidiousness of the operation of White privilege within the majoritarian story is revealed in the ways in which education policy elites work to improve "the disadvantaged" without bearing any costs themselves. So although it appears that those people and institutions

speaking to the MS are working to improve the plight of the disadvantaged, they do not lose

individual, institutional or structural power (McIntosh, 1991).

Masked in White privilege, the majoritarian story claims to be neutral and objective, yet

it is grounded in negative assumptions and stereotypes about people of color (Solórzano &

Yosso, 2002). This depiction promotes a narrow view that essentializes and wipes out the

complexities and richness of the experiences of people of color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Often, the majoritarian story is not questioned because "people do not see them as stories

but as natural parts of everyday life" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.28). It is important to note

that majoritarian stories can be told by people of color as well as by Whites. In education,

majoritarian stories offer explanations and solutions for educational inequity centers on

cultural deficit models. The majoritarian story in New Orleans centers on the belief the New

Orleans schools were such a disaster before Katrina that anything would be better than

what existed at that time. In the New Orleans context, some of the assumptions and beliefs

that sustain the majoritarian story on K- 12 education that are relevant to this study are:

1. Reform is neutral and progressive and therefore not racist.
2. Reform is beneficial and inherently good.
3. Reform does not devalue the knowledge and resources of Black people.
4. Issues of poverty, and thus class, are more important than race in rebuilding.
5. There was nothing in the schools worth saving.
6. Since the schools were failing, anything would be better than what was there was before.
7. Knowledge about specific communities and neighborhoods does not matter or add any value to education.
8. Hiring practices in schools are not racially biased.
9. All students need the same thing.
10. Teacher testing is an effective means of determining teacher quality.

Language of Opportunity

Fundamentally, the MS is phrased in a language of opportunity. Although tragic, the

destruction and reconstruction of schools in New Orleans is viewed as a "green field of

opportunity" (Dingerson, 2005, p. 13) for reform advocates seeking to fix the broken and

antiquated system of public education. In New Orleans, students were not achieving at

grade level. It was one of the worst in the country with less than 50% of students in 4th grade

proficient in reading and less than 30% proficient in math. Almost 75% percent of the

schools in the district received an academic warning from the state or were rated as

academically unsuccessful (Hill, 2006). Yet, as Former Governor Kathleen Blanco stated "It

took the storm of a lifetime to create the opportunity of a lifetime; an opportunity to start

anew in a thoughtful, organized and measured way that serves every child in New

Orleans"(Lips, 2005, p. 2).

        Edwin Feulner (2006), president of the Heritage Foundation[4] suggests "To help solve

that problem, the federal government should make all its K-12 funding portable, giving

parents control and allowing them to use it in any public or private school. That will help

students while they're attending schools elsewhere and will give them real choice when

they return to New Orleans" (p. 1). The mantra of the majoritarian story is captured by

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4 The Heritage Foundation is a conservative think tank. It promotes education policies that promotes state and local control of education and allows parents to choose their children's schools. Specific strategies include:

- "Restore federalism and citizen ownership of public education by moving educational control out of Washington and into the hands of state and local authorities who are responsive to parents and other taxpayers.
- Enact and implement parental choice in education policies in the states and the District of Columbia.
- Persuade the public and policymakers that educational and cultural factors are critical to upward mobility.
- Integrate research on family, parental choice in education, federal education policy, and human capital formation to convince policymakers and the public that the perennial proposals for new federal education programs are not effective"(Heritage Foundation, http://www.heritage.org/about/lfa/education.cfm retrieved, March 1, 2008).

Blanco's belief in Katrina providing the schools a "golden opportunity for rebirth" (Robelen, 2005, p. 2). This is also echoed by Leslie R. Jacobs, a member of the Louisiana Elementary and Secondary Board of Education (BESE), "Katrina, in its devastation really gives the opportunity for a rebirth of a school district" (Dingerson, 2006, p. 12).

Centering on concentrated poverty as the issue, reform as good and quality education that can be adequately measured and achieved by teacher and student performance on standardized tests, private visionaries, not those involved in the public school system, should direct change. This driving assumption of the majoritarian story is not found only within conservative institutions; they are also espoused by those considered liberal or progressive. Yet, while the majoritarian story operates on a set of assumptions, the same institution or group of people will contradict these underlying assumptions on another aspect of education that creates a glaring contradiction, for example, keeping the arts in schools or the need to address race and racism in rebuilding. These major contradictions will be discussed in Chapter 6.

I extracted the majoritarian story or majoritarian story about K – 12 education and schooling in New Orleans from local and national newspaper articles, influential policy reports such as the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee Report as well as information from conversations and meetings in New Orleans after Katrina. The themes emerging from these documents were then used to construct the majoritarian story which is grounded in their vision of the *new* New Orleans.

The majoritarian story in New Orleans centers on the belief the New Orleans schools were such a disaster before Katrina that anything would be better than what existed before. The ideas espoused by the elites drive the discourse and discussion about how the New Orleans schools should rebuild. Feulner (2005) stated it this way, "As we work to help

people put their lives back together, we also should work to improve their lives" (p.1).

Coupled with this notion of improvement is the idea that after Katrina the education system

was a blank slate. The notion of a blank slate not only denies that there was nothing after the

storm but more importantly that there was nothing before the storm. This is akin to the

notion of Columbus *discovering* America. In essence, national, state and city elites devised a

plan to reconstruct a *new* New Orleans with fewer poor people and Black people, starting

with the schools.

The damage done to the city infrastructure of New Orleans was catastrophic. Since,

according to the MS, the social infrastructure was already failing, Katrina presented the

opportunity to learn from the strategies of other cities and rebuild in such a way as to

decrease the presence of the poor in the city. In their piece for The Urban Institute, Hill and

Hannaway (2006) state it this way, "Innovation and experience from other U.S. cities offer

promising strategies for reducing risks of poverty and opening up opportunities for

economic security and success" (p.1). These strategies to reduce poverty also would be

beneficial for the education of poor children. The Heritage Foundation (2008) wanted more

poor families to have opportunities for a better education stating,

> "Many poor families were also seeking better schools for their children. In
> 1999, the non-profit Children's Scholarship Fund announced that 1,500
> scholarships were available for low-income students in New Orleans. A
> lottery determined who would receive scholarships. More than 29,000
> children applied – nearly one out of every four children who were eligible –
> from families with an average annual income of $18,000. Most of the 27,500
> unlucky children who didn't win scholarships were forced to remain in the
> broken public schools" (Lips, p.1)

Eradicating, or at the minimum seriously addressing, concentrated poverty would

help support schools. Thus, according to the MS, the federal and state government taking

no steps to open public housing although 60% of public housing families indicated they

planned to return (Institute of Southern Studies, 2006) was a step in the right direction.

Before Katrina, the average rent for a one bedroom apartment was $578; by July 2006, the

average was $803. Paul Hill (2006) discussed one possible implication stating, "many of the

poorest Blacks have little reason to return [especially without access to public housing and

healthcare] and a Latino population will take root in the general metropolitan area" (p. 4).

Thus, it will be possible to replace the poor and Black population with more desirable group

of people of color which, of course, will mean a decrease in the amount of public housing

needed.

The majoritarian story also articulates a need to have *new* structures in the Orleans

schools particularly as it relates to leadership and a systems approach to school

organization. First, in late 1990s, the Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF), one of the

leaders was Paul Pastorek, now State Superintendent of the Louisiana Department of

Education, ushered in an innovative approach to district leadership in New Orleans public

schools. GNOF actively supported bringing in a superintendent with no background in

education, Colonel Alphonse Davis, a retired Marine colonel from New Orleans. Decisions

such as these reinforced the belief that having a background and knowledge of education is

not necessary.

Second, The Bring New Orleans Back Commission Education Committee plan calls

for a system of systems approach which requires adaptability and quality. This systems

approach would replace the antiquated and ineffective bureaucracy that existed in schools

before Katrina. Interestingly, the composition of the committee included representatives

from Tulane, the Algiers Charter School Associations and the business community but

conspicuously absent were representatives characteristic of the communities served by the

public schools (community leaders and parents) and of the teachers union (See Appendix G).

The MS story of traditional public schools as outdated was reinforced in many ways. The federal government unilaterally supported this majoritarian story with its unprecedented monetary contributions to a decentralized charter school system marked by the September 30, 2005 announcement by Secretary Margaret Spellings of a $20.9 million grant to Louisiana for charter schools. As of August 2006, the US Department of Education had contributed $44.8 million for charter schools and $0 for traditional public schools.

Also nationally, the Urban Institute released a series of articles on education in New Orleans after Katrina. In this series, Hill and Hannaway (2006) stated "In the case of New Orleans, there is little in the district's history to use to face [the] demands [of rebuilding after Katrina]" (p. 2). Thus, a hybrid approach would allow public money to follow students to any school their parents choose provided it meets high standards for both teacher quality and student success. So the "time is ripe to consider transforming the school district in ways appropriate" (Hill and Hannaway, 2006, p. 2). In other words, Katrina provided an opportunity to remake schools in ways that suit the needs of those in power.

The majoritarian story also articulates a need for high caliber workers to support the reemerging or new business was the important to link to quality schools. Since the New Orleans schools were a failing system before Katrina, it is a selling point to those that were displaced that the schools were going to be totally different. Barry Erwin, president of the Council for a Better Louisiana stated it this way, "The schools in New Orleans prior to the storms were in such terrible shape academically, financially, and physically, I don't believe people would want to come back home and bring their children into that school system" (Hardy, 2006, p.30).

According to the MS, the *new* New Orleans schools would prioritize performance of both students and teachers and tolerate no excuses. The usual incentives to attract teachers – such as government pensions, control over work assignment, small classes and limits on working hours – are "counterproductive" (Hill and Hannaway, 2006, p.6), and thus no longer will exist in the *new* New Orleans. Teachers will be screened and hired based upon their performance on tests. Paul Vallas, superintendent of the RSD, stated in Education Week (2007, online), "The meek need not apply for these jobs. These are very tough kids. … It's deep poverty combined with the trauma suffered from this natural disaster." Thus, the track record of programs such as Teach for America with the necessary experience, skills and leadership necessary to place highly qualified teachers in urban areas support bringing in such entities as partners in the schools. In short, teacher testing is an effective means of determining teacher quality. Furthermore, given the perceived objectivity of testing, hiring practices based in teacher testing are not racially biased.

Key Policy Elites and the Language of Opportunity

The language of opportunity is exemplified by the elites in New Orleans. Table 3 gives an overview of key state and city educational elites. In this section, I specifically focus on elites, both individuals and organizations that are considered by many to be key decision-makers in regards to schools in New Orleans after Katrina. Within this language of opportunity there is also an articulation that school rebuilding is key to the city rebuilding. The language of opportunity is also evident in the documents of each key education elites. In the majoritarian story, the language of opportunity is intimately connected to the charterization of the New Orleans public schools. In essence, this story heavily emphasizes charter schools as synonymous with public schools. In this section, I provide examples of how these policy

elites articulate (1) the language of opportunities, (2) the definition of public schools, and the

(3) connection between the rebuilding of the schools and the city.

Table 1: Key Policy Elites in New Orleans

Name	Description	Connection/Partners
Boston Consulting Group (BCG)	A global management consulting firm and leading advisor on business strategy who has "focused on helping clients achieve competitive advantage" (2007, p. ii). They partner with clients in all sectors and regions to identify their highest-value opportunities, address their most critical challenges, and transform their businesses.	A team from BCG worked with the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee to create plan for rebuilding education in New Orleans. BCG also produced "The State of Public Education in New Orleans" report for The Greater New Orleans Education Foundation, Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives and The New Orleans City Council Education Committee.
Bring New Orleans Back (BNOB) Education Committee	Sub Committee created by Mayor Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission to develop a plan to reform and rebuild the educational system in Orleans Parish. The Education Committee's mission is to create an educational system that will (1) serve as a model for schools in the 21st century and (2) distinguishes New Orleans in a positive way, attracting both families and businesses to the city.	Chair, Scott Cowen, President of Tulane University
The Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF)	With total assets of $170 million in more than 700 charitable funds and serves donors throughout Southeast Louisiana, The Greater New Orleans Foundation is a self-described community foundation. GNOF receives gifts from individuals, other foundations, businesses and organizations, and makes grants to other local and regional nonprofits. In short, GNOF is the gatekeeper to foundation monies, local, state and national.	Partnered with FSG to identify needs and opportunities in education, and design a competitive grant making program that will establish outcome-driven approach to our grant making. GNOF was a founding funder of New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) with a $1, 000, 000 and $500,000 donation.

The Greater New Orleans Education Foundation (GNOEF)	Founded in March 1998, The Greater New Orleans Education Foundation is a non profit organization of business, education, civic and political leaders whose purpose is to ensure a high quality education for every child in the five parish region of New Orleans although because of the low academic performance of students in Orleans Public Schools, the Board decided to focus its efforts in Orleans Parish. The Policy Board consisting of New Orleans' eight college and university presidents and is responsible for overseeing the educational soundness of assessments and recommendations made by GNOEF. The Board of Directors acts in concert with the 50Policy Board, and is responsible for all actions taken by GNOEF	Important to Note that ▪ Policy Board member is Dr. Scott S. Cowen, President, Tulane University ▪ On the Board of Directors: Paul G. Pastorek (listed as General Counsel, NASA) but is the current LDE Superintendent
New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO)	Advocate for charter schools. Primary areas include: Teacher recruitment (TeachNOLA) school leader recruitment (New Leaders for New Schools) and charter support including board training and pro bono legal services.	In many ways, functions as *parent company* for: ▪ TeachNOLA (i.e. provides six-week summer crash course in precollegiate teaching) ▪ New Leaders for New Schools
Recovery School District (RSD)	Created in 2003 by the Louisiana Department of Education to take over schools that are failing. Following Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana Legislature passed a law directing the RSD to take over any New Orleans public school that had a school performance score that was academically below average.	▪ RSD Supt. (Vallas) appointed by the State Supt. (Pastorek)

Scott Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives	Seeks to further Tulane's impact on public education working specifically in four areas – applied research, public policy, programming and clearinghouse. Acknowledging Tulane President Cowen's vision to save New Orleans' failing public education system, the Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives was founded in December 2006, with a grant from the Lavin Family Foundation.	The Cowen Institute provided office space that is shared with three of their partner organizations: New Schools for New Orleans, New Leaders for New Schools and The New Teacher project.
Office of the Superintendent Louisiana Department of Education (LDE)	The Superintendent of Education. Oversees 69 public school districts with more than 1,400 schools and 650,000 students.	Paul Pastorek, current State Superintendent. Serving on the Louisiana State Board of Education from 1996 to 2004. Pastorek is a partner with Adams & Reese law firm. Named by Governor Kathleen Blanco as General Counsel for the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation (LRDF)

The articulation of the potential to transform public education and Katrina being a catalyst for change is grounded in the operating assumption that reform is neutral and beneficial. The Greater New Orleans Education Foundation, Scott S. Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives and The New Orleans City Council Education Committee charged the Boston Consulting Group with assessing the state of public education in New Orleans. In its report, the BCG stated

- "In the aftermath, a new 'system of schools' emerged. This new system, while struggling, has the **potential to fundamentally transform public education** in the city" (p. 2, bold is mine).

- "The emergence of public school choice is a promising element of the new system, although it is currently constrained by lack of schools, inequitable access for students, and limited information" (p. 2, bold is mine**)**

- "**A system with multiple operators** can benefit students, parents, and school leaders by **fostering innovation**" (p. 3, bold is mine).

- "Hurricane Katrina served as **a catalyst for change** in the governance of the public schools" (p. 10, bold is mine).

In their final report (2006), the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee presented the "Educational Network Model of a System of schools (in networks)" as the "Lean 'Strategic'" choice for rebuilding the schools (See Appendix H). Also, in their plan is an articulation between the connection between how the schools are rebuilt and in turn how the city will be rebuilt,

> "Schools have a critical role to play in re-building the neighborhoods, culture and spirit of New Orleans" (2006, Slide 26).

The operating assumption of the FSG Social Impact Advisors (FSG) is that reform is good and takes into the needs of those who want long-lasting change. As represented on the website of their client, GNOF, FSG believes,

> "Despite the challenges of rebuilding, **it's an exciting time for those who want to make a difference**, 'With no one central school system and rather a 'system of schools' in place, **New Orleans currently has the most market-driven school system in the United States**,' said Jeff Kutash of FSG. 'New organizations have emerged to provide services and there are **multiple 'entry points' for grantmakers to leverage their support for long-lasting change'**" (FSG Social Impact Advisors Presentation for the Greater New Orleans Foundation, retrieved February 20, 2008, www.gnof.org, bold is mine).

Within the presentation, *Supporting New Orleans Schools: Overview of Funder Opportunities* (2007), FSG states the purpose of their assessment as a way

> to understand the education landscape in New Orleans and to **identify opportunities for private funders** to support the re-emergence of the public school system" (slide 3, bold is mine).

On its website, The Greater New Orleans Foundation (GNOF) also articulates the language of opportunity after Katrina stating,

- "In short, in 2007, New Orleans has **the opportunity to rebuild public education** around:

- the rigorous and selective creation of—and ongoing support for—charter schools;
- early childhood education; and
- after-school programming and other out-of-school time programming" (p.1, bold is mine).

- "We now have an **unprecedented opportunity to transform public education** in New Orleans and to **create a new national model** for reforming failed urban school districts" (p.1, bold is mine).

Absent from these statements is any acknowledgement of the value in local community knowledge. Also, absent is any acknowledgement to any programs that were considered successful and beneficial, such as Students at the Center which operated at two high schools prior two Katrina. Rather, these statements by the FSG and GNOF articulate a belief that the schools were failing and now there is an unprecedented, once-in–a-lifetime opportunity to transform a failing school system.

When describing the city of New Orleans after Katrina, the language of opportunity emerges often, with New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) asserting,

- "New Orleans now has an **unprecedented opportunity** to provide all of its children with an excellent education…"

- "New Orleans public schools are **transforming into a system of excellent schools**" (p.1, bold is mine).

The notion of transformation implicitly implies that the schools needed a complete overhaul. Since the operating assumption is that there was nothing in the schools worth saving, there is the justification for the blank slate approach to reforming schools in New Orleans.

In the executive summary of the June 2006 report, *Recovery School District Legislatively Required Plan*, within two paragraphs once-in-a-lifetime was used to capture the extraordinary importance of the historical moment presented by Katrina for education.

- "In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, there is a **once-in-a lifetime opportunity** to create a fundamentally better public education system in New Orleans" (p. 4)

- "The RSD's overriding objective is to make the most of this **once-in-a-lifetime chance** to reinvent public education in New Orleans"(p. 4, bold is mine).

- "Hurricane Katrina offers New Orleans as **unprecedented opportunity** to transform and rebuild a world-class public education" (p. 5, bold is mine).

The leadership of the RSD, both past and present, also articulates a belief in the language of opportunity,

- "This will be the **greatest opportunity for educational entrepreneurs, charter schools, competition and parental choice in America**." Paul Vallas, Time Magazine, September 7 2007 (NSNO)

- "**Ideally, all of the public schools in New Orleans**, whether they are a charter or run by the RSD, are **going to be charter-like in how they operate**" (Education Week, 2007, retrieved February 21, 2008)

The leadership of the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) actively espoused the belief that schools were necessary to the rebuilding of the city. In response to the role of education in rebuilding New Orleans, Paul Pastorek, the current state superintendent, replied,

"I think education is further along than any part of government or infrastructure in the city. However, New Orleans public schools have to work well or the city will become irrelevant" (as quoted in New Orleans City Business, 2007, p. 2)

Majoritarian Story Summary. The master narrative or majoritarian story about K – 12 education and schooling in New Orleans was developed from local and national newspaper articles, influential policy reports such as the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee Report as well as information from conversations and meetings in New Orleans

after Katrina. The themes emerging from these documents were then used to construct the majoritarian story which is grounded in a particular vision of the *new* New Orleans.

The composite counterstory challenges the majoritarian story in New Orleans. The majoritarian story in New Orleans centers on the belief the New Orleans schools were such a disaster before Katrina that anything would be better than what existed at that time. In the New Orleans context, some of the assumptions and beliefs that sustain the majoritarian story on K- 12 education that are relevant to this study are:

1. Reform is neutral and progressive and therefore not racist.
2. Reform is beneficial and inherently good.
3. Reform does not devalue the knowledge and resources of Black people.
4. Issues of poverty, and thus class, are more important than race in rebuilding.
5. There was nothing in the schools worth saving.
6. Since the schools were failing, anything would be better than what was there was before.
7. Knowledge about specific communities and neighborhoods does not matter or add any value to education.
8. Hiring practices in schools are not racially biased.
9. All students need the same thing.
10. Teacher testing is an effective means of determining teacher quality.

CHAPTER 5

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS: A COMPOSITE COUNTERSTORY

Using the tool of composite counterstorytelling, this dissertation project seeks to answer and explore what Black educators have to say about what's happening in New Orleans Public Schools post Katrina. The setting is CC's Community Coffeehouse on Esplanade: John McDonogh High School (John Mac), McDonogh 35 (35) and about 8 other schools are within a mile of the coffee shop. This dialogue emerges between three educators (Sarah, Lewis and Mary) much like our own discussions emerge – through sharing, listening, and reflecting (see figure 3).
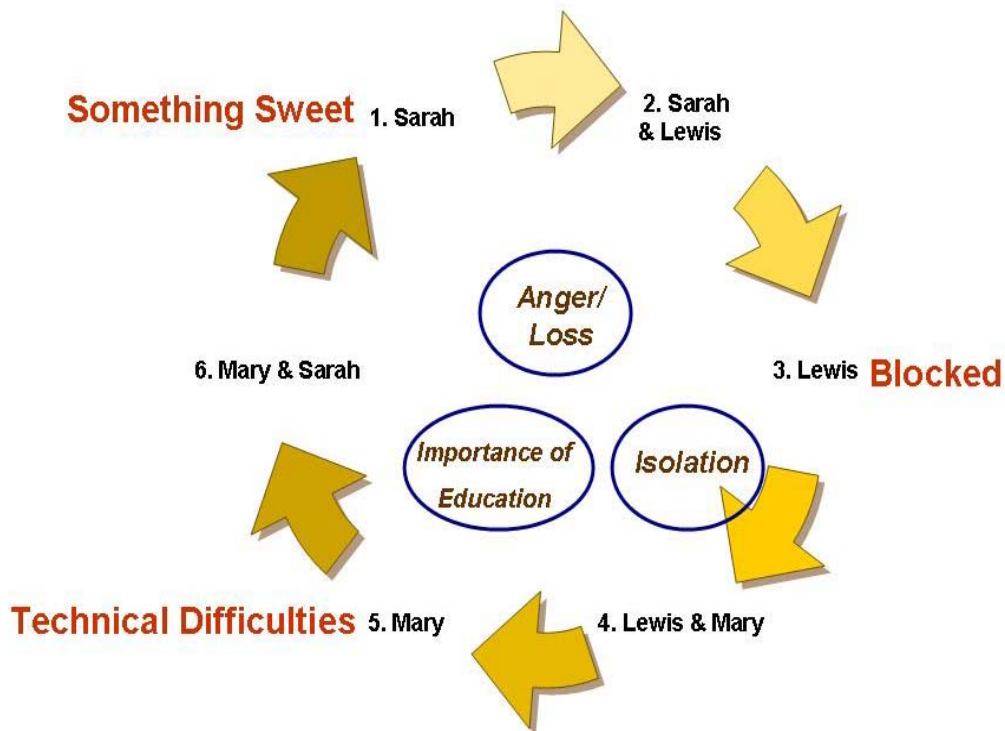
Figure 3. Composite Counterstory Overview

I ask that you "suspend judgment, listen for the story's points, test them against your own version of reality (how ever conceived) and use the counterstory as a theoretical conceptual pedagogical case study" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). When reading this composite counter story, keep in mind that

1. the dialogue, setting, and even the thoughts of these composite characters are directly from the interviews. That is my challenge, mixing the voices (like a DJ) while preserving the integrity of their voices;

2. the analysis is coming at the end; and

3. the footnotes provide information on specific references.

Something Sweet

I have so much work to finish. This new electronic grading and attendance system is really getting on my last nerve. And who has time? thought Sarah as she got out of her car. She noticed the trees swinging lightly in the breeze and said out loud to no one in particular *Dang, this is November 7th and who could ask for anything better than what the day looks and feels like. I mean nowhere in the world other than Florida and Jamaica will you feel this type of breeze. How could anyone give this up? I love this city.*

As she opened the door to CC's Coffeehouse on Esplanade Avenue, a woman was walking out at the same time. They greeted each other warmly with a chorus of "How you doing? Fine and you?" Katrina may have flooded the city wreaking untold damage, but it didn't take her soul or the heart and passions of her people. How could you not get stuck in the gumbo that is New Orleans?

Reaching the counter, Sarah ordered her cup of coffee. She decided to get a quick cup while waiting for the professional development workshop to begin. She was actually looking forward to this one. She had heard so much about the Bread Loaf/Students at the Center[5] training from one of her colleagues at another school.

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[5] Students at the Center (SAC) is an independent writing-based program directly serving high schools and middle schools that works within the Orleans Parish public school system. It is funded through grants that either go directly through the school system and through fiscal agents who are community-based programs with whom they partner. SAC operates under three basic principles: (1) Students are a resource to and not just an object of the education process; (2) Education is for community development in addition to individual student and development and (3) The campus is the community development.

"Afternoon," she said to the tall skinny young man at the counter. "Umm… can I have a tall house blend with room for cream?" Maybe she should have been thinking of the sweeping changes happening in the school like the folks in charge were ordering coffee. One tall charter with laptops or one venti open admissions house blend. She chuckled to herself. Like ordering a coffee, these schools are different sizes and names but in reality, versions of the same coffee with room for cream.

"Here is your coffee. That will be $2.60." As she took the steaming cup from the young man at the counter, she said "Thank you baby" with the baby sounding more like bey-bay to those ears not native to the crescent city. She dropped the change into the jar with "TIPS" handwritten in large red letters. She had tips for those people running the schools, too. "How about thanking the teachers who came back after the storm? How about showing some appreciation for the work we had been doing before the storm without all these resources? The only thanks we got was being told over the Internet that we were going to be terminated. In other parishes, teachers got paid throughout the storm, and they were just as impacted as we were. Jefferson Parish people never missed a check, but we had to go to a Western Union or Moneygram to get a check that wasn't even correct. And that was just one check.

Lost in her thoughts, Sarah had not noticed the person who had walked up to the table where she was sitting near the glass window that extended the length of the wall giving patrons a view of Esplanade. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Stevenson" a voice called out. Sarah looked up from her musings to Mr. Snyder. With his characteristic smile, he was known to light up any room.

"Hey, Mr. Snyder. How you doing?"
"Fine, I suppose. Or as fine as I could be given the circumstances."

Sarah wondered to herself which circumstance he was referring to. She could think of so many: the changing bell schedule (five times since the beginning of the school year and it was only November!), the transportation fiasco, the teacher shortage from last year and now this new teacher surplus, the leadership in the RSD — she could go on and on.

Who they want…

"You know" he continued "it looks like they are going to cut the arts and extracurricular activities out of the school. I don't know what they are thinking."

Sadly and with her head beginning to hang low, she said "It's almost as if what we do is not important." But then with a fierce determination in her voice, she continued "We reach kids with the arts. They can be creative in one thing and it leads them to something else."

"Yeah," he replied emphatically. Sarah's defiant energy was contagious. "What they don't know is what we've always used in our background and in our process to reach our kids. Teaching is an art. You have to have a passion for it." *I never saw myself as a teacher*, she thought. I never dreamt of being a teacher when I was younger and going through undergrad and making a choice about what my profession. But when I saw the impact that I could have on people's lives, it tends to give you the focus that you need to stay on the job.

"It's about teaching respect and discipline, and also interacting in a group form. Not only with music and bands, but anywhere you have a group of people, whether it be teams or what not, they form a bond. And it's life-long. If we have these kids in programs, we use that to motivate them to become academic. You can't be in the band if you don't have good grades, or if you don't have a certain grade average. So if it's something that they want, they actually work at it. I mean that's how it was when I was growing up".

Sarah was drinking and nodding in agreement. "I just wish they would listen or at least…"

"…say they don't know what in the hell they are doing" Lewis interrupted finishing her sentence.

They both laughed. Sitting her coffee cup back on the small round tabletop, Sarah asked, "Do you mind watching my bag while I go to the bathroom?"

"Yeah. No problem." Placing her hands on small round table top, Sarah pushed her chair away from the table, the legs scratching against the wood floor.

As she made her way to the restroom down the hallway, he thought about why he came back after the storm. It was for his kids. He had built something with them. He was offered many jobs in and out of town, but really wanted to come back here to continue what he had already started. There was a need to be here. The complexion of the city was changing. He knew that he didn't want to be one that would look back 10 years from now and say, I could have been there to effect some more positive change in the direction I thought the city should go. Being absent from the city wouldn't allow him to do that.

The air was surrounded by the syncopated bass of the sousaphone steady as the drum, the trumpet solo joins in perfect time; the trombone did a rendition of Stevie Wonder's classic *Living in the City*. As the vibes floated through the air, he recognized New Birth Brass Band's "Who They Want,"[6] how appropriate.

What they want… What they want… New Birth

Returning from her much-needed restroom break, Sarah sat back down, relieved and smiling. Interrupting his thoughts about returning, she said "I never got a chance to ask, what brings you in this afternoon?"

"Well, I wanted to grab something sweet and maybe do a little work." His voice softening, "And to be honest, it's still hard to work in the school." The pace of words slowing, "The environment is…"

"Different" said Sarah knowingly finishing his sentence. The relief from her face was replaced with a somber, almost blank stare. Almost in a whisper, he said "You know what bothers me most?"

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[6] 9th track on *New Birth Family*. New Birth Brass Band (2005).

At that moment, it seemed that everything was still. New Birth faded in the background taking their horns, snare and sousaphone; the barista dropped a cup but it made no sound when hitting the wood floor. Looking her in the eyes, his voice slow, Lewis answered his own question, "The way our families were devastated. We were a family before Katrina. How we leaned upon each other a lot. We've always been a school where we were family. We knew when each other's children were born, when they graduated from school, and when they took their first driving lessons. You knew if you needed something, if you were going through something, we were there for each other."

Sarah understood what he meant, "And with the kids from that St. Bernard community, we had that same type of woven relationship: where kids could come to us and, you know, share something, and we could get to the agency or someone if we couldn't help the situation. We lost that piece of the puzzle."

As he talked, he began moving his hands through the air, with them occasionally touching the table to make his points. "We were establishing relationships with the whole body. Relationships with families, because we taught the students, we taught some of their parents, their cousins, brothers. If the custodians saw you do something or say something, there was some tie or something that would enable that individual to feel close enough to you to say, "Look! You know this is unacceptable behavior to you."

The coffeehouse seemed more vibrant. The music sounds and voices in the coffeehouse began to re-emerge. The instruments returned to talking to each other again. For a moment, they both sat, lost in their own thoughts.

What they want….What they want…New Birth

"What bothers me is the kids are moved further away from their community. Kids are bussed for hours or for a longer time on the bus. If parents want to be involved, they are separated. It's more difficult now to be involved because there's no such thing as a neighborhood or community school."

Remembering how the community came to support the Plessy Day Celebration[7] at Douglass, Sarah continued, "The community folk knew that this was their community school, and as a result they lent their resources and their talent to that school. I mean we were making progress. Parent advocates would be in the school; they would be responsible for recruiting parents to be involved in their children's education."

"There was continuity, and children felt a sense of ownership because they were going to school pretty much in their own neighborhoods unless they chose to go to a magnet school. Now the RSD is busing people from New Orleans East schools across the river. You know,"

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[7] A coalition of local activists in the Crescent City Peace Alliance and students from Douglass High School wants to establish an educational park paying tribute to Plessy in the greater context of the local civil rights struggle. Annual Homer Plessy Celebration Day commemorates the start of the Civil Rights Movement in New Orleans.

Lewis continued shifting the conversation, "I was thinking while you were in the bathroom about why I came back. But I think we haven't talked enough about *how* we came back."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, when you start talking to people, you realize the adults haven't really dealt with our issues."

"To be honest, people are pretty much busy trying to piece their own lives back together. A friend told me how when she finally broke down one day and went for help, she was told 'We don't know how to help you. This is a phenomenon that we're not prepared for.' "

"They don't know how to handle the Katrina psychosis, but," he continued sarcastically, "they're tracking our symptoms."

"Although it's devastating for us, our kids are hurting. You know they're still working on their emotional side and you want them to pass the state mandated tests. You know they're not ready."

Finally, Lewis said, "And when you sit and you look at it, we have miseducated an entire population of children. And at this point honestly I don't even know how to fix it. It's almost hopeless."

Sarah suddenly had a thought. "You didn't get what you came for. "

"What do you mean?"

"Remember, you wanted something sweet."

Blocked

Leaving the coffee shop, Lewis welcomed the warmth of the sun on his face. Watching the cars and trucks on Esplanade zipping by to their destinations, he thought of how his life and the life of his kids had changed. He hadn't planned on staying so long in the coffee shop but he welcomed the chance to talk. The conversation made him feel both light and heavy. Because his mind was somewhere else, he almost didn't see Mary getting out of her car. CC's didn't have a parking lot, but there was plenty of street parking to be found in front of the row homes and businesses lining the street.

As Mary began walking away from her car towards the entrance to CC's, Lewis called out, "Afternoon, Mrs. Griffin. How your mama doing now?"

Smiling Mary replied, "She's okay, I guess." Two years after Katrina, it was overwhelming thinking about rebuilding her life. "Her insurance finally came through, but her house was paid off and the insurance is only going to cover $60,000 of the $120,000 needed to rebuild.

She did get some Road Home[8] money, but that's only another $20,000. We're trying to decide what to do about taking another mortgage out for the rest." With a deep sigh: "If its not one thing its another."

Knowingly, Lewis, added, "But what can we do?" Wanting to change the subject, he added "So how is your school year going?"

"It's just tough. We have so many demands on us. It's overwhelming." Mary replied as she used her fingers to move her hair out of her face.

At that moment, a cloud temporarily blocked the rays of sunlight that had only moments earlier warmed Lewis face. "It feels like everyone I talk to is stressed, overwhelmed, and overburdened. It feels like something else is dumped on me every week. We don't have a union. So you're almost in a position where if you don't do it, you can lose your job."

Lewis thought about how his routine had changed. I have no problem keeping my roll-book, tracking grades and doing things by hand. The technology isn't making things any easier. Now you have to do it this way and you've got to go to this site and then this pops up and you've got to put these grades in. Now everything has to be done on a computer. I'm busy with planning and this new way doesn't fit into my schedule."

"All they care about are the test scores. Everything is data driven." Mary continued. "I'm documenting everything that they do in the classes, and I need to see target growth, things like that. Documenting all this stuff should have been done from the beginning."

"You know the State is doing everything they can do to make sure they are successful on paper."

The phone ringing interrupted their conversation. Mary began reaching into one pocket then another searching for her phone. "Hello. Hey, baby. Yeah, I will stop and pick it up on my way home later."

The RSD is no better than Orleans Parish, Lewis thought to himself. Orleans had its issues, but at least they had a plan. It might not have been a good plan, but they had something on paper.

"This is the most disorganized school system I've ever worked in", Lewis muttered under his breath.

"Let me call you back a little later. I was having a conversation with someone when you called."
Mary returned her attention to Lewis.

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[8] Road Home program is the single largest housing recovery program in U.S. History and is designed to provide compensation to Louisiana homeowners affected by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita for the damage to their homes.

"I am sorry about that. That was my daughter calling. Did I tell you that she was a teacher? We thought she was going to be something else, but she is a teacher now. I am trying to keep her encouraged. It has really been a stressful, chaotic year."

"She just feels bombarded now with staff development, staff development every day, staying after school until 5:00 for training after a long day inside of a classroom, getting home and barely able to get something to eat, getting your shower or whatever it is you need to do, and then you're dealing with trying to keep up with assignments and checking test papers and preparing for the next day, and you find it's 1:00 in the morning, and you've got to get up at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning. She doesn't know if she is going to be able to make it to the second semester," the words running together, tumbling out of her mouth.

Lewis added, "Many of the veteran teachers are at the point of being burned out." And we're going to be leaving, he continued silently to himself. What is going to happen to our children then?

Mary thought about why she became an educator. I don't do this for money. I do this because I know what a kid can learn, where it can take him in life. These kids, they become… you never know what a talent a student might have. You never know.

The changes in the schools weighed heavy in the air between them. "So what's going to happen to our children?" Mary asked. The question lingered. "They are still traumatized from the experience of the hurricane."

"When you talk to the kids and you ask them, 'When you evacuated where did you go to and how many schools?' The average one has gone to 3 or 4 schools or no school at all. Some of them just did not go to school."

"I mean, everyone has a Houston story." He was not thinking of the heartwarming tales of the good people of Texas taking in displaced families. "They weren't treated great in Houston. They were not treated well, and it didn't help that when they started enrolling kids in school, they put them in the worst schools in Houston with the worst kids, and that caused a huge problem."

"Our kids came back into the city because they were either suspended or expelled from schools in Texas or Georgia or the other places they were in. Many just wanted to come home."

Thinking back, she remembered how one of the kids started talking about being on the bridge. "One of my students was on the bridge for a week, and he doesn't even remember eating." She couldn't even imagine being on the bridge for a week. "One of the kids said, 'I was on that bridge too, and there were bodies everywhere.' How do you even respond to that?"

Mary thought about the study published by the Bulletin of the World Health Organization that said the severe mental illness rates in New Orleans had doubled after Katrina. About

15% of residents in the counties and parishes struck by the storm — or 200,000 people — have depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and other forms of mental illness.

 "So many of our students actually lived on the streets, and got themselves up, spent the night with friends or whomever and came to school every day because they just wanted to be in school. Students are living on their own or with other family members. Their parents are not here. They were here with cousins and sisters and people who were not too far in age from them." Pausing, Lewis continued with intensity in his voice, "How did we respond?" Suddenly shifting his focus, "We needed to be parents to some of these kids, since their parents were displaced, and they were here because they wanted to come back to school."

She said to Lewis, "We always felt that we were parents to the kids, but even more so after the hurricane." *My heart is in educating African-American children*, Mary thought to herself. "They were all alone and they didn't know how to deal with the situation."

"Sometimes neither did we. But you know who don't know how to deal even more? The…"

"… R --- S --- D", they stated simultaneously pausing after each letter.

"The RSD is not only *not* responding but seems *incapable* of responding." Lewis declared emphatically.

"They don't share information or communicate or anything. It just seems as though they have some people that are either setting things up or making plans, and then when it gets to us, the people that are actually doing it, it doesn't fit into what we're doing."

Didn't they realize how harsh it was, having to take the test to be rehired? Lewis thought remembering conversations with other educators. I had been in the system all of these years. There was never any question about our teaching ability. I had never received unsatisfactory evaluations. We were not valued then, but you've given us all of these things now. But we're the *same* people. He thought angrily. We're the *same* teachers. We're the same students, parents, administrators. Pre-Katrina we were doing the best we could with what we had, but we should have had more. I guess it was just an indictment on me, questioning my teaching ability, my credentials. Eventually, I — we — realized that for the kids and for whatever reasons that were selfish to us, we needed to get back to work.

"That group of people didn't even know how to run a system." Mary continued, interrupting his thoughts. "It was just a group of people they put together that was supposed to be educators or whatever they were supposed to have been," she continued sarcastically, "and they just put them in here together it wasn't and isn't working."

"Yeah. It's good that they have purchased a lot of new equipment, supplies and everything for all the schools, but in a way it really doesn't mean anything because it's how *you* affect the students."

Mary thought about her students. They had so many needs. The social ills they were dealing with prior to coming to school were some of the hindrances of why they weren't succeeding in school. If there is something going on in your life, it's a distraction for you. And they're not old enough to be able to fully understand how they are able to handle this particular situation. They all were capable of learning and they needed some additional support to make that happen. And that meant working a little harder to attract them and change teaching styles to address those needs.

"Like how is the RSD addressing how many of our students needed money because they were living on their own?" They probably were completely unaware of this challenge when they were opening schools that first year after the storm Lewis thought. "Our students are not accustomed to having to live on their own, trying to work and attend school."

"Although we understood when students said '*I need to work*', we had to tell them 'I know you need to work, but you *need* to pass this class. We need to find some other way to help you to do both of these things, because we know you need to work; however, we know you need an education as well,'" Mary continued, "We had to try to find agencies and ways to assist the kids in trying to do both."

As Mary spoke, Lewis thought about his relationships with his kids. The kids relate to me so well because I treat them like my own kids. I love them, care about them, I spank them, I chastise them, just as if I was their father. And they relate to that." Mary's words resonated with him and his experience, "We felt that we were everything that a child would need to function as a human being, and we were there to try to connect them with what was available, which wasn't much at the time. It was a survival mechanism to get through that year until things got better."

Lewis echoing her words, "We always felt that we were parents to the kids, but even more so after the hurricane. They were all alone, and they didn't know how to deal with the situation. If you needed medical attention we tried to find wherever it was, feeding and buying clothes and toiletries. We were the resource person to find whatever it was the child needed, but I think the education part of it was suffering. You needed those basic skills for you to be able to concentrate on your academic part of your life, but we were just trying to hold it together…"

Their sentences and thoughts ran together like streams into a lake.

"Teachers have got to be social workers."

"They've got to be missing parents for a lot of the kids because a lot of the kids are here without parents."

"They have to be advocates, they have to be the doctor, they have to be the nurse, because some of the kids, you can't get a doctor's appointment."

"You can't get a dental appointment."

"So we've got to have a toolbox with not just books in it, but a myriad of things in it…Band-Aids, aspirin and you're not supposed to give them to them."

Looking at the row houses and cars going by made the city seem back to normal. Almost. But there was something in the air, in the schools. "I hear what you're saying. But what do we do…" she paused to think about what she was really trying to say, "I mean what can we do about their anger?"

There it was. The question that many of us fear. Because really the teachers, we had fear. The teachers we feared the students. "Well," his mind searched for the right words, "you've got to have all those kind of things to make people comfortable in order to be receptive for learning."

"But trying to work with the kids became so difficult, because the children wouldn't allow it. They wouldn't allow you to get near them." Her voice for the first time revealed her frustration with the students.

"We *have* to make an effort with our classes. To establish rapport with them …"

"…and let them know where you came from, and the problems and things you and I had coming up." Mary replied, sensing what Lewis was getting at.

"I came up in the Lower 9th Ward," Lewis continued, "and that wasn't the best environment, but I didn't let the environment take me down. I wanted to have more and do better, and that's what I feel that I have done. And that's what I explain to my kids. And I tell them, "You don't have to remain in your environment. You can get up and come out of it." And that's what I tell them, "You can get up and come out of it. You don't let the environment take you down."

Moving her purse from one shoulder to the other, Mary said, "Well, a lot of them are angry because of the way things happened. I know one of my students wrote about how angry she was because she lost everything, and then she realized that she still at least had her family, because she knew people that had died down there in the Ninth Ward."

"But our students are angry for a lot of reasons." Lewis interjected. "The anger I see in my students may not all be just about Katrina, some of the things they write about are not necessarily Katrina related."

"Yeah," Mary agreed, "there are personal things students deal with. They don't know how to express their emotions. A lot of them are dealing with the death of their parents. One young man talked about how he failed a year because the year that he was absent so much he was going to chemotherapy with his mother. And his brother was murdered on the side of Drew School, which is right across the street from where we are. So he literally sees where his brother was killed every day."

"And as a result of Katrina, we've lost at least two years of educating kids. We've lost at least two years of teaching children, because their minds are either focused on if there's

going to be another storm or helping mom cope with the fact that she may not get home because she may not get the assistance from FEMA she needs."

"We've got a group of people who need some emotional support, and they don't know where to go. And it's difficult to get the emotional support here anyway." Mary replied, thinking about how there was more security in the building than social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists that we needed to help those kids, as well as us go through this rebuilding process.

 "They're still working on their emotional side and you want them to pass the state mandated tests. The students themselves are traumatized. You know they're not ready."

"There should have been a way that they could have suspended the tests[9] at least for a year or two, and then maybe brought it back."

Mary thought about her college professor, who was an activist in her own right. She really pushed education and believed that the only way that we will survive as a people is that we are educated — and not just educated in book knowledge, but educated in the struggle of our race. And that's where I am, she thought. We have to be educated as far as academics and educated to where we were as a people, and where we are as a people, because we're just enslaving ourselves at this point.

"We need caring individuals to nurture these young people through these 12 or 13 years of schooling such that they will be able to realize that it just doesn't stop at this high school education, that I need to find myself a vocation, or find myself some place in life that I'm able to this productive citizen. We can't get them to sit down and get the academics until we reach them socially. Our kids are hurting a lot more than just academically. Individuals working in the schools must be able to touch students' lives."

"… and that's where a lot of the black teachers come in and why they stayed." Lewis interjected, remembering why he got into education. "I've seen a lot of people come and go, but the ones that stick to it, that's the reason they're sticking to it, because this could be our sons or our daughters that we're failing. And the system is definitely failing our kids with the curriculum that they're imposing."

Lewis wished people realized that most of their kids have never been outside of a housing development, let alone outside of the city. That's why they could not adjust when the hurricane hit and they had to go to other cities. They couldn't adjust because they have not been outside of the city of New Orleans. Many of them could not see beyond the housing development. In a class he taught many years ago, they we were talking about going on a vacation. And I said to one young man, 'I know there's somewhere that you want to go. Come on, I just need you to write a paragraph about a vacation that you would like to take.'

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[9] Part of Louisiana's high stakes testing policy, the LEAP (Louisiana Educational Assessment Program) is given in 4th and 8th grade and students must pass to be promoted. Students must achieve at least *Approaching Basic* Level on the Graduate Exit Examination (GEE) to receive a standard diploma. Due to Hurricane Katrina and Rita, the tests were suspended for the 2005-2006 school year for the 4th and 8th grade students.

And his vacation was he wanted to go and stay in the Iberville Housing Development by his dad. He lived in the St. Bernard Housing Development. His parents were separated and so he did want to go and spend his summer with this father. Some kids' idea of a vacation was to go shopping, because they didn't have the opportunity to go to a shopping mall.

"Even some of us have bought into the idea that some of the kids are bad." Mary's statement disrupted his thoughts. "That after Katrina, we've got a new group of kids coming in and they're coming from all and everywhere and some of the kids are coming who are drug dealers and gangster like. So some of the teachers had that in their minds so when the kids came and they looked like they thought a drug dealer should look or they looked like a thug should look, the teacher immediately went into psyche that I'm dealing with that, and that might not have been the situation. Perception is powerful."

"Yeah, that happened everywhere our kids went after the storm. What you saw on the news in Houston and Atlanta was New Orleans kids are coming in and trying to take over the drug scene and the gangs, and they're fighting over turf issues. You can say a lot about New Orleans kids, but we don't have gang activity. But," he said pausing dramatically "New Orleans *is* a very, very territorial place and we do have a ward or turf issue."

Pre-Katrina we had an issue with turf, Lewis thought. Kids from different neighborhood couldn't go to the same school without getting into a big fight. That was still evident right after we came back from the hurricane. With no such thing as a neighborhood or community school, kids are moved further away from their community and that can be frightening. We had those issues with some of the high schools where the rivalries started to pick up.

Growing up in the 7th Ward, Mary knew that her people were traditionally considered to be privileged Creole light skinned blacks, and people further uptown or back of town were people of dark descent. This is why these parents tend to parent their children much different than the parents of kids from the 7th Ward, where they may have picked up some of the European ways of dealing with situations where the people uptown didn't. They kept their soul, they kept the African root, and all that stuff in place. "People uptown *are* different from people from downtown. People from front of town are different from people from back of town."

"Yeah" Lewis agreed. "Even though we may live in the city, and the city may be small, each neighborhood has its own different or unique culture that makes it uptown or makes it downtown, makes it the 9th Ward, makes it the Southern Ward. They are all so different."

"That's why" Mary replied forcefully, "new teachers need to do a serious internship here first before even going to a New Orleans classroom."

"Yeah they need to understand the New Orleans communities and their relationship with the schools. I know how it was when I was in school and you were proud to be a Buccaneer or Trojan or whatever. You wore your school shirt. Now the kids can't wear anything with a logo on it, so all they have is a blue shirt… this is an RSD rule. "

"The environment is different now. You had school pride. You just wanted to win because that's your school. Just like you hear the players say, 'This is our house.' You know you have that feeling about your school, and when you do, a lot of people that went to 35, and I will use it as an example, feel that way about 35. They don't feel that way so much now because the 35 isn't the 35 that it used to be, and I hope it becomes once again. But you hear people talking about their proudness, just like St. Aug. 'I went to St. Aug.' "

"You know that's the big thing" Lewis responded, "where you went to high school, especially here. So you're proud of your school, and I don't feel a lot of that at any of the high schools. We don't really have anything that says our school on it unless they're on a cheerleading squad or something like that. And I talk to my friends who are teaching in the high school, and they are saying the same thing."

The sky felt more and more overcast. The sun was there when Mary got out of her car but was barely cracking through the clouds. Before Katrina, most of the people who worked in the school systems were New Orleans graduates. Most of the people who worked in city government, public, and state and federal government were from New Orleans Public Schools.

"Now we have a lot of young white teachers who this is their first time in the classroom." Mary stated, hoping it wouldn't rain since she just got her hair done and didn't have an umbrella. "They find themselves burned out and frustrated. So where they may have the ability to deliver and teach, they can't because they can't deal with the inner city kid in terms of the problems and the things that they have, the social things they have to deal with first, before you can even start teaching.'

Affirming her observation, Lewis added, "Like why I've got to walk three blocks away and not come here on time because I can't walk straight to the school. I have to take a detour because there are drug addicts on the corner that's the closest walk to me. So kids are getting punished for being late and teachers not understanding that they are going through a mountain of hills to get to where they've got to get to."

"These new teachers need to understand the whole psyche of the inner city, how things operate, the politics in terms of community — that each community within itself in New Orleans is unique and different."

This time Lewis's phone ringing interrupted their conversation.

"Hello? I am heading over to the school now. Can you hold on for a minute? Mrs. Griffin, it was good seeing you" as Lewis reached down to give her a quick peck on the check and hug goodbye. "You too. Take care of yourself." As Lewis walked away heading towards his car, Mary noticed that the sun had re-emerged her rays, breaking through the gray clouds. The breeze gave her a slight chill, reminding her that it was time for her afternoon cup of tea.

Technical Difficulties

Walking into CC's, Mary noticed that there were five people in front of her. Her mind wandered while waiting to place her order. Her conversation with Lewis left her thinking about the changes in the schools since Katrina. She wanted a better life than her mother. Her music scholarships made teaching a natural choice. *Many of my students have told me that the things that we did or the things that I said to them made a difference in their lives. I even work with some of my former students, who are also educators, and they've said the same thing. You can have the best of the best of everything. But if the students are not getting what they need, it doesn't make a difference.*

"Good afternoon. What can I get you?" asked the tall skinny young man at the counter.

"A tall Earl Grey, please." The young man at the counter punched the order into the cash register. These days the touch screens on the cash registers made them look more like computers. Suddenly, there was a loud, prolonged beeping noise that drowned out the music playing in the background. The young man at the counter began pushing buttons looking more and more irritated. "It looks like we are experiencing some technical difficulties with the cash register. It will be a few minutes before we can fix it. I'm sorry about the inconvenience."

Humph. Technical difficulties indeed. Post Katrina, there was a rush to equip the teachers with modern technology. Being displaced to other cities and states, the kids and the parents saw the priority that education was being given. Of course, it caused the parents to realize that the kids here in New Orleans were not getting the type of education that they saw taking place in those other cities and states. In this hurried attempt to get the school's technology up and running, there was a lack of training for the staff. *Many us were not familiar with the new technologies that the district expected us to be efficient in. How could we help the kids with it?* And they found that some of the buildings were not equipped with the proper wiring and electrical needs to just drop this technology in, get started, and it's ready. *Well*, she thought to herself, *they found out that the buildings were just too old and ill kept, and were not up to par to receive this new technology overnight.*

"Here is your tea. That will be $1.63." The young man said as he took her money. "Again, I'm so sorry about the wait."

"No problem." she replied, taking the hot cup off the counter. She dropped her change in the TIPS jar and, wanting to add some honey and lemon, she headed toward the counter with the coffee condiments.

Her thoughts were interrupted when she saw one of her colleagues, Mrs. Stevenson, at a table near the window.

For the second time this afternoon, Sarah felt someone standing near her. She looked up to find Mary Griffin.

"Hey Mrs. Griffin. How are you?"

"I'm good, I suppose. Just trying to hang in there and get a measure or handle on what is going on inside of the school system." *And trying to deal with my personal concerns and issues*, she continued silently. After taking a sip of her tea, Mary continued, "Have you hear the rumors that the Epic laptops that they have, they won't keep?"

Thinking about the Epic laptops bought by the school system made Sarah even more angry. Epic is a computer-based teaching system, and *they* were going to block all the websites to keep the kids focused just on the curriculum. They didn't and now our kids are walking around with $1200 iPods, because they've downloaded their music, movies and everything but for the purpose that they were bought for. But it's the system's fault, because *they* bought them, *they* issued them, and *they* did not think before *they* did it. The more she thought, the more incensed she became.

"Sadly, yes" Sarah replied to the question. "You've actually now got them engaged and responsible for their own education. Now you're going to take it away from them because you're having a disagreement with the company. They should have set this all up before the kids even got the laptops. Morale is not well. If they actually keep what's in place, the kids may actually do OK. I was just talking with Lewis about how…"

"Really, I bumped into him on my way in" interjected Mary.

"…they don't share information or communicate or anything" After a pause, Sarah said, exasperatedly placing her head in her hands, "So now what are we going to do?"

"I don't know. My biggest challenge used to be trying to teach without having anything, and learning how to do it. Remember that workshop that was offered called *Teaching with Nothing*?" Mary plaintively smiled, thinking about even having to have such a workshop in the first place, especially after visiting other parishes and spending a couple of professional days in Jefferson Parish and St. Charles Parish. It was such a disparity in terms of class size, in terms of the curriculum, in terms of the resources, the condition of the building. I went into a resource room for each department, and I was stunned she thought to herself. You know, there was paper, copy paper to the ceiling. There was an office that you could go into. Your staplers, your staples, your rulers, your protractors, your calculators…

Interrupting Mary's internal reflection, Sarah expressed concern for the students, "Our kids are hurting a lot more than just academically. We can't get them to sit down and get the academics until we reach them socially, and that's where a lot of the black teachers, especially at my school, why we stayed."

Nodding in agreement, Mary replied intensely "The kids have to feel that they are loved. And I'm not talking about just loved by parents. I'm talking about by society. Their teachers, other people on the outside, someone they could go and could talk to. At the end my first day of school with my kids, I say, 'If you need me, you may call on me. You can come talk to me.' And when phone calls were a nickel, I'd say, 'You can put a nickel or dime in the phone. You can put a nickel on me or a dime on me.'" Mary chuckled at her own phrasing.

Sarah affirmed, "One of the goals post-Katrina has to be focused on the purpose of educating the whole student."

"We have to expose them to a lot of things culturally. I worked at the summer camp at the Treme Center[10], and we brought two busloads of kids to the meetings in support of the Indians. You'd be surprised at the things that these kids nowadays don't know. Simple stuff like who Marcus Garvey is. I tell our kids, 'You need to know about this. You need to know who this person was and what they did.'"

"Actually, it's really up to us." Sarah stated resolutely. "Nobody can teach our history like us. Nobody can reach our kids like us, because we've been there already. I have nothing against my Caucasian counterparts, but in order to reach our kids, I think it has to be us, because we can see through their eyes. We know their struggles, and we're not blind to them. And this year alone, a lot of new teachers have come in from all over the United States into the school, and they really cannot reach and deal with our kids. And they're probably fantastic teachers, but it takes people who have been there, have seen it and worked through it to help our kids work through it."

"And we're constantly trying to give them some background and history of where we came from as a race of people. As a matter of fact I taught a lesson today on segregation using one of the memoirs from Dr. Martin Luther King."

"Using history to help the students come together is important" Mary replied. The two women became animated, their hands moving, heads nodding, while they shared.

"Right, exactly. And that's basically what we've been trying to do, couple some history into our actual lessons. I'm an English teacher, so we were writing. We are doing our own autobiography, and not the traditional "I was born…" but just one incident or one aspect of their life that changed them and shaped them into the person they are today. And that's the type of autobiographies I have my kids writing. So we did one of Dr. King's autobiographies and memoir. In that lesson I'm also teaching about segregation and desegregation when it came about, why we are where we are. I did two forms, one from Phyllis Wheatley and one from Langston Hughes to also talk about it, just trying to let them see that all of the struggles that other people had gone through to get you where you are. You should not have ills about your own race." Sarah thought about her own schooling experiences. I was living when Dr. Martin Luther King was marching and I saw where we came from and what we came through. I think we were like the 3rd or 4th class of Black students that graduated from that particular, predominantly white high school.

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[10] The Faubourg Tremé (pronounced Fow-borg Tra-may) is a New Orleans neighborhood next to the French Quarter area. It is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city and historically was the main neighborhood of free people of color. It remains an important center of the city's African-American culture, especially the modern brass band tradition. Congo Square was the "town square" where slaves gathered on Sundays to dance. The square was also an important place of business for slaves, even enabling some to purchase their freedom.

"We have to go beyond the curriculum to reach the curriculum. That's why creative writing is so important." Mary thought about the professional development workshop she attended this summer where she had a chance to meet a group of kids that just blew her away. It was the first time she'd ever been in a workshop like that. Creative writing would give the kids inroads to knowing more about English, being able to read, and being able to interpret what they read. "Let me tell you about the workshop I was in this summer, together with students and teachers. The students performed all over the teachers. The students were more motivated than the teachers. Kids were able to write about things that were affecting their lives. If only all these kids could take creative writing and be able to express themselves. That's one of the keys."

"Yeah, our professional development could be different. These people come down here, they're consultants or whatever, and they come up with ideas quite natural. All ideas don't work. And you know something?" Sarah paused dramatically and almost whispering her next words "I'm a staunch believer of basic education."

"Everything new they try, a lot of the stuff don't work." With each sentence, Mary's voice became more and more annoyed. "They screwed up a generation of kids with new math. A generation of kids with set, sub-sets, and void sets, supers. These kids have been in school and they don't know there multiplication tables. Teach the kids the basic verb uses. Let them know that sentences have a subject and a predicate, and teach them how to define the subject and the predicate."

"The state makes all these decisions, and whoever the experts are that make the decisions, they never come to the schools and ask for input from the grassroots people that are in the trenches working with the kids. That doesn't happen. They buy it. They do it. And say, 'Here, learn it. You implement it.' It's unfortunate."

Thinking about the multiple entities operating the schools was depressing and sapped the energy when they were talking about what could be done to help the kids. Mary said out loud as much to herself as to Sarah, "There's no togetherness, so I don't assume how they think it's going to be any good."

"I think if we had a unified system, and everybody stopped trying to beat each other and be on top, we could be there to educate the whole child. We would wind up being much better off."

"They rushed to get the school open. If they had taken their time everything would have been in place." Mary thought back to when school was about to open and they didn't have a master schedule. Three days prior to the opening of the school, a small group of them who had passed the test had to hand schedule students. "But when you just put people together, whether it be students or any other people, and things are not ready and prepared, you're going to have confusion."

"I would gamble that the administration didn't take the effort to try and bring these kids together — to try and point out some of the similarities that these kids had, you know, show them that they had more in common than they had that was not in common."

"After the storm, for staff as well as for kids, the administration should have said, 'All right, we've just went through one of the worst storms or the worst disasters to mankind, and we're all in this together. You and I have lost things that we once cherished. Things that you once cherished are now gone, but now let's start a new life. As a group, we do that by respecting each other's individual differences. We respect each other's culture and neighborhood and come together as a group and pull through this together. Because," with determination in her voice and eyes "Katrina can't win. We've survived the storm, how do we survive this new New Orleans."

These words reminded Mary of what didn't happen. She thought about how there was no talk about how we survive this new New Orleans with a mix of charter schools, with a mix of the Recovery District Schools, and now Orleans Parish. No one asked, How do we all come together to make sure that kids are getting what they need to get? With each professional getting what they need to get to be successful in the classroom. That conversation never happened, not at a school level I know for sure. Probably at the administration level they did, and at the city level they did, but not coming directly to the teachers and saying, 'Well, we're going to take this time to not have students come back into the school immediately, but we're going to deal with all these new teachers. This is a new face to you. How do we come together and make this work? And respect that we lost Ms. Jones in a flood. Or this person is not returning after the storm. How do we marry these people back together?' That was not there.

Taking a sip of her now cold coffee, Sarah stated, "Before the storm, there were central office leaders, like Dr. Hanley, who understood that with leadership comes responsibility and that responsibility was to train your staff or teach your staff that one day you may be in this position, and you need to know how to operate this position. Under her leadership we had a responsibility of understanding everybody's function. If that was a social worker's job, then I understood what the social worker did. If it was a math teacher's job, I understood the function of the math teacher. I might not have been able to teach the content, but I knew how the content was supposed to be delivered."

"She had that ability to transfer the knowledge" Mary said remembering Dr. Hanley, who was no longer with Orleans Parish schools. "Before Katrina the district was predominantly African-American administrative-wise, and it helped, and those people held powerful positions from the board down to the school site staff to central office administration. Immediately after Katrina, the faced changed. The face was more European in terms of how they dealt with business."

Sarah thought about how there was not that creative piece anymore and not just in leadership. With reform came the testing. The high-stakes testing focuses on the teacher's ability to teach to the test to see if kids were learning what was taught. Teachers lost their creativity in delivering curriculum. So the teachers who had a style of teaching, who had a method that was working for them, had given that up because now they were under the gun of getting the kids to pass a test. So they were now teaching script, instead of teaching from what teaching is, which is an art. It's not an exact science.

"…and I think right now why the district is suffering is because there was never a legitimized way of transferring knowledge over to the staff." Sarah stated somberly. "When the people left, they left with their knowledge."

The loud, prolonged beeping noise returned drowning out the music and other sounds in the coffee shop. "I'm sorry" Sarah overheard the voice of the young man at the counter from her window seat, "We're experiencing technical difficulties. It will be a few minutes before I can ring up your order."

Chapter Summary

As a critical race scholar, I believe that experiential knowledge is an asset. I also believe it is important to gain a thorough understanding of how people understand their current reality before attempting any meaningful analysis about the meaning of their stories. In reading this composite story, it is my hope that we might become more conscious of the current reality of African American educators in New Orleans after Katrina from their perspective without immediately jumping to conclusions. In short, I hope that as a reader, you were able to listen to them — hearing their feelings, their frustrations, and their hopes. Truly listening can raise our consciousness and might encourage us to challenge the master narrative in favor of a different kind of story. In this way, the composite counter story focuses on central ideas in CRT and answers the call by Ladson Billings (2005) to provide "richer, more detailed stories that place our stories in more robust and powerful contexts" (p. 117).

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION & FINAL THOUGHTS

In this chapter, I use the data to respond to the two research questions that guided this study[11]:

1. What stories do these educators tell about schooling in pre and post Katrina New Orleans?
2. What are the implications of these educators' perspectives for urban education reform?

In response to the first research question, four stories emerge: (1) losing kin and the erosion of fictive kinship networks after Katrina, (2) the impact of the erosion of these networks on the expanded role of Black educators, (3) the ways in which whiteness as property operates in public schools post Katrina and (4) the contested meaning of reform. I make use of Fordham's notion of fictive kinship to understand the ways in which Sarah, Mary and Lewis articulate their work in schools pre and post Katrina. Siddle Walker (2001) speaks to what African American teachers believed in the era before desegregation. Jeffries (1997) speaks to how they carried out those beliefs before and after desegregation. Utilizing both Siddle Walker's (2001) conceptualization of African American teachers' professional beliefs and Jeffries' (1997) articulation of the cultural performances of African American educators, I discuss how their roles have been altered in the changing landscape of reform.

In the section that follows, I concentrate on the educators' understandings of school reform post Katrina. Here, I used Adkins' (1997) concept of reform as colonization and

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[11] The data I draw from includes the composite counterstories and majoritarian story.

CRT's notion of whiteness as property to frame my analysis. Finally, I address the second research question with a discussion of the implications of wading in the water of school reform with a focus on the contradictions between the composite counterstory and majoritarian story

Losing Kin: The Erosion of Kinship Networks

The essence of the African American imagined community of fictive kin centers on the survival of the group rather than the individual. Fictive kinship encouraged an emphasis on the "value of cooperation, collaboration and solidarity" (Fordham, 1996, p.76-77). Fictive kinship relationships with the community allowed Black educators to advocate on behalf of their students which included supporting the non-academic needs of students. The loss of these relationships after the storm was a source of tremendous grief.

The ways in which Black educators perceived students and other adults as extensions of themselves with whom they shared essential reciprocal social and economic relationships (Fordham, 1996) was apparent in the composite counterstory (CCS). When speaking about students in the New Orleans schools, Black educators used the possessive "our" as a defining marker for their relationships with students. Their articulation that this could be "my child" going through this experience is illustrative of how Black educators in the New Orleans context understand the expanded role of educators.

The CCS addresses how before Katrina educators' felt as if the other adults' were not just educators, they were family. These fictive kinship networks were described as sources of informal social and psychological support (Chatters, Taylor and Jayakody, 1994). Siddle Walker (2001) found that African American teachers' use of an expanded notion of caring was facilitated by relationships and familiarity held with Black communities. This type of

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caring was evident in how these Black educators articulated their relationships with each other, students and the broader community.

The emphasis on cooperation, collaboration and solidarity in fictive kinship relationships is a stark contrast to the emphasis on competition found within the majoritarian story of policy elites in New Orleans. The value of sharing among kin in the Black community was not embraced in the American system of schooling. This is also reflected in school reform research that documents how the desegregation process systematically disregarded conceptions of school quality valued by African American community (St. John & Cadry, 2004; Dempsey & Noblit, 1996).

Furthermore, the importance of these fictive kinship relationships among educators and students was ignored in school reform efforts in New Orleans. Adkins (1997) understands education reform as colonialism in that it creates a condition where marginalized people find themselves, their experiences and knowledges subject to the terms of the colonizer. This notion of the colonial nature of reform is reflective of the ways in which Mary, Lewis and Sarah feel their knowledges and experiences are discounted by those charged with *reforming* the schools. Furthermore, the shift in decision making power, which marginalized the experiential knowledge of Black educators, created and maintained an unequal distribution of political power in schools.

Reform is not a neutral term; it has significant political, social and racial meanings. The experiential and cultural knowledge of Black educators has been considered a part of the problem, and thus Black educators have not been considered allies in creating solutions. The majoritarian story articulates the political and social meanings of reform with the language of opportunity without explicitly addressing its racial meanings. Yet within the MS is a contradiction in the ways in which race and racism has been acknowledged as a

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problem, but ignored in how to rebuild the schools and the city. This is highlighted in a 2005 statement by President Bush which acknowledges racism, yet actions by his administration, specifically those only financially supporting charter schools ignores the racial meanings associated with privatization:

> "When communities are rebuilt, they must be even better and stronger than before the storm. Within the Gulf region are some of the most beautiful and historic places in America. As all of us saw on television, there's also some deep, persistent poverty in this region as well. That poverty has roots in a history of racial discrimination, which cut off generations from the opportunity of America. We have a duty to confront this poverty with bold action. So let us restore all that we have cherished from yesterday, and let us rise above the legacy of inequality"(Turner, 2006, p. 1).

The language of opportunity operates on the assumption that opportunity has the same meaning for all communities. It also ignores who historically benefits from advantages and the ways in which structural racism operates to impede opportunity for those students who need it most.

The issue of bussing students is illustrative of the dangers in ignoring the knowledges and experiences of Black educators in two ways. First, the context of the history and connection with local communities in New Orleans made the teachers aware of the role schools played in each New Orleans community. For example, Sarah commented on how educators used the community and school supports as needed during the annual Plessy Day Celebration. Bussing students out of their communities ignored an important function of neighborhood schools. Neighborhood schools create points of access. The community could access the schools; and the schools had access to the community. Access was essential to building the relationships that educators felt were necessary to support student learning.

Second, given the trauma and loss experienced by many of the students after Katrina, educators saw bussing as taking something more from students. The community provided a source of stability for a student that was removed with the implementation of bussing. Community access via neighborhood schooling was even more significant since prior to Katrina, twenty-seven percent of the people in New Orleans did not have access to a car. Fifty percent of evacuees ended up in Houston (250,000 people) and Atlanta (100,000 people). A Washington Post, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health survey of 680 randomly selected adult evacuees in Houston shelters found that 55 percent did not have a car or a way to leave. Using the language of opportunity, the majoritarian story told by policy elites spoke of giving poor families better educational opportunity. Yet, the economic condition of people living in poverty did not improve after Katrina. It is s puzzling why, in a city where public transportation had not been restored, students were moved so far away from their communities, creating an unnecessary obstacle for parent and community involvement in the schools.

In New Orleans, fictive kinship (Fordham, 1996) in the African American community enabled members of the community to survive, and in some instances, thrive in a social context filled with obstacles and impediments to success. Fictive kinship, coupled with Siddle Walkers' articulation of an expanded notion of caring, explains how Black educators in this study perceived their relationships with students as an important factor in overall student well being, both inside and outside of the classroom. Students were more than bodies in a classroom; they were viewed as extended family, and, in many cases, as children to the educators. The role of educators was understood as being both parent and enforcer (Jeffries, 1997). Thus, discipline was connected to students' feelings and sense of being loved. This was evident even more so after the storm.

Foster's (1991, 1993, 1997) examination of excellent Black teachers found that the task of educating African American students was focused not only on academics, but also understanding larger societal relationships. The kinship African American educators felt with their students was an important aspect of their expanded notion of caring. At the heart of this understanding is the belief that providing for the non-academic needs of students is a crucial component in attaining high achievement of African American students. Supporting students began with a deep belief in their ability not only to do well in school but to have a positive impact in their communities. Educators were sustained by their belief in the potential of students and the impact they had on the lives of students.

The CCS also articulated the importance of building resilience and a sense of humanity as a key responsibility of educators (Dingus, 2006). Black educators articulated the importance of fostering a nurturing environment in schools that entailed giving students the financial, emotional and social support needed to facilitate learning. This was especially important when addressing the challenges faced by students post Katrina when many students returned to the city without their parents. In short, their pedagogical emphasis was addressing the whole student.

Mary, Lewis and Sarah also articulated the importance of shared background with students. They used their own counterstories of growing up in New Orleans to inspire students to see beyond current difficulties and challenges. This desire to have an impact on the lives of their students and communities guided their pedagogical beliefs. Teaching was more than a job; it was a calling. Black educators sought to instill the holistic educational goals in schooling African American children. Students were expected to develop a sense of

their racial history and legacy as well as an understanding of their responsibilities as community members. This understanding of shared responsibility was evident in the significance placed in having students participate in meetings at the Treme Center in support of the Black Indians.

The educators believed that it was necessary to "go beyond the curriculum to reach the curriculum". Mary and Sarah's dialogue focused on the significance of history, story and biography in reaching students and teaching them about their racial legacy. Memoirs and autobiographies were used to give students a sense of history and their place in it with importance being placed on students writing themselves into history through biography. The biographies of King, Wheatley and Hughes were used to give students examples of Black folks who had struggles to overcome, just like them. History and biography was an important teaching tool used to help students not have "ills about [their] own race". Stated another way, these educators wanted their students to value their Blackness. Thus, these educators created conditions in their classrooms and schools to counter the negative assumptions and stereotypes about Black people.

Inspired by their own struggles and schooling experiences during segregation and desegregation, these educators believed it was of the utmost importance for students to have an understanding of history. History could be used "to help students come together" which was especially important in addressing the turf and ward issues among students. The educators in this study believed that the curriculum could be used to help students see beyond their particular wards and honor broader notions of community. Yet, it is important to note that their articulation of solidarity "acknowledge[s] that we are divided and must develop strategies to overcome fears, prejudices, resentments and competitiveness" (hooks,

2000, p. 65). In short, these educators understood the importance of connecting the curriculum to the real conditions and struggles students were facing.

Of great importance to these educators as New Orleaneans was the cultural history of their students. Within the CCS, educators articulated how they used the arts to teach discipline and reach the students. Given the cultural history of the city, this should have been the norm reinforced in school reforms. This sentiment was echoed by a member of the BNOB Education Committee stated, "We have got to bring the arts and music back into the schools. Nowhere else is this more important than in a cultural city like New Orleans" (NCQENO, 2006, p. 3). This statement exemplifies the desire to build a system that revitalizes the unique aspects of the New Orleans community. Yet although the arts were characterized as a crucial element in the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee Plan, the *actions* of the RSD to remove extracurricular activities and the arts from the schools reveal otherwise.

This composite counterstory reveals the appreciation Black educators hold for the needs of students and their responsibility in addressing those *before* schooling could begin. In this way, their focus was on the development of the whole person. Mary, Lewis and Sarah believed it was there job as educators to provide non-academic supports as needed as well. They also speak distinctly about the need to help students negotiate the reality of their conditions. After Katrina, the multifaceted roles and functions of Black educators were even more crucial.

Expanded Role of African American Educators

The pedagogy of these educators was guided by their understanding of what students needed to know as African Americans in America. They felt they had to meet the needs of students despite policies that dictated otherwise, like giving access to medication if needed. In the midst of attempting to deal with their own issues, Sarah and Lewis spoke to the various roles embraced after Katrina including, the roles of advocate, parent, social worker and teacher.

Mary, Sarah and Lewis did not perceive the level of trauma the students experienced as a reason to give up hope. They understood that the students would need additional support to be able to cope with the trauma. However, they felt the kind of support that needed was structurally unavailable for both students and adults. Given the expanded role of African American educators, this lack of structural support was heightened when considering the trauma and loss experienced by the adults. According to a study published by the Bulletin of the World Health Organization, severe mental illness rates in New Orleans doubled. Despite their own issues resulting from their Katrina experience, Black educators in this study felt compelled to address the needs of their students.

Black educators were angry about those in power ignoring and disregarding their commitment to students. The educators' anger emanated from their treatment during and after the storm. Throughout the CCS, Black educators used *they* when referring to those in power who made decisions. This use of *they* captures the ways in which those charged with the day-to-day needs of students were not only locked out of the process but unaware of who made decisions that affected the process. Yet, the educators in this study had to not only negotiate their anger but the anger felt by their students.

The anger of the kids had roots in pre and post Katrina structural conditions and Black educators felt that it was their responsibility to help them cope. It was this

understanding, that in their opinion, their White counterparts didn't grasp – the awareness that this could be *their* kids. This was expressed when the question was posed, "So what's going to happen to our children?" Of particular concern was how the students were treated when they evacuated. The collective response of these educators was to point out the resiliency in the kids and the ways in which Black educators actively embraced their expanded roles with the students.

As expressed in the CCS, an importance tenant of the beliefs of these educators was "The kids have to feel that they are loved. And I'm not talking about just loved by parents. I'm talking about by society. Their teachers, other people on the outside, someone they could go and could talk to." Effective educators used their situated knowledge and proficiency in community norms to communicate that love to students.

Given the belief that being able to identify with students was of great value, the effects of losing Black veterans and replacing them with predominately White teachers was of great concern for these Black educators. They felt their experiences as African Americans uniquely positioned them to understand the challenges faced by their students. According to these Black educators, the lack of understanding on the part of the new predominately White teaching force led to conflicts in classroom (Delpit, 1995). Although, these conflicts were not unique to New Orleans, in the context of Katrina they took on a new magnitude in light of the trauma experienced by the students. Black educators in this study articulated a belief that having the ability to teach would not be enough for teachers who desire to effectively reach students in New Orleans.

Similar to educators in Jeffries (1997) work, the educators in the composite counterstory expressed frustration with resolving their belief in high expectations for their students with an educational environment mired in discrimination and racial inequality.

According to these African American educators, before schooling could begin a necessary

first step must be the building of self-esteem and confidence of the students.

Whiteness as Property in post Katrina New Orleans

In their discussion of the implicit and explicit ways that property relates to

education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) assert that "the ability to define, possess and

own property" has been a central aspect of power in America. For example, the property

tax, as the primary means to fund schools, affords the affluent access to better and more

resources. This was evident in Sarah and Mary's dialogue about Jefferson Parish, which was

coincidently one of the surrounding parishes that many white families moved to as New

Orleans schools integrated (Rasheed, 2006).

In addition, property differences are apparent in the curriculum as a form of

intellectual property. Material resources must be present in order for students to truly have

the "opportunity to learn"; thus "intellectual property must be undergirded by real

property" (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p.18). The property function of whiteness is

evident in post-Katrina education reforms in New Orleans.

White privilege systematically confers advantages to one group that should be the

norm in a just society (McIntosh, 1991) such as the expectation that in a crisis one would be

treated with dignity, compassion and humanity. Yet as a privilege or unearned advantage,

educators in predominately White parishes were protected from the hostility and violence

experienced by New Orleans public school educators specifically teacher testing as a

condition of being re-hired. The testing of New Orleans educators, a large percentage of

whom were African American, is reminiscent of the use of testing in desegregation to

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exclude Black educators from integrated schools. This was one way the crisis of Katrina was racialized.

If harming a person's reputation affects his or her personal property, thepredominately non-White educators being subjected to testing to be re-hired fed into the perception of New Orleans educators as less qualified and thus treated as such. An aspect White privilege is the benefit of the doubt that white skin carries (Tatum, 2002). Based upon their treatment after Katrina, Black educators received the message that what they did was not important.

Benefit of the doubt also confers favor at critical junctures, such as the assumption of being qualified, that reinscribes systems of social inequity. In the case of New Orleans, Black educators were assumed to be less qualified and simply undesirable. There was no attempt to keep the best educators in the system. Singham (1998) point outs that characterizing the discussion of any social problem based on how different ethnic groups compare is an issue of White privilege. "Statistics for whites are usually taken as a measure of the "natural" state of society, and black statistics are used as a measure of the problem. If the problem is viewed in this way, then the solution lies in getting black people to "act white" i.e., to adopt the values, behavior, attitudes, and mannerisms of white people, so that blacks will perform as well as whites. Much of the preaching of virtues to the black community about their social pathology seems to have this belief as a basis" (p. 3). In this sense, White is more than the norm; it is the gold standard to be aspired to. The State of Public Education in New Orleans report (BCG), acknowledged that there were some "promising developments" (p. 9) made right before Katrina. Specifically, the report stated,

> "In the last days before Hurricane Katrina, the district was showing initial
> signs of improvement. The OPSB received a fresh start when five new
> members were sworn in during January 2005. Academically, the schools

were showing some promising developments. Seventy-nine percent of
schools improved their School Performance Scores on the 2004–05 LEA P test.
However, even with those improvements, the vast majority of NOPS schools
performed below the state average." (2007, p. 9)

This was the only paragraph that discussed these "promising developments". It is curious to

me that the elites did not ask what was done in the pre-Katrina New Orleans schools that

led to seventy nine percent of schools improving – which is no small task for an urban

school system. Blatantly ignoring these improvements supports the assumptive belief that

there was nothing worth saving even when there was evidence to the contrary.

Finally, whiteness conferred specific cultural, economic and social privileges

specifically as it relates to the curriculum as a form of intellectual property. As articulated in

the CCS, Black societal structures are not and were not valued as property. In the case of

Black educators, the specific intellectual property of these educators were ignored and were

considered of little value as evidenced by their not being paid through the crisis and having

additional requirements placed upon them as conditions for employment. In addition, with

the mass termination of educators following Katrina, the New Orleans schools had to re-

staff an entire urban school system. Rather than create a mechanism to rehire the best

teachers from the system, each school operating entity (NOPS, RSD, various Charter

operators) created a process for hiring teachers. This differentiation in the hiring process,

salary scale and certification requirements exacerbated the anger and isolation felt by many

of the educators who were terminated.

The ways in which technology was haphazardly introduced into the schools after

Katrina speaks to how access to resources in and of itself is not enough – the way resources

are introduced matters greatly. The majoritarian story acknowledges that many of the

buildings were in disrepair before the hurricane and yet technology was purchased and

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installed without making sure that it would be able to be used. Further fueling the anger of the educators in this study was the introduction of "$1200 iPods" without a clear agreement with the company providing them; resulting in having students, many of whom have experienced loss, potentially losing out…again.

The point that I am making is not whether or not the Black educators were better or worse than their Teach for America counterparts. The data in this study cannot speak to whether that is indeed the case. Simply stated, this study speaks to the ways in which the *perception* of Black as less, inferior and unqualified (and White as desirable, capable and worthy) guided how these educators, and their experiential knowledge as Black educators, were treated not only before but during and after a major tragedy.

Contested Meaning of Reform

St. John and Cadry (1996) highlight the enhanced qualities of care and community that were strongly emphasized in schools controlled by African Americans. Siddle Walker's (1996) examination of a Black high school in North Carolina speaks to how a caring school culture was created and maintained before desegregation identifying how because of the deep commitment of the teachers to the development of children, they located resources in the community to support them. Within the African American tradition, the strong culture of care can be used as a foundation on which to restructure urban schools (St. John and Cadry, 1996).

Noblit and Dempsey (1996) in their study of the desegregation in a Southern community explained how the closing of the African American school led to a decline in the close-knit relationships with the neighborhood served by that school. They assert that a result of a century of educational policymaking has made "schools creatures more of the

state than of the community" (p. 194). Each successive wave of school reform in the twentieth century relied on experts and political elites and resulted in school-community relations being considered a problem for reform (Noblit and Dempsey, 1996). Thus, at the base of educational reform in the twentieth century is a distrust of local communities. In the New Orleans, the distrust of local communities led to a disregard of everything that existed before the storm – even if it had value. A glaring example is although the RSD did not having a scheduling system in place rather than using what NOPS had they didn't use anything at all!

Whiteness functioned after Katrina to disregard the different ways knowledge is conceptualized among African American educators especially as it relates to leadership. Lewis and Mary articulated an understanding of leadership that was communal and cooperative. In essence, Dr. Hanley's style emerged from one of cooperation, (Fordham, 1996). Knowledge was to be shared and used to help build the community. Black educators articulated a desire for leadership that is no longer in the Orleans Parish schools - effective leadership that had an "ability to transfer the knowledge". After Katrina, Black educators critiqued the leadership's inability to not understanding and/or value the cultural knowledge of the community. This lack of communication was a sore point. Leadership after Katrina ushered in changes that were "more European in terms of how they dealt with business". This top-down style did not have knowledge of community norms and thus did not value the importance of cooperation, communication and collaboration. Black educators were positioned as part of the problem so they were not included in discussions. Similar to the displacement of Black educators during desegregation, the education of children suffered because "…there was never a legitimized way of transferring knowledge over to the staff. When the people left, they left with their

knowledge." Yet for a transfer to occur, the experiential knowledge of Black educators must have been considered of value.

Implications: Wading in the Water of School Reform

Wade in the Water
Wade in the Water children
Wade in the water
God's a-going to trouble the water[12]

We are at a critical turning point in U.S .educational policy and New Orleans is a crucial site. Friedrich Hayek's (1948) advocacy of "a policy which deliberately adopts competition, the market, and the prices as its ordering principles"(.p10) has been elaborated to mean, as Susan George (1999) has put it, "that the market should be allowed to make social and political decisions…and citizens [be] given much less rather than more social protection". This neo-liberal model, which today seems triumphant in intellectual and academic policy circles, insists that economic forces are color-blind, fair and just (Apple, 2000) and thus, government intervention to address social problems such as racism is counterproductive. In short, capitalist globalization will solve world economic, political, and social problems. In this sense, democracy is transformed from a political concept into a "wholly economic concept" (Apple, 2000, p. 60). Nationally, Neoliberal education policy, as exemplified by the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation, promised the development of color-blind law along with "accountability" in the public schools supported by a voucher system subsidizing private competition with public schools (in the original NCLB proposal) will allow for the development of a true meritocracy. In New Orleans, the creation of a "system of systems" of schools represents the fulfilling the dream of Neoliberal education

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[12] Wade in the Water. Lyrics from The New National Baptist Hymnal (1977) Triad Publications: pg, 489.

policy - . It was beyond the scope of this study to fully investigate the ways in which Neoliberal education policy operates in New Orleans and the implications for national urban education policy. In this study, I sought to offer an alternative to the dominant narrative, which is represented of the larger Neoliberal discourse, of school reform by focusing on the voices and experiences of Black educators in post Katrina New Orleans.

Given the possibilities of improving the academic achievement of black students by utilizing Black teacher pedagogical strategies (Siddle Walker, 2001; Jeffries, 1997; Foster, 1993, 1997), this study begins to address the gap in literature by highlighting the stories told by African American educators about urban school reform efforts in New Orleans. In this way, I sought to counter the historical legacy of education research that silences and marginalizes the pedagogical knowledge and practices of African American educators. Specifically, the voices, knowledges, and experiences of Black educators in the composite counterstory undermine the belief that educators do not possess knowledges key to creating solutions to the challenges in urban schools.

In the African American community, spirituals have served both sacred and pragmatic purposes. During enslavement, the spiritual had coded meanings that slaves used to convey messages about and directions to freedom. The spiritual Wade in the Water spoke to wading through the water as a way to throw the bloodhounds off your scent while escaping to freedom. It can also be understood as code for being willing to step into the sometimes murky creeks, streams and rivers for freedom. In the case of school reform in New Orleans, the identity of the bloodhound is not always clear. Yet, the bloodhound is simply performing its assigned role for its master so in many ways both the slave and bloodhound are trapped within the same story. However, liberation is possible if we are willing to wade through the water.

Wading is also significant because in order to wade you have to be willing to get wet. Standing on the shore will not help you reach the other side and riding in a boat is not always an option. In New Orleans, Black educators are wading. The changes in the schools are rising all around them and still they wade. They are considered less than, undesirable and unworthy and still they wade. The majoritarian story paints a picture of despair in the schools, a city mired in poverty, ripe for opportunity and investment. Yet, the stories of Black educators speak to the hope and possibility within public schools. They realized the structural challenges that affected the kids and the school yet they believed that solutions to these challenges rested in their ability to build relationships with each other and the students and families they served. Their notion of reform was grounded in connecting current struggles in schools to the larger struggles Black people have always faced in the United States. Mary, Lewis and Sarah spoke to the need for curricular choices informed by the cultural and racial history of Black students. The educators in this study articulate an understanding of professional excellence that attends to the needs of the whole child and fosters a nurturing environment that would give students the financial, emotional and social support needed to succeed.

Final Thoughts. The composite counterstory juxtaposed against the majoritarian story paints a larger picture of the existence of racism in schools on institutional levels, revealing the structural conditions that continue to limit the professional lives of African American educators and suppress educational possibilities for African American students (Foster, 1990). Some may read this counterstory and deem it overly romantic. Yet, Black folk are rarely nostalgic about racism and injustice in schooling; and in the case of Black folk in New Orleans, the man-made destruction of Katrina shattered any remaining illusions.

New Orleans must be the line in the sand for those concerned with equity in schooling; and for those who believe that public education is the last bastion of democracy in America. What is allowed to happen in New Orleans is coming to a community near you (or in many cases is already there). New Orleans speaks to the reality that there is an ideological war and the schools are the battleground; yet, it is not always clear who the bloodhounds are (even when the master story is obvious).

Like Sizemore (1978), I am deeply troubled that "the child is no longer the center of the controversy, [reform] is. The means have become the end" (p. 62 - 63). I am troubled that 50 years after Brown, researchers and reformers alike have again ignored the ways in which the knowledge of Black children held by Black teachers was sacrificed on the altar of public school reform. It was not my intention to provide a generalizable analysis that takes into account all African American educators in New Orleans or any other urban system. This study simply sought to begin to include the stories of African American educators into the larger narrative of urban school reform. It is important to legitimize the voices of people who are often ignored in the school reform literature and research.

This work is just a small glimpse into what post Katrina school reforms not only added but swept away. We don't know what we lost and without a large scale study of New Orleans Black educators, we never will. If the voices of the marginalized matter, then research must take into account the voices and experiential knowledges of Black educators. Studying Black educators cannot be left only to those who study twentieth century desegregation era schooling. This project represents my attempt to produce research that meaningfully takes into account the strategic role of Black educators in the very real and complex racial realities of twenty-first century public schooling.

**APPENDIX A: NATIONAL COALITION FOR QUALITY EDUCATION
IN NEW ORLEANS**

The National Coalition for Quality Education in New Orleans (NCQENO) is an *ad hoc* group of national and New Orleans scholars and educators who are working together to help insure that post-Katrina schooling in New Orleans provides excellent education for all children, especially children who have historically been least well served – those from low-income communities and communities of color. We believe that New Orleans education, if rebuilt with thoughtful attention, can become a model for improving urban education in the nation.

A primary principle under-girding our work is that communities have the right and responsibility to define and develop their educational institutions. Thus, in every aspect of our work we are responsive to and supportive of what the people of New Orleans want. In rebuilding a system of education for New Orleans, we believe that constituents must first begin with a vision of the schools they desire, and then develop the administrative structures that would best support such institutions. This work would involve all stakeholders – parents, students, teachers, administrators, unions, municipal leaders, the larger community – with the invited assistance of educational specialists with like-minded perspectives. NCQENO has been established to support such a process.

Although NCQENO first and foremost supports the self-determination of New Orleans residents, the following school design principles, derived in part from those put forth by the New Orleans Douglass Coalition, reflect the work in which NCQENO members engage individually and collectively in their respective work arenas:

1. Students, their families, and their communities are resources to improve students' education, not problems to be solved. Thus, students' prior knowledge and experience must become the foundation upon which to build new understandings.

2. The community is the classroom, and education is for community development as much as it is for individual achievement. Students should meet educational standards through studying the history and culture of New Orleans and its people, and by participating in the city's planning and rebuilding.

3. Students become a resource to their community when school work is tied to the creation of social justice, self-empowerment, and the development of solutions for real community problems.

4. Students develop and demonstrate acquired knowledge through original, applied, and publicly shared work in literacy, mathematics, the arts, sciences, and other subject areas, providing for multiple forms of learning and multiple opportunities for authentic assessment.

5. Schools should be open to all students with curriculum and pedagogy that provide the experiences, the knowledge, and the skills all students need to become first rather than second class citizens of this country and full participants in a democracy.

6. Schools intentionally address students' social, emotional and character development through affirmative, culturally-grounded curriculum and through

integrating and co-locating appropriate social service agencies, where appropriate, within school settings.

7.   Schools should be anchor institutions for their communities, and should include supports for adult education, community renewal, family strengthening, healthcare, and cultural growth, as well as other elements necessary for community, family, and student development.

Below is a list of the members of the National Coalition for Quality Education in New Orleans.

List of NCQENO Members

Dr. Lisa Delpit

Lisa Delpit is the Executive Director and an Eminent Scholar at the Center for Urban Education & Innovation at Florida International University in Miami. A nationally and internationally known lecturer, she was named a MacArthur "Genius" fellow in 1990 for her work in school-community relations and cross-cultural education. She received Harvard Graduate School of Education's "Outstanding Contribution to Education" award in 1993.   Delpit was selected as the Antioch College Horace Mann Humanity Award recipient for 2003. She describes her strongest focus as "finding ways and means to best educate urban students, particularly African-American, and other students of color." Among her publications are *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (1995); *The Real Ebonics Debate: Language, Power, and the Education of African American Children (*co-edited with Theresa Perry); and *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom* (co-edited with Joanne Kilgour Dowdy, 2002)

Jessie Cooper Gibbs

Jessie Cooper Gibbs was a middle school mathematics teacher for 27 years. During her teaching tenure, she served three years as a coordinator with the Mathematics Collaborative in New Orleans, sponsored by the Ford Foundation. After leaving the classroom, she served as coordinator to the Louisiana National Science Foundation Systemic Grants at Xavier University of Louisiana, training teachers to use the Algebra Project Transition Curriculum and providing support to middle school mathematics teachers trained under these grants. Since 1997 she has worked as a Southern Initiative of the Algebra Project professional development trainer. She has earned the rank of Full Trainer for the Algebra Project, a rank that is one level below the highest rank of Master Trainer. She maintains her contact with students through her work with 4-6 graders in Dillard University's Saturday Science Academy.

Dr. Irving Hamer, Jr.

Irving Hamer, Executive Vice President for The Millennium Group Education, is one of the nation's foremost leaders and activists for education reform. During his 30-plus years as an educator, Dr. Hamer served as New York City Deputy Commissioner of Education, Board of Education member, school administrator, teacher, and professor. His entire career has been dedicated to improving education for the most vulnerable and fragile students in the nation's school systems. Most recently, Dr. Hamer served as Deputy Superintendent of School Improvement, where he developed and managed implementation of the School Improvement Zone for the Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida. In addition to his work with TMG, he serves as a Visiting Professor with the Center for Urban Education and Innovation at Florida International University and as Senior Consultant with Mass Insight Education.

Merle T. Harris

Merle Harris has worked in the Orleans Parish School System for more than 20 years as a math teacher, a math consultant, and an administrator. For four years she served as principal of a college

preparatory private high school and for six years as an instructor in the Department of Education at Xavier University of Louisiana. During the last three years of her tenure at Xavier, she served as director of Louisiana National Science Foundation Systemic Grants to train middle school mathematics teachers. These grants were built around the Algebra Project. When she left Xavier in 1997, she began working as an independent professional development consultant for the Southern Initiative of the Algebra Project (SIAP) and has continued this work to the present. In addition to her work with SIAP, she has worked as an external teacher assessor for the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program in Orleans Parish Schools and as an instructor at Delgado Community College teaching its ACT Preparation Course.

Dr. Freddye Hill
Freddye Hill is the Vice President for Campus Life and Enrollment Management and an Associate Professor of Sociology at Dillard University in New Orleans. She also served as a Dean at Wesleyan College. She has extensive experience in planning programs to enrich the academic and personal lives of college students, including several leadership and health initiatives. Hill has published articles focusing on issues related to the oppression of people of color, and she has served on such diverse community groups as the Committee for Atlanta Public Schools and the Metropolitan Atlanta Liberian
Relief Committee.

Dr. Janice Ellen Jackson
Janice Jackson is an assistant professor in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. Prior to coming to BC, she was the Deputy Superintendent for the Boston Public Schools. During the first term of the Clinton Administration, she served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education for the U. S. Department of Education. Dr. Jackson has also held several positions with the Milwaukee Public Schools, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Marquette University, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. At this time her research interests are focused in four areas: bridging the gap between research and practice; leadership and organizational change in public school districts; teachers' and principals' professional identity; and reflective judgment of teachers and principals.

Dr. Joyce E. King
Dr. Joyce E. King is the Benjamin E. Mays Chair of Urban Teaching, Learning, and Leadership in the College of Education at Georgia State University. The former Provost and a professor of Education at Spelman College, King is the author of three books: *Preparing Teachers for Diversit; Teaching Diverse Populations;* and *Black Mothers to Sons: Juxtaposing African American Literature with Social Practice*. She has also published many articles that address the role of cultural knowledge in effective teaching and teacher preparation, black teachers' emancipatory pedagogy, research methods, black studies epistemology and curriculum change. King is a graduate of Stanford University, where she received a Ph.D. in Social foundations and a BA in Sociology. She also holds a certificate from the Harvard Institute in educational management.

Dr. Timothy F. C. Knowles
Timothy Knowles is the Executive Director of The University of Chicago Center for Urban School Improvement (USI), which develops teachers, teacher leaders, social workers and principals for urban schools. The Center also undertakes research and development to create tools and ideas that educators can use to improve teaching and learning, and is creating a portfolio of 20 exemplary new schools across the South Side of Chicago. The portfolio of schools (the USI Network) represents a new design for an urban school system, a locus for research and development to support improved teaching and learning, and proof that children, no matter who they are, can learn at high levels and succeed in post-secondary education.

Dr. Pedro Noguera
Pedro Noguera is a professor in the Steinhardt School of Education at New York University and the Director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education. An urban sociologist, Noguera's scholarship and research focus on the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions in the urban environment, and has written about urban school reform, student achievement, youth violence, the impact of school choice and vouchers, and race and ethnic relations in American society. His work has appeared in several major research journals, and many are available online at inmotionmagazine.com. Among his books are *City Schools and the American* Dream (Teachers College Press, 2003), which was the winner of Foreward Magazine's Gold Award, and *Unfinished Business: Closing the Achievement Gap in Our Schools* (Josey Bass 2006).

Dr. Charles M. Payne, Jr.
Charles M. Payne is the Sally Dalton Robinson Professor of African-American studies, history and sociology at Duke University. His areas of research interest include urban education, social inequality, social change and modern African American history. He is the author of *Getting What We Ask For: The Ambiguity of Success and Failure In Urban Education* (1984), the prize-winning *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement* (1995) and the forthcoming *So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban School Systems* (2006). He has been a member of the Board of the Chicago Algebra Project, of the Steering Committee for the Consortium on Chicago School Research, and of the Board of the City-wide Coalition for School Reform (Chicago). He has also been a Laubach Literacy Trainer and director of the Urban Education Project in Orange, New Jersey, a nonprofit community center that attempts to interest urban youngsters in science careers.

Dr. Theresa Perry
Theresa Perry is a Professor of Africana Studies and Education at Simmons College and the Director of the Simmons College/Beacon Press Race Democracy and Education
Lecture and Publishing Series. Her research and work in schools has recently focused on the development of a theory of practice for African American achievement and educational environments that normalize high achievement for black students. Her areas of expertise include African American language, teacher preparation, school/college/ community partnerships and culturally responsive teaching practices. Among her most recent publications are *Educating African American Students: What Teachers, Teacher Educators and Community Organizers Should Know* (2006) and *Black Vernacular Culture and Adolescent Literacy* (2006).

Jim Randels
Jim Randels, a graduate of and 20-year teaching veteran in the New Orleans Public Schools, co-directs with Kalamu ya Salaam the Students at the Center (SAC) program, a school-based writing project that develops students as mentors in writing for their peers and as writers working to improve their schools and communities. A former teacher of the year for the New Orleans Public Schools, he has helped raise over 4 million in funding for writing projects and community-school collaborations. He serves on the Executive Council of United Teachers of New Orleans (AFT Local 527).

Dr. Alethea Frazier Raynor
Alethea Frazier Raynor is a Principal Associate at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. She earned her Ph.D. in education from Clark University in Worcester, MA, conducting research on issues of culture, race, and schooling. She has worked for many years in urban education as a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, equity specialist, and central office administrator in Boston, Baltimore, and the District of Columbia. Raynor also worked at the state education level, coordinating professional development for principals and district administrators from across the state

of Maryland in critical areas of school reform. Prior to joining the Institute, she taught at Clark University.

Dr. Warren Simmons
Warren Simmons is Executive Director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. The Institute's mission is to generate, share, and act on knowledge that improves the conditions and outcomes of schooling in America, especially in urban communities and in schools serving disadvantaged children. The Institute provides technical assistance and support to several multi-site urban education reform initiatives focused on high school transformation, central office redesign, and K–12 improvements in teaching and learning. Before joining the Institute in 1998, Dr. Simmons was Executive Director of the Philadelphia Education Fund, where he supported district-wide efforts to enact standards-based reform. Dr. Simmons received a Ph.D. in psychology from Cornell University. He serves on the boards of several national and local education organizations.

Dr. Linda J. Stelly
Linda Stelly works as the Associate Director for Educational Issues for the American Federation of Teachers in Washington, D.C. Her role includes coordination of the AFT's Redesigning Schools to Raise Achievement Project. Stelly has facilitated leadership and results-based reform solutions, designing communications strategies for administrators and decision makers in local and national institutions. She has coordinated research initiatives in the areas of local and national policy development and strategic planning. She has developed proven practice leadership strategies for accountability and effective teaching behaviors from a multi-cultural perspective. A graduate of Dillard and Loyola Universities, she is a resident of the New Orleans community and serves on the mayor's advisory committee for education.

Dr. Richard Streedain
Dr. Richard Streedain is a professor of Leadership Studies at National-Louis University and lecturer at the Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy. Presently, he serves as the co-director of the Doctoral Urban Leadership Program at NLU and coordinates the KIPP/NLU School Leadership Partnership Program. From 1998-2002 he directed the Northwestern Graduate School of Education School Leadership Program. Dr. Streedain has been involved as a desegregation consultant to the Rockford Public schools and as a professional development consultant to the Chicago Public Schools Department for Special Initiatives (charter schools and small schools) and Evanston Township High School (Minority Achievement). His research interests include leadership formation and development, minority achievement, and the role of school leaders in creating a culture of literacy.

Dr. Joan Wynne
Joan Wynne, a former high school English teacher, is also professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Florida International University in Miami. She taught at Morehouse College for 14 years, where she designed and directed The Benjamin E. Mays Teacher Scholars Program; and co-designed and directed an Urban Teacher Leadership Master's Degree Program at Georgia State University. Her research interests include the instruction of urban children and the impact of racism in schools. Having grown up in the segregated south, she is passionate about creating learning communities of excellence for children of African descent and children who live in poverty in the richest country on earth. Wynne recently co-edited *Racism, Research, and Educational Reform: Voices from the City* (2005) with Joanne Kilgour Dowdy.

WANTED

Study Seeks African American Educators in NOLA

Did you work as teacher, social worker, counselor, administrator

✓ **In a public school prior to Katrina AND** ____

✓ **During the 2006-2007 school year in either a NOPS, Charter or RSD school**

If so, please consider participating in this study of African American educator views on urban school reform. I believe the voices of African American educators are crucial to understanding what's happening in NOLA schools. Participants will be interviewed individually as well as in a focus group about their perspectives about the challenges facing the New Orleans Schools.

If you are interested in participating or want more information, please contact Daniella Ann Cook at 919-423-5140 or dacook@email.unc.edu. (All calls and messages are confidential).

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at UNC-CH. IRB#: 07-1212

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Teacher Consent Form

IRB Study # 07-1212
Consent Form Version Date: July 31, 2007

Title of Study: After the Flood: The Experiences of Black Teachers in New Orleans

Principal Investigator: Daniella Ann Cook
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Education
UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number: 919-966-7000
Faculty Advisor: George W. Noblit, Ph.D.
Advisor telephone Number: 919-962-2513   **Advisor email**:
gwn@email.unc.edu

Study Contact telephone number: 919-423-5140
Study Contact email: dacook@email.unc.edu

Dear Teacher,

My name is Daniella Ann Cook and I am a doctoral student 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 African American teachers' perspectives on school reform in post-Katrina New Orleans.

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
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, without penalty.

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

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this research study is to capture the school experiences of African American teachers in New Orleans after Katrina. Particularly, this study wants to

address insights that African American teachers have concerning school reform efforts.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 6 teachers asked to join this study.

What will happen during the study and how long will it take?
Participation in this study will require approximately 4 hours of your time. During these four hours, you will participate in two 60 - 90-minute one-on-one interviews and one 90-minute focus group with a group of other teachers. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreeable location and scheduled at a time of your convenience during the fall (October and November) of 2007. If you consent, I would like to record each of the two interviews and the focus group so that I can be sure to document your thoughts and opinions accurately. These recordings will be transcribed. Both the audio recordings and the paper transcriptions will be kept confidential.

During the one-on-one interviews, I will ask you a number of questions regarding your experiences teaching pre and post Katrina in New Orleans. During the focus group (where you will be joined by other study participants), I will ask questions of the group and each member of the group will be given an opportunity to respond. You may choose not to answer any of the questions I ask you during the one-on-one interviews, or you may choose not to participate in any part of the focus group discussion, for any reason at all. Your participation in all these activities is voluntary and you may choose not to participate at any time, for any reason.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study. This study will provide you with an opportunity to give voice to your expectations and beliefs as a teacher about effective teaching. This knowledge and understanding gained from this study will be useful to a broad educational audience. Food will be provided during the focus group.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
Potentially participants may feel uncomfortable when discussing their experiences in New Orleans during and after Katrina. You may drop out of the study at any point. In addition, you will only be asked to share that with which you are comfortable. In regards to the focus group, 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?

Participants will not be identified in any report or publication about this study. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

To maintain confidentiality, you will not be identified by name on any tapes. Tapes will be transcribed and kept in a locked file cabinet in my office. Your name and the name of the school will be replaced with different names to protect your identity. At the conclusion of the study, all notes and records that contain your name or the name of your school, organization, or community will be destroyed. Only the researcher and transcriber will have access to interview and focus group tapes. Once the audio is transcribed, it will be erased.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will not receive anything for the individual participant interviews.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study other than your time.

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, or concerns, you should contact Daniella Ann Cook at dacook@email.unc.edu or 919-423-5140 or George Noblit at gwn@email.unc.edu or 919-966-7000.

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

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.

- -

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:

    2 individual interviews

    focus group interview

_____   _____

Signature of Research Participant   Date

_____

Printed Name of Research Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

The interviews will be with six activist black teachers in New Orleans. Using life story approach which emphasizes narrative.

Interview 1: Setting the Stage: Goals to get a snapshot of the interlocutor
Establishes the participant's life story in context of day-to-day teaching in NOLA.

1. Tell me why you chose to become a teacher. (first 45 minutes)
    a. Why did you choose to teach elementary/middle/high school?
    b. What do you like about teaching your subject area?
    c. How did you come to teach in New Orleans?
    d. What do you believe are the most important influences on your teaching?
    e. Why did you decide to come back to NOLA?
    f. What experiences/encounters led you to become a teacher activist?

2. How does teaching this year compare to your pre-Katrina experiences in New Orleans? (1 hour)
    a. What do you find the most challenging about teaching this year?
    b. What was the most surprising aspect of teaching this year?
    c. What are particular frustrations and successes you have experienced this past school year with students? Administrators? Central office?
    d. What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the way the schools system(s) are organized?
    e. How, if at all, has your teaching been changed by your Katrina experience?

Interview 2: Reflection on Meaning of Experiences
Participants to reflect on the meaning of school reforms in NOLA.

1. Given what you have shared about your teaching experience, how do you understand or make sense of the school reforms in New Orleans?
    a. What do you think about the school reform efforts (for example the move towards an all charter district or end of collective bargaining for school employees)?
    b. How do you think the reforms are affecting teachers?
    c. What do you think has been the impact, if any, of these reforms on student learning?
    d. What do you think is needed that is not happening to make the schools better?
2. Is there anything that we have discussed that holds particular meaning or significance to you?
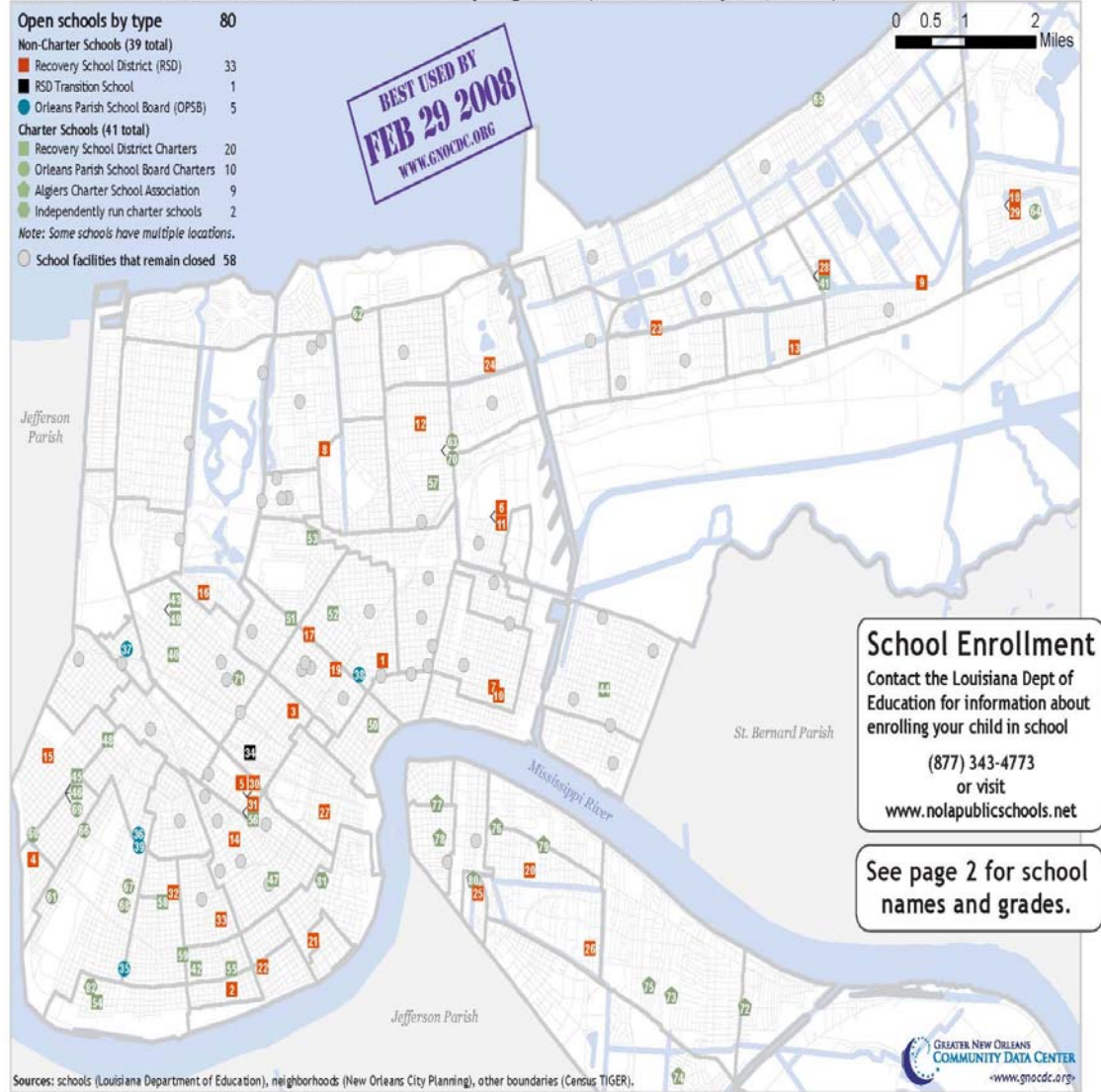
3. That covers the things I wanted to ask. Is there anything you care to add?

APPENDIX E: DETAILED MAP OF NEW ORLEANS NEIGHBORHOODS & WARDS

Neighborhoods in Orleans Parish

Legend:
- Neighborhoods
- Major parks

Labels on map include:
Little Woods, Read Blvd East, West Lake Forest, Read Blvd West, Plum Orchard, Pines Village, Viavant/Venetian Isles, Lake Terrace & Oaks, Lakeshore/Lake Vista, St. Anthony, Milneburg, Pontchartrain Park, Gentilly Woods, West End, Lakeview, Fillmore, City Park, Gentilly Terrace, Dillard, Desire Area, Navarre, St. Bernard Area, Desire Dev, Fairgrounds, St. Roch, Florida Dev, Florida Area, Lakewood, Bayou St. John, Seventh Ward, St. Claude, Dixon, Mid-City, Hollygrove, Treme'/Lafitte, Marigny, Lower Ninth Ward, Gert Town, Tulane/Gravier, Iberville, French Quarter, Bywater, Holy Cross, Marlyville/Fontainebleau, Leonidas, B.W. Cooper, Central Business District, Algiers Point, Whitney, U.S. Naval Base, East Carrollton, Broadmoor, Central City, McDonogh, Black Pearl, Freret, Fischer Dev, Behrman, Audubon, Milan, Lower Garden District, Uptown, Touro, Garden District, Irish Channel, St. Thomas Dev, Old Aurora, West Riverside, East Riverside, Tall Timbers/Brechtel, New Aurora/English Turn

New Orleans East inset:
Village De L'Est, Lake Catherine, Viavant/Venetian Isles
0 — 6 Miles

0 — 2 — 4 Miles

Sources: Water & parish boundaries (Census Tiger files), parks (ESRI StreetMap 2003), neighborhood boundaries (City Planning Commission of New Orleans)

Open Public Schools in New Orleans for Spring 2008 (as of January 30, 2008)

▓ Recovery School District

1. A.P. Tureaud Elementary School (PK-6)
2. Agnes L. Bauduit Elementary School (PK-8)
3. Albert Wicker Elementary School (K-8)
4. Benjamin Banneker Elementary School (PK-8)
5. Booker T. Washington High School (Transitional)
6. Carver Elementary School (PK-8)
7. Dr. Charles Richard Drew Elementary School (PK-8)
8. F.W. Gregory Elementary School (7-8)
9. Fannie C. Williams Elementary School (PK-6)
10. Fredrick A. Douglass High School (9-12)
11. G.W. Carver High School (9-12)
12. Gentilly Terrace Elementary School ('PK-8)
13. H.C. Schaumburg Elementary School (PK-8)
14. Harney Elementary School (PK-8)
15. James Weldon Johnson School (PK-8)
16. John Dibert Elementary School (PK-8)
17. John McDonogh Senior High School (9-12)
18. Joseph A. Craig School (PK-8)
19. Joseph S. Clark Senior High School (9-12)
20. Julian Elementary School (PK-8)
21. Laurel Elementary School (PK-8)
22. Live Oak Elementary School (PK-8)
23. Livingston High School (7-12)
24. Mary D. Coghill Elementary School (PK-8)
25. Murray Henderson Elementary School (PK-9)
26. Paul B. Habans Elementary School (PK-8)
27. Rabouin Career Magnet High School (9-12)
28. Sarah Towles Reed Elementary School (PK-8)
29. Sarah Towles Reed Senior High School (9-12)
30. Schwartz Alternative High (6-12)
31. Sylvanie F. Williams School (PK-5)
32. Thurgood Marshall School (7-8)
33. Walter L. Cohen High School (9-12)

▓ Recovery School District Transition School

34. Welcome School (6-12)

● Orleans Parish School Board

35. Benjamin Franklin Elem. Math-Science Magnet (PK-6)
36. Eleanor McMain Secondary School (7-12)
37. Mary Bethune Elementary Literature/Technology (PK-6)
38. McDonogh #35 Senior High School (7-12)
39. Orleans Parish PM School (7-12)

▓ Recovery School District - Charters

40. A.D. Crossman: Esperanza Charter School (K-8)
41. Abramson Science & Technology Charter School (K-9)
42. Andrew H. Wilson Charter School (K-5)
43. Capdau-UNO Early College High (9-10)

44. Dr. M.L.K. Charter School for Science & Tech. (PK-8)
45. E. Phillips: KIPP Believe College Prep (5-6)
46. Guste: KIPP Central City Academy (5)
47. James M. Singleton Charter School (PK-8)
48. Lafayette Academy of New Orleans (K-7)
49. Langston Hughes Academy Charter School (5)
50. McDonogh #15: A KIPP Transformation School (PK-8)
51. McDonogh #28 City Park Academy (K-8)
52. McDonogh #42 Elementary Charter School (K-8)
53. Nelson Elementary School (PK-8)
54. New Orleans Charter Middle School (3-6)
55. New Orleans Free Academy (K-8)
56. NOLA College Prep Charter School (6)
57. P. A. Capdau School (PK-8)
58. Samuel J. Green Charter School (K-8)
59. Sophie B. Wright Inst.of Academic Excellence (4-8)

● Orleans Parish School Board - Charters

60. Audubon Charter School (4-8)
61. Audubon Charter School (PK-3)
62. Benjamin Franklin High School (9-12)
63. Edward Hynes Charter School (PK-8)
64. Einstein Charter School (K-8)
65. Lake Forest Elementary Charter School (K-8)
66. Lusher Charter School (K-5)
67. Lusher Charter School (6-12)
68. New Orleans Charter Science and Mathematics HS (9-12)
69. Priestley School of Architecture/Construction (9-10)
70. Robert Russa Moton Charter School (PK-7)
71. Warren Easton Senior High School (9-12)

⬟ Algiers Charter Schools Association

72. Algiers Technology Academy (9-12)
73. Alice Harte Elementary Charter School (K-8)
74. Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary School (K-8)
75. Edna Karr Secondary School (9-12)
76. Harriet Tubman Elementary School (PK-8)
77. Martin Behrman Elementary School (PK-8)
78. McDonogh #32 Elementary School (K-8)
79. O.P. Walker Senior High School (9-12)
80. William J. Fischer Elementary School (PK-8)

⬡ Independent BESE Charters

81. International School of Louisiana (K-7)
82. Milestone SABIS Academy of New Orleans (K-8)

APPENDIX G: BRING NEW ORLEANS BACK STEERING COMMITTEE

BRING NEW ORLEANS BACK EDUCATION COMMITTEE
STEERING COMMITTEE

| Name	Title
Dr. Scott Cowen (Chair)	President, Tulane University
Ron Forman	President and Chief Executive Officer, Audubon Nature Institute
Mary Garton	Executive Director, Teach For America of Greater New Orleans
Mason Granger	President and General Manager, WDSU-TV
Kevin Hall[1]	Chief Operating Officer, The Broad Foundation
Leslie Jacobs	Member-at-Large, BESE Board
Dr. Alex Johnson	Chancellor, Delgado Community College
Linda Johnson	Secretary-Treasurer, 8th BESE District
Phyllis Landrieu	President, Orleans Parish School Board
Mary Laurie	Principal, O.P. Walker Sr. High
Thomas (Tom) Luce	Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning and Evaluation U.S. Department of Education
Fr. William Maestri	Superintendent, Archdiocese of New Orleans Schools
Cecil Picard[1]	Superintendent of Education, State of Louisiana
Dr. Anthony (Tony) Recasner	Director, New Orleans Charter School
William (Bill) Roberti[1]	Managing Director, Alvarez & Marsal
James (Jim) Shelton[1]	Program Director (Education), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
David Waller	Global Telecom Solution Executive, IBM
Carole Wallin[1]	Deputy Superintendent of Education, State of Louisiana
Dr. Neari Warner	Past President, Grambling State University

(1) Indicates ex officio member

BNOB Education Committee-Final Presentation-1 17 06.ppt

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APPENDIX H: BNOB SCHOOL OPERATION PLAN

WHO SHOULD OPERATE THE SCHOOLS?
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CENTRAL OFFICE?
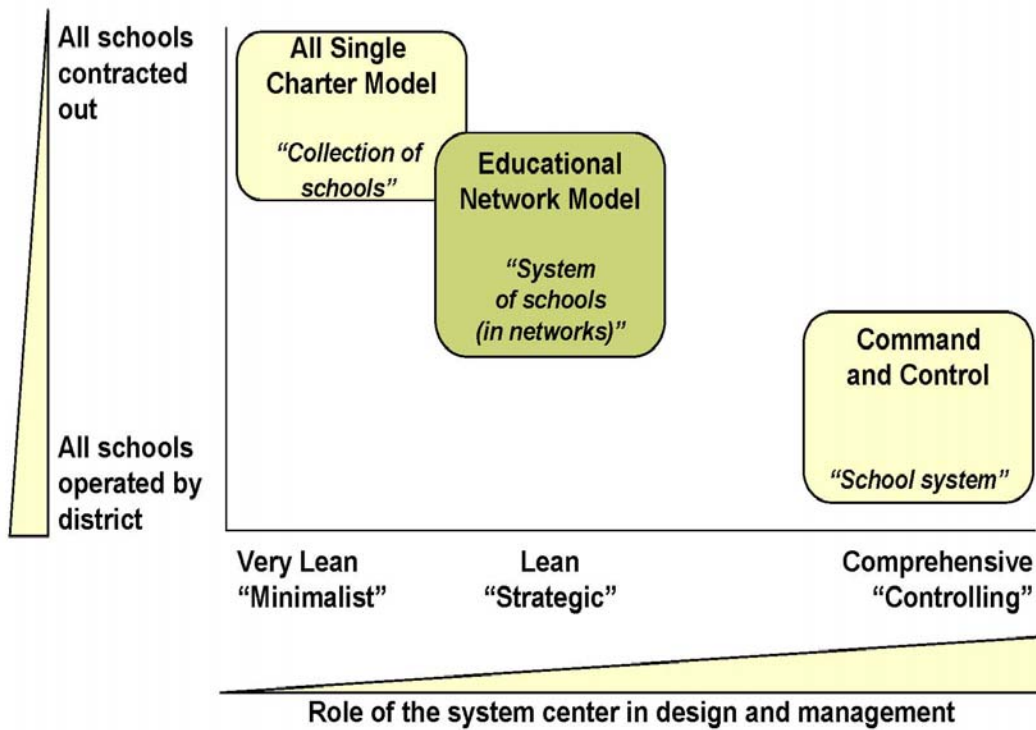
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