Grounding critical race theory in participatory inquiry: Raising educators' race consciousness and co-constructing antiracist pedagogy

Author: Evelyn Young

Persistent link: http://hdl.handle.net/2345/1841

This work is posted on eScholarship@BC, Boston College University Libraries.

Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2010

Copyright is held by the author, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise noted.
BOSTON COLLEGE
Lynch Graduate School of Education
Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education
Program in Educational Administration

GROUNDING CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY:
RAISING EDUCATORS’ RACE CONSCIOUSNESS
AND CO-CONSTRUCTING ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY

Dissertation
by
EVELYN YOUNG

Adviser: Dr. Diana Pullin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

May 2010
ABSTRACT

In recent years, critical race theory (CRT) has garnered much attention in education scholarship as a way to examine the racialized practices that persist in U.S. schooling. This study was a grassroots attempt at using CRT as the theoretical framework to engage a group of administrators and teacher leaders at one urban school in inquiry-based discourse that focused on raising the educators’ race consciousness and co-constructing an antiracist pedagogy. A combined method of action research and critical case study was used as the research methodology.

This dissertation reports on three notable findings that surfaced from the study. One, the participants largely perceived racism an individual pathology, not as a system of privilege. Because the participants regarded themselves as educators who were committed to social justice, they were often deceived by their activism to recognize their own complicity in the perpetuation of racist ideologies in their practice.

Two, despite the overwhelming criticisms against NCLB in scholarly literature, the participants at this low-income, racially-diverse, urban school were passionately in favor of the goals behind the statute. With the recent push toward the development of common core content standards through the Race to the Top program, increased dialogue regarding what knowledge should be considered “common” and “core” needs to occur in order to breach the impasse between the divergent curricular viewpoints held by all stakeholders.

Three, although culturally relevant pedagogy is widely espoused and utilized in educational research and practice, it is often not commonly understood as a conceptual framework that advocates the three-pronged elements of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Findings revealed wide misconceptions and misuse of the
theory that stemmed from teachers’ cultural bias, the nature of racism in school settings, and the lack of support to adequately implement theories into practice.

All of these findings revealed issues of power, positionality, and privilege that were deeply entrenched in the policies and practices of the school, which suggested that greater collaboration between scholars and practitioners was necessary in order to engender ongoing critical self-reflection and reconceptualization of theories as viable pedagogical tools to begin the work of antiracism.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Diana Pullin, whose wealth of knowledge, dedication to education policy and research, compassion for others, and natural light-heartedness make her the ideal mentor, model, and friend. Thank you for pushing me beyond what I thought was intellectually, emotionally, and mentally possible. Thank you also for supporting me through all of my academic “firsts”—e.g. inviting me to my first policy conference, assisting me through my first grant submission, helping me to secure my first teaching fellow position, attending my first AERA presentation, and reading and rereading drafts of my article submission for my first paper publication. I could not have asked for a better, kinder, wiser, or more patient adviser to help guide me through my doctoral studies.

To Irwin Blumer, whose determination to actively confront racial hegemony in educational policies and practices gave me the initial inspiration for this project. Your commitment to antiracism is evident not only in your leadership as a superintendent, but also in your teaching, your ideology, and your personhood.

To Ana Martínez Alemán, whose succinct, but poignant counsel time and again compelled me to stop, think, and redirect my work in a manner that is conducive to a methodologically-sound, cogently-argued, and “done” dissertation. Thank you for making my study more “airtight” and of more publishable quality.

To Karen Arnold, whose encouragement and extensive feedback throughout the initial writing process contributed immeasurably to the life that this dissertation has taken on. Thank you for being captivated by my work in its beginning stages, and for being captivated still.
To Elizabeth Twomey, who took a leap of faith in letting me co-teach a graduate course, and for being my surrogate mother away from home. I will miss our many conversations on life, scholarship, the principalship, family, and kids.

To Jerry Starratt, whose love for learning and teaching is contagious, and whose gentleness and compassion is a refreshing model of ethical care in the academy. Thank you also for introducing me to UCEA—it has been instrumental in shaping my career as a budding scholar.

To Janice Jackson, who met with me frequently to brainstorm ideas for the project, and who shared with me a passion to understand and utilize critical race theory in educational research and practice.

To Brinton Lykes, who spent hours listening, molding, and refining my understanding of action research. Your skilled use of the maieutic method gave me the forum to learn from my own illogic, to reason through contradictions, and to have moments of blissful epiphany.

To Nicole Zito, Jeremy Vizant, Paul Pudussery, Lisa Chen, and Ahjane McLeod, with whom I shared many intellectual debates, personal struggles, late-night paper crunches, lunch/dinner parties, and birthday celebrations… I am thankful for your friendship, and I look forward to a life-time of stimulating conversations together.

To my parents, Edward and Lillian, who taught me to never settle for less, who gave me the freedom to break traditional Asian female roles, and who provided me endless support and encouragement to pursue my goals. I am infinitely grateful for the sacrifices that you have both made to make this Ph.D. possible.

To my children, Matthew, Ashley, and Kristen, who understood when Mommy needed time to work, who played quietly on their own whenever I crashed on the couch out of sheer
fatigue, and who drew me many sweet pictures to remind me that life as a doctoral student and a full-time mother is not only doable, but also enjoyable. Thank you for being adept to make Boston College your second home—I will have many fond memories of watching you trek your way up to the Lynch School from the parking lot in knee-deep snow, stuff your faces silly with peanut butter-filled pretzels, and laugh with giddiness as you spin dizzily in the swivel chairs while I prepped for lectures in the office. I love you all very much!

To my husband, Arthur, whose love for intellectual discourse and passion to aright everything wrong in the world paved the way to my doctoral studies. Over the years, you have made me a better thinker, a more skilled debater, a more well-read individual, and a person who is more committed to her resolves. Thank you for taking on so much of the child care while I sat at a coffee shop to get some writing done. Thank you for indulging me in conversations on NCLB, the racial achievement gap, and Gramscian hegemony even though they are completely irrelevant to your line of work. Thank you for taking so much pride in my accomplishments and for constantly pushing me to greater heights. You have been my rock throughout this journey, and I look forward to our next chapter of life in scaling the ivory tower together (if and when the economy finally rebounds for such an opportunity) as a newly minted Ph.D. and a Postdoctoral Fellow.

To Lynn, Amy, Jamie, Karen, Bob, Madison, and Will for your candor and insightfulness throughout the study. Your willingness to engage in critical discourse and ongoing self-reflection has helped to make small, but not insignificant contributions to the field of teacher education. Thank you for challenging me to think more critically about my own ideologies and practices, and for allowing me to challenge yours. Together we have learned much about our
own racial identities, the systemic roots of racism in society, and the struggles that we must undertake as antiracist pedagogues.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Historical Impact of Racism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Rationale</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Dissertation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the No Child Left Behind Act</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race Theory in Law</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Racism is Endemic to American Life</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Skepticism Towards Legal Claims of Neutrality, Colorblindness, and Meritocracy</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Racism is Rooted in a Contextual and Historical Analysis of the Law</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Experiential Knowledge of the Oppressed is Fundamental in Analyzing the Existing Legal and Social Structures</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: CRT is interdisciplinary and eclectic</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6: CRT Works Toward Eliminating Racial Oppression as Well as Ending All Forms of Oppression</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race Theory in Education</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT in Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Theory</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Pedagogy</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Education</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiracist Education</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Race Pedagogy</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT as a Praxis of Theory and Practice</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT in Education Policy</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desegregation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Funding</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT in Counternarratives</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT in Educational Leadership</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using CRT to Raise Educators’ Race Consciousness</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ....................................................................................66
Research Design ........................................................................................................66
Setting .......................................................................................................................70
Participants .............................................................................................................74
Data Collection .......................................................................................................76
Pre- and Post-Inquiry Group Interviews ..................................................................76
Inquiry Group Meetings .........................................................................................77
Meetings with the Principal and the Intern ..............................................................77
Classroom Observations .........................................................................................77
Participants’ Reflections .........................................................................................78
District’s Documents ...............................................................................................78
Online Discussions ..................................................................................................78
Researcher Journal ..................................................................................................79
Data Analysis and Interpretation .............................................................................79
Phase 1: Open Coding .............................................................................................79
Phase 2: Axial Coding ..............................................................................................82
Phase 3: Open and Axial Coding by Themes .........................................................84
Data Interpretation ..................................................................................................85
Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability ..............................................................85

CHAPTER FOUR: INDIVIDUALIZED VS. SYSTEMIC RACISM ................................88
Four Personae of Racism ..........................................................................................88
Racism as Acts of Conscious Perpetrators .............................................................90
Racism as Acts of Unconscious Perpetrators .........................................................92
Racism as Acts of Deceived Perpetrators/Activists .............................................94
Racism as Acts of (Partially) Enlightened Perpetrators/Activists .......................96
Engaging Participants in Discourse on Race and Racism ..................................97
Journey Toward Race Consciousness ....................................................................100
Bob: Disidentifying with Whiteness .......................................................................101
Karen: Wrestling with White Privilege .................................................................102
Discussion ...............................................................................................................106
Conclusion ...............................................................................................................108

CHAPTER FIVE: STANDARDS DEBATE ................................................................111
Curricular Ideologies ..............................................................................................112
Findings ...................................................................................................................116
Pro Standards Movement .....................................................................................116
Good for the Teachers ............................................................................................117
Good for the Students .............................................................................................119
Good for the Promotion of Social Equality ............................................................120
Con Standards Movement .....................................................................................121
The Politicians Screwed It Up ...............................................................................121
How Do We Do It? ..................................................................................................123
Whose Knowledge is Being Presented? .................................................................125
Discussion ...............................................................................................................127
CHAPTER SIX: MISCONCEPTUALIZING CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy ................................................................. 135
Findings ........................................................................................................ 138
Examinining the District’s and Teachers’ Interpretations of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy ................. 139
Academic Success .................................................................................... 139
Cultural Competence ............................................................................. 140
Sociopolitical Consciousness .................................................................. 142
Developing a Shared Understanding of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy ............................................. 143
Applying Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to Lesson Planning .............................................................. 145
Describing the Process of Observing, Coding, and Reporting the Classroom Observations ............. 147
Post-Interview Observations ................................................................. 150
Discussion ............................................................................................. 151
Raising the Race Consciousness of Educators .................................................................................... 152
Adequately Equip Teachers with the Knowledge of “How” ................................................................. 155
Conclusion .............................................................................................. 156

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS ................................................. 159
What Did the Study Accomplish? ........................................................................... 159
Examining the Process Involved in Engaging Participants in Inquiry-Based Dialogue ...................... 159
Examining the Changes in the Participants’ Perception and Pedagogical Practices as a Result of Their Commitment to Antiracism .......................................................... 162
Examining How CRT Can Be Utilized as a Theoretical Framework To Engage Practitioners in Antiracist Education ............................................................................................ 165
Where to Go From Here? ........................................................................ 168
Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy .............................................................................. 170
Implications for Research .................................................................................. 171
Implications for Practice ................................................................................ 172
Implications for Policy .................................................................................. 175
Conclusion .............................................................................................. 177

APPENDICES
Appendix A: Weekly Inquiry Group Agenda .................................................................................... 179
Appendix B: Definition and Counter-Definition of Terms ................................................................ 181
Appendix C: Comparison of Ladson-Billings’s and the Participants’ Definitions of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy ................................................................................................. 183
Appendix D: Coding for Classroom Observations ........................................................................... 184
Appendix E: Classroom Observation Data for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy ................................. 185
Appendix F: Racial Identity Models...............................................................186
Appendix G: Interview Protocol for Pre- and Post-Inquiry Group Sessions........188

REFERENCES.................................................................................................. 190
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Phase 1: Open Coding.................................................................81
Figure 3.2 Phase 2: Axial Coding...............................................................83

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States............ 2
Table 2 Student and Teacher Demographics in 2007-2008 School Year...................... 71
Table 3 2007-2008 Adequate Yearly Progress Performance Levels of African-American Students................................................................. 72
Table 4 2007-2008 Adequate Yearly Progress Performance Levels of All Students........ 73
Table 5 Description of the Participants...................................................................... 74
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Historical Impact of Racism

The world had it wrong. It wasn’t Hitler who massacred six million European Jews during the Holocaust; it was the pervasive sentiment of anti-Semitism that resided deeply in the souls and ideology of ordinary German citizens. When the anti-Semitic fury that lay latent in the hearts of Germans was released in their quest for Aryan dominance, the world witnessed the decrepitude of humankind, as commonplace men and women shot, gassed, tortured, and experimented on the Jews on the sole basis of their ethnicity. A genocidal act of such magnitude and atrocity required individuals who were willing and ready to carry out their duties. All of German society was complicitous in the horrific murder of the Jews; it was their belief in their own racial superiority that laid the rationale for the Holocaust.

This was the theory proposed by Daniel Goldhagen (1996) in his widely acclaimed, yet highly controversial book, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. Goldhagen argued that to attribute blame solely to the genocidal desires of one mad man erringly provided absolution to a host of ordinary citizens who actually carried out the killing. For decades prior to the Holocaust, hate crimes committed against the Jews went largely uncontested. The legalized and widely accepted assaults on the Jews made it only a matter of time before hatred turned into slaughter.

The history of the Holocaust echoes eerily in the U.S.’s own history. Slave narratives attest to the heinous abuses inflicted upon those of African descent, such as being stripped from the arms of mothers and sold as chattel, whipped to death by blood-stained cowskins, and raped at the master’s leisure (Gates, 1987). Even after the emancipation of slaves, African Americans found themselves unwelcomed, unprotected, and unjustly treated. The Jim Crow era barred
blacks from equal access to public property, legalized hate crimes, and denied them their voting rights. Lynching became prevalent, and the ghastly sights of black men and women hanging limply on nooses scattered across the countryside became commonplace. Racism, like anti-Semitism, became the rallying cry for ethnic hatred.

Racial discrimination was not limited only to blacks, however. In need of fast, cheap labor, America opened its doors to Asians in the 1800s to work as railroad construction workers, miners, sugar cane plantations farmers, fruit pickers, and substitutes for former slaves on southern plantations (Takaki, 1993, 1995). Likewise, in the 1900s, Mexicans were encouraged to cross the border, and the men quickly became the primary source of manual labor in construction while the women were employed as dishwashers, maids, and workers in garment factories, food-processing plants, and canneries (Takaki, 1993). Immigrant workers were often subjected to verbal and physical abuse, and their “strange” cultures made them easy targets for harassment. Xenophobic sentiments fueled the hostilities directed toward the foreign laborers.

Lest one raises the contention that racism is a thing of the past, Table 1 below depicts the breakdown of the median income, the number and percentage of people living in poverty, and the number and percentage of people living without health insurance in 2007 based on race (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2008).

Table 1

Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Median Income</th>
<th># &amp; Percentage of People Living Below Poverty</th>
<th># &amp; Percentage of People Living w/o Life Insurance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$52,115</td>
<td>25,120,000 (10.5%)</td>
<td>34,300,000 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, not Hispanic</td>
<td>$54,920</td>
<td>16,032,000 (8.2%)</td>
<td>20,548,000 (10.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>$33,916</td>
<td>9,237,000 (24.5%)</td>
<td>7,372,000 (19.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>$66,103</td>
<td>1,349,000 (10.2%)</td>
<td>2,234,000 (16.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>$38,679</td>
<td>9,890,000 (21.5%)</td>
<td>14,770,000 (32.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This data suggest that in 2007, African-Americans and Hispanics earned $16,000 to $21,000 less than the average non-Hispanic white person, and $27,000 to $32,000 less than the average Asian person. Also, African-Americans and Hispanics were twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Hispanic whites and Asians. While African-Americans were twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to live without life insurance, Hispanics were three times as likely to do so.

Furthermore, minorities continue to make up the largest percentage of the workforce in jobs that require manual labor while whites dominate occupations in management, business, science, and law. According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s 2008 report entitled “Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity,” Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics or Latinos/as—even though they comprised of roughly 25% of the total U.S. population—together made up 51.2% (n=2,787,840) of building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations, 62.3% (n=873,382) of maids and housekeeping cleaners, 53.7% (n=886,576) of construction laborers, 59.7% (n=184,473) of butchers and other meat, poultry, and fish processing workers, 59.4% (n=141,966) of laundry and dry-cleaning workers, and 62.5% (n=163,125) of packing and filling machine operators and tenders (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). Although the data did not specifically list a separate category for whites, it could be inferred that the percentages not taken up by Blacks, Asians, and Hispanic or Latinos/as combined more or less made up the data set for whites. Thus, whites roughly comprised of 78.3% (n=41,311,863) of employees in management, professional, and related occupations, 76.2% (n=4,729,734) of businesspersons and financial operators, 76.2% (n=995,934) of life, physical, and social scientists, 88.7% (n=899,418) of lawyers, and 87.3% (n=1,444,815) of chief executives (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). It is doubtful that the sharp distinction between the income, health benefits, and employment opportunities of whites and minorities throughout
U.S. history could be explained by hard work, perseverance, or coincidence. A more likely culprit, as CRT scholars argue, is the persistence and pervasiveness of racism in U.S. society (Bell, 1987, 1992a, 1992b; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

To understand CRT’s contention that racism is a ubiquitous structure of U.S. society, a proper look at the history and psychology of racism is essential. How is it possible that ordinary men and women are capable of indescribable malice toward people of another race, when their only association was to be born of a different ethnicity? How is it possible that the dominant group subscribes to an ideology of racism without any trace of remorse or guilt? What makes them immune to acts of bigotry, even when the loss of life is at stake? U.S. history is fraught with racism, both in the past and the present. Inequality based on racist ideologies abounds in every aspect of society, including discrimination in law, employment, healthcare, housing, and education.

Theoretical Rationale

This study utilized CRT as the epistemological lens to understand the intersection of race and achievement in U.S. Schooling. CRT originated in the field of law, where legal scholars of color argued that the judicial system persists to incur inequalities upon people of color, despite well-intentioned enactments of antidiscrimination laws (Bell, 1987; Crenshaw, 1988; Freeman, 1978). Ever cognizant of their “double consciousness” (DuBois, 1903/1969), CRT scholars of color recognize that the worldview that they employ differs significantly from the worldview of the dominant class. As DuBois (1903/1969) suggests, those “gifted with a second-sight in this American world” (p. 45) are forever wrestling with their “twoness”—one side struggling to fit within an existing world that seeks to exclude them, and the other side seeking to preserve their
ethnic identity in the face of assimilation. This sense of duality is impalpable to white Americans, and the struggle of the critical race theorists is to raise the race consciousness of the dominant class by compelling them to attend to the voices of those who are marginalized (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Matsuda, 1987).

CRT scholars contend that power is socially and historically constructed, and that the oppressed consent to their own subjugation through the forces of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). The laws and customs of the ruling class are accepted as the norm, despite their apparent discrimination against women and people of color (Bell, 1987). In essence, whiteness has become a property right that brings unmerited privileges on the basis of one’s race (Harris, 1993). Such privileges are unnoticed by those who bear them, but are sharply recognized by those who are deprived of them.

For that reason, one of the major contentions of CRT scholars is the importance of experiential knowledge. Through counterstories, critical race theorists attempt to reconstruct the perception of the norm to include the voices of the oppressed (Bell, 1987, 1992a; Delgado, 1984, 1990, 1992; Matsuda, 1987). Counterstories point out the discrepancies between what the dominant class regards as truth and what the oppressed know to be true based on their own experiences. This tactic compels the perpetrators to examine their seemingly benign stance on colorblindness and their insistence on neutrality and meritocracy as the fundamental principles of democracy.

Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) framed CRT around six central themes: (1) racism is endemic to American life; (2) legal claims of neutrality, colorblindness, and meritocracy are to be viewed with skepticism; (3) racism is rooted in a contextual and historical analysis of the law; (4) experiential knowledge of the oppressed is fundamental in analyzing the
existing legal and social structures; (5) CRT is interdisciplinary and eclectic; and (6) CRT works toward eliminating racial oppression as well as ending all forms of oppression (pp. 6-7). Over the last decade, these six tenets have also been adopted by education scholars to analyze the role that racism plays in American schooling (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Since then, CRT in education has arisen as a new field of inquiry, as scholars of color grow increasingly dissatisfied with the marginalization of race in critical pedagogy and multicultural education. Because these themes are pivotal to the discussion of racism in U.S. society, each will be looked at in greater detail in the following chapter, both in terms of how they are manifested in law and in education.

CRT in education stems from a number of preceding theories, including critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism, antiracism, and CRT in law. It is fundamentally rooted in the principles of education for democracy, experiential knowledge, emancipatory dialogue, and counterhegemony (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Giroux, 2001; McLaren, 2007). Unlike its predecessors, however, it seeks to ground race at the center of school analysis (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, 2006; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Race conscious scholars in education contend that in order to appropriately address the glaring achievement gap between whites and non-Asian minorities, one must look deeply at the inequalities in school funding (Kozol, 1991, 2006), learning opportunities (Oakes, 2008), and teacher qualification (Darling-Hammond, 2007). One must also examine the psychological ostracization of minorities in an academic atmosphere that promotes white privilege (McIntosh, 1990), as well as the curricular and instructional bias that is entrenched in Americocentric pedagogy (Cochran-Smith, 1995, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Sleeter, 2001).
Underlying the CRT perspective is the need for educators to evaluate their own complicity in the promotion of white dominance at the expense of minority students’ opportunities for academic success (Howard, 2003; Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin, 2004). Not only must well-intentioned educators become aware of their own racial prejudices, but they must deliberately work toward antiracist practices (Blumer & Tatum, 1999). By adopting an antiracist stance, classroom pedagogy no longer mirrors the cultural capital of the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1986), but instead strives to engage minority students in liberatory knowledge, critical discourse, and resistance to the forces of hegemony and deculturalization (Freire, 1970/2005; Spring, 2004). In a school that employs CRT, educators consciously heed the voices of the oppressed, and in the process, co-construct a more informed understanding of equality and democracy.

Statement of the Problem

Nowhere in American society is racism more impacting than in public education, as well-intentioned, but no less prejudiced teachers blindly (Cochran-Smith, 2000) and willingly abet the mass “cultural genocide” of the nation’s minority youth (Spring, 2004). Through the ideological inculcation of white superiority in their daily classroom pedagogy (Giroux, 2001; McLaren, 2007), minority students are forced to master the cultural capital of whiteness in order to attain educational success (Bourdieu, 1977; Ogbu, 2004). Failure to acculturate often penalizes students by way of social ostracization, feelings of inferiority, and academic failure (Steele, 1992). Thus, to properly attend to the issue of the racial achievement gap, it is necessary to openly address the sensitive and often avoided topic of race and racism among administrators and educators.
With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, the need to examine the racialized practices in U.S. schooling has never been more important. While the statute expressly states to make “improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged” as one of its primary goals, critics have contended that the underlying motive behind the bill was to increase the privatization of schools through the use of vouchers and for-profit supplemental educational services (Molnar & Garcia, 2007). Moreover, NCLB has been criticized for “perpetuating educational inequities and achievement gaps” by establishing putative measures for failure in the absence of adequate funding for underperforming schools (Gay, 2007, p. 279). One might even suspect that NCLB possesses an interest-convergence agenda (Bell, 1980), in that: (1) in the “interest” of raising minority students’ academic achievement, the dominant group may be arguably pushing their own agenda for the privatization of education in the attempt to promote greater competitiveness in the global economy; and (2) the “convergence” bears little to no harm to the majority of white, middle class children without disabilities or language barriers, who are likely to meet proficiency regardless of the accountability requirements. Thus, what appears to be an egalitarian endeavor to eliminate the achievement gap may actually be promoting racism’s enduring existence.

Because educational structures tend to cater to the interests of white students, Tatum argues that educators need to critically evaluate their own beliefs and practices, and to examine whether they unconsciously support, ignore, or actively resist racism. She illustrates the concept of racism using the analogy of the conveyor belt. She writes,

Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identified with the ideology of White supremacy and is moving with it. Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway. No overt effort is being made, but the conveyor belt moves the bystanders along to the same destination as those who are actively walking. Some of the bystanders may feel the motion of the conveyor belt…and choose to
turn around….But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt—unless they are actively antiracist—they will find themselves carried along with the others (1997, pp. 11-12).

To challenge the systemic roots of racism, therefore, requires individual teachers who acknowledge the presence of racism in schools, not simply in the sense of attempting to make lessons culturally relevant to minority students, but in the sense of recognizing that the curriculum, the pedagogy, and the very ideology that schools uphold endorse the standard of whiteness. To engender a counterhegemonic movement, therefore, necessitates raising educators’ race consciousness as well as working in concert with them to develop a vision, an instructional strategy, and curriculum framework that is rooted in the principles of antiracism.

It was with this in mind that I chose to work with a Latina principal at an urban elementary school who sought to practice social justice leadership. She aspired to challenge her staff to assess critically the manner through which racism is unintentionally communicated through their pedagogy. The purpose of this dissertation was for the researcher and the participants, which included the principal, a principal intern, and the five teacher leaders who were a part of the school leadership team to engage in critical dialogue regarding issues of race and racism through a process of collaborative inquiry. It also sought to study the changes that occurred as a result of the ongoing praxis of reflection and action. The research questions driving the study were:

1. What process is involved in the co-participatory inquiry and implementation of antiracist training among the researcher, the principal, the intern, and teacher leaders in an effort to narrow the racial achievement gap?
2. What are the principal’s, the intern’s, and teacher leaders’ perceptions of the changes in classroom pedagogy as a result of their collective commitment to antiracist education?

3. How does the framework of CRT fit with the principal’s, the intern’s, and teacher leaders’ viewpoint of antiracist education?

Purpose of the Study

Education researchers have long sought to find the solution to the racial achievement gap. The research on the topic has been as enduring as it has been prolific. Over the last century, many angles to the dilemma have been explored, such as inequalities in school funding (Kozol, 1991), teacher qualification (Darling-Hammond, 2006), tracking (Oakes, 1986a, 1986b), access to early intervention (Styfco, Zigler, & Schorr, 2004), and opportunities to learn (Starratt, 2003). Many scholars, however, have politely averted accusing the obvious: that underprivileged, minority students are underachieving because of racist policies and practices.

Other literature on the topic has been less courteous. Scholars have openly faulted minority students’ lack of achievement to unconscious racism (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Sleeter, 1994), white privilege (McIntosh, 1990), colorblindness (Freeman, 2005), legal mandates (Gay, 2007), and institutional racism (Tatum, 1997). Critical race theorists, in particular, have painstakingly fought to expose the systemic nature of racism in all aspects of society, as scholars in interdisciplinary fields engage in critical discourse and engender viable ways to confront racism at its core.

But such discourse has remained largely within the academy, as scholars heatedly and passionately critique the formation of laws and policies that sustain white dominance while subjecting racial minorities to an unalterable state of oppression. CRT has been used by
educational researchers as an epistemological lens through which structural inequalities in schools have been examined, critiqued, and rebuffed using the strategy of telling counternarratives (Delgado, 1989, 1990; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The methodologies driving CRT research to date, however, have mainly centered on ethnographic or phenomenological studies where the use of interviews, observations, and anecdotal records dominate the research design. While such approaches yield informative and interesting data on how racism plays out in various aspects of schooling, they do not precipitate what CRT fundamentally seeks to do—to engender transformative change at the grassroots level.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was twofold: one, to engage educators in critical self-reflection and to raise their race consciousness to the pervasive, yet often hidden practices of institutional racism; and two, to participate collaboratively in inquiry-based dialogue in order to apply CRT to the design and implementation of an antiracist pedagogy. To achieve these goals, I employed a qualitative approach that utilized a combined method of action research and critical case study. This strategy lent itself to co-generative knowledge as the participants and I wrestled with the challenges of confronting racism at the institutional level while attempting to make structural changes to current curricular and instructional practices.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter two begins with a look at NCLB, in particular with regards to the history of its development and how it has become the legislative behemoth in the policies and practices of public schools today. It also provides a review of relevant literature on the theories central to the research questions and the design of the study, including CRT in law, critical theory, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, antiracist education, culturally relevant pedagogy, critical race pedagogy, and CRT in education.
Chapter three articulates the rationale for employing a combined methodology of action research and critical case study for the purposes of this study. It also explains the process involved in selecting the participants and the setting, as well as the strategies used for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. This section concludes with an address on how the study attempted to meet the scientific rigor of reliability, validity, and generalizability.

In chapter four, I present the first of three findings that are included in the dissertation. This chapter deals with the enduring debate between racism as an individual act of hostility versus racism as a system of privilege. It begins by examining the presence and persistence of racial hegemony in the United States. It argues that individuals fall into four categories of racism: the conscious perpetrators, the unconscious perpetrators, the deceived perpetrators/activists, and the enlightened perpetrators/activists. It also describes the process involved in engaging educators in conversations regarding race and racism, and it concludes with a close examination of two participants’ journey toward race consciousness.

Chapter five details the findings surrounding the standards debate, in particular the participants’ responses in favor of and in opposition to the standards and accountability movement. The debate is further analyzed with regards to the four different curricular ideologies proposed by Schiro (2008): scholar academic, social efficiency, learner centered, and social reconstruction. In this chapter, I argue that the impasse in the standards debate is largely rooted in the fundamental opposition in curricular ideologies that individuals hold. Therefore, as the federal government pushes for the development of national curriculum standards, it is important that the administration brings ownership of the design and review of the curriculum frameworks to all stakeholders in order to see to the revised NCLB’s success.
Chapter six begins by highlighting the wide discrepancies in which culturally relevant pedagogy is defined and used in scholarship and in practice. It exemplifies how over the last decade, the theory has lost its original three-pronged intent to raise the students’ academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. It then describes the process that took place to engage the participants in the collective definition of the term, the application of the theory into curricular planning, the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy into classroom practice, and the evaluation of theory as a viable pedagogical tool. It further examines the obstacles that prevent culturally relevant pedagogy from being used effectively in classroom instruction as well as makes recommendations to address those obstacles.

In chapter seven, I conclude by first resituating the study’s findings in relation to the research questions. For each of the questions, I summarize what was found and how it could be analyzed and interpreted with reference to the existing literature. I then discuss the significance of the study, the limitations, and the implications for research, practice, and policy.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

History of the No Child Left Behind Act

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush reauthorized Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (20 USCS 6301) by signing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (P.L. 107-110) into law. Under NCLB, the goals included: (1) ensuring for high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials that are aligned [to state standards] (20 USCS 6301 § 1001(1)); (2) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving children in [the] nation’s highest-poverty schools (20 USCS 6301 § 1001(2)); and (3) closing the achievement gap… especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers (20 USCS 6301 § 1001(3)).

To ensure that individual states follow the statute’s mandates, NCLB stipulated that in order for any State to receive federal funding, it must set “challenging academic content standards” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(1)(A)) as well as develop and implement a “single, statewide State accountability system… that the State will use to hold local educational agencies and public elementary schools and secondary schools accountable for student achievement and for ensuring that they make adequate yearly progress (AYP)” (20 USCS 6311 § 1111(b)(2)).

Should a school or a district fail to make AYP, the federal government has the right to impose sanctions, which include the following: provision of supplemental educational services to students who fail to meet minimal proficiency; option for students to transfer to another school; replacement of school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP; institution of a new curriculum and/or professional development that is based on scientifically based research; reduction of administrative authority at the school level; appointment of an outside expert to...
advise the school; extension of the school year or school day; and restructuring of the school organization (20 USCS 6316 § 1116(b)(7)). The massive requirements that the federal government placed on individual states in exchange for federal grants led many educators to criticize the statute as the largest intrusion of federal policy into state and local educational affairs in U.S. history (Becker & Helderman, 2004; McDonnell, 2005).

That NCLB was enacted into law should have been no surprise, however. Since its enactment under the Johnson administration in 1965, research on the benefits of Title I has been inconclusive (Borman & D’Agostino, 1995; Jennings, 2000; Price & Karweit, 1999; Puma et al., 1997). While some researchers contend that Title I has failed to achieve its goal to bridge the “performance gap between low-achieving students in high poverty schools and their more advantaged classmates” (Price & Karweit, 1999, p. 1), others claim that Title I has been instrumental in raising the achievement of underprivileged children, for “without the program it is likely that the children served...would have fallen further behind academically” (Borman & D’Agostino, 1995, p. 31). The insubstantial return for the billions of federal dollars spent on Title I, along with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, eventually led to the development of the standards and accountability movement (Superfine, 2005).

*A Nation at Risk* challenged the effectiveness of the American education system by citing its failure to produce educated students to compete in a rapidly changing global economy. It claimed that “[t]he educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). The study worried businessmen and politicians alike, who increasingly put pressure on schools to improve students’ academic performance, particularly in math and science. As a result, the federal government turned its support for “an
‘excellence agenda’ [that] focused on higher standards and achievement for all students” (McDonnell, 2005, p. 27).

In 1991, President George H. W. Bush proposed a bill entitled America 2000, which established six national educational goals, as well as “supported the development of assessments to measure student performance, called for more flexibility and accountability at state and local levels, and provided for more educational choice” (Superfine, 2005, p. 15). The bill, however, was rejected by Republican senators who feared the increased role of the federal government in educational affairs (McDonnell, 2005). Yet despite the defeat of America 2000 in the Senate, the fervor for performance standards, norm-referenced assessments, and measurements of accountability did not subside. Like his immediate predecessor, Clinton pressed for standard-based reform. In 1994, he proposed Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which in many ways mirrored the America 2000 bill. The major difference was the inclusion of a “horse trade” (McDonnell, 2005), in which state and local educational agencies would be held accountable for student achievement in exchange for greater flexibility in how federal funds were to be used for educational purposes.

Concurrently, Congress reauthorized the ESEA by passing the Improving America’s School Act (IASA). Title I of ISIA was designed to continue providing assistance to low-income students. In order to receive funding, however, states were expected to establish high performance standards, adopt assessment systems to measure those standards, and set criteria for “adequate yearly progress (AYP)” (Puma & Drury, 2000). ISIA also required that “states develop plans for taking corrective action in schools where students were not making ‘adequate yearly progress’ in their performance” (DeBray, McDermott, & Wohlstetter, 2005, p. 4). How AYP was to be measured and what corrective actions states were to take was left up to the
individual states. But as states failed to take responsibility for establishing measures of accountability and imposing sanctions against schools that continued to underachieve, Congress was ready to pass NCLB in 2002 in response to the slow rate at which the states were raising the academic achievement of the nation’s underprivileged and underperforming students (Elmore, 2002).

Although rife with controversies, NCLB raised to the fore issues that had escaped the consciousness of mainstream scholars, politicians, and activists since the Supreme Court’s ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The mayhem of *Brown* quelled when schools nationwide made a conscious effort toward desegregation, albeit slowly and violently in some regions of the country. The protest that African-Americans as a collective group managed to muster up during the Civil Rights era subsided when the nation adopted a stance of racial tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and colorblindness (Bell, 1987). Schools quickly followed suit and embraced a multicultural curriculum that sought to prepare students to live in an increasingly diverse society (Banks & Banks, 1995, 2004). Over time, however, multicultural education became a pedagogy that celebrated each child’s cultural uniqueness and emphasized the motto that “we are all the same,” while overlooking the fact that the historical, social, political, and economic contexts in which minority groups lived nullified their claim to the status of sameness as those in the dominant group.

In recent decades, education scholars have decried the resegregation of schools with the practice of white flight, tracking, and disparate funding between urban and suburban schools (Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1986a, 1986b, 2008). NCLB has resurfaced the issue of school equity to a national level, as educators and politicians are again being confronted with the question: How
will we address the issue of the achievement gap, in particular as it pertains to race, language, socioeconomic status, and disability?

NCLB is but one instance in which the law seeks to enforce the interests of the dominant group while ignoring the harmful effects that it has on people of color (Gay, 2007). Coated in an overtone of equality and fairness, equal opportunity laws underestimate the tenacity that racism has on everyday affairs. Because of this, critical race theorists work toward the elimination of racial oppression by employing a tactic of liberatory pedagogy. As such, this dissertation uses CRT as the theoretical lens through which the practices of racism in school settings are examined. It also attempts to analyze how school administrators can use the ideologies of CRT to engage staff and students in antiracist practices.

Critical Race Theory in Law

Critical legal studies (CLS) arose in the 1970s in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. Originally comprised of largely white, liberal, male professors in legal scholarship (Dalton, 1987), the movement sought to challenge “the role of law in helping to rationalize an unjust social order” (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xviii). CLS scholars criticized the hegemonic nature of the civil rights reform, positing that antidiscrimination laws were ineffective in eliminating racial inequity. In fact, the “crits” argued that the enactment of such laws provided a convenient camouflage for the perpetuation of oppression. The law merely functioned to legitimate the existing world view, not to remediate the ills of the present social condition (Crenshaw, 1988).

CLS scholars derived the theory of hegemony from the works of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian journalist and activist who advocated for socialist-democracy during the time of Mussolini’s fascist regime. Gramsci believed that “[a]ll men are intellectuals…but not all men
have in society the function of intellectuals” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 7). He saw a capitalist society as being comprised of a stratum of “intellectuals,” with those who exercised “intellectual-cerebral” intellectualism (i.e. entrepreneurs, politicians, physicians) dominating over those who exercised “muscular-nervous” intellectualism (i.e. working class laborers). Within the category of “intellectual-cerebralists,” there existed the subcategories of “organic” intellectuals and “traditional” intellectuals. The “organic” intellectuals were the aristocratic elites, those who by virtue of their status and prestige exerted power and influence over the laws of the land. In short, they were the dominant, ruling class of society. Meanwhile, the “traditional” intellectuals consisted of “learned” gentry such as scholars, scientists, philosophers, and theologians. Although the “traditional” intellectuals often disparaged the elitism of the “organic” intellectuals, both groups enjoyed the privileges and benefits of the ruling class, and thus were complicitous in the oppression of the working class (Burke, 1999/2005).

These class distinctions are important in understanding Gramsci’s definition of hegemony and his call for counterhegemony. Gramsci (1971) regarded hegemony as:

1. The “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

2. The apparatus of state coercive power which “legally” enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent” either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed (p. 12).

In other words, Gramsci argued that the dominant class (i.e. the “organic” intellectuals) exerted ideological control over the subordinate masses. The elites’ beliefs, attitudes, and traditions became “normalized” into mainstream consciousness such that the formations of law,
language, and customs were patterned after the constructs of the ruling class. The pervasiveness of these ideologies infused into the consciousness of the underclass so that the latter regarded their subjection to the rules and formalities of the dominant class as inevitable. Furthermore, the oppressed neither knew how to overcome their oppression nor dared to resist even if they did. The laws of the land commanded abeyance; attempts to challenge the rules wielded punitive consequences, which ranged anywhere from a frown of disapproval, to mockery, physical and psychological torment, or even death.

In order to effectively overthrow the hegemonic superstructure, Gramsci argued that the consciousness of the oppressed must first be raised to recognize the state of their suffering, and secondly, to desire and actively work towards the transformation of the existing social order. Paulo Freire regarded this revolutionary awaking as conscientização (conscientization), the “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1970/2005, p. 35). According to Gramsci, all men are intellectuals, and in a socialist-democratic society, no form of intellectualism has a right to supersede or dominate another.

To abet the revolutionary effort, Gramsci sought to convert as many “traditional” intellectuals to the side of the working class as possible. Freire regarded converts as indispensable members of the struggle, as they brought with them a reckoning of the unjust social order and a desire to move from the side of the exploiter to the exploited. He warned, however, that true conversion require[d] a profound birth. Those who undergo must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were. Only through comradeship with the oppressed can the converts understand their characteristic ways of living and behaving, which in diverse moments reflect the structure of domination (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 61).
The converts, Freire contended, must become one with the oppressed, not merely one who sympathized with them. Sympathy would yield “false generosity,” which in turn would lead one to believe that his/her calling was to “rescue” the underclass from their state of oppression (Popkewitz, 1998). A “savior” mentality would only serve to perpetuate the cycle of oppression.

CLS scholars looked upon this concept of hegemony to explain “the continued legitimacy of American society by revealing how legal consciousness induces people to accept or consent to their own oppression” (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1351). They argued that legal doctrine was susceptible to manipulation, and that the opinions of the Supreme Court often reflected the ideological positions of the dominant class (Freeman, 1978; Matsuda, 1987). What appeared to serve the interest of the underclass in reality confirmed the higher status and power of the ruling party (Bell, 1980). The Supreme Court was able to conceal its hegemonic rulings by boldly denouncing discriminatory practices that violated the equal protection of the laws while absolving itself of the duty to ensure that its holding was actually carried out. Its decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* was a case in point of this occurrence (Bell, 1980).

In 1954, the Supreme Court held in *Brown* that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place…[for] such segregation is a denial of the equal protection of the laws” (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954, p. 495). The ruling held promise for the equalization of educational attainment for those who had long been denied access to quality schooling, and it brought hope to a league of nonwhite citizens who believed that their right to equality had at long last come (Bell, 1987). Yet critical race theorists argued that while *Brown* recognized in theory that blacks were entitled to constitutional protection against racial discrimination, it failed to offer any remedies by which that protection would come (Bell, 1976; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Gotanda, 1991). In fact, in *Brown II*, the Court relegated the duty for
school authorities to “make a prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance with [Brown I] ruling” (Brown v. Board of Education II, 1955, p. 300) to the lower courts, thereby removing itself from the obligation to address the deeper racial underpinnings of the law. By adopting an anti-affirmative action approach to the interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment, the Supreme Court legitimated the right of the dominant class to maintain its social, economic, and political advantages over the oppressed groups (Gotanda, 1991). In short, Brown outlawed segregation, but it made no effort to dismantle white privilege (Harris, 1993).

Although CLS scholars “condemn[ed] racism, support[ed] affirmative action, and generally adopt[ed] the causes of oppressed people through the world,” (Matsuda, 1987, p. 331), they also believed that the remedies to racial prejudice and social injustice lay in the ideals of meritocracy, integration, neutrality, and colorblindness (Bell, 1987; Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado, 1984; Gotanda, 1991; Matsuda, 1987; Peller, 1990). That is, they believed that by simply eliminating race consciousness and adopting a zero-sum perspective, all members of society would be given an equal opportunity to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” America would become, as it often boldly claims, the great “melting pot,” where one’s race matters less than one’s determination and hard work in the attempt to climb the corporate ladder. In short, everyone is given a fair start in life, all past prejudices are erased, and the future is wide open for one’s own choosing.

Unfortunately, such perspective narrowly undermined the part that race played in the interweaving fabric of society. Freeman (1978) propounded two views by which racial discrimination could be seen: the perpetrator perspective and the victim perspective. From the perpetrator perspective, antidiscrimination law served the purpose of “neutraliz[ing] the inappropriate conduct of the perpetrator” (p. 1053). This view alleged that racial discrimination
persisted on account of individual biases apart from social and historical phenomena. It sought to redress discrimination by declaring certain practices illegal; it did not, however, recognize that in order to remediate the effects of racism, the perpetrator needed to feel a personal responsibility for the contribution and continuation of racism. “[A]ntidiscrimination law,” argued Freeman, “is hopelessly embedded in the perpetrator perspective” (1978, p. 1054).

The victim perspective entailed looking at discriminatory practices from the viewpoint of those “at the bottom” (Matsuda, 1987). Matsuda argued that “adopting the perspective of those who ha[d] seen and felt the falsity of the liberal promise can assist critical scholars in the task of fathoming the phenomenology of law and defining the elements of justice” (p. 324). Whereas the predominantly white, male writers of the perpetrator perspective “[took] polite issue with, extol[ed], criticiz[ed], and expand[ed] on each other’s ideas [in] something like an elaborate minuet” (Delgado, 1984, p. 563), the oppressed daily felt the weight of their ostracism at the social, political, and institutional level on the mere basis of their nonwhiteness (Harris, 1993).

The ideological differences between the perpetrator and victim perspectives were essentially the rift between CLS scholars and CRT scholars in law. According to Crenshaw et al. (1995), CRT scholarship arose in the late 1970s in response to the receding opposition that the Civil Rights Movement had stirred up in the previous decade. CRT emerged out of the thoughts and traditions of CLS, yet veered with respect to CLS scholars’ ideals of a raceless, colorblind society. As a movement, CRT began when a number of students staged a protest in reaction to the departure of Professor Derrick Bell from Harvard Law School to assume deanship at the University of Oregon in 1981 (Crenshaw et al., 1995). In a fictional, yet no less autobiographical, sketch entitled “A Law Professor’s Protest,” Bell (1992a) recounted how he “agreed to become Harvard’s first black faculty member back in 1969…on the express[ed]
commitment that [he] was to be the first, but not the last, black hired” (Bell, 1992a, p. 138). His parting prompted the students to recruit professors of color from other law schools to teach “The Alternative Course.” The “Course” centered around weekly discussions of race and civil rights issues from Bell’s book, *Race Racism and American Law* (1973/2004). The students and faculty who participated in this endeavor, including Kimberlé Crenshaw, Mari Matsuda, Richard Delgado, and Charles Lawrence, later became the founders of the CRT movement (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

From the outset, critical race theorists placed “race and racism…as central pillars of hegemonic power” (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xxii). They posited that oppression was rooted in racism and that “race consciousness…must be taken into account in efforts to understand hegemony and the politics of racial reform” (Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1335). While CLS theorists condemned *Brown* for failing to recognize the social and political hegemony perpetuated by the legal system, the CRT scholars condemned it for “fail[ing] to expose the problem of substantiv[e] inequality in material terms produced by white domination and race segregation” (Harris, 1993, pp. 1751-1752). Critical race theorists contended that CLS was “elitist and exclusionary,” “lack[ed] a program,” was “cynical,” and “fail[ed] to resolve conflicts of value” (Matsuda, 1987, p. 331). By advocating an anti-law stance that lacked tangible solutions amongst themselves, CLS scholars discretely avoided issues of race and racism, as well as dismissed the pleading of the minority scholars who beckoned to be heard (Bell, 1992a, 1992b; Delgado, 1984, 1992; Lawrence, 1992; Matsuda, 1987). From this exclusion, CRT scholars formed a movement of their own, one which centered the analysis of law through “fiction, personal experiences, and the stories of people on the bottom [to] illustrate how race and racism continued to dominate our society” (Bell, 1992a, p. 144).
As alluded to in chapter 1, Matsuda et al. (1993) derived six central themes from CRT literature. Each of the themes will be discussed in greater depth in the following section.

Theme 1: Critical Race Theory Recognizes that Racism is Endemic to American Life

To fully understand this phenomenon, one needs to look no further than to ask a typical white person in America what it means to be “white.” In all likelihood, the response that he or she would give is, “I don’t know.” The reason why whites are unable to define their whiteness is because whiteness is a taken-for-granted privilege (Frankenberg, 1993; Giroux, 1997; hooks, 1994; McIntosh, 1990; Tatum, 1992). Frankenberg (1997) argues, “whiteness makes itself invisible precisely by asserting its normalcy, its transparency, in contrast with the marking of others on which its transparency depends” (p. 6). It is similar to asking any able-bodied person what it is like to have ten fingers, and the reaction of the questioned would be one of befuddlement. One who has had the misfortune of losing a digit or two due to war, illness, mishap, or natural birth would immediately recognize the ostracism and “otherness” associated with his or her handicap. She or he would also readily recognize the discrimination and oppressiveness associated with being “different.”

Harris (1993) associates whiteness as a property right, that anyone in possession of it is guaranteed membership into society’s upper caste. One is freely given unmerited deference and benefits solely on account of his/her whiteness. One also has access to schools, employment, housing, and public facilities that are restricted to minorities, even though most companies and institutions today contain a policy of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity. Harris writes, being white automatically ensure[s] higher economic returns in the short term, as well as greater economic, political and social security in the long run….Becoming white increase[s] the possibility of controlling critical aspects of one’s life rather than being the object of others’ domination…. [Furthermore], whites have come to expect and rely on these benefits, and over time these expectations have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by the law (1993, p. 1713).
Recognizing the privileges bestowed upon her as a result of her whiteness, McIntosh (1990) laments, “I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (p. 10). Among these unspoken privileges are the freedom to associate with people of her own race without question or glare, the assurance of being able to feel safe in public places, the opportunity to see people of her race represented in school curriculum, media, and high status jobs, and the certainty that people would not assume that her accomplishments were the result of affirmative action practices (McIntosh, 1990). One privilege that she does not mention is the right to speak against racism without sounding like someone who has blown race out of proportion. When whites attack an image, speech, or action as defamatory and racist, others look upon them as righteous, politically correct, if not downright heroic. However, when people of color accuse whites of employing racist speech or practices, the whites’ reaction is to dismiss the allegation and regard the accusers as “overreacting.” In fact, some will turn the accusation around and claim that the real racists are those who see everything in racial terms. This places minorities in a double-bind position: To vocalize their objection is to risk being targeted as hyper-racists; to remain silent is to submit to their own oppression. The Constitutional provision of “freedom of speech” is a privilege that is reserved for the dominant group. People in the minority groups who choose to exercise that privilege must use it at their own discretion.

Theme 2: Critical Race Theory Expresses Skepticism Toward Dominant Legal Claims of Neutrality, Objectivity, Colorblindness, and Meritocracy

America in the 1970s witnessed a surge of opposition to the Civil Rights Movement, as neo-conservatives attacked race-based policies as antithetical to the fundamental values of democracy (Crenshaw, 1988). They advocated for a colorblind interpretation of Constitutional and judicial analysis, and they sought to dismantle affirmative action programs by heralding the
principles of equal opportunity. As overt racist practices began to wane in the wake of the post-
Civil Rights era, the majority of white folks increasingly believed that discrimination had
become a thing of the past (Bell, 1987, 1992a). As a result, discrimination became more
difficult to prove, as seemingly “neutral” standards masked the underlying motives for the denial
of housing, employment, health care, and equal schooling (Bell, 1987, 1992a).

Sharply criticizing the viewpoint of neutrality, Gotanda (1991) argues that “[a] color-
blind interpretation of the Constitution legitimatizes, and thereby maintains, the social, economic,
and political advantages that whites hold over other Americans” (pp. 2-3). Non-recognition of
race protects the property interest of whites and denies the historical and social context of white
domination (Harris, 1993). Moreover, by undermining the significance of race, the Supreme
Court “privatizes” the right to discriminate (Gotanda, 1991). The First Amendment protects an
individuals’ right to free speech, free expression, and freedom of association. With the
exception of when such liberties infringe upon public order (e.g. yelling “fire” in a crowded
theater, “fighting words,” and obscenities), a private person has the right exercise hate speech,
don Ku Klux Klan robes, and alienate “dislikeable” people from social gatherings and business
partnerships (Gotanda, 1991; Matsuda et al., 1993). Already branded as outcasts, the
employment of colorblindness further ostracizes minorities to the fringes of society. Race
consciousness is necessary to reverse the trends of neutrality and colorblindness. Only by
proactively recognizing and affirming race would the blatancy of prejudice seep into the
consciousness of the perpetrators.

CRT advocates also regard meritocracy as symptomatic of the persistence of racism
(Bell, 1987, 1992a; Gotanda, 1991; Matsuda et al., 1993; Peller, 1990). Merit alone is incapable
of earning a minority his/her position in the dominant group, and neither can it overcome the
deep-seated belief of white superiority. The flaws behind the idea of meritocracy are twofold: One, it assumes that everyone starts out on equal footing in life; and two, it assumes that everyone faces the same opportunities and/or obstacles along life’s journey. Supporters of meritocracy also embrace the standpoint of equal opportunity, yet no one knows better than the oppressed that equal opportunity favors whites more than it favors nonwhites (Gotanda, 1991). An “equal opportunity” employer boasts of the fact that she or he selects candidates not by the color of one’s skin, but rather by one’s merit. Yet as already mentioned, one’s ability to merit success is intricately tied to one’s race and one’s social background. In fact, not only does the rhetoric of equal opportunity discriminate against minorities on the basis of merit, but it also works against them on the basis of “reverse discrimination” (Bell, 1992b). Under the theory of equal protection, whites can claim that they are denied admission to a school or employment to a company when they are clearly more qualified than a minority applicant. As in the case of

*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, where a white applicant challenged his rejection from medical school under the language of equal opportunity, the Court held that an affirmative action policy may not unseat white candidates on the basis of their race. The Court argued,

> [I]t is evident that the Davis special admissions program involves the use of an explicit racial classification never before countenanced by this Court. It tells applicants who are not Negro, Asian, or Chicano that they are totally excluded from a specific percentage of the seats in an entering class. No matter how strong their qualifications, quantitative and extracurricular, including their own potential for contribution to educational diversity, they are never afforded the chance to compete with applicants from the preferred groups for the special admissions seats. At the same time, the preferred applicants have the opportunity to compete for every seat in the class (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978, pp. 319-320).

According to Bell (1992b), this interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment ignored the patterns of racism throughout history and the pervasiveness of white privilege in societal
standings (Bell, 1992b). It affirmed that while the law appeared to support the effort to dismantle racism, it would only go so far as it bore no harm to the dominant class.

**Theme 3: Critical Race Theory Challenges Ahistoricism and Insists on Contextual/Historical Analysis of the Law**

The rationale that the Supreme Court gave in its ruling in *Brown* was that segregation “has a detrimental effect upon the colored children…[for] a sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a children to learn” (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954, p. 494). Yet for centuries prior to *Brown*, minority students had been subjected to inferior education in segregated schools, and in many instances, had been denied educational opportunities altogether (Bell, 1980; Spring, 2004). Up until 1954, the Supreme Court had no qualms about the psychological impact that illiteracy and inadequate education can have on students of color. Therefore, the unexpected regard for the educational welfare of minority students led scholars of color to question the sincerity of the Court’s motives.

Bell (1980) argued that the historical context of the day rendered it impossible for the Supreme Court to rule against school desegregation. Furthermore, its interest in overturning *Plessy* lay less in the educational welfare of the colored children, but more in the economic and political advantages that would be afforded to whites as a result of desegregation. Bell (1980) posited three suppositions for the Court’s decision: (1) to gain international approval for America’s struggle against communism; (2) to assure blacks fighting in WWII that their sacrifice for freedom and liberty was as true at home as it was abroad; and (3) to increase economic productivity by transitioning the South from a rural, plantation society to a capitalistic enterprise. Thus, it could be argued that the decision in *Brown* was not made on the grounds of equality and morality, but on the basis of “interest-convergence,” or as Bell aptly put it, “the
interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (1980, p. 523).

An example of the “interest-convergence” argument was the busing phenomenon that occurred as a result of court-ordered desegregation (Apple & Pedroni, 2005). To achieve the goal of integrated schools, thousands of black children were bused out of their neighborhoods over long distances into white suburban schools. The school systems could have just as easily compelled white students to be bused into inner city schools to achieve racial balancing, but doing so bore no benefits for white folks. Instead, the burden to attain school balance fell upon the shoulders of minority children. At times, the extent of the travel impinged on the health and educational welfare of the children (Apple & Pedroni, 2005). Busing continued despite the fact that research showed that “court orders mandating racial balance may be educationally advantageous, irrelevant, or even disadvantageous” to colored children (Bell, 1976, p. 480). bell hooks (1994) personally recounted the dismay of entering a desegregated school as a young child. To her, white teachers in integrated schools taught obedience and reinforced domination. Black students learned quickly that they did not belong there, and that as much as they resented being bused to white majority schools, the whites resented the black students’ presence even more.

Theme 4: Critical Race Theory Insists on Recognition of the Experiential Knowledge of People of Color and Our Communities of Origin in Analyzing Law and Society

As Matsuda reminds us, “Every person…has an accent. Your accent carries the story of who you are” (1991, p. 3129). Storytelling from the perspective of those “on the bottom” is a technique that is heralded by CRT scholars (Matsuda, 1987). It is set in contrast to the formal, legalistic discourse of members of the dominant class. It avers that “members of marginalized groups, by virtue of their marginal status, are able to tell stories different from the ones legal
scholars usually hear‖ (Delgado, 1990, p. 95). The use of personal experiences shed light on the varied perspectives of individuals, and their purpose is to counter the hegemonic voices of the oppressors.

Scheppele (1989) points out the exclusivity of the Founding Fathers in the drafting of the Constitution. In the very assertion “We the people,” America’s forefathers selectively included those who constituted “we.” “We” comprised of the white, male, Protestant, educated landowners. “We” possessed the privilege of writing “our” nation’s ordinances into law, and “we” had the right to voice “our” opinions as “we” saw fit. Noticeably absent from the “we” were females, people of color, the poor, the uneducated, and anyone who didn’t fit the image of the white, male aristocrat. And as long as there was a “we,” there also existed a “they.”

Critical race theorists separated from critical legal scholars largely due to the “we-they” dichotomy. Dalton (1987) articulates three mechanisms employed by CLS scholars to silence the voices of minority scholars. One, legal scholarship prides itself on rhetoric that is structurally complex, inundated with archaic Latin phrases, and mired in facts, details, and intricate analyses. It is scholarship that is intended to bar common folks from participating in intellectualized legal discourse, and it scorns those literature that display less sophisticated techniques. CRT scholars regard CLS scholars’ writing as impersonal and removed from reality, entrenched in interpretation of the law apart from race and gender concerns. Yet the “crits” tend to dismiss CRT writing as lacking in academic quality, thus giving CRT scholars the sense that “if you don’t talk th[e] talk, you won’t be heard” (Dalton, 1987, p. 441).

Another way of silencing minorities is what Dalton (1987) refers to as the “I don’t want to be made to feel like a guilty white male” syndrome (p. 442). That CRT writing focuses on the hegemonic nature of white dominance is uncontestable; its purpose is to emancipate the
invisibles of society through contestation and discourse with its oppressors. When those of the ruling class refuse to see themselves as complicitous to the subjugation of those on the bottom, the voice of the oppressed is muted with a simple statement of absolution: “I’m not a racist.” The underlying message of that statement is, “Don’t blame me for what happened in the past. I’m sorry for what happened to your people, but I’m not at fault for your present situation.”

A third method of silencing is to bar people of color from speaking for themselves. Whites speak on behalf of the minorities, advocating for “their” causes, presenting “their” plight, and arguing amongst themselves about how to remedy “their” problems. Minorities’ points of view are assumed, not confirmed by their own testimonies. In such instances, minority scholars feel talked for and talked about, but not talked to (Dalton, 1987). They plead to be heard, to have an opportunity to articulate their thoughts. They plead to be visible, not to remain in the hidden crevices of the silenced and unknown, where whites pass by them and through them as if they are phantomlike beings. As Henry Louis Gates (1987) contests, “blacks lay veiled in a shroud of silence, invisible not because they had no face, but rather because they had no voice….Without a voice, the African is absent, or defaced, from history” (p. 104).

Theme 5: Critical Race Theory is Interdisciplinary and Eclectic

CRT is derived from a number of disciplines, including “liberalism, law and society, feminism, Marxism, poststructuralism, critical legal theory, pragmatism, and nationalism” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 6). From these disciplines, critical race theorists have learned to view race and racism as historically and socially constructed, to empower the lives of the marginalized by engaging them in emancipatory discourse, to constantly search for answers and not accept the inevitability of the present situation, and to challenge the status quo so as to resist conforming to the ideologies of the dominant class.
CRT is interdisciplinary not only because of the sources that it has drawn from, but also because of the sources that it has contributed to. Stemming from CRT are FemCrit, LatCrit, AsianCrit, TribalCrit, and WhiteCrit (Yosso, 2006). Each of these look critically at how the legal system represses groups of people based on gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, culture, and social status. Recently, CRT has also moved into the field of education, which will be examined more closely in the next section. As a critique of its own dominant position, critical whiteness studies arose to challenge the illegitimacy of its subjugation of others. Critical white theorists seek to overthrow their own power in an attempt to counter the regimes of racism, sexism, and classism (Leonardo, 2002; Roediger, 1991, 1994). They argue that “what oppressed people of color need from whites is not sympathy as much as a self- and collective-reflection on their own white privilege in a system of white racism, a system that will remain permanent without a revolutionary transformation of white consciousness” (Allen, 2002, p. 32).

Crenshaw (1989) also warns of the need to look at race, gender, and class theories not in isolation from one another but as an intersection of the multiple layers of oppression. She contends that legal interpretations and critical discourse often adopt a single-axis framework, examining discrimination on the basis of race or gender, but not as a combination of both. Such observation fails to account for the compounded effects of the oppression felt by people marginalized on multiple fronts. Crenshaw (1989) notes, “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, [thus] any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p. 140). This analysis is also true of anyone who possesses more than one marker for discrimination, including poor Latino migrant workers, uneducated Asian immigrants, and homosexual black males.
Critical race theorists recognize that race is only one of many elements that are subject to
discrimination. People of color commiserate with other oppressed groups who fall under the
umbrella termed as “other.” The marginalized understand that as long as a group of people has
the power to exert control over the legal, political, social, and economic aspects of society, no
other person who falls outside of the circle of the dominant group is safe from oppression. Erick
Fromm (1966) describes the oppressors’ pleasure in subordinating others as such:

The pleasure in complete domination over another…is the very essence of the
sadistic drive. Another way of formulating the same thought is to say that the aim
of sadism is to transform a man into a being, something animate into something
inanimate, since by complete and absolute control the living loses one essential
quality of life—freedom (p. 32).

Thus, Blacks, Jews, women, and homosexuals are all susceptible to being reduced to nonexistent
objects. As it is, their silenced voices have transformed them into invisible creatures, beings that
are to be talked about and referred to, but not associated with. Ellison (1947/1995) reminds his
readers of his disassociation from society with the powerful words, “I am an invisible man” (p. 3). Those are words that can be muttered from every member of the subordinate class.

CRT scholars are ever conscious of the fact that the fate that awaits them—the absolute
loss of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—are the same fate that awaits all marginalized
groups if they do not fight against hegemony in a concerted effort. Despite the seeming
hopelessness in the fate of the oppressed, critical race theorists adamantly place their faith in the
hope that circumstances are not written in stone and that change is possible. In this seemingly
contradictory duality of fatalism and optimism, Fanon describes on the one hand the inevitable
assimilation of the black folks, yet on the other the belief in the alterability of the human
condition. He writes, with an air of concession, “For the black man there is only one destiny.
And it is white” (Fanon, 1967, p. 10). Yet a few paragraphs later, he makes this argument, “But society, unlike biochemical processes, cannot escape human influences. Man is what brings society into being. The prognosis is in the hands of those who are willing to get rid of the worm-eaten roots of the structure” (p. 11). In other words, as long as there are those who are willing to resist the oppressive structure that the dominant class has created, there is hope for a counterrevolution.

Freire (1970/2005) asserts that a pedagogy of the oppressed is a “pedagogy [that] must be forged with, not for, the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity” (p. 48). The struggle for freedom requires awaking the underclass from their state of oppression as well as conjoining the efforts of the oppressors in “true solidarity” with the oppressed. By true solidarity, Freire means to “enter into the situation of the [oppressed]” and to “fight at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them ‘beings for the other’” (p. 49). Through emancipatory discourse, both the oppressed and the oppressors can become liberated from the strongholds of hegemony. Both parties need to name the world together, to critique the forces that contribute to the oppression, and to construct a world that is founded upon hope (Freire, 1970/2005, 1994).

Critical Race Theory in Education

The centrality of race in CRT scholars’ examination of legal issues led a similar movement among education scholars a decade later. Dissatisfied with how schools served to perpetuate class differences in society, education scholars employed the ideologies established by critical theory and critical pedagogy to condemn the hegemonic nature of academic institutions. But because critical theory and critical pedagogy failed to stress the prevalence of
racism in educational practices, scholars of color began to adopt the ideas of CRT into their analysis of racism in schooling.

To understand the urgency for educators to insert “race” into critical theory, a brief definition of race and racism is in order. Omi and Winant (1994) propose that race as a terminology is “unstable,” composes of “complex social meanings,” and is “constantly being transformed by political struggle” (p. 55). At one time, all “colors” of the human spectrum in America fell under the racial categories of black and white. For example, Mexicans and Asians in the United States were once considered “black” for the sake of segregation; their “non-whiteness” gave whites the excuse to bar them from attending the same schools, having access to the same housing, and enjoying the same public facilities (DuBois, 1915/2001). Even the Irish were denied entrance into the realm of whiteness due to their poverty-stricken, Catholic status (Takaki, 1993). Eventually, the Irish were accepted into the white racial category as a way to discriminate “colored” folks on the basis of phenotype.

Omi and Winant (1994) contend that since race-based associations are social and historical constructions, differentiation among groups of people along racial lines is “imprecise” and “arbitrary” (p. 55). What one considers a racist act today would not have been so half a century ago, and what one considers “affirmative action” is what another would consider “reverse discrimination.” Solórzano borrows from Lorde (1992) and Marable’s (1992) conceptualization of racism to help articulate its general characteristics, which he sums up as: (1) the perception of one group’s superiority over another; (2) the power of the “superior” group to enact racist behavior toward the oppressed group; and (3) the beneficial effects that the “superior” group accrue at the negative expense of minority racial/ethnic groups (Solórzano,
1998, p. 124). These characteristics are helpful in understanding how racism plays out in the politics of race and education.

In a paper Ladson-Billings and Tate presented at the American Educational Research Association meeting in 1994 entitled “Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education,” the authors linked the six tenets of CRT in law to issues of race and equity in academic situations. Since then, many education scholars have utilized the concepts of racial hegemony, counternarratives, whiteness as property, and interest convergence to analyze the racial inequities that persist in education (Chapman, 2005; Decuir-Gunby, 2006; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, 2006; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003; Morris, 2006; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1998) urges school leaders and educators to critically examine how race is played out in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school funding, in particular as they relate to the suppression of “intellectual rights” of minority children.

In recent years, a proliferation of CRT scholarship has surfaced in educational research, and the majority of the studies have focused on the application of CRT in the areas of curriculum and instruction, education policy, counternarratives, and educational leadership. Each of these areas will be examined in detail below.

**CRT in Curriculum and Instruction**

CRT in curriculum and instruction has largely borrowed from the fields of critical theory, critical pedagogy, multicultural education, antiracist education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and critical race pedagogy. The pedagogical strategy continues to be rooted in the critique of power and domination, attention to the experiential knowledge of the oppressed, education for democracy and equality, and the engagement of liberatory discourse as the means
toward social transformation. The emphasis, however, is centered on a critical analysis of racial hegemony in school policies and practices, and how educators can use the CRT framework to bring about pedagogical change in the education of minority students. The following section will look at how each of the preceding fields has contributed to the formation of CRT in education.

Critical theory. The philosophies behind critical theory originated with a group of thinkers who gathered to critique orthodox Marxism and the ideological power that capitalism exerted on the economic, social, and political faculties of society. The “Frankfurt School” was a gathering of socialist intellectuals that was created by a wealthy merchant named Felix Weil in 1923 (Giroux, 2001). Its first meeting place was at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in Germany. In 1930, the Institute came under the directorship of Max Horkheimer, and subsequently, a number of renowned social theorists, such as Theodore Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erick Fromm, and Jürgen Habermas, joined the Institute (Darder et al., 2003; Giroux, 2001).

Darder et al. (2003), Giroux (2001), and McLaren (2007) have written extensively on the history of the Frankfurt School and can be referred to for a fuller understanding of the development of critical theory. To briefly summarize their work, the Frankfurt School’s neo-Marxist, postpositivist principles were largely influenced by two predominant factors: the failure of the working class to revolutionize against capitalistic enterprises after World War I, and the rise of Nazism in Germany in the eve of World War II. It rejected the traditional Marxist thoughts of historical inevitability, capitalism as the primary means of shaping history, and the idea that class struggle was generally contained in the realm of labor. It also eschewed the positivist notion of neutrality, objectivity, and the dependence on scientific rationality as the
basis of fact and certainty. Instead, the Frankfurt School embraced a faith in the rationality of human beings as well as in the belief that individuals constituted agents of social change. It saw self-criticism as central to transformative action based on moral consciousness, and that the struggle against oppression was not against capitalism alone, but against a sphere of domination that permeated the daily lives of the common folk. In the 1980s, Habermas contributed the idea of “discourse theory” (1985) which posited that communicative reason was the basis for consensus and mutual understanding. Eventually, the notions of “meta-theory,” emancipatory knowledge, and dialectical thought became the cornerstones of critical theory, which underlay the notion that self-criticism and dialogical critique of exiting theories were essential for transformative action (Giroux, 2001). These principles laid the foundations for the development of critical pedagogy, which is a theory that continues to be used extensively in research and practice today.

*Critical pedagogy.* Like critical theory, there is no uniform definition for critical pedagogy; it is rather made up of a heterogeneous set of beliefs and principles (Darder et al., 2003). Critical pedagogy is rooted in the belief that “men and women are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege….The individual, a social actor, both creates and is created by the social universe of which he/she is a part” (McLaren, 2003, p. 69). Thus the main task of critical educators is to engage individuals in “praxis”—that is, to awaken their understanding of the theoretical concepts of transformation, resistance, and counterhegemony, as well as to incite them into active participation through reflection, dialogue, and action to bring about a society that rests upon the ideals of democracy and social justice (Darder et al., 2003; Freire, 1970/2005).
Critical pedagogues view schools as sites of both domination and contestation (Giroux, 1983, 2001). It is through the development of critical consciousness that students learn to identify the subtle, yet pervasive, acts of oppression. Critical pedagogy unveils the hidden curriculum that is taught unquestioningly in schools, which attempts to enhance the status quo of the dominant class while perpetuating the present structures of hegemony and exploitation (Apple, 1982; Giroux, 1983, 2001). McLaren (2007) defines the hidden curriculum as the “unintended outcomes of the schooling process” (p. 212). The knowledge and values that are transmitted, the pedagogical and learning styles that are emphasized, and the day-to-day rules of conduct that are condoned or criticized come under the package of the hidden curriculum. The result of the hidden curriculum is, on a less extreme scale, a pronounced disassociation between the “norm” and the “deviant.” On a more drastic level, it is a horrific act of “cultural genocide,” which Spring (2004) articulates as the “educational process of destroying a people’s culture and replacing it with a new culture” (p. 3). Deculturalization operates on the assumption that minority cultures are inferior and therefore must be gentrified; that is, if people of color must be tolerated, they at least should be taught at an early age to conform to the standards of the dominant class. Educational institutions in this sense serve as the perfect venue for carrying out the operations of cultural genocide.

For this reason, critical pedagogues encourage educators to reject what Freire contends as the “banking method” of pedagogy, which views students as empty containers whose knowledge need to be filled by the teacher (Freire, 1970/2005). Liberatory education requires individuals to participate in conscious problem solving, for knowledge emerges only “through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). Freire further contends
that to objectify students as inanimate, static beings is “necrophilic”; it deadens the oppressed to a continual state of subjugation. By grounding their own voices and knowledge in their revolutionary efforts, however, the oppressed can begin to chip away at society’s definition of their “otherness” and “deviancy.” Counterhegemony decents the culture and knowledge of the dominant class as the “norm”; it rents “whiteness” and “privilege”—two seemingly inseparable terms—apart from one another.

_Multicultural education._ Multicultural education in schooling began during the Civil Rights era in the 1960s and 1970s as a social protest movement that sought to dismantle racism and transform schools to prepare students to live in an increasingly multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural society (Banks & Banks, 1995, 2004). Banks (1995b) argues that multicultural education is founded upon five dimensions: (1) content integration; (2) the knowledge construction process; (3) prejudice reduction; (4) an equity pedagogy; (5) and an empowering school culture and social structure. These dimensions speak to the need to utilize the students’ cultural referents as springboards to illustrate the key concepts taught in various disciplines, to challenge dominant forms of knowledge while validating the experiential knowledge of minority students, to raise teachers’ awareness to their racial attitudes and biases, and to challenge the institutional racism that persists in schools (Banks, 1995a).

Over the years, however, multicultural education has been used by theorists and educators as a pedagogical tool to encourage tolerance and acceptance for diversity without connecting it to an analysis of racism (Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004). As Berlak and Moyenda (2001) argue, the centrality of multicultural education is on “naming and actively challenging racism and other forms of oppression, not simply recognizing and celebrating differences and reducing prejudice” (p. 92). The liberal misuse of the theory as a means of
introducing the students to world cultures as part of a month-long thematic unit or celebrating diversity in a superficial tourist-like manner has drawn sharp criticisms from scholars and the public alike for its limited effectiveness on the academic success of minority students (May, 1999). Moreover, multicultural education has also been criticized by Western traditionalists for being nothing more than “isolated incidents, anecdotes, and examples of poorly conceptualized and implemented educational practices” (Banks, 1995a, p. 391). Central to their criticism is how multicultural education seeks to threaten the canonical Western curriculum with a body of knowledge that is rooted more in personal narratives than in scholarly research, and whose knowledge has more potential to tear apart rather than to unify a nation that is densely populated with individuals with diverse cultural experiences (Howe, 1991; Schlesinger, 1991).

To address these criticisms, multicultural education scholars has found it necessary to reconceptualize the theory in a critical manner (Kanpol & McLaren, 1995; May, 1999). Critical multiculturalists seek to form a nexus of multicultural education with antiracist education by merging the elements of attending to the historical, social, and dialogical formations of cultural identity with examining power relations in the perpetuation of systemic racism. As McLaren (1995) contends,

A critical multiculturalism suggests that teachers and cultural workers need to take up the issue of difference in ways that do not reply the monocultural essentialism of the “centrism”....They need to build a politics of alliance building, of dreaming together, of solidarity that moves beyond the condescension of, say, “race awareness week” that actually serves to keep forms of institutionalized racism in tact. A solidarity has to be struggled for that is not centered around market imperatives but develops out of the imperatives of freedom, liberation, democracy, and critical citizenship (pp. 47-48).

Although multicultural education is much theorized and contested in interdisciplinary fields, scholars on this topic agree that the goal of multicultural education is to increase the learning opportunities of racially and ethnically diverse students by attending to their cultural
backgrounds and learning styles. Moreover, it seeks to empower minority students by promoting critical thinking skills, presenting divergent viewpoints, engendering a sense of social consciousness, and honing their skills for political activism. That being said, however, the literature on this topic is extensive and cannot be done justice with a brief summary here. A more detailed reading on multicultural education can be found in works by Banks and Banks (1995, 2004), Gay (1995, 1997), May (1999), McLaren (1995), Nieto (2000), Sleeter (2001), and Sleeter and Delgado Bernal (2004).

*Antiracist Education.* Opposed to the “apolitical and folksy orientation of multicultural education” (Bonnett & Carrington, 1996, p. 280), a movement toward antiracist education grew out of predominantly urban areas in Britain in the 1980s to raise questions regarding issues of power and racism embedded in the curricular content of schooling (Brandt, 1986; Gillborn, 2000; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004; Troyna, 1987). Antiracist scholars argue that rather than merely addressing minority students’ experiences as a response to discriminatory practices, antiracist teaching should view activism, conflict, and struggle as key characteristics in the education of the oppressed (Gillborn, 2000). Troyna (1987) argues that the irreconcilable difference that exists between multicultural education and antiracist education lies in the way racism is conceived. While the former views racism as the “product of ignorance and perpetuated by negative attitudes and individual prejudices” (p. 311), the latter regards racism as institutionalized in the historical and political structure of society.

Antiracist pedagogues are unabashedly critical of white dominance. They eschew the normative presumption of whiteness as ordinary (Dyer, 1997), which renders non-whites as deviant, exotic, and less human (Apple, 2003). Moreover, Bonnett (1997) writes,

Whiteness has developed, over the past two hundred years, into a taken-for-granted experience structured upon a varying set of supremacist assumptions...
Non-White identities, by contrast, have been denied the privileges of normativity and are marked within the West as marginal and inferior (p. 188).

Gillborn (2008) traces the perennial discrepancy between white students’ success and students of color’s failure to a societal conspiracy to maintain a structure of white supremacy. By delineating evidence of foul play, favoritism, and interest convergence through a thorough analysis of educational policies, colorblind practices, school finance, assessment, and reverse discrimination claims, he demonstrates how every facet of society caters to the preservation of a White World.

The task of antiracist pedagogues, therefore, is to raise whites people’s awareness to their own whiteness. It is to make present the political, social, historical, and cultural ramifications that make whites a distinct racial category. In other words, it is to make “whiteness strange” (Dyer, 1997, p. 4) so as to decenter whiteness as the accepted norm.

*Culturally relevant pedagogy.* Bourdieu (1977, 1986) conceptualized the notion of “cultural capital,” which is the heritage, knowledge, traditions, language, beliefs, actions, dress, and rules of engagement that are passed down from one generation to another. A person’s cultural capital is defined by his/her race, gender, class, religion, education, and location. One’s cultural capital may be vastly different from another, even within the same race and/or class. In America, the cultural capital that defines the norm is that of the Anglo-Saxon, well-educated, middle to upper class, Protestant male. It is this capital that schools tend to emphasize in their curriculum and instruction, and educators unthinkingly perpetuate these values through the means of the dominant curriculum.

To counter the devastating effects of cultural capital of the dominant class, Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995b) urges educators to recognize the students’ cultures and to use their experiential knowledge to their advantage. Ladson-Billings coined the phrase “culturally
relevant pedagogy” to advocate for a form of teaching that “uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 17). Culturally relevant pedagogy rejects assimilation; instead, it affirms the students’ identity and empowers them to think critically about the development and ramifications of cultural capital. Ladson-Billings contends that the aims of culturally relevant pedagogy are threefold: to “produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 474). The failure of many students of color to achieve in schools has been attributed to the devastating effects of “stigma” (Steele, 1992) and to the rejection of one’s own race in an attempt to “act white” so as to feel accepted (Ogbu, 2004). If the custom of schools is to validate the cultural identities of minority students through the means of culturally relevant pedagogy, students may less likely fall prey to the devastating regime of deculturalization.

**Critical race pedagogy.** Lynn (1999) introduced critical race pedagogy as the “analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly on the perceptions, experiences, and counterhegemonic practices of educators of color” (p. 615). The theory is constructed based on the reflections and experiences of black people (Lynn, 1999, 2004, 2006). It bases its roots in African American history, language, religion, and social formation, and it is highly critical of Eurocentricism and the ideological control that whiteness exerts over all aspects of social mooring (Lynn, 2004). He proposes that critical race pedagogy is derived from three sources: (1) Black scholarship; (2) culturally relevant pedagogy; and (3) critical theory (Lynn, 2006). Critical race pedagogy attempts to raise blacks’ awareness and appreciation of their own
heritage. It delegitimates myths of African inferiority while promoting a positive sense of cultural belonging and identification.

Critical race pedagogy is similar to CRT in that they both emphasize the “importance of cultural identity” and the “practice of liberatory pedagogy” (Lynn, 1999, p. 615). Both theories strive to ground African Americans’ recognition of their own culture in an affirmative, empowering light. The goal of both is to enable blacks to utilize the sociocultural knowledge of their race to enhance the lives of their own people while challenging the denigration of their race imposed by the dominant group. Critical race pedagogy veers slightly from CRT, however, in that while the latter embraces a broader analysis of racial oppression in society, the former is focused primarily on the historical and social construction of racism against black Americans in education. The aim of critical race pedagogy, therefore, is to invite black teachers to “draw on culture as a basis for fostering the academic achievement of African American students” and to “investigat[e] the liberatory dimensions of their teaching practices” (Lynn, 2006, p. 116).

CRT as a praxis of theory and practice. Despite the recent proliferation of studies using CRT to examine the role of racism in educational settings, the use of the theory as a pedagogical tool is still in its infancy. Much like McLaren’s (1998) contention with critical theory, where he argues that although much is written about the theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy, little is offered in terms of guidance to educators on how to implement the ideas into practice. The lack of guidance is even more pronounced in the elementary school setting, since the students are perceived to be too young to understand the forces of oppression and to participate in emancipatory dialogue. CRT runs a similar risk, and Ladson-Billings warned of the possibility of such occurrence when the theory began to gain momentum in educational research in the 1990s. She wrote,
What, then, might happen to CRT in the hands of educational researchers and school personnel? I doubt if it will go very far into the mainstream. Rather, CRT in education is likely to become the “darling” of the radical left, continue to generate scholarly papers and debate, and never penetrate the classrooms and daily experiences of students of color (1998, p. 22).

To date, there are but only a few studies that have attempted to integrate CRT as a theoretical framework into an evaluation or a construction of classroom pedagogy (DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Iseke-Barnes, 2000; Knaus, 2009; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Stovall, 2005). All of these studies used the CRT lens to challenge the students to wrestle with the presence of white dominance and institutional racism in the classroom curriculum. Moreover, the studies heavily stressed the importance of attending to the students’ voices and utilizing their counterstories as starting points to critique and resist the Eurocentric policies and curriculum that bear little to no relevance to the students’ daily lives.

For example, in Knaus’s (2009) work with 20 students in an urban continuation high school, many of whom had been in juvenile halls or probation previously, he noted with irony how meaningless the idea of having to meet proficiency on standardized tests is when his students were often victims of hunger, sexual and physical abuse, and street violence. Through the use of journaling and discourse, Kraus provided the students a forum to “(1) develop and express voice; (2) demonstrate the overwhelming nature of racism, poverty, and violence that shapes everyday life; and (3) develop the tools to survive” (p. 145). Thus, while NCLB sought to normalize the students’ knowledge to reflect the Western canon, Knaus aimed to use the minority students’ stories to render such a narrow curricular focus as undemocratic and oppressive.

Moreover, Rogers and Mosley (2006) introduced the concept of racial literacy (Guinier, 2004) to challenge a group of second graders to recognize whiteness and to critique the practice
of colorblindness. Using literature such as *The Bus Ride* (Miller, 1998) and *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washington* (Ruffin, 2001), the authors led the children in a critical analysis of how the narratives and illustrations in the texts portrayed stereotypical assumptions of whiteness and blackness. They also pushed the children to confront their own whiteness and to recognize that racism is as prevalent today as it was in the days of the Civil Rights Movement. The authors concluded that racial discourse must begin at an early age if we as a society are to have any hope of dismantling the systemic roots of racism. A curriculum of silence only serves to reinforce the “practice of colorblindness, denial of racism, and the uncritical reproduction of white privilege” (p. 484). In essence, they argued that if educators were to disrupt this silence in the elementary school setting, white children would more likely be attentive to the presence of privilege and power, the counternarratives of racial minorities, and the efforts of white allies in their resistance to racial oppression throughout their upbringing.

But a radical change in curricular design of this magnitude cannot be enforced or maintained without the backing of the local or state educational agencies. Such then, is the need to address systemic change at the administrative and policy levels.

**CRT in Education Policy**

Over the last decade, a preponderance of literature has arisen utilizing CRT as the epistemological lens to examine the racial overtones that preside over matters of education policy. In particular, CRT scholars have used the tenet of interest-convergence to focus their analysis of legal and policy issues with regards to desegregation, assessment, and school finance.

*Desegregation.* 2005 marked the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and with it came an outpouring of anger from education scholars who lamented over the unfulfilled promises for racial integration and educational equity that *Brown* had proffered to procure. Due
to practices of white flight, tracking, busing, and the voucher system, schools today are arguably more segregated on the basis of race than in the pre-*Brown* era (Saddler, 2005). As a result, Saddler argues that “African American youth are not only mis-educated but actually ‘de-educated’” (p. 44), in that they are being “systemically excluded from education system and/or being systematically destroyed within that system” (p. 44).

Many scholars of color support Saddler’s claim, citing evidence of ability grouping throughout K-12 schooling as a way to maintain the racial imbalance of students in college preparatory versus vocational programs (Oakes, 2008). Solórzano and Ornelas (2004) argue that the common practice of “schools within schools” fulfills the districts’ responsibility to meet *Brown*’s mandate for racial integration while continuing the practice of racial resegregation within schools. More notably, they highlight how Latina/o and African American students are disproportionately excluded from Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and how such practices preclude their opportunities to colleges and universities that weigh AP courses in the admissions process.

Furthermore, Beratan (2008) contends that continued overrepresentation of minority students in special education programs is enhanced by an intersectionality of institutional ableism and racism. One of the stipulations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) is to provide students who qualify for special education services to be placed in the “least restrictive environment” (P.L. 108-446). Using the theory of interest-convergence, he argues that

> [t]he institutional abl[e]ism built into IDEA’s LRE clause serves to legali[z]e the discrimination that it was intended to alleviate. With this legal and accessible discrimination at its disposal, the special education system offers the general education system a means of maintaining the discrimination that *Brown v. the Board of Education* made illegal. The disproportionate identification of minority students as disabled becomes the means of transposing disability discrimination
in place of racist discrimination. Understanding this makes it easier for us to recognize the explicit connection between the development of special education and white America’s interest in recouping its losses from the Brown decision (pp. 348-349).

As these practices show, while Brown provided the rhetoric of equal opportunities and racial reform in education, its outcomes have remained more or less the same. *De facto* segregation continues to dominate all facets of public schooling. As these scholars argue, unless there is an interest for whites to mobilize toward desegregation inside and outside of schools, it is unlikely that full racial integration will be achieved.

*Assessment.* Since its enactment in 2002, NCLB has been much scrutinized for its poor implementation, putative measures, lack of funding, and unscientifically-based methods of remediating failing schools (Borkowski & Sneed, 2006; Gay, 2007; Hursh, 2005). More specifically, it has been argued that in its attempt to promote educational equity for all students, the statute has had the effect of privatizing education for majority gains (Emery, 2007), undemocratizing education (Sleeter, 2008), and widening the gap between minority and non-minority students (Gay, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007).

Gillborn (2008) argues that the “assessment game” is a conspiracy set up by the dominant group to legitimize their status as the social and intellectual elites while psychologically manipulating the oppressed to believe that their lack of educational attainment is due to their own laziness, familial dysfunctionalism, or lack of intellectual ability. It is set up such that the only measure of the students’ scholastic aptitude is determined by a single paper-and-pencil test while failing to account for the numerous factors leading to the outcome, including the lack of opportunity to learn (Pullin, 2008), poor teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2006), inadequate funding (Alemán, 2006; Vaught, 2009), and deficit thinking on the part of the entire educational system (Amin, 1997; Feagin, 2006). Ladson-Billings puts it this way:
In the classroom, a poor-quality curriculum, couple with poor-quality instruction, a poorly prepared teacher, and limited resources add up to poor performance on the so-called objective tests. CRT theorists point out that the assessment game is merely a validation of the dominant culture’s superiority (2004, p. 60).

The “game” is not lost upon students either. One of the students in the urban continuation high school in Knaus’s (2009) study said,

Listen, if I fail a test that asks me questions I have never seen, that judges me based on courses I did not take, is that my fault? Is it my responsibility to learn what a teacher don’t teach?....then don’t test me on things I don’t know. I can tell you what I don’t know without having to sit through your test (p. 38).

It could be argued that the present educational system is set up geographically, financially, politically, and socially to produce a multi-tiered caste system based on test scores. Those students scoring at the Advanced level are likely to be those who already possess advantages based on race and class, and their high test scores will in turn play a significant role in their securing a spot at one of the nation’s most prestigious universities. This will undoubtedly lead to greater societal and economic opportunities, thereby sustaining the advantages of being an unearned member of the upperclass. On the other hand, those who are prone to score at the Warning/Failing level are likely to be children living in poverty, a large proportion of who also happen to be racial minorities and non-native English speakers. Their poor quality education and their feeling of racial/social ostracization will likely lead to a disconnect with the curriculum, the teachers, and the schools in general. Their failure will in all likelihood lead to school drop out, thereby sustaining a life of poverty.

In fact, Darling-Hammond (2007) argue that NCLB has inadvertently created large incentives for schools to keep struggling students from not being counted in AYP reporting using ingenious methods such as pushing students into special education, retaining low-performers, denying admission to high performing schools, and encouraging students to drop out. Dobbs
(2003) also argues that in states that have used test data to drive school improvement such as Texas, New York, and Massachusetts, a large number of minority students have “disappeared” at the tenth-grade level, either having been retained in ninth grade to avoid school sanctions or having been pushed out of schools into “alternative” settings. Such practices have led to a triple-fold increase in the “school-to-prison pipeline” since the 1980s (Wald & Losen, 2003), where functionally illiterate children who have no prospect of going to college or joining the working force often end up.

The rhetoric of NCLB purports to eliminate the racial and economic achievement gap, but its putative measures for failing schools have merely served to sustain, if not widen the gap (Gay, 2007). Simply because initial reports have indicated an increase in the performance of racial and social minorities, the gap has not been eliminated, and neither is it ever likely to. Systemic oppression will see to it that the status quo is maintained, even while giving a false pretense of care on the part of the dominant group. Gillborn (2008) goes so far as to argue that if in the unlikely event that black students begin to master and outperform whites on the standardized tests, it is probable that another strategy will be concocted to “reengineer” black students’ failure. We have seen this done time and again with the ever-changing laws to ensure that escaped slaves are properly returned to their owners, the enactment of literacy requirements to block blacks from their entitled voting rights, and the establishment of a tracked system to recreate a “separate but equal” educational policy in the face of desegregation laws. Is it therefore so impossible to conceive of a conspiracy plot to maintain the racial stratification with the development of assessment tests that are intended to fail minority students?

__School funding.__ Ladson-Billings (1998) contends that “no area of schooling underscores inequity and racism better than school funding” (p. 12). In *Savage inequalities: Children in*
America's schools, Kozol (1991) shocked the nation when he exposed the deplorable conditions in which some of the nation’s poorest schools operated. In the largely underfunded urban schools that he examined, which comprised predominantly of students of color, the schools lacked supplies and updated textbooks, functional laboratory facilities and bathrooms, and qualified teachers who set rigorous curriculum and high expectations for the students. Although many legal battles have been fought over the issue of disparate school funding (e.g. McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education, 1993; San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez, 1973), Darling-Hammond (2007) argues that “schools serving large number of low-income students and students of color [continue to] have larger class sizes, fewer teachers and counselors, fewer and lower-quality academic courses, extracurricular activities, books, materials, supplies and computers, libraries and special services” (p. 247).

Alemán (2006) uses a CRT framework to examine the racially discriminatory practices built into the Texas school finance policy. Since the 1960s, school finance policy in Texas has been challenged in the courts and legislature. After decades of lawsuits filed against the state for its failure to provide equitable funding to poor districts that made up mostly of minority students, a more equalized system was finally established in 1995 under Robin Hood. Robin Hood aimed to take all of the property taxes collected by the state and redistribute it equitably across all districts, thereby “robbing” wealthier school districts the funds that they could have collected through local property taxes. Within a few years of the law being in effect, however, the largely wealthy, white, male-dominated legislature in both major political parties fought to eliminate the bill, claiming that the system was inherently unfair and un-American (Alemán, 2006). More disconcertingly, when Alemán interviewed eight Mexican American superintendents in mostly poor districts regarding their perception of the racial implications of the unequal funding system,
the majority of the superintendent did not see Robin Hood as a race issue, but rather as a class issue. Many even regarded the bill as being *unfair* to the wealthier school districts, which supported Harris’s (1993) contention that whiteness as a property right is legitimated and reinforced through colorbind discourse.

Vaught (2009) also used CRT to study the racially discriminatory financial system practiced at one large, urban school. Using a practice called “differential student funding,” the district sought to provide school choice to students by attaching different amounts of money to different kids. Schools with higher number of English Language Learners, Title I students, and students with special needs, therefore, would have the benefit of receiving more funds than schools with students in regular education. However, as Vaught found out,

>[T]he money attached to each child stopped following him or her at the front door of the school. All monies were put into one pot, divided evenly across the number of students enrolled at each school, and reported as the per-pupil dollars” (p. 552).

Thus, the money that had been rightfully entitled to predominantly racial minorities who needed every resource available to meet graduation requirements were often taken by vocal white parents who demanded enrichment and advanced placement programs for their children. According to these parents, each child was entitled to his/her “per-pupil expenditure,” regardless of where the money had come from and to whom it actually belonged. In this sense, Vaught argues, “Black children were objectified as currency” who were “owned” by middle-class whites (2009, p. 559).

Furthermore, NCLB is designed such that the schools serving the neediest students are at the greatest risk of losing federal funds. Rather than providing more financial support to failing schools, the putative measures under the statute remove the much-needed funding by way of vouchers and extra tutoring services provided by outside educational agencies. Darling-
Hammond warns, “[i]f left unchanged, the Act will deflect needed resources for teaching and learning to ever more intensive testing of students, ranking of schools, bussing of students and lawyers’ fees for litigating the many unintended consequences of the legislation” (2007, p. 247). If the concept of “robbing from the rich” in the Robin Hood bill is unsettling for politicians, what could explain their condoning the practice of “robbing from the poor”? No one would find such practice legal or ethical, unless of course, one views the “poor” as inherently undeserving of the services rendered to them in the first place. As Vaught (2009) argues, intellectual property is a right reserved for the whites. In the eyes of a white dominant society, the “robbing” is nothing more than rightly cashing in on what naturally belonged to them.

**CRT in Counternarratives**

Perhaps the most used strategy in the work of critical race theorists is the telling of counternarratives. In naming one’s own reality and attending to the voices of the oppressed, those who are traditionally marginalized in the dominant discourse use storytelling so as to challenge the stereotypical images placed on them. Delgado (1989) argues that counternarratives serve a threefold purpose: (1) to debunk the validity of the “rational” and “formulaic” discourse commonly used by Anglo-American scholarship, and the illegitimacy of the “personal” and “experiential” knowledge of racial minorities; (2) to heal the nihilistic wounds of minorities whose perceptions of self and their own culture has been denigrated by the dominant group; and (3) to make the oppressors become aware of their power and their role in perpetuating the oppression of others.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) conceptualized “critical race methodology” as a strategy that focuses on the stories and experiences of students of color. For example, Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) used CRT and LatCrit to study the microaggressions experienced by African
American students on college campuses, and found that the students often felt invisible, isolated, and racially discriminated by peers and professors in classroom settings. Delgado Bernal (2002) argued that “the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of students of color have been devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings,” and that counternarratives provide a venue for students of color to be recognized as “holders and creators of knowledge” (p. 105). Meanwhile, Howard and Reynolds (2008) used the strategy to engage middle-class African American parents in focus group discussions on their and their children’s experiences in schools. While all of the parents in their study felt that it was important to be involved in the educational experiences of their children, many of the parents did not feel that their voices were included in the decisions that really mattered, such as the hiring of more teachers and administrators of color, budget issues, disciplinary practices, and the need for more cultural and ethnic diversity in the curriculum.

Counternarratives come in a variety of genre and are used in fictional and nonfictional forms. As nonfictions, they represent a personal account of the stories told by people of color. As fictions, they depict a different reality as seen or imagined by the oppressed. These altered realities are based on actual historical precedents, and they represent the fears and concerns of minorities in present and futuristic terms. For example, through the use of counternarratives, Yosso (2006) illustrates a fictional, yet probable, account of a group of Chicana mothers actively involved in critical discourse regarding the educational inequities of the school. Unlike typical PTA meetings where parents are merely assigned duties to serve the interests of the school, Madres Por la Educación fought to change the ways in which knowledge is constructed, questioned the inaccessibility of GATE/magnet programs to minority students, challenged a curriculum that centered on whiteness, and opposed the uneven distribution of resources across
the district. They utilized their own cultural wealth and experiential knowledge as channels of empowerment. The parents in this story did not sit idly by and fatalistically accept the politics of school as inevitable. Instead, they were leaders for change and revolutionists against unjust educational practices. In short, Yosso told this story to envision the potential for engaging minority parents’ in a vastly different manner than has been traditionally done. Rather than relegating them to the inconsequential roles of planning multicultural nights and sharing ethnic foods, critical race educators place the voices of minority parents and students at the center of schools’ decision-making power, especially when the make-up of the school consists primarily of students of color.

In essence, the underlying question that all those who employ the strategy of counterstories is “whose voices are heard and whose voices are left out?” (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Yosso, 2005). The efforts of CRT scholars are therefore to deconstruct the traditional line of insider/outsider knowledge and to make the voices of the marginalized count in the larger discourse.

**CRT in Educational Leadership**

Although issues of race and achievement have long plagued the field of educational administration, the application of CRT in the work of PreK-12 administrators has been a largely unexplored area. While CRT is slowly emerging in educational leadership literature (Alemán, 2006; Evans, 2007; Lopez, 2003; Parker & Villalpando, 2007), most of the work done thus far has been centered on the framework of critical theory and antiracist education. Race-oriented scholars in the field contend that school leadership programs often avoid the discussion of race and do not adequately prepare students to become antiracist educators (Lopez, 2003; Parker & Shapiro, 1992; Young & Laible, 2000). For example, in a study of graduate students’
experiences in three educational administration programs across the country, Parker and Shapiro (1992) found that the students were frustrated with the dearth of attention paid to diversity issues, in particular topics dealing with race, urban education, disabilities, sexual orientation, and class differences. Instead, the students reported learning far more about these topics through informal discussions with one another outside of class. Because of this lack of preparation, many white leaders fail to recognize racism as the root of educational, social, and structural inequalities in school settings, or worse, their own complicity in the perpetuation of white dominance (Lopez, 2003; Young & Laible, 2000).

Even though education leaders are well aware of the “racial achievement gap,” the proposed solutions have tended to come in the forms of restructuring or providing additional services. Among these commonly used tactics include the offering of in-school Title I services and/or additional afterschool tutoring to underachieving students (Puma & Drury, 2000; Puma et al., 1997), collaborating with community agencies that provide comprehensive social services (Dryfoos, 2000; Walsh et al., 2000), and referring parents to programs that offer early intervention services (Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Ramey et al., 1999; Zigler, 1993; Zigler & Styfro, 1983). All of these strategies, although well-intentioned and beneficial to a certain extent, do not address the deeper presence of racism in the structure of schools. Even detracking, which attempts to dismantle white, middle class privilege by placing students in heterogeneously-grouped classes rather than in classes based on ability can fall into the perpetrator camp if the ultimate goal is simply to “level the playing field.” In all of these situations, the students and parents are deemed as helpless individuals who need the assistance of kindhearted benefactors to raise them out of their oppressed state. Such tactics fall tragically in the perpetrator perspective since the aim is to neutralize inequities rather than to actively counter racism. Instead of
regarding minority parents and students as collaborators of school reform and allies in the effort to uproot racism, administrators and teachers often see them as problems to solve.

For those reasons, Lopez argues that it is essential for students in educational administration preparation programs to engage in “critical dialogue about the role of racism in society” (2003, p. 76). School leaders need to begin employing the “victim’s perspective” and to see the ubiquity of racism in the structure of schools from the worldview of minority students and parents. Since racism occurs on the basis of action and inaction, Young and Laible (2000) argue that it is imperative that administrators actively promote antiracism in their school environment. Ladson-Billings and Grant (1997) describe antiracist education as a practice that “challenges the total school environment to understand the ways in which racism is manifested in schools and society. It encourages educators to integrate antiracist concepts into all subject areas…. [and it] attempts to reveal the adverse effects of racism on student learning and development” (p. 20).

In examining how school leaders attempt to address the systemic roots of racism, Laible and Harrington (1998) conducted a study of two principals who practiced the theory of antiracism in rural high schools that comprised largely of poor minority students—one in Alabama and the other one in Texas—whose leadership has resulted in elevating the achievement scores of their student population to match that of the highest SES, suburban, Euro-American school districts in each of the states. The researchers found that the success of the principals’ leadership was due to four common themes: (1) they persistently challenged the myth of minority inferiority; (2) they courageously advocated for what was right and stood on “moral imperatives, regardless of the political consequences” (p. 118); (3) they demanded a “responsible community” in which all members of the staff were expected to focus primarily on instruction,
work together, and be collectively responsible for student learning; and (4) they encouraged teachers to have a holistic knowledge of their students—their backgrounds, biographies, families, interests, and hopes.

Similarly, Blumer and Tatum (1999) investigated the outcomes of a suburban school district in Massachusetts in which antiracism was established as a core value. Although African American and Hispanic American student together made up less than 10% of the student population, the district leaders were gravely concerned about the gap in achievement test scores between whites and minority students. In building an antiracist community, the educators took part in a professional development course that examined the concepts of “prejudice, racism, white privilege and internalized oppression” (p. 259). Central to the teachers’ learning was the idea of becoming active antiracists, that is, individuals who challenged institutional racism through self-reflection, critique, and curricular and instructional transformation. As a result, all aspects of schooling were scrutinized for their perpetuation or elimination of racism, including school goals, curricular content, instructional practices, teacher evaluation, professional development, and staff hiring. In this district, the school community regarded one another as allies of antiracist education.

In other words, educational leaders who are committed to antiracism cannot stop short at simply discussing the students’ state of oppression, change the curriculum to incorporate a more multicultural dimension, or expect respect for human differences from everyone. Instead, they need to engage in self-reflective practices that seek to reject “ideologies and practices steeped in blatantly biased or color-blind traditions [in efforts] to transform schools” (Cooper, 2009, p. 695). Dantley (2005) argues that a “spiritual” transformation is in order in urban educational
leadership. He means this less so in a religious sense, but more in an overtone of critical consciousness, moral resolve, and hopeful idealism. He writes,

[R]ace-transcending leaders…critically reflect on the context within which schools are established and contend with the issues of power that are at work there. They facilitate a learning environment that is not put off by the systemic realities of racist, sexist, and classist behavior. They see it…as an opportunity to use the academic and intellectual prowess of the learning community to attack and redirect these practices of inequality and social injustice (p. 670).

The call for educational administrators to become “race-transcending leaders” is particularly crucial in the twenty-first century. While the minority student population in U.S. schools is increasingly on the rise, whites continue to make up 82.3% of individuals in educational leadership positions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). The positionality of school leaders wields decision-making power that can adversely or beneficially affect the educational experiences and outcomes of minority students. To construct schools as sites of liberation requires administrators who are committed to continuous self-reflection and who are willing to stand firmly on the principles of anti-discrimination in the face of opposition from the teachers, the parents, and the community.

Given the necessity to engage in reflective practices, this study sought to engage a core group of administrators and teacher leaders in ongoing inquiry-based dialogue to examine the historical, social, and political underpinnings of the racial achievement gap. To transform classroom curriculum and instruction to reflect antiracist pedagogy, it is essential to first raise the educators’ awareness toward their own unintentional prejudices.

Using CRT to Raise Educators’ Race Consciousness

Much research has been done in the field of teacher education to challenge preservice and inservice teachers to confront their own white racism (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; hooks, 1994; Marx, 2004; Paley, 1979;
Much also has been done in the area of critical whiteness studies to render whiteness visible and to centralize whites in the position of domination and exploitation (Applebaum, 2008; Fine, Weis, Powell, & Mun Wong, 1997; Frankenberg, 1997; Giroux, 1997; Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996; Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1997; Leonardo, 2002; Roediger, 1991, 1994; Scheurich, 1993). The volume of studies on the power and privilege of whiteness has been instrumental in forwarding the field of education to address the deep-seated social and racial inequalities present in American schooling. At the same time, however, the preponderance of literature written on this topic has also posed several problems.

One is that the unsystematic, highly individualized approaches to raising the race consciousness of educators in teacher preparation programs or professional developments have engendered a smorgasbord of ideas as to how to engage educators in difficult conversations about race and racism. Aside from the two underlying premises of making whiteness visible and unpacking white privilege, there seems to be little consensus as to how to begin such a politically, emotionally, and racially-sensitive conversation, how to handle resistance from the participants, and how to link this newfound awareness (if that should come to pass) to social activism. The vagueness associated with this type of training has led scholars to caution the adverse effects that poorly-constructed and ill-prepared programs can have on the participants’ psychology (Henze, Lucas, & Scott, 1998; Tatum, 1992). It may lead to guilt, shame, anger, resentment, and greater resistance (Gillespie et al., 2002; Tatum, 1992). It may even embitter whites toward being victims of “reverse discrimination” or grow fed up with all of the “white bashing” (Gillespie et al., 2002). To avoid such a spectrum of reactions, it would behoove
scholars in this area to conglomerate their wealth of experiences to approach the task of raising educators’ race consciousness in a more cohesive, systemic fashion.

This leads to a second problem with the current effort to address white racism: that racism is considered as an individual pathology (Vaught, 2008). Discourse on racism typically centers on efforts to push whites to come to grips with their own prejudiced nature. It fails to recognize that racism is a systemic problem, one whose roots are much deeper and more pervasive than getting individuals to become aware of their own racist ideologies. Although present studies situate the need for race consciousness within a context of structural inequalities and white supremacy, the researchers are wholly satisfied when the participants demonstrate an inkling of recognition of their own white privilege. There is little analysis of how their privilege is situated in the legal, social, and historical oppression of racial minorities, or how a purposeful dismantling of their privilege is necessary in order to effect systemic change. It is, after all, easy to engage in intellectual, circuitous discourse about race and racism if one’s lifestyle is more or less unaffected by one’s awareness of others’ oppression. It is infinitely harder to bear others’ oppression as one’s own, which would inevitably lead one to desire change not merely on an individual level, but on a larger, systemic scale.

A third problem is that these studies are predominantly conducted by white researchers, whose primary objective is to raise the race consciousness of white educators. However, white scholars’ conceptualization of racism is vastly different from scholars of color’s experience with racism, and white participants’ understanding of white privilege is incomparable to minority participants’ familiarity with racial oppression and ostracization. To engage in discourse about white racism when either the researchers or the participants are non-white may raise issues of power and positionality. Would students of color in teacher preparation programs amplify their
racialized experiences so as to give white instructors what they would like to hear in order to receive a higher grade? Would white teachers trivialize minority scholars’ experiences with discrimination on account of their being overly sensitive to race issues? Even in the most ideal of circumstances where all participants reflected upon their racial experience with utmost candor, where power and positionality did not influence the dynamics of the discussion, one would still have to acknowledge that a discourse that is centered on “blind racism” or “white privilege” among whites would still be radically different from a discourse that is centered on “systemic racism” and “oppression” between people of color. This is perhaps why CRT scholars find the dominant discourse on racism somewhat unsatisfactory (Stovall, 2006; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). It continues to leave out the voices of the marginalized while glorifying the progress made by whites.

The use of CRT in raising the race consciousness of educators alleviates the problems noted above. First, the thematic nature of CRT easily lends itself to addressing the historical, social, and political context of race and racism in a systematic fashion. A critique on the “endemic nature of racism” and the “myth of meritocracy” is rooted in legal precedents, not merely on theoretical hypotheses or circumstantial interpretations. Rather than challenging the existence of white privilege as an amorphous entity, CRT provides concrete examples of how whiteness has garnered unmerited benefits throughout U.S. history. Second, CRT emphatically rejects the viewpoint that racism is symptomatic of individual pathology; instead, it unwaveringly positions racism as a systemic condition. CRT scholars seek not only to raise educators’ consciousness to their own blind prejudices, but more importantly to the pervasiveness and persistence of racism in society. Third, CRT was a movement created by students of color who felt a need to center their understanding of legal analysis from a racialized
perspective. Their refusal to be taught Constitutional Law from white, distinguished professors was indicative of their desire to have their marginalized experiences be heard and validated, not to be dismissed or objectified by the traditional interpretation of the law. CRT was and is intended to bring a “colored” perspective to the dominant discourse, not to be sidetracked by discourse on whiteness. While dismantling the invisibility of whiteness is undoubtedly a goal of CRT scholars, the more pressing objective is affirming the lived experiences of minorities in the enduring presence of racial discrimination and oppression.

It was with this perspective in mind that I used the framework of CRT to raise the race consciousness of educators in this study. Unlike previous studies that sought to enlighten educators of their “unconscious racism,” I aimed to enlighten the participants to the very presence of racism and their complicity to its continued existence. I grounded our discussions on the topics of the “endemic nature of racism,” the “cultural capital of whiteness,” “colorblindness vs. color consciousness,” and “deculturalization” using legal examples and experiential voices from scholarly work (See Appendix A). Subsequently, I continually interwove our discussions on CRT in our collaborative attempt to define, implement, and assess culturally relevant pedagogy as well as to co-construct antiracist pedagogy.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study focused on the co-participatory inquiry process that took place between the principal, the intern, the teacher leaders, and the researcher in an attempt to become more race consciousness and to transform classroom pedagogy to reflect antiracism through critical discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the research design, including the methodologies used for data collection, the description of the setting and the participants, and the strategies for data analysis and interpretation. To help frame the rationale for the design of the study, the research questions are restated below:

1. What process is involved in the co-participatory inquiry and implementation of antiracist training among the researcher, the principal, the intern, and teacher leaders in an effort to narrow the racial achievement gap?

2. What are the principal’s, the intern’s and teacher leaders’ perceptions of the changes in classroom pedagogy as a result of their collective commitment to antiracist education?

3. How does the framework of CRT fit with the principal’s, the intern’s, and teacher leaders’ viewpoint of antiracist education?

Research Design

Critical race theory calls for a research methodology that is democratic in process and liberatory in effect. It seeks not merely for the researcher to study the participants and their setting from a traditional ethnographic or phenomenological lens, but rather for the researcher and the participants to engage in an iterative process of action and reflection, conscientization, and emancipatory dialogue (Friedman, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2001a). In this sense, the researcher and participants are immersed in a process of collaborative inquiry as both strive to
better understand and alter the existing sociopolitical conditions for and with the oppressed. For these reasons, a qualitative design that utilizes the combined methods of critical case study and action research are employed for the purposes of this study.

The rationale for the qualitative study is multifaceted. The project: (1) is an attempt to understand a specific situation in greater depth, unlike quantitative studies that are suited for studies that cover for breadth; (2) seeks to comprehend the phenomenon from a naturalistic and holistic perspective; (3) requires immersion in the field in the form of participant observation; and (4) entails the use of intensive interviews, ongoing conversations, observations, and analysis of documents (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Stake, 1995). As Patton (1990) contends, the purpose of a qualitative inquiry is to take the reader into the setting, the experiences, the feelings, and the worldviews of the participants. To do so, a qualitative researcher must provide a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973; Guba & Lincoln, 1981) of the complex system under inquiry, including the context in which the study is situated, the participants’ perspectives and experiences, the interactions that emerge, and the changes that occur within the process of discovery (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990).

Merriam (1988) defines qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 16). The case study method is appropriate when one seeks to understand how and why a phenomenon occurs within its context (Yin, 2003), in particular when one’s aim is “to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (Merriam, 1988, p. 10). It heavily emphasizes the process and meaning of a situation, rather than the end product (Merriam, 1988). Furthermore, Rossman and Rallis (2003) characterize case studies as “in-depth,” “descriptive,” “complex,” and “inductive” (p. 104). The goal of the case study researcher therefore is to provide rich
descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of one particular situation—to become aware of the uniqueness of the problems, events, interactions, processes, changes, and perspectives within it—so as to understand the phenomenon and to extrapolate lessons from it. As Stake (1995) puts it, the purpose of case studies is not to generalize, but to “particularize” by seeking to comprehend the case itself (p. 8).

Unlike case studies in general, a critical case study “assume[s] theoretically that oppression and domination characterize the setting and seek[s] to uncover how patterns of action perpetuate the status quo” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 106). This approach is particularly fitting with the study, as the epistemological rationale behind the project stems from a critical view of how racism is unintentionally perpetuated through classroom pedagogy. By using the elements of qualitative case study methods, such as naturalistic inquiry, holistic perspective, inductive analysis, attention to change, and empathic neutrality (Patton, 1990), this study attempts to unravel the hidden racist practices and beliefs embraced by well-intentioned educators at one particular school, and their collaborative effort to strive towards antiracist pedagogy.

The applied case study method falls short when the intent of the project is to alter the existing oppressive conditions rather than to examine them from an analytical and empathic lens. Opposed to the traditional approach to conducting qualitative research, Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes (1991) contend that in most applied research, the researcher “serve[s] as [the] professional expert, design[s] the project, gather[s] the data, interpret[s] the findings, and recommend[s] action to the client organization” (p. 20). Here the data primarily serve the interest of the researcher, while the participants are merely given a report of the findings at the end of the study (Whyte, Greenwood, Lazes, 1991). In contrast, action research is “research with, rather than on
practitioners, who in many instances become co-researchers themselves” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001a, p. xxv). In this scenario, the researcher acts as a coach or a facilitator rather than an expert. Together, the researcher and the participants engage in a collaborative effort to “bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities” (Reason and Bradbury, 2001b, p. 1)

Action research resonates with Freirean philosophy (1970/2005) and the fundamental principles of critical race theory. The aim of action research is to engage in discourse with the participants to inquire into issues of mutual concern and to redefine the boundary of what constitutes knowledge, who should be privy to construct it, and how to engender liberatory change. Underlying the research endeavor is the assumption that issues of power are at play, whereby raising the participants’ consciousness to the present state of social injustice is necessary to propel individuals into action by building a community of inquiry. Therefore, in lieu of traditional interviews, observations, and analysis of materials in an effort to understand a culture or phenomenon, action researchers seek to co-construct research questions, designs, and agendas through ongoing inquiry so as to transform the circumstances. Action researchers view insider and outsider knowledge as equally valuable in the process of cogenerative learning (Elden & Levin, 1991). While the outsider (i.e. researcher) possesses the theoretical understanding, the analytical strategies, and a fresh lens from which to address the problem, the insiders (i.e. the principal and the teacher leaders) possess the experiential knowledge and the internal motivation to improve their own situation. Greenwood and Levin (2007) argue that the deeper both parties immerse themselves in collaborative inquiry, the less distinct the
insider/outsider positions appear. In the end, both the researcher and the participants are mutually committed to the overthrow of hegemony and the emancipation of the oppressed.

This study combined the methodologies of critical case study and action research to better grasp the holistic purview of the setting, participants, pedagogy, and interactions at one school site as well as to engage the participants in critical analysis and dialogue of the racial assumptions and practices hidden in curriculum and instruction. The goal of the study was to empower the participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to make alterations to the present reality and to transform pedagogy such that classroom instruction moves increasingly from the “banking” method to that of critical problem solving (Freire, 1970/2005). Through changes in classroom pedagogy, the hope was to see students engaging in classroom discussions that reflect an understanding of the forces of hegemony and ways they can actively resist it. I looked for the employment of culturally relevant and antiracist pedagogies in the classroom observations, in particular with regards to the teachers’ use of culturally relevant pedagogy’s three-pronged component—academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. I also looked for instances of antiracist pedagogy where teachers challenged white dominance and institutional racism in their lessons.

Setting

The study took place at one elementary school (henceforth, Maplewood Elementary School) located in a large urban school district (henceforth, Centralia School District). Since 2003, the district of which the Maplewood is a part had been undergoing intense evaluation of accountability and achievement issues from the perspective of race. The district’s Achievement Gap Committee had developed a “Comprehensive Achievement Gap Plan” that explicitly detailed the goals and strategies for addressing this need. These goals included: aligning all
school policies to the district’s commitment to closing the achievement gap; equipping teachers with strategies required for rigorous, culturally relevant teaching and learning; promoting high expectations among the staff; and partnering with families through community engagement.

Furthermore, each of the goals was followed by a list of concrete strategies to assist administrators and educators to make active progress toward the goals’ attainment. In short, the participants’ effort to examine the racialized practices in their school was grounded in a network of support, inquiry, common philosophy, and professional development opportunities offered by the district.

The total student enrollment at Maplewood Elementary School for 2007-2008 was approximately 220 students, and the number of staff was roughly 20. The demographic breakdown of the students and teachers based on race is listed in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Number of Students (Percentage of Students)</th>
<th>Number of Teachers (Percentage of Teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>88 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina/o or Hispanic</td>
<td>88 (40%)</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>26 (12%)</td>
<td>15 (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11 (5%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7 (3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, about 70% (n=154) of the 220 students qualified for free and reduced-priced lunches, and 25% (n=55) of the students received special education services, and a large proportion of the students in both categories comprised of minority students.

Based on the Adequate Yearly Progress report under NCLB for the 2007-2008 academic year, Maplewood fell in the “Corrective Action” category for English Language Arts (ELA) and the “Needs Improvement” category for Mathematics on the state’s standardized test. The school
was required to report the aggregate student performance as well as students in subgroups based on race, income, gender, and services received according to four performance levels: Advanced/Above Proficient, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Warning/Failing. Scores of subgroups with less than ten students were not reported in the school’s AYP report card.

Due to insufficient data in all racial subgroups except for African-Americans, the performance levels of only African-American students are depicted below in Table 3. The data for the entire student population is given in Table 4.

Table 3

2007-2008 Adequate Yearly Progress of African-American Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Warning/Failing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>6 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>8 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>5 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (15%)</td>
<td>6 (46%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (8%)</td>
<td>5 (38%)</td>
<td>7 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>6 (38%)</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
<td>8 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

2007-2008 Adequate Yearly Progress Performance Levels of All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Students</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Warning/Failing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>8 (26%)</td>
<td>14 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>8 (26%)</td>
<td>15 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>15 (52%)</td>
<td>14 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>9 (29%)</td>
<td>14 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>19 (61%)</td>
<td>10 (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>5 (16%)</td>
<td>8 (26%)</td>
<td>14 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>8 (26%)</td>
<td>8 (26%)</td>
<td>15 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>11 (37%)</td>
<td>15 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>15 (52%)</td>
<td>14 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>19 (61%)</td>
<td>10 (32%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As can be seen, the performance level of African-American students at Maplewood Elementary School leaned heavily to the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories. This was also true for the combined performance of all students. Considering that the African-American and Latina/o or Hispanic subgroups made up 75% (n=150) of the student population at the school, it could be inferred that many Latina/o or Hispanics also fell in the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories. Despite the school’s many attempts at providing additional services to boost the academic performances of minority students, including Title I services, before and after school programs, lunch-time enrichment groups, partnerships with local universities and community programs, and Big Brother/Big Sister volunteers, minority students continued to perform poorly on standardized tests. Because the performance level of African-American and Latino/a or Hispanic students at Maplewood had historically skewed to the Needs Improvement and Warning/Failing categories in both subject areas, the principal found it necessary to openly address the issue of race and racism at the school.
Participants

In all, eight participants took part in the study, which included the school principal, 5 teachers, an intern, and me. All of the participants were members of the school’s leadership team, and many of them played active roles in the school, in the district, and in professional organizations. The range of experiences among the group was from two years to over thirty years. Table 5 below outlines each participant’s race, role at the school, and the years of experience in the district.

Table 5
Description of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Role at School</th>
<th>Years of Experience in the District</th>
<th>School Leadership Team?</th>
<th>Cultural Diversity Team?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lynn</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Black Carribean</td>
<td>3rd Grade Teacher</td>
<td>15 (also previously taught in Trinidad)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3rd Grade Teacher</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Science Teacher</td>
<td>8 (second career)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Principal Intern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Asian-American</td>
<td>Participant-Observer/Researcher</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In pursuing the participants for this study, I first contacted the interim director of the Achievement Gap Committee. His direct involvement in the district-wide effort to devise and
implement “The Comprehensive Achievement Gap Plan” provided him inside knowledge of each of the schools’ attempts to address the gap from the perspective of race. Concurrently, I also sought the advice of a university professor who had worked closely with the principals in the district through professional development training. She facilitated weekly book discussions with a small cluster of principals, and as a result, she was able to get to know the participants personally. Both the interim director and the university professor provided me a short list of principals who they thought exhibited commendable race conscious leadership. Based on the guidelines of purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), I made initial contacts with the seven principals who appeared on either list. Of the seven I contacted, four responded with eagerness to meet with me to further discuss my proposed project. Three eventually decided not to participate due to various reasons, including busyness of schedule, the staff not being ready for such an undertaking, or mismatch of the project’s intent with the school’s vision. The one principal who remained out of the four who initially expressed interest proved to be remarkably well-suited for the study. In my initial conversations with her, I noticed that she was keenly aware of the racial implications present in curriculum and instruction. Without any prompting, she proclaimed herself as a “racist,” one who contributed to racist practices by not being vocal enough against instances of racism that she sees. Her conviction to center race in the discussion of the achievement gap, her ongoing efforts to reflect upon and actively resist racism in schooling, as well as her highly regarded leadership qualities within the district rendered her an ideal candidate for the study.

The principal was a Hispanic female who had been working in the district for 31 years as a teacher and an administrator. Prior to her assuming the principalship role, she was a department chair for ten years at a high school. For the past 16 years, she had been the principal
at Maplewood Elementary School. Under her leadership, the school had received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Excellence in Technology Award in 1998, the School Improvement Award in 2000, and the Effective Practice School Certificate in 2001.

In selecting the participants for the study, I asked the principal to provide me a list of names who she thought would be interested in the topic. She gave me names of teachers who were members of the Cultural Diversity Team and/or members of the School Leadership Team. Of the nine teachers I asked to participate in the study, five agreed. Meanwhile, the intern, who was enrolled in a school leadership program at a nearby university asked if he could join the study when he heard of the study’s emphasis on promoting antiracist education. All of the participants who took part in the study volunteered to commit to three months of critical self-reflection and the co-construction antiracist pedagogy with the knowledge that weekly readings and writing assignments would be involved. They were also aware that at least one formal classroom observation would be made during the course of the study.

Data Collection

The data were collected over three months using a variety of strategies: interviews, inquiry group meetings, follow-up meetings with the principal and the intern, classroom observations, the participants’ reflections, the district’s documents, online discussions, and the researcher’s journal. Below, I describe each strategy in greater detail.

Pre- and Post-Inquiry Group Interviews

Participants were asked semi-structured questions at the beginning and the end of the study to see whether there were perceived changes in their beliefs and attitudes toward their awareness of racism in school policies and practices as well as in their understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy. Each interview was audiotaped and lasted 45 to 60 minutes.
Inquiry Group Meetings

The inquiry group meetings took place before school, lasting an hour each. In preparation for each meeting, the participants were asked to read assigned articles and write reflections based on prompts that were related to the discussion topics (See Appendix A). In the first phase of the study, I acted as a participant observer in the discussions as I conducted a critical case study of the phenomenon. The first four weeks of the meetings were therefore more researcher-directed, where I selected the readings and assigned the writing prompts beforehand. Meanwhile, the latter four weeks were based on action research, where the inquiry group questions and agenda were more driven by the participants-as-researchers than by me. The readings and the reflection prompts were also determined by the questions and challenges that arose in each meeting. The inquiry group meetings were videotaped and audiotaped, and I wrote up field notes and reflections immediately after each session.

Meetings with the Principal and the Intern

After each inquiry group session, the principal, the intern, and I met to reflect on the proceedings of the meeting and to discuss the agenda for each subsequent meeting. These meetings lasted for 15-30 minutes each, and the conversations were open-ended and loosely structured. I audiotaped the meetings and wrote up the reflections immediately after the conversations ended.

Classroom Observations

I made one scheduled classroom observation in each of the teachers’ classrooms to document how they had attempted to apply culturally relevant pedagogy in their classroom instruction. I made holistic observations of the teacher’s behavior, the students’ participation, the materials that were used, the classroom dynamic during the discussions/activities, and the
ways in which the teachers attempted to make the lesson reflect cultural relevancy. I took on the role of an observer as I audiotaped and took extensive notes on each lesson. Due to student privacy issues, I did not videotape the lessons.

Participants’ Reflections

Participants were asked to submit weekly written reflections based on assigned prompts. On occasion, I also asked the participants to reflect at the beginning or at the end of the inquiry group meetings, particularly near the end of the study when the participants found it more difficult to keep up with the reflections.

District’s Documents

Prior to the study, I informally interviewed the interim executive director of the Achievement Gap Committee at Centralia School District and examined several documents given to me during the interview. These documents included an “Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Statement” that laid out a 12-goal plan to address the racial achievement gap, a PowerPoint presentation of the district’s efforts to implement the policy statement, and various handouts on professional development activities, seminars, and workshops held by the district that attempted to address race and achievement issues.

Online Discussions

Because our hour-long inquiry group discussions often concluded with unresolved issues and questions, the participants and I frequently continued our conversations online. This provided an opportunity for the participants to ask clarifying questions as they attempted to integrate the theories discussed into classroom practice. It also became a forum in which we could share additional information and insights with one another in response to the topics that were discussed in the inquiry group meetings.
Throughout the study, I wrote up field notes with extensive description, reflection, analysis, and interpretation of the data.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

All of the video and audio recordings from the interviews, inquiry group meetings, meetings with the principal and the intern, and the classroom observations, as well as the district’s documents, the written reflections, and online conversations submitted by the participants were transcribed and coded in an ongoing manner. The transcripts were analyzed by looking and coding for patterns of paradigm shift from the traditional construct of race as a peripheral cause of the achievement gap to a critical view of race and racism as the root of educational disparity that is deeply embedded within a context of political, social, and economic oppression. The data analysis occurred in three phases, which entailed repeated processes of open and axial coding until all possible categories were exhausted.

Phase 1: Open Coding

In the first phase of data analysis, I used the major tenets of CRT to deductively look for key words, phrases, and ideas that emerged from the data that either confirmed or disconfirmed the themes advocated by CRT scholars. Concurrently, I used inductive reasoning to code for themes that emerged directly from the data. During this phase, each transcript was analyzed twice, the first time manually using line-by-line coding, and the second time using HyperResearch in an effort to reduce the number of codes that emerged from the data. In all, 138 codes emerged from the data after attempting to consolidate similar codes using HyperResearch. I thus wrote each code out on index cards and put them in categories using deductive and inductive analysis.
By using deductive analysis, I began to place codes under the CRT category that appeared most fitting (See Figure 3.1). For example, the codes that seemed to support CRT’s theme of the “Endemic Nature of Racism” included instances where the participants addressed issues of “White Privilege,” where they seemed to display “Unconscious Racism,” or where they recognized the “Subtlety of Racism.” Many other codes fell into this category, which due to space constraints, I was not able to illustrate in Figure 3.1. I continued this process until all of the codes that could fit into one of the six CRT categories were placed accordingly.

Of the remaining codes, I began to use inductive analysis by forming categories based on similar concepts. For example, the codes “How Do We Do It?”, “Lack of Support and Resources,” and “No Time to Reflect” all spoke to a common theme of “Teachers’ Frustration.” I again repeated this process until all of the codes that could be placed into categories were done so. The remaining codes were thrown out because they appeared to be isolated instances that did not add much value to the project as a whole. Again, Figure 3.1 shows a partial list of categories that had emerged through the process of data analysis, as well as only a few examples of the codes that fit under each category.

In essence, in Phase 1, I used the strategy of open coding to to identify key concepts and to group them by categories and subcategories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined open coding as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (p. 61). It is the process of teasing out significant words, phrases, or sentences amidst all of the data to identify concepts and label them based on their properties and dimensions. From there, one forms categories based on the similarities that exist within the concepts.
Figure 3.1
Phase 1: Open Coding

Deductive Analysis: Critical Race Theory

- **Endemic Nature of Racism**
  - Examples: White Privilege
  - Examples: Unconscious of Racism
  - Examples: Subtlety of Racism

- **Skepticism Toward Colorblindness**
  - Examples: Affirm Students' Racial Identity
  - Examples: Color Conscious
  - Examples: Respect for Diversity

- **Historicity of Racism**
  - Examples: Race as a Socially Constructed Concept
  - Examples: Legal Precedents

- **Experiential Knowledge**
  - Examples: Attention to Students’ Culture
  - Examples: Counter-narratives
  - Examples: Co-construct Knowledge

- **Interdisciplinary**
  - Examples: Racism in Law
  - Examples: Gay-blindness
  - Examples: SES not Race

- **Eliminating All Oppression**
  - Examples: Counter-hegemony
  - Examples: Many Forms of Oppression

---

Phase 2: Axial Coding

- **Attention to Learning Styles**
  - Examples: Build Confidence
  - Examples: Know Students Well

- **Levels the Playing Field**
  - Examples: Politicians Screwed It Up
  - Examples: Power & Knowledge

- **How Do We Do It?**
  - Examples: Lack of Support & Resources
  - Examples: No Time to Reflect

- **Prepare Students to Survive in an Existing World**
  - Examples: Prepare Students to Challenge Inequalities

- **Participants Not in Agreement**
  - Examples: Ideal Versus Real
  - Examples: Power Issues

- **Moral Activism**
  - Examples: Attention to Students’ Voices
  - Examples: Question Knowledge

---

Inductive Analysis: Grounded Theory

- **Students’ Needs**
  - Examples: Pro/Con Standards

- **Teachers’ Frustrations**
  - Examples: Purpose of Schools

- **Purpose of Schools**
  - Examples: Challenges to Action Research

- **Counter-hegemony**
Phase 2: Axial Coding

In this phase, I employed axial coding to look for relationships between the categories and to assess whether novel themes emerged. Axial coding, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) is “a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories” (p. 96). Thus, whereas in open coding, the researcher places common themes into categories, in axial coding, she or he looks for the relationships between the categories and assesses whether novel themes emerge. This idea is congruent with Guba and Lincoln’s (1981) convergence/divergence model, whereby the qualitative researcher must first determine how the data fit, or converge, together in common categories. Subsequently, the researcher must figure out how to make connections among the different categories to propose new themes. Patton (1990) contends that this process of convergence and divergence needs to continue until “sets of categories have been saturated so that new sources lead to redundancy, when clear regularities have emerged that feel integrated, and when the analysis begins to ‘overextend’ beyond the boundaries of the issues and concerns guiding the analysis” (p. 404).

Throughout the process of axial coding, therefore, I carefully looked at how the categories that emerged in Phase 1 related to or overlapped with one another. For example, one of the topics that was heatedly discussed at the Inquiry Group Meetings was regarding the standards and accountability movement. The categories “Pro/Con Standards,” “Teachers’ Frustrations,” and “Purpose of Schools” all tied into a larger theme that addressed the “Standards Debate.” It was evident from the data that there were many opinions regarding the standards movement, and that NCLB had heightened the discussion about what is the purpose of schools, what are the roles of teachers, and what are the benefits and drawbacks to the statute.
Moreover, the categories “Endemic Nature of Racism,” “Skepticism Toward Colorblindness,” “Historicity of Racism,” and “Eliminating All Oppression” spoke to a greater issue of how the participants defined the terms race and racism, how they understood their own racial identity, and how consciously they attended to racism in their own thoughts and behaviors as well as instances of racism in the larger society. The categories merged into a more prominent theme of “Individual vs. Systemic Racism,” which highlighted the tension between social justice educators’ commitment to antiracism while simultaneously contributing to racism’s endemic nature.

I continued this process until all of the categories had been exhausted and major themes had been formed. Like the extraneous codes from the first phase, those categories that appeared as outliers were thrown out, as were the lesser themes. The major themes that arose from this process are illustrated in Figure 3.2.

![Figure 3.2 Phase 2: Axial Coding](attachment:image.png)
After the major themes had been formed, I took each theme and treated it as a separate chapter of the dissertation. While CRT remained as the theoretical framework for the larger study, it became apparent that each theme, with the exception of “Individual vs. Systemic Racism” required a separate theoretical lens from which to build a literature review, the data analysis, and interpretation of the data. For example, in order to effectively examine how the participants were “Misconceptualizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” I needed to thoroughly review the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and recode the data related to this theme using again the strategy of open and axial coding. Deductively, I used Ladson-Billings’ three-pronged component for culturally relevant pedagogy and examined the data for evidence of “academic success,” “cultural competence,” and “sociopolitical consciousness.” Inductively, I used grounded theory to form categories based on similar codes.

This process was also repeated in “Standards Debate.” From the first round of open and axial coding, it became clear that at the basis of the standards debate was a rift in curricular ideology between the teachers, scholars, politicians, and the business community. Thus I engaged in a separate analysis of the data on the standards debate using Schiro’s (2008) four curricular ideologies as the conceptual framework. This framework also served the purpose of data interpretation and reporting.

Because of the enormity of the data, this dissertation focuses only on the themes “Individual vs. Systemic Racism” (Chapter 4), “Standards Debate” (Chapter 5), and “Misconceptualizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” (Chapter 6). I have purposefully excluded the themes “Inattentiveness to Counternarratives,” “How to Put CRT into Practice?”, and
“Challenges to Action Research” from the dissertation with the intent to address them more fully in future publications.

Data Interpretation

Rossman and Rallis (2003) defined data interpretation as a process of making sense of the raw data and making it comprehensible to the general audience. It is an attempt to “tell a story” (p. 287) that is developed through a logical conceptualization of the data based on thick descriptions and emerging evidence. Patton (1990) described interpretation as “attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities” (p. 423). Indeed, throughout the process of data analysis, I sought to provide interpretations of the data that were grounded in scholarly research. At times I attempted to formulate arguments to explain the data, and at other times I offered rival explanations to address the possibility of alternative interpretations (Patton, 1990).

Consistent with action research, I frequently invited the participants to critique, affirm, and/or provide feedback to my analysis and interpretation of the data in an effort to accurately capture the “truth” of the story. As Greenwood and Levin (2007) contended, action science is engaged science: the understanding of a phenomenon and the power to change it rest on the cogenerative nature of knowledge.

Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability

In order to optimize the reliability and validity of a qualitative study, I employed the tactic of triangulation to ensure that the data was collected from multiple sources and angles. Patton (1990) expounded upon four basic types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator
triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. In this study, all four forms of triangulation were used: (1) data collection through the use of interviews, inquiry groups, classroom observations, personal and online conversations, and document analysis; (2) investigator triangulation through the co-participatory roles between the researcher, the principal, the intern, and the teachers; (3) theory triangulation through use of critical race theory for deductive analysis and grounded theory for inductive analysis; and (4) the methodological triangulation through the use of critical case study and action research.

To make clear of the methodologies used in this study, the case study approach was used when the intent was to look holistically at the context of a particular phenomenon, such as the conversations with the principal and the intern, the inquiry group sessions, and the classroom observations. In those instances, I described in detail the environment of the situation, the interactions among the participants, the demeanor and the attitudes of the principal, the teachers, and the students, and the events that took place within those contexts. Meanwhile, the action research approach was used when the participants and I engage in collaborative inquiry in an attempt to assess problems, pose hypotheses, strategize solutions, reflect upon actions, and cognate knowledge. This method took place primarily in the inquiry group sessions and in the conversations with the principal and the intern. The two methodologies overlapped substantially, however, as it was impossible to separate the observation and the engagement of the conversations that took place.

Beyond the traditional techniques of ensuring for data validity, Greenwood and Levin (2007) posited that, “the credibility-validity of action research knowledge is measured according to whether actions that arise from it solve problems and increase participants’ control over their own situations” (p. 63). In other words, the validity of action research is not merely measured by
the rigor involved in the techniques and methods used for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, or the credibility of the researcher (Patton, 1990), but more importantly by the actions that ensued from the participants as a result of their collaboration in the research (Bradbury & Reason, 2001a). The heart of action research, after all, is to co-generate knowledge with the participants in an effort to empower them to engage in self-reflection and to become roused into action. Therefore, one way to ascertain the validity of the study was by evaluating the perceptual and pedagogical changes that occurred among participants through pre- and post-interviews, as well as through observations of a shift in classroom instruction based on the principles of CRT antiracist pedagogy.

Patton (1990) argued, “[w]hile studying one…critical [case] does not technically permit broad generalizations to all possible cases, logical generalizations (emphasis in original) can often be made from the weight of evidence produced in studying a single, critical case” (pp. 174-175). Critical cases, after all, operate under the assumption that “if it happens there, it will happen anywhere” (Patton, 1990, p. 174). Thus, while it would be impossible to suggest that the effects of co-participatory inquiry groups at one context-bound setting could be generalized to all other urban schools that attempt to replicate the study, it could be logically deduced that given similar settings, methodologies, and attitudes held by all participants, the results of the study can produce comparable results in other situations. As a precaution, however, it should be noted that the goal of qualitative studies is not for the purpose of generalization, but rather for the purpose of understanding the particularities of the project in extensive detail.
CHAPTER FOUR: INDIVIDUALIZED VS. SYSTEMIC RACISM

Four Personae of Racism

As alluded to in chapter one, Tatum likened racism to that of a moving conveyor belt. Everyone on this belt falls into one of three categories: the active racist who consciously runs to ensure that the systemic privileges remain in the power of the dominant group; the unconscious racist who stands idly by, not realizing that by his inaction, he reaps the benefits of his privileged status at the demise of the racially oppressed; and the active antiracist, who boldly walks in the opposite direction in which the conveyor belt is moving in an effort to challenge the deep-seated roots of racism. While this analogy aptly differentiates racism as a system of privilege from racism as individual acts, it is flawed on one account. It assumes that at any given time, a person who is enlightened of this appalling phenomenon is able to turn 180° and walk, albeit tenuously, against the momentum of the moving belt. It assumes also that individuals are in control of their own actions, and that if they wanted to, they could simply atone for their past mistakes and reverse their path of travel. Hegemony has far greater control over the beliefs, desires, and wills of individuals than a simple pivoting of one’s foot, however. After four hundred years of racial discrimination and oppression, racism in America has become an entity of its own, and the control that it has over the populace’s mindset is one that should not be slighted.

Perhaps a better analogy is that of our increasing environmental concerns since the days of the Industrial Revolution. When in the late eighteen to early nineteen centuries machine power began to replace manual labor in nearly all facets of work, humans made an irreversible pact with nature to forego her unadulterated sanctity in exchange for speed, efficiency, and power. What began as an ingenious idea quickly became inescapable trap. As industrialization progressed, smog, ozone-depleting chemicals, and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere rose to
alarming levels. Today, we are warned time and again of the dangers of continued pollution. Global warming is in effect—animals, insects, and plant life are losing their natural habitats, the level of carbon monoxide is rapidly rising, and one day, all aspects of life on earth may become endangered if we persist to ignore the problems at hand.

But our zest for efficiency and economic prowess would and could not be deterred. Even when we know better that we owe it to ourselves, our children, and our future generations to salvage our depleting planet, we are incapacitated into inaction by our very dependence on modern technology. For many of us, it is inconceivable to return to the days where there were no automobiles, no heating or air conditioning, no electricity, and no day-to-day household amenities. Even the most zealous environmentalists tap into the luxuries of modern conveniences and they, too, would be reluctant to give up their way of life in its entirety. The point of this illustration is this: we are ensnared by a system that we once created to fulfill our lust for power. We no longer have control over it; instead, it controls us—our thoughts, our actions, and our perception of the world as it “should” be. The stronghold of hegemony cannot be overcome simply by walking the other way; we are intricately tied to its utter perversity, and we deceive ourselves if we believe that we can somehow transcend beyond its power.

Tatum (1997) proposes three personas to the faces of racism, I extend it to four. I believe that there are the conscious perpetrators, the unconscious perpetrators, the deceived perpetrators/activists, and the enlightened perpetrators/activists. Conscious perpetrators are those who actively and intentionally commit acts of racism, such as practicing purposeful, albeit at times subtle, discrimination on the basis of race. Unconscious perpetrators incur acts of hostility or speak words of denigration with no intent of malice or foul play. Deceived perpetrators/activists devote themselves passionately to the causes of the racially oppressed, and
yet in their unrelenting fight for social justice, they are blinded by a false idealism that renders them incapable of seeing themselves as contributors to an oppressive system. Enlightened perpetrators/activists recognize the hegemonic nature of racism, and that while the goal is to assist others to reach a stage of conscientization (Freire, 1970/2005), they realize that no matter how actively and vocally they confront racial and social inequality, they are inevitably tied to a system in which they are simultaneously a reaper and loser of its benefits.

Because the majority of the participants in the present study fall in the deceived perpetrators/activists camp, it explains why they readily acknowledge the persistence and prevalence of racism, but hedge when asked the question, “Would you consider yourself a racist?” It also explains why some had such difficulty differentiating “prejudice” from “racism,” since they saw both terms as attributable to individual pathology (Vaught, 2009) rather than seeing “racism” as a systemic issue.

*Racism as Acts of Conscious Perpetrators*

To give some examples, during the pre-interviews, one of the questions that I asked the participants was, “In what ways do you believe that racism still exists today?” Every one of the participants recognized that it exists in some shape or form, but they disagreed to the extent in which it exists. A couple of the teachers saw racism as a phenomenon that only incriminated the conscious perpetrators, such as those who made racist jokes and comments about different nationalities just off the cuff (Jamie, Pre-Interview), and those who made stereotypical remarks based on first impressions (Madison, Pre-Interview).

Furthermore, when asked the question, “How would you describe someone who is a racist,” nearly all of them readily pointed their fingers at the “others” out there. For the most part, the participants described a racist as someone who “thinks [she or he] is better than
everyone else and puts down others” (Amy, Pre-Interview), “won’t change their first impression” (Madison, Pre-Interview) and “is a redneck” (Karen, Pre-Interview). Bob, one of the teachers, regarded the Wallace Democrats and Dixicrats—individuals who proudly and passionately ascribed to a segregationist ideology—as examples of racists. Thus, implicit in their view of racists were those who actively commit acts of racial discrimination.

Amy, a Black Caribbean teacher, also saw racism as caused by individuals. However, she recognized the subtlety in which racism rears its head nowadays. To her, the public has become politically correct enough to avoid making assaultive remarks for the sake of consensual co-existence. Instead, often it is the words that are not said, the nuances in which a comment is made, or an unobvious act of discrimination that makes her question whether racism is still as prevalent today as it was in the past.

At the first inquiry group meeting, Amy mentioned a time in which she entered a room and a white man who was sitting in there abruptly stood up and left. She wasn’t sure whether his leaving was because of her entrance or because he wanted to go out and smoke, although as she mentioned in her interview, smoking in public places was acceptable back then. But the fact that he had failed to acknowledge her presence, did not ask her directly if she minded that he smoked, tersely left the room when she entered, and did not return to the room subsequently all wore on her psyche to this day. In her words,

I remember one time I walked into someone’s office, and well, the guy was [about to smoke]. At that time, it was okay to smoke in that place. And he walked out of the office. I felt that it was me who came into the office [that made him leave]. And it has never left me. But at the same time, he was about to light up and needed to come out, so I go back and forth, and I still have that feeling like (laughing)...[he left] because of me! You know, he wanted to smoke. You don’t want to be judgmental …but it has never left me (Amy, Inquiry Group Meeting #1).
Even though Amy was cognizant of how one could overtly or covertly commit acts of racism, she also attributed fault solely to the unbecoming conduct of individuals. The offense, whether done in a blatant or a subtle manner, was nonetheless an act of conscious perpetration. In contrast, the participants who regarded racism as something more pervasive, more clandestine, and more deeply entrenched in the crevices of society recognized that individuals could incur racism either by will or by ignorance. In short, they understood that one could be an “unconscious racist,” and the unintended consequences of one’s blind actions contributed equally to the root of racial oppression.

**Racism as Acts of Unconscious Perpetrators**

Bob perhaps articulated it best when he differentiated conscious versus unconscious racism as acts on a “spectrum.” When describing someone who is a racist, he said,

> You got a spectrum, you know, from some kind of Aryan-nation nutcase…to your more ordinary person who sees everything as being the way that it should be, [that] this is the best world possible…. [and that] everybody is acting pretty much how they should (Bob, Post-Interview).

As Bob noted, those who actively commit hate crimes towards racially oppressed groups are now in the minority. Cross burning and lynching are more or less a thing of the past, and members of the Ku Klux Klan have been driven into anonymity. But as Bob recognized, the majority of racists that exist today are not those “Aryan-nation nutcases”; they are everyday people doing their everyday businesses, who go about their routines without giving second thought as to how their unquestioning acceptance of life as it is indicates their approval for “Aryan domination.” Racism has become so commonplace and so accepted that most people no longer cringe at the sight of overworked and underpaid immigrants slaving over laborious, servile, and hazardous jobs so that the more privileged can continue to enjoy life as they know it. Racism has anesthetized the conscience of the American public such that they are able to stare
race-related poverty, crime, and inadequate education, healthcare, and housing in the face and react with calloused indifference. But even more shocking than their ambivalence to the plight of the oppressed is their nonrecognition of racism in general. The majority of white Americans today believe that racism went away with the Civil Rights Movement, and with it went all the horrible “nigger hating” racists who shamed the country. Disbelievingly, Bob remarks at the predominance of unconscious racism that still lingers in society today:

You have a lot of people who are racist who don’t believe they’re racist. And this is very confusing to me sometimes, because it’s very clear that they are, and that [the things they do] are not only uncomfortable, but really hostile, and then they think that they’re not [racists]—it’s strange to me (Bob, Pre-Interview).

Other participants also expressed similar incredulity at the thought of how unconscious racism continues to be a rampant and enduring problem in society today. In response to the question, “In what ways do you feel that racism still exists in society?” Lynn (Pre-Interview) sighed with exasperation, “Everywhere... everywhere! In the way you act, in the way you think... in the way that we teach, in the way that we talk.” Similarly, Will (Pre-Interview) laughed scornfully as he retorted, “In what ways? I mean, it’s extremely prevalent... and it’s ingrained in people’s heads... [racism] is still very much alive in this country.”

The administrators and teachers in this camp recognized that racism could be committed in hate or in ignorance, and that one did not need to be a conscious perpetrator in order to encourage the persistence of a racist society. In fact, they largely attributed the fault of racism’s continued existence to the absent-mindedness of unconscious perpetrators. Nonetheless, they still regarded racism as acts of individual perpetration rather than a system of privilege. This was evident in the participants’ responses when they were asked the question, “Would you consider yourself a racist?” All except for the principal perceived themselves as someone who stood apart from those individuals who promoted the suffering of racial minorities. As race conscious,
social justice educators, their appreciation for cultural diversity and their fervor for educational
democracy made it nearly impossible for the participants to see that they, too, could be part of
the problem rather than the solution. In fact, racism blinds those who are most committed to its
extinction. The more strongly one advocates on behalf of the oppressed, the more detached one
is to his/her sense of culpability, and in turn, the more one becomes deceived by his/her activism.

*Racism as Acts of Deceived Perpetrators/Activists*

To acknowledge the presence of racism in society is one thing, but to acknowledge
oneself as a racist is quite another. Prior to the inquiry group meetings, the majority of the
teachers saw racism as something that could only be committed by malicious, bigoted
individuals. At the pre-interviews, when asked if they would consider themselves as a racist
based on the definitions that they had given, the majority of them immediately answered in the
negative, although they qualified their refutation by drawing a distinction between thought
versus action and discrimination versus racism. As Will tried to explain, “Where I grew up, we
define[d] the term ‘racism’ as the thought [and] ‘discrimination’ was the *act* of the thought”
(Pre-Interview).

Based on Will’s definition, a person is only a racist when she or he crosses the line
between thought and action. That is, as long as one only *thinks* negatively about people of other
racial groups but does not *act* upon his/her thoughts, one is exempt from being a racist. Thus,
while Will admits that he has “racist tendencies,” his ability to catch himself from turning a
prejudiced thought into a hostile act most of the time rendered him “very low” on the racist scale.

On the other hand, Bob readily answered, “I would not [consider myself a racist]….I kind
of like all kinds of people….I’m gregarious by nature” (Bob, Post-Interview). This response was
particularly surprising because in the preceding question where I asked him to describe a racist,
he, better than all the other participants in the group, understood the existence of unconscious perpetrators. In fact, he found it shocking that people could commit acts of atrocity without any awareness of them. His response revealed that racism is often perceived as a purely evil act when in reality it could be as benign as an act of charity out of pity, in particular if the act was done in such a way that conveyed an air of superiority.

Amy and Jamie were more ambiguous in their answers, but they nonetheless felt that even if they could be racists, they weren’t so intentionally. They were aware that they could be perpetuating racism in an unconscious manner, but that they tried their best to be conscious of their actions. When asked if she considered herself a racist, Amy replied, “I would like to think that I am not, but then...sometimes [I] have to ask...to make sure that I’m embracing all” (Amy, Pre-Interview). Meanwhile, Jamie answered, “I would definitely like to think no. But I can’t say I...have never made judgments because of someone’s race...I can’t say that no, I’ve never had a racist thought—that would be dishonest. But I do try to be mindful of it” (Jamie, Pre-Interview).

The teachers in the study appeared to be deceived by the belief that racist ideologies were controllable, and that if only one could consciously refrain from turning racist thoughts into actions, one could not be blamed for the persistence of racism in society. As dedicated social justice educators in a low-income urban neighborhood, they saw themselves as race-conscious individuals who fight against racism rather than contribute to it. Moreover, the participants had many stories to tell about the challenges that their students and families faced, but instead of seeking to empower them, the teachers spoke vivaciously about their attempts to help their students to overcome their difficulties. In other words, the participants employed a “savior mentality” (Popkewitz, 1998) that was common among urban educators, and they were deceived by their activism to recognize their promotion of the culture of whiteness onto their students.
Racism as Acts of (Partially) Enlightened Perpetrators/Activists

The only participant in the group who recognized that she was blameworthy for perpetuating racism was the principal. When asked if she considered herself a racist, she answered without hesitation,

Yes, I do. And because I mean, not to be a racist you need to have a lot of courage. You need to be able to stand up to even the people that you love…in order to stop certain things….When we let go certain comments in front of us, I would say we’re still showing traces of being racist (Lynn, Pre-Interview).

Unlike other teachers who saw racism as acts of hostility, Lynn was keenly aware that the beholding of racist ideologies, whether or not one carries them to fruition, rendered one a racist. Moreover, she saw herself as a racist largely because she often balked when she should have challenged racism when confronted with it.

But despite her heightened awareness of her own culpability to the endemic nature of racism, she still perceived racism as individual conduct rather than a system of privilege. She believed that everyone had racist tendencies in him/her, and that most people today have become blind to those tendencies. Like the other participants, she regarded the definition of a racist as the degree of one’s perpetration, not the state of one’s being. After much reflection over her understanding of the terms “prejudice,” “racism,” and “racist,” it occurred to me that there was a critical flaw in her logic. She believed that:

A. Everyone is a racist to some degree.

B. Prejudice is a racist thought while racism is a racist act.

C. One who can prevent his/her prejudiced thought from turning into a hateful act is not considered a racist; and therefore,

D. Not everyone is a racist.
Statements A and D are clearly in contradiction with one another. One would either have to accept A as true or D as true, but one could not simultaneously accept both as true. The inconsistencies in Lynn’s responses engendered a discussion of the terms “race,” “ethnicity,” “racism,” “prejudice,” “discrimination,” and “hegemony” with the participants at one of the inquiry group sessions. Throughout the inquiry group meetings, the participants wrestled with their own identity as “racists,” as well as their role in the perpetuation of racism in society.

Engaging Participants in Discourse on Race and Racism

The biggest barrier to the participants’ understanding of their capacity to perpetuate racism despite their activism against it was their view of racism on a continuum. A continuum implies a gradation of perpetration, from the passive to the active, the unconscious to the conscious, and the benign to the malicious. It also implies that the degree of perpetration is inversely correlated with one’s exertion of will power to resist it. If, as all of the teachers and administrators in the study suggest, it is true that everyone has racist tendencies, then the conduct of racism is merely measured by the line at which a person’s thoughts turn into action.

In my attempt to get at the heart of racism as individual acts of hostility versus racism as a systemic issue, I presented the participants with a list of possible “counter-definitions” from various scholarly work that contrasted the definitions from Webster’s New World College Dictionary (1997). For example, Webster’s Dictionary defines “racism” as “a doctrine or teaching, without scientific support, that claims to find racial differences in character, intelligence, etc., that asserts the superiority of one race over another or others, and that seeks to maintain the supposed purity of a race or the races” (1997, p. 1106). A “racist,” therefore, is one who holds such doctrine or teaching. In contrast, Wellman, as cited in Tatum, (1997) defines “racism” as a system of advantages based on race” (p. 7), upon which Tatum (1997) adds that it
is “prejudice plus power” (p. 7). Based on Wellman and Tatum’s definitions of racism, a “racist” would be anyone who benefits from this system of advantages and who believes that she or he is somehow entitled to such benefits.

Not surprisingly, some of the participants did not take well to the idea of being considered a racist by virtue of their membership in the circle of whiteness alone. Upon hearing the two definitions, Karen chuckled, “So it sounds like there’s no way not to be a racist if you’re white” (Karen, Inquiry Group Meeting #2). In a less direct manner, Will also challenged the notion that racism was a system of white privilege. He raised the proposition that racism went beyond the color line, that anyone of any color could be culpable of committing racism at any time. He said, “I don’t like the term ‘reverse racism.’ I think racism is racism…. [Y]ou can be the person on the other side of that and it’d still be racism” (Will, Inquiry Group Meeting #2).

On this point, I could neither fully agree nor disagree. I, too, differed in opinion with Tatum, who believed that minorities were incapable of committing racism since their actions were often in reaction to the racism done towards them and that no matter what they did, they could not receive the benefits reserved for the privileged class. I, as an Asian-American female, by Tatum’s definition lied outside the circle of privilege; however, I would still consider myself a racist for living and perpetuating the ideology of whiteness as well as for permitting the system to run its due course. On the other hand, I do agree with Tatum in that I also attribute racism to a system, not to a single person’s ideas or actions. To fault individuals for their complicity in perpetuating racism is to trivialize racism’s endemic nature.

But Will’s argument brought out the crux of the individuals versus system conundrum. If racism isn’t individual acts of hostility, then how do “prejudice” and “discrimination” fit into the equation? Building up on the idea that racism is a system of privilege, I suggested to the group
an alternate way of looking at the term “prejudice,” which I interpreted as a “belief in one’s own superiority over others such that one feels that she or he is entitled to the system of privileges based on power” (See Appendix B). Prejudice, then, is not just a person’s “irrational hatred of other races” as Webster’s Dictionary defines it (1997, p. 1063). In fact, a prejudiced person would find it perfectly rational to desire the benefits that society has to offer; it would only be irrational if one seeks to purposefully give up his/her privileges in an effort to counter the system for the benefit of the racially oppressed.

On a similar note, I proposed the definition of “discrimination” as “an action, usually with malicious intent, done towards minority groups based on one’s belief in his/her own superiority. Typically occurs when one feels that his/her right to the system of privileges is being threatened” (See Appendix B). Although the first half of the definition incriminates the individual, the second half positions the individual within the context of his/her society. One discriminates not necessarily because of personal contempt or repulsion for members of the minority groups, but more often because one fears the encroachment of minorities into his/her own privileged space. For example, when the courts mandated desegregation in neighborhood schools, those of the dominant group who could afford it fled to the suburbs in fear that “colored folks” would deteriorate the quality of education afforded to their children at public schools. Also, in this current age of increased global networking, the market’s demand for bilingual/multilingual speakers places monolingual English speakers at a disadvantage. In fear of the losing millions of jobs that “rightfully” belong to the whites, lawmakers and politicians across the nation fought to pass anti-immigration and English-only bills to keep immigrants away from the labor market. Thus, discrimination does not necessarily have to be a blatant,
hateful *action* towards a person or persons of color; it could very well be a *reaction* of resistance to “set things aright again” when one senses that his/her privileged space is being invaded upon.

In the end, not everyone was convinced that simply because racism is rooted in a larger societal problem that they are somehow also a part of that problem. Many continued to see a sharp distinction between an individual’s prejudices versus societal racism. A few, however, began to question whether there was some truth to the idea that racism is one’s condoning of a system that privileges one group over another. The post-interviews revealed that many of the teachers remained in the deceived perpetrator/activist camp while only a couple showed evidence of emerging into the enlightened perpetrator/activist category. What was surprising was not that only a couple of teachers showed signs of moving toward conscientization at the end of the study, but rather *who* among the participants got there and who remained static. I found teachers I would least expect in both camps.

**Journey Toward Race Consciousness**

As was the case with the pre-interviews, all of the participants stated in the post-interviews that they believed that racism was still a prevalent issue in society today. The subtlety of it came out more clearly in the participants’ responses in the post-interviews, as did the idea of “unconscious racism.” But with regards to their recognition of their own role in perpetuating racism, the participants either held more adamantly to the resolution that “No, I’m not a racist,” or they began to experience an internal struggle over the idea that they were in fact “unintentional racists.” Two of the participants’ responses to the question “Would you consider yourself a racist” during the post-interviews were most worth noting for two reasons: (1) They more or less represented the divide between the deceived perpetrators/activists and the enlightened perpetrators/activists; and (2) they came as a surprise given the comments that the
two participants had made in the pre-interviews and inquiry group meetings. Rather than describing each participants’ changes in perspectives or lack thereof, I will focus my analysis on the perceived changes of race, racism, and the self as a racist from Bob’s and Karen’s viewpoints, along the journey that they took to get there.

**Bob: Disidentifying with Whiteness**

Of all the participants, Bob demonstrated the most “liberal” tendencies. From his open denouncement of anti-conservative Reagan doctrines and his bemoaning of Dixiecrats as brainwashed bigots, Bob stood time and again on the side of the oppressed throughout the inquiry group meetings. He was as pro-multiculturalism as he was pro-gay and pro-feminism. He was an avid supporter of bilingualism, affirmative action, and socialized healthcare, and he rejected the notion of meritocracy because he understood that the “system” was inherently unfair. Bob was quick to conceptualize and embrace the counterhegemonic arguments that were raised throughout the inquiry group sessions, and he readily jumped on board to critique the structural injustices embedded in a system that catered to the privileged.

But just as Bob was staunchly liberal, he was also staunchly Irish. In his mind, being Irish was to be in a class all by themselves because they were neither racial minorities nor white. Bob was raised in a generation where poverty crossed the color line, and the poor Irish Catholics were just as ostracized from the mainstream white society as the rest of the “colored folks.” The neighborhood in which he grew up had a rich diversity of cultures, and he distinguished the “good blacks” from the “bad blacks” by who belonged in the “hood” and who didn’t. He recounted going to Salt Lake City as an adult one time, and the inundation of whiteness raised a sense of discomfort in him. It made him realize that he didn’t identify with the “Caucasian race” and that being with a crowd of “generically white people” made him more aware of how he was
“out of [his] own race” because of his strong affiliation with his Irish, Catholic identity (Post-Interview).

The fact that Bob regarded himself as a “minority” and sought identification with the oppressed more than he did with the white dominant class helped explain why he did not consider himself a racist. His disadvantaged economic status growing up prevented him from seeing the whiteness as a privilege because he had yet to personally see benefits resulting from that privilege. When asked where he thought he fell on the spectrum of racism, he answered,

I don’t see myself on that spectrum….I don’t carry around any hostility….As a matter of fact—a little brag—there was this test that I took the other day [about] where you are in your political beliefs. And I came out with the Dalai Lama (laughs). Me and the Dalai Lama—just like twins (Bob, Post-Interview).

Although Bob was highly perceptive of the structural inequalities rooted in society, he continued to remain in the deceived perpetrators/activists camp because he regarded “whiteness” and “privilege” as two completely disconnected terms. But as McIntosh (1990) pointed out, as a white person in America, Bob could get by with only speaking English and “remain[ing] oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color, who constitute the world’s majority, without feeling…any penalty for such oblivion” (p. 32). He could also “criticize [the] government and talk about how much [he] fear[ed] its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider” (p. 32). Furthermore, he would never be “asked to speak for all the people of his racial group” (p. 32), unlike many “token minorities” in white dominant settings. Inasmuch as Bob was sensitive to the plight of the oppressed, these were privileges that racial minorities simply could not enjoy—and in some cases, not even the Dalai Lama himself could.


In direct contrast to Bob, Karen was perhaps the most resistant to the counterhegemonic ideologies that were brought up in the inquiry group meetings. She saw herself as a passionate
liberal, one who always advocated for the causes of the oppressed, and one who dedicated her life to serving disadvantaged children and families. In her teaching, she was ever mindful of presenting dissenting viewpoints, and she found it shameful that in this age of standardization, less and less emphasis is placed on multicultural curriculum (Pre-Interview). She was, in essence, the prototype of the white, female social justice educator—compassionate, idealistic, self-sacrificing, and committed to the values of democracy and equality. But like most social justice educators, she was one step removed from the realities of the racially, socially, and economically oppressed. In many ways, she could “talk the talk” but not “walk the walk,” and her inability to truly identify with the oppressed gnawed at her conscience every time she raised issues of inequality in her classroom.

Over the course of the study, Karen’s reaction to the inquiry group sessions became increasingly more cynical and defensive. When the participants worked together to deconstruct the curriculum to make it more culturally relevant, she took issues with the feasibility of such a practice in this time-constrained, test-driven school culture. With regards to the need to attend to the hidden curriculum in the textbooks, she complained about how such practices deviated from the actual lessons, and how at times the sociopolitical implications were simply not age appropriate. But moreover, she felt, to some degree, personally attacked by the barrage of seemingly anti-American propaganda that I raised to the fore. At one point in the inquiry group sessions, I argued against America’s continued use of the English system of measurement when the rest of the world used the metric system. I felt that by doing so, the United States was sending a message to the rest of the world that we were an economic superpower, and that if any country wanted to maintain economic relations with us, it had better have a separate calibrating system for producing marketable goods to export to the U.S. The response Karen gave me was,
One of the things that is wrong in some classrooms is that we are conveying our own values—our personal values—that may not be other people’s values. Maybe my value system says, “I kind of like the fact that we’re different from the rest of the world. We’re unique. We’re Americans. We’re people that come from all different places. We have our own system of measurement.” What I’m saying is that it’s your value that Americans should be using the metric system. It’s your thought about this. Is it everyone else’s thought? And is it the right thought? (Inquiry Group Meeting #6).

Karen’s defensiveness to my critique of the standard system revealed just how difficult it was to challenge the hegemonic nature of racism. The fact that she could entertain the idea of having the rest of the world accommodate the idiosyncrasies of the United States—and feel justified in doing so—attested to the perversity and tenacity a deeply ingrained ideology such as rugged individualism could have on the psyche of the masses. Karen’s sentiments, I suspected, were not atypical of the general public. If they were, America would have long rid of its system of measurement to fall in sync with the manufacturing standards of the global economy.

Later in the same inquiry group meeting, our conversation led to the 2008 Presidential election. In this unprecedented election where the Democratic Party was to endorse either an African-American or a female Presidential candidate, the idea of not having a white male name on the ballot for a major political party sent the nation abuzz. As the teachers and I talked about the marvel of seeing a diverse range of candidates on the ballot, Karen said unexpectedly, Quite honestly, what would you make of my attitude when I realized that when it came down to Barack Obama and Hillary, as much as I decided that I like Barack even though in the beginning I wanted Hillary…there’s a piece of me that is disappointed that it’s not a white man only because I don’t trust this country to elect a person of color? (Inquiry Group Meeting #6).

Her comment elicited a response of outrage from Bob and a look of surprise from the rest of the participants. Karen dared to say out loud what many other Americans felt, but her candor floored everyone because in this day and age of racial sensitivity, such blatantly racist comments were deemed prohibitively politically incorrect. But as I later wrote in my researcher journal, “I
don’t think Karen made that comment with a racist intent; I think she was exposing her vulnerabilities by saying that she recognize[d] that she may after all be a racist.” This was perhaps the moment when I realized that Karen’s seeming resistance to the topics discussed in the inquiry group sessions was a natural course of travel towards conscientization. Karen didn’t simply take the theories presented to her at their face value; she wrestled with them, critiqued them, rejected them, and internalized them as they began to make more sense to her.

At the following session she thanked me for reawakening her past learning on racism and critical literacy, and she commented, “When you’re a white person and you’re talking about race, you can come away very uncomfortable and defensive and like a failure. And you don’t want to be a failure and you don’t want to be engaging in the cycle of oppression” (Inquiry Group Meeting #7). Somewhere along this journey, she realized that to be an antiracist pedagogue, she had to acknowledge the racist in herself. At the post-interview, she insightfully remarked:

This is the third time [that I’ve gone through training on race], and none of them is comfortable….However, I feel like it’s essential if you’re going to be a good person, and particularly if you’re going to be an educator because we have to continue to live with that discomfort. And we have to be continually confronted with that discomfort or things will never, ever change (Karen, Post-Interview).

Throughout the study, Karen’s struggle with her own white privilege and her willingness to confront racism face to face moved her increasingly toward the enlightened perpetrators/activists camp. She wore her candor and her vulnerabilities on her sleeve, and she wrestled deeply with her own proposition that “there is no way not to be a racist if you’re white.” Like Lynn, who in the post-interview said that she would consider herself a racist because she realized that being an antiracist wasn’t just about “being able to have a conversation [with others],” but more about “changing the structure and changing the system” (Lynn, Post-Interview), Karen was also beginning to realize that she couldn’t truly consider herself a social
justice educator when she harbored deep unconscious racist sentiments within her. As Karen wisely noted, however, becoming more race conscious is not a state of mind that is achieved at one moment’s time and is never forgotten. It takes constant reawakening, introspection, and refinement, and it also takes an active commitment on one’s part to live out his/her beliefs. Being enlightened is not the end of the journey; it is merely the beginning. How one continues to grapple with the paradox of one’s own perpetration and activism throughout one’s life journey is the true test of an antiracist pedagogue.

Discussion

The study’s finding of the four personae of racism raised disconcerting evidence of how persistently the participants regarded racism as acts of individual pathology rather than as a systemic problem. Unlike previous literature that highlighted well-intentioned educators’ unconscious racism (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Tatum, 1992), this study suggested that educators were in fact well aware of the phenomenon of racism in schools, but instead were deceived by their activism to recognize how they were just as much a part of the problem as the “others” out there.

The participants’ understanding of “social justice” was particularly telling of how they were deceived by their activism. In defining their view of multicultural education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and antiracist pedagogy, the participants primarily saw such practices as showing “respect/tolerance,” “celebrating and affirming culture,” and giving “attention to individuality/differentiated instruction.” These codes appeared altogether 32 times in the data analysis. Because the participants were already attentive to these strategies in their teaching, they believed that they were engaged in social justice work. On the other hand, two codes emerged in which the participants believed that social justice education was about “teaching
different views,‖ and engaging in “critical self-reflection.” These codes appeared only 3 times in the data analysis. In other words, the participants saw social justice education as more about embracing the students’ individuality and their diversity rather than addressing issues of social and racial equality. This finding confirmed Cochran-Smith et al.’s (2009) study on preservice teachers’ attempt to engage in social justice education. In their study, they too found that the participants heavily emphasized the themes of “pupil learning” and “relationships and respect” while providing little evidence of the themes of “teacher as activist” and “recognizing inequalities.” Cochran-Smith et al. argued that “[d]espite their interest in teaching for social justice, the teachers in this study seldom offered critiques of the larger structures and arrangements of schooling, such as grading, tracking, and labeling of pupils” (p. 360). Findings from both studies suggested that even as the educators believed that they were engaged in social justice practices, many of them were missing a critical element of their practice: the recognition that schools were rooted within a system of dominance and oppression.

Social justice education has often been criticized for being ambiguous and undertheorized (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). It leaves far too open for critique the idea of what constitutes “justice” and it renders the idealism of a socially just society to the imagination of the beholder. More troubling, however, is that teachers and students of social justice education often fail to ground the theory in a larger systemic issue. Perhaps a more concrete way of teaching social justice education is by using the tenets behind CRT. CRT unabashedly begins with the proposition that racism is an endemic problem in U.S. society. It avers that to bring about social justice, educators need to challenge the hegemonic roots of oppression and the myths of colorblindness, meritocracy, and neutrality. Educators also need to recognize the social and historical construction of racism, attend to the counternarratives of the oppressed, and work
towards the elimination of all forms of oppression. CRT leaves no doubt as to the systemic nature of racism, and it pushes educators to actively confront it in the policies and practices of schools.

Unfortunately, as this and many other studies on social justice education reveal, educators are by and large deceived by their sensitivity toward the students’ individual needs and cultural backgrounds to recognize that their “activism” merely perpetuates systemic inequalities. The unquestioning beholding of a WASP-centered ideology and the willful perpetuating of such practices render all educators culpable of racism, in much the same way as Goldhagen argues that all Germans were complicit in the Holocaust. In fact, as argued in Chapter 2, Spring (2004) contends that inattention to the practice of the hidden curriculum is tantamount to a horrific act of cultural genocide. In the view of the dominant group, there is no better place than educational institutions to carry out this act of “ethnic cleansing.” Under the laws of mandatory attendance, virtually all students must undergo the process of learning the rules, beliefs, and traditions of what it means to be an “American.” Educators then, conveniently serves as the agents of deculturalization, even as their social activism is masked in the cultural genocide of millions of schoolchildren on a daily basis.

Conclusion

In society’s view, a “racist” is a bigoted individual who intentionally denigrates and oppresses racial minorities in hateful thought and deed. Given that definition, anyone would answer in the negative to the question, “Would you consider yourself a racist?” But denial precludes change because it is obviously impossible to correct a problem that does not exist. If, however, we recognize a “racist” as anyone who embraces and supports the ideologies of the dominant group at the expense of suppressing others’ values, beliefs, and desires, then nearly
everyone would have to admit to being complicit to a regime that privileges one group’s way of life over that of others.

The offensively negative connotation associated with the term “racist” prevents us from engaging in open conversations about race and racism in a manner that is constructive and non-judgmental. But even more offensive is to deny the existence of racism, as if accuse the oppressed for living in a state of delusion. To engender change, to live out the true creed of liberty and democracy, we must come face to face with the realities of racism and be willing to accept our roles in its perpetuation. We are indeed a nation of immigrants, but we continue to live by the values, customs, and beliefs of white-wigged men who decreed the ordinances of the land four hundred years ago. Racism was as prevalent then as it is now, but the shackles of slavery have been replaced by shackles of nihilism (West, 1993). And as long as racial minorities are the primary victims of poor education, inadequate healthcare, joblessness, impoverished housing, hate crimes, and poverty, we need to recognize that there is a system in place that purposely advantages some and disadvantages others. No individual or a group of individuals could sustain enough hostility to keep a mass of minorities in a state of constant submission. But a system based on unfair rules and privileges can, and it does, at the unconsciousness of the perpetrators.

Enlightened perpetrators/activists recognize, therefore, that as social beings, it is impossible to extract the individual from the system. Antiracist education isn’t simply about critiquing the dominance of whiteness; it is also about asking what counter-actions we must take in our own thoughts and behaviors in order to effect systemic change in the reverse direction. A system once created by individuals can be recreated by individuals to reflect multiculturalism
and equality. And such task falls upon the shoulders of antiracist pedagogues who must forever wrestle with the duality of their perpetration and activism in their fight against racism.
CHAPTER FIVE: STANDARDS DEBATE

“Be it remembered, however, that liberty must at all hazards be supported…And liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the People…[who] have a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge…And the preservation of the means of knowledge among the lowest ranks, is of more importance to the public than all the property of all the rich men in the country” (p. 456-457).

--John Adams, *Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law* (1851)

The twenty-first century ushered in a new era of standards and accountability in U.S. educational policy. More than that, however, it renewed long-standing debates about what is the purpose of education, who has the power to construct knowledge, and what role, if any, should the federal government play in state affairs. It also raised the question of whether the time has come for the creation of national curriculum standards, and whether standards setting would aid or augment the educational disparities that exist between the wealthy and the poor, the non-minorities and the minorities, and the regular education students and the students with special needs. Since the summer of 2009, the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State of School Officers have been working on establishing common guidelines in mathematics and English language arts that are aimed toward preparing schoolchildren for college and career readiness. The emphasis is on setting “fewer, clearer, higher” goals that are determined by international benchmarked standards and focused on promoting 21st century skills (Council of Chief State of School Officers, 2009).

Taking this a step further, the federal government has recently proposed a nationwide $4 billion “Race to the Top” (RttT) grant competition that seeks to improve the standards and accountability system set under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). While NCLB gave liberty to individual states to determine what standards to set and how student achievement is to be measured, RttT attempts to rectify the discrepancies in student outcome based on inconsistent benchmarking standards and assessments. Although RttT leaves the buy in for common
standards “optional,” it encourages participation from individual states by awarding up to 40 points out of 500 for simply signing on to the effort to create common academic standards and student assessments (Klein, 2010). Moreover, the grant also provides incentives for states to adopt measures that would tie teacher pay and tenure to student performance as well as remove limits on cap for charter schools.

The controversies that surround RttT are not new; they have long been contested passionately and sometimes uncompromisingly from diametric viewpoints by educators, politicians, corporate leaders, scholars, and parents. But fueling the debate’s impasse is that the issues themselves cross racial, class, and gender lines. One would likely find racial minorities arguing in favor of standardization as one would find opposing it. Similarly, one would find people from all walks of life heatedly contesting differing opinions about what the purpose of education should be. For some, it may be to prepare students to survive, function, and contribute to societal affairs; for others it may be to raise a generation of critical thinkers in the attempt to change the existing unjust social order. At the heart of the debate are ideological differences in curricular theory, and a brief overview of the opposing viewpoints may help contextualize the current debate over NCLB.

Curricular Ideologies

Curricular theories have been espoused under various terminologies throughout educational history in the U.S. The Founding Fathers, for example, exhorted public education to “to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences” (McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive of Education, 1993, p. 560), to “disseminate the principles of Religion and morality amongst our fellow Citizens” (p. 588), and to “prepar[e] the great mass of people for understanding and defending their rights” (p. 592). Meanwhile, education philosopher John Dewey regarded the
inculcation of curriculum as antithetical to the very principle of democracy and individualism. He argued,

An educational aim must be founded upon the intrinsic activities and needs....Until the democratic criterion of the intrinsic significance of every growing experience is recognized, we shall be intellectually confused by the demand for adaptation to external aims (1916, pp. 126-127).

Controversies over the nature of learning, the rigor of academic disciplines, the moral upbringing of children, the role of instruction, and the aim of education have shaped and defined the fabric of American education. The irresolvable tensions between and amongst the different stakeholders have contributed to lively debates and critical analyses of how to best educate children, and whether “best” is a term that is definable. Although many categories of curricular ideologies have been proposed in the past, Schiro (2008) articulates four major theories that dominate curricular ideologies today. These ideologies are scholar academic, social efficiency, learner centered, and social reconstruction.

Scholar academics hold steadfastly to the belief that education is the “great equalizer” and that mastery of the academic disciplines is regarded as the key to success in society. They advocate the setting of curricular standards because they believe that “access to such knowledge is the key to individual betterment, equalization of men’s position in society, and maintenance of a democratic society, and social progress” (Ravitch, 2000, p. 26-29). Proponents of this ideology hold academic disciplines with high esteem, and they believe that the purpose of schools is to transmit the authoritative knowledge of leading scholars in the various disciplines to the eager minds of students. Scholar academics regard the acquisition of knowledge as the penultimate goal of education, with its end sight set on one’s exercise of such knowledge to “understand [one’s] world” and to “realize [one’s] full stature as a free mind” (Schiro, 2008, p. 21). Scholar academics are also supporters of high-stakes testing and accountability measures. They believe
that testing and data disaggregation is essential in order to better understand the needs of the students and to channel efforts to effectively remedy the areas of concern.

Meanwhile, proponents of the social efficiency model contest that what matters more than the acquisition of scholarly knowledge is the utilization of individuals’ strengths and abilities to contribute to the greater society. The focus, therefore, is not on the knower but the doer (Bobbitt, 1924), and that action toward the benefit of society is a far worthier end goal than to understand one’s own role in it. Social efficiency theorists advocate “scientifically-based research,” in which curriculum objectives are stated as specific behavioral—not academic—goals, designed with what is good for the society in mind (Schiro, 2008). They are also concerned about how to direct teaching, learning, time, and resources efficiently so that educators can maximize the potential that the students can bring to society as an adult. In essence, the teacher’s role is to be “the supervisor, director, guide, stimulator, or the rank and file of the workers in order to bring about the part of the [students] the development of these various abilities” (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 84).

The learner centered philosophy orients the entire school around the child, such that “the interests, needs, and desires of learners dictate the nature of the school program, the content of the curriculum and…the governance of the classroom” (Schiro, 2008, p. 93). Unlike the previous two theories, the learner centered ideology measures “proficiency” not by scores on standardized tests or by one’s potential productivity in the workplace, but by one’s mastery in self-actualizing tasks through strategies such as discovery learning, manipulation of materials, and collaborative discourse (Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). Rather than imposing knowledge on the students, learner centered advocates believe that children come to best understand their world when they take the initiative to question it, explore in it, and experiment with it.
Ultimately, they believe that children should be treated as individuals who will one day become adults of their own choosing, rather than as adults-in-training who have already been assigned a role and place in society.

And last, social reconstruction theorists believe that the existing society is flawed and that schools serve the purpose of educating the masses to “critically analyze themselves in relation to their society, understand the ills of their society, develop a vision of a better world based on a conception of social justice, and actualize that vision” (Schiro, 2008, p. 133). Proponents of the social reconstruction ideology are critical of the standardization of knowledge because they view such knowledge as “socially constructed, culturally mediated, and historically situated, [whereby] dominant discourses determine what counts as true, important, and relevant” (McLaren, 2007, p. 210). They argue that a curriculum and policy that is free of bias do not exist, and as such, any attempt to impose and measure a scripted body of knowledge encourages hegemony to run its due course. Instead, social reconstructionists propose that the purpose of schools is to educate the students on the inherent inequalities that exist in society, and to teach them to question, challenge, and engender solutions to transform the present societal ills through emancipatory and critical dialogue.

The proponents of each of the above four curricular theories possess “fundamentally oppos[ing] worldviews about the purpose and meaning of education, curricular content, funding equity, the role of teachers, how students learn, and reliable notions of assessment” (Giroux, 2009, p. 256). Their ideological rift explains why politicians and business executives are wary of the quality of education in preparing students to meet the demands of the global market and why many education scholars sharply criticize the neoliberal agenda behind NCLB. It also explains why school administrators and teachers, despite the overwhelming demands placed upon them
and the constant threat of sanctions due to failure to meet AYP, are largely supportive of the standards and accountability movement. These four uncompromising visions of what students should know and how knowledge should be measured explain why educators disagree sharply over the benefits and harms of NCLB. In this chapter of the dissertation, I present the participants’ arguments in favor of and in opposition to the statute, as well as education scholars’ viewpoints, in relation to their curricular ideologies.

Findings

Analysis of the data showed that the participants were overwhelmingly in favor of the standards movement, despite their frustrations with the NCLB. While they lauded the ideals and principles behind NCLB, they spoke critically against the federal government’s lack of support in assisting teachers and administrators to achieve the goals outlined by the statute. There were mixed reactions as to the feasibility of the accountability measure, and the overarching sentiment that effused from the participants was one of “I like the standards, but….” Because the responses naturally fell into arguments in support of and in protest against the federally mandated accountability system, the data was also organized in a traditional pros and cons manner.

Pro Standards Movement

The arguments in favor of the standards movements fell into three categories. The participants found that the standards were: good for the teachers, good for the students, and good for the promotion of social equality. In general, the participants felt that the standards themselves were wholesome and just, and that they were created with the intent of promoting the common good. Without standards and accountability, there would be no end goal, no driving force, and no purpose for the establishment of schools. Education would fall to the idiosyncrasy
and caprice of individual teachers, and the outcome would be a certain unequal distribution of knowledge among students of different races and socioeconomic status. As imperfect as NCLB might be, the participants felt that the statute at least gave them a sense of purpose and a common goal to work toward.

**Good for the teachers.** From the interviews and inquiry group meetings, it appeared that the participants were grateful for the establishment of state curriculum standards. The standards forced all of the teachers to be “more or less on the same page” (Karen, Pre-Interview) so that students in the same grade and in the same school were learning the same materials. Moreover, they helped to define the scope and sequence across grade levels so that the teachers were not repeating the same topics (e.g. dinosaurs) year after year, but were rather “expos[ing] the students to a wider range of knowledge” (Jamie, Post-Interview). In other words, the standards movement was instrumental in building the horizontal and vertical alignment of the school’s curriculum, and it fostered a sense of responsibility and collegiality among the teachers to do their utmost to prepare their students for each subsequent grade level.

The standards also ensured that all of the students were exposed to the same knowledge, regardless of language difficulties or special learning needs. The teachers no longer had any excuses for why certain groups of students could not be taught the appropriate grade level material or why they could not be expected to master basic proficiency skills. As Karen said,

> [Standards] raised our expectation for kids so that we can’t discount a group of kids because they are black or because they don’t speak English or because they are poor. We can’t just say, “Well those kids aren’t going to learn.” So it…pushes us to push the kids because there is a standard to be reached (Karen, Pre-Interview).

On this issue, Lynn, the school principal, was most adamant. She was intolerant of the excuses that the teachers made for why some students “[could] not make it” or why some were
incapable of “performing to the standard” (Lynn, Post-Interview). She felt that the excuses contributed to the achievement gap, and that as long as educators allowed students to fall short of grade level standards, the gap between the have’s and the have not’s would inevitably persist.

Most importantly, however, the participants felt that the standards were good for the teachers because they helped to set goals and held teachers accountable for reaching those goals. Standards increased teacher productivity so that the teachers were no longer saying, “I’m tired this afternoon. Let’s just put on a movie and do nothing” (Karen, Pre-Interview). As a second-year teacher, Madison expressed relief for the existence of standards because they gave guidance to what was expected of her and her students (Madison, Pre-Interview). Lynn illustrated the importance of standards setting using the analogy of running a marathon:

> When the marathon was first created, you need[ed] to run. You know, would a person who didn’t have legs be able to run? And there are people who said, “You can’t. This is about running. You don’t have legs. You would never be able to run the marathon.” However, nowadays, we have people in wheelchairs “running” the marathon. We have made accommodations to those individuals to be able to run the marathon…That line that everybody needs to cross, that’s the standard” (Lynn, Post-Interview).

While the marathon analogy is not perfect, it does paint a vivid picture of the purpose behind standards setting. For one, there is a target toward which all participants run; finishing the race isn’t determined by their running in whatever direction they choose or stopping at any point they like. For another, it makes no exceptions for who can or cannot finish the race; instead, with proper accommodations, all should theoretically be able to cross the finish line. Based on this analogy, the task of educators is to ensure that every student has the knowledge and resources necessary to reach minimal proficiency. The challenge, therefore, is not a matter of if the teachers and administrators can get the students there; it’s a matter of how to get them there within the allotted time given.
**Good for the students.** One of the most frequently expressed benefits of standards setting was that it compelled the teachers to hold the same high expectations for all students. No longer could the teachers say, “Aw, poor kid…she’s never going to make it” (Lynn, Pre-Interview), but instead, they were expected to wholeheartedly embrace the belief that “failure is not an option,” as written in the district’s policy statement. The district believed that psychology was pivotal in the battle against the racial achievement gap. If the teachers had any doubt of the students’ ability to succeed, it would in turn negatively affect the students’ confidence in their own ability to succeed. As Lynn said, “If we say that we don’t believe in standards, then it means we don’t believe [that] every child can learn” (Lynn, Inquiry Group Meeting #4). Although not directly said, the inverse of that statement would suggest that to believe every child can learn depends on one’s unwaveringly belief in the standards.

Standards also benefitted the students because they “level[ed] the playing field” (Jamie, Pre-Interview). They gave all students the right to access the same knowledge, regardless of race, class, gender, or ability. Having a core set of knowledge ensured that curriculum is not “dumbed down” for the students receiving Title I, English Language Learner, or special education services. While instruction may be differentiated for the purpose of accommodating the students’ individual needs, they are all nonetheless taught the same concepts, with the expectation that they will at minimum master the grade level standards (Lynn, Meeting with the Principal and Intern).

Ultimately, however, the participants felt that standards setting opened opportunities and offered the students choice. Without mastery of the basic skills, the option of going to college or pursuing a career that they would enjoy may be foreclosed to them (Karen, Inquiry Group Meeting #4). The students would no longer be given a diploma at the end of high school only to
find out that they didn’t have the literacy or numeracy skills to function in society (Lynn, Post-Interview). Instead, a standards-based education would ensure that all graduates possessed the knowledge necessary to be competitive in the global economy.

*Good for the promotion of social equality.* As problematic as the accountability system might be under NCLB, the teachers in the study unanimously applauded the statute for the role it played in exposing the public to school inequalities across the country. The students who had traditionally been dismissed as unteachable or had fallen through the cracks were now at the center of everyone’s attention. Although educators had long known that certain subgroups of students “have not been making it” (Lynn, Inquiry Group Meeting #4), the mandate to disaggregate data made the public aware of the rampant disparity in achievement between blacks and whites, the rich and the poor, the native and immigrant students, and regular and special education students. What was shocking to the public was not that the achievement gap existed between the students in urban and suburban schools, but that these same disparities existed among the same racial groups at nearly every level of schooling regardless of location. Prior to NCLB, children needing extra services often got “the short end of the stick” (Karen, Inquiry Group Meeting #4), but with the mandate to publicly disclose test scores, schools were now making a concerted effort to bring their achievement to grade level proficiency.

Furthermore, Lynn strongly believed that the standards were developed with good intentions, and that “the real reason to create the standards was to stop [the] separation of power, knowledge, authority” (Lynn, Inquiry Group Meeting #4). As one of the original curriculum specialists who worked with the state in developing standards, Lynn was vociferous in contradicting the bad reputation that standards now have as a result of NCLB’s testing requirements. Standards were established with the very purpose of leaving no child behind, and
the individuals who worked to develop them had the children’s best interest in mind. To her, saying that standards were bad was tantamount to saying that not every child had the right to learn. The problem, as she sternly pointed out, was not with the standards, but with the way that it had been corrupted by the politicians.

*Con Standards Movement*

As much as the participants were in favor of curriculum standards, they also had many criticisms with regard to the ways in which the standards had been handled. The three main themes that surfaced in opposition to NCLB were: the politicians screwed it up; how do we do it; and whose knowledge is being presented?

*The politicians screwed it up.* From the participants’ point of view, the most troubling aspect about the standards movement was how perversely it had been “corrupted” in the hands of politicians. What was meant to encourage educators and students as goals to work toward had now acquired putative measures for failure. Instead of providing the training and resources necessary to assist underperforming schools, the participants felt that the federal government’s method of imposing sanctions on failing schools had resulted in their having to narrow the curriculum, waste instructional time to teach test taking strategies, and place an overemphasis on literacy and numeracy skills at the expense of other subject matters. The participants questioned whether the politicians’ advocacy for an accountability system was more driven by the need to remain globally competitive than by their proposed sentiment to ensure that all students met proficiency for their own well-being. As Karen complained,

> [T]he country has shifted in producing a student that can perform on a standardized test….[W]e’re teaching kids these narrow, specific skills to pass tests….So we’re going to have kids who’s never had social studies, or are not doing science because we have to have them pass this stupid test….This infuriates me (Karen, Pre-Interview).
Bob’s strongest protest against the standards movement was that “we are giving up training citizens and that we are concentrating on training…efficient economic units” (Bob, Inquiry Group Meeting #4). Furthermore, being constantly “under the gun” for getting students to meet proficiency in reading and math meant that “all of [the students’] other abilities are not worth anything” (Amy, Inquiry Group Meeting #4). In other words, Amy was concerned about the message that the accountability system was sending to the students whose strengths lay outside of what was being tested, which was that schools cared less about the students’ as individuals and more about producing individuals who could fulfill a societal role.

Meanwhile, Will questioned the validity of the standardized tests, especially when it is presumed that “one test on one day [could] reflect everything that [a] kid is capable of doing” (Will, Pre-Interview). He also spoke critically of the regulation to deny students a high school diploma on account of a single test. Unlike the other participants, Will actually advocated for more testing because he believed that increased data would more accurately capture the students’ “true” proficiency levels. Madison, however, raised questions about the test construction itself. She challenged the biased nature of the questions and lamented, “When you read some of the [test] questions, it is based on the majority culture. Minority students may not have access to that information” (Madison, Inquiry Group Meeting #4).

All of the above arguments raised by the participants had likewise been articulated by those in academia. Education scholars also questioned the legitimacy of measuring the students’ aptitude in various content areas using a one-time, homogeneous, paper-and-paper test (Gay, 2007). Moreover, scholars argued that the mandate for schools to meet AYP had compelled state and local educational agencies to take ethically questionable measures, such as “lowering their performance standards to keep more of their schools from being designated ‘failing,’” (Gay,
2007, p. 283), performing savvy statistical manipulation so as to meet AYP (Brokowski & Sneed, 2006), and arranging creative bookkeeping methods so that chronically underperforming students could avoid being tested while not being counted as part of the drop-out rates (Hurst, 2005). Although the participants saw value to standardized testing and data reporting, they also felt that the current accountability system needed to be “tempered” (Karen, Pre-Interview).

Somewhere along the line, the art of teaching had been replaced by the task of teaching test taking strategies and covering the materials that were most likely to appear on the test. Had NCLB utilized achievement tests as a diagnostic tool rather than as a measure for punishment, the statute might have been subjected to less criticism from both the scholars and the practitioners. As such, educators now view standardized testing with skepticism, arguing that it had succumbed to “political and economic manipulation,” where the interest of the politicians is more about “preserving the advantages of some groups over others, and sorting out those who mainstream society historically has deemed the ‘intellectually fittest’ from the socially undeserving, than about providing genuine high-quality, egalitarian education for all students” (Gay, 2007, p. 282).

*How do we do it?* Although the participants commended the vision behind the development of standards, they were mystified by how they were expected to implement the standards into their curriculum and instruction. The mandate given to them was that they were to bring all students up to a level of minimal proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic; however, what was frustratingly amiss in reaching that goal was a complete lack of support from the federal government in providing the knowledge, the training, and the funding necessary to make the ideals of the standards movement into reality.

As Lynn passionately argued,
My whole emotion with the standard is that standards are good… But the people who took it, very politically, have totally changed the good intention of the standards. And the problem is [that] they have given it to us, and we have no idea how we’re going to do the work. How? (Post-Interview).

Moreover, she felt that the federal government wrongly imposed stipulations and sanctions on the administrators and teachers when they merely dictated, but not demonstrated, the use of scientifically-based strategies for raising students’ achievement. Her anger with being accused for being negligent in her work as a long-time urban educator was evident as she spoke with sarcasm, “We are at fault. We don’t know how to teach. And if someone wants me to do better, show me how” (Lynn, Post-Interview).

The question of “how” was further exasperated by scientifically unproven strategies to inflict sanctions on underperforming schools. Borkowski and Sneed (2006) argued that NCLB “impose[d] a number of untested, federal mandated remedies that seem to be driven more by ideology than by educational research” (p. 504). Such ideologies included the provision of school choice, supplemental educational services through outside tutoring agencies, and the restructuring of failing schools, none of which had been substantiated with rigorous research to support their effectiveness. Moreover, they criticized the manipulability of AYP reporting itself, stating that in an effort to ensure that all subgroups met proficiency, states had resorted to such tactics as setting lower proficiency standards, adopting easier assessments, and increasing the N-sizes so that it “increase[d] the number of students, including students with disabilities, not [to be] included in state accountability systems” (p. 514). The federal government’s emphasis on how to penalize underperforming schools rather than how to support them had led critics to suggest that the hidden agenda behind NCLB was to privatize education through vouchers and charter schools (Molnar & Garcia, 2007), to corporatize American schools so that “education [became] a resource for national global competition and for private gain” (Sleeter, 2008, p. 145),

Although the participants did not criticize the legitimacy of NCLB itself, they did feel that the statute overlooked details regarding implementation. While I argued that NCLB was “biased in design, implementation, and outcome,” the participants did not see it that way. In fact, they adamantly defended the good and rightful purpose behind its design and the validity in its outcome. The only point on which they agreed with me was that it was flawed in implementation. The inundation of “how” resounded throughout the study, as the administrators and teachers wrestled with their role in meeting the statute’s requirements.

Whose knowledge is being presented? The most contentious aspect of the standards movement was the issue of power. At its basis were the questions: Who is privy to construct knowledge and whose voices are left out? Should the goal of education be to ensure that all students acquire the same knowledge at the same rate? Is it fair to say that only one form of knowledge is correct?

At one of the inquiry group sessions, we heatedly debated whether the proposition that “knowledge = power” or its reverse more accurately reflected the intent behind the standards movement. Some of the participants viewed knowledge as empowering, and that the only way for the students to become aware of societal injustices was to acquire an understanding of how oppression worked so that they could challenge the unjust power structure. Others viewed knowledge as being dictated by the dominant group, and that the universal imposition of knowledge on schoolchildren was an attempt by those in power to maintain the status quo. Those in the former camp argued that access to the knowledge of the dominant group was “a right that everyone was entitled to” (Lynn, Inquiry Group Meeting #4) while those in the latter
camp questioned whether a body of standardized knowledge that was “handed down from the top” was representative of minority voices (Amy, Inquiry Group Meeting #4).

The same debate was not lost among academic scholars either. As an avid advocate and the founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation, E. D. Hirsh said at a convocation address to the students and faculty of the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga that the only way to reduce the “tragic achievement gap between social groups” was to ensure that

\[\text{[e]ach child in each grade…learns what he or she needs to know in order to be ready to learn the lessons of the next grade….Broad, well-chosen knowledge in the academic discipline is the one thing needful in effective early schooling (Hirsh, 1999).}\]

Likewise, John Chubb argued, “Universal proficiency is perhaps the most important principle of NCLB…It should and will be preserved. Who, after all, will be willing to say whose children should be proficient and whose should not?” (Ravitch & Chubb, 2009, p. 56).

On the other hand, Peter McLaren vehemently opposed the establishment of a “core knowledge,” arguing that “[k]nowledge is a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations….\[S\]ome forms of constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not” (2007, pp. 196-197). Using his argument as a springboard to looking critically at Centralia School District’s Middle School Social Studies Curriculum Guide, I asked the participants whether the expectation to “know how Sumerian city-states emerged,” "trace the development of Cuneiform," and "apply the code of Hammurabi to Babylonian court cases” was representative of a core knowledge that every child in America should know. I also questioned whether the State’s mathematical standard, “Apply appropriate graphical, tabular, or symbolic methods to the solution. Include growth and decay; logistic growth; joint (e.g., \[I = Prt, y = k(w1+w2)\] and combined \[F = G(m1m2)/(d2)\] variation” (―State‖
Curriculum Frameworks, Learning Standards for Algebra II, AII.P.11), was meant to narrow the achievement gap or to “thresh the wheat from the staff.”

The following day, Karen emailed all of the participants a QuickTime video of Andy Hargreaves’s keynote speech at the Building Learning Communities Conference (2006). In the speech, Hargreaves sharply criticized the standards movement, and recounted the failure of every country that had attempted it prior to the United States. The movement was not sustainable, he claimed; it could only make short-term gains for some at the expense of others. Similarly, Gay (2007) warned,

If we continue the dangerous precedents and directions set by NCLB we run the risk of exacerbating already dire conditions in U.S. education. Achievement gap will continue and even expand; more and more children will be victimized and then punished for being victims; and society will reap the benefits by becoming even more chaotic, violent, immoral, oppressive, exploitative and depressing than it currently is (p. 291).

Despite the warnings given by education researchers, however, the participants did not see NCLB as “unsustainable” and “dangerous” as the scholars proposed. In fact, they held firmly to the position that the pros to the standards and accountability movement far outweighed the cons. This finding was entirely unexpected considering the general antagonism toward the statute as espoused in education journals. In the following section I discuss why such an unexpected finding might have occurred.

Discussion

Admittedly, I, like all educators, held a particular curricular ideology when coming into this project. I was a strong proponent of the social reconstruction ideology, and having been in the throes of the NCLB movement as a classroom teacher at its inception and having broadly read the literature on the statute, I also presumed that education scholars, administrators, and teachers far and wide universally possessed anti-NCLB and anti-standards sentiments. The
scholarly journals, after all, were saturated with criticisms against NCLB, most notably regarding issues of underfunding for underperforming schools (Darling-Hammond, 2007), the “corporatization” of public schools (Sleeter, 2008), the myth of school choice (Gay, 2007), the “interest convergence” agenda of white politicians (Chapman, 2008), and the overall lack of scientifically-based evidence that a government-imposed accountability system with its strict putative sanctions would actually work (Borkowski & Sneed, 2006). But the data from this study suggested otherwise. The participants at this low-income, racially-diverse, urban school spoke passionately in favor of the goals behind NCLB, and they earnestly believed that setting a rigorous standards and accountability system was the means to equalize education for all students.

The inconsistency between the data that surfaced and the existing literature on NCLB led me to conduct a database-wide search to examine just what exactly administrators and teachers in the school settings thought about the standards and accountability movement in general. Of the countless articles and books that popped up during the search, only a couple dealt with examining the perceptions of and experiences with NCLB from practitioners’ point of view (Pedulla et al., 2003; Sherman, 2008). Ironically, whereas majority of the papers written about NCLB from education scholars’ perspective sharply criticized the legitimacy of the statute, both Pedulla et al. (2003) and Sherman’s (2008) studies found that the teachers and administrators were far less negative about state curriculum standards than the scholars presumed. For example, the superintendents in Sherman’s study (2008) spoke of NCLB in a tone that conveyed a sense of simultaneous appreciation and frustration with the statute. On the positive end, one superintendent said outright, “I’m supportive of NCLB,” while another said, “[W]e think that the law is a good one” (p. 688). Another superintendent qualified his/her statement by saying,
“Now, I’m not saying NCLB is perfect. It needs work. But the concept is good” (p. 690).

Meanwhile, on the negative end, one superintendent said, “[NCLB] is a political document and, for the most part, bad law” (p. 689). Others felt that the statue was unrealistic in its goal setting and were frustrated with the pressure and tension that it produced on the administrators, teachers, and students. In summation of the superintendents’ responses, Sherman (2008) wrote,

> Positive consequences of...NCLB include[d] increased collaboration, increased professional development, attention to subgroups, and attention to data-driven instruction. Negative consequences include[d] lack of recognition for progress, increased pressure and anxiety, increased paperwork, lack of adequate funding, and punitive sanctions. Many superintendents expressed the desire for a middle ground (p. 691).

Sherman’s account of the superintendents’ perceptions of NCLB mirrored what the participants in this study had also said. The reviews of the statute from the practitioners’ views were much more mixed than what scholars had proposed. Moreover, in an unpublished paper presented at the University Council for Educational Administration Conference in 2009, Louis used a mixed-methods study of surveys and interviews of 200 school leaders over a three-year period and also found that that the overall perceptions of NCLB were positive in both 2005 and 2008. She specifically highlighted the uniqueness of this finding during her presentation, citing its contrariness to the existing literature.

The present study also found that not all educators viewed NCLB with unbridled distain. In fact, the participants in the present study were in fundamental agreement with the philosophy behind the statute even though they did not agree with the ways in which the politicians had handled its implementation. The disparity in what the scholars and practitioners thought about NCLB was undoubtedly troubling, given particularly that educators were purportedly to be uniformed in their objections to the statute’s unwieldy intrusion into educational affairs. This
marked divide between the two camps led me to conclude that fundamental differences in curricular ideologies were at play in the interpretation of the statute.

It appeared that the majority of the participants in the study fell in the scholar academics camp, with a few embracing a hybrid of the scholar academic and the social efficiency ideologies. As long-time urban educators, several of the teachers were simply fed up with seeing the kids “not making it” and just pushing the kids through so that they could get a diploma after twelve-plus years of schooling. As Lynn argued,

The reason why we’re in the hole right now economically...[is] because we’re not producing people who can work for this country. That’s what is happening. It’s nothing new....[But] there are people now who are looking into how really we can move a generation of kids that we have been losing for years and years and years. That’s to me what [NCLB] has done (Lynn, Inquiry Group Meeting #4).

The participants in the group were realists who believed that in order for low-income, non-English speaking, minority students to compete in a white-dominant society, these children must have access to the same knowledge as their more well-to-do, English-speaking peers. The teachers and administrators were skeptical of the idealism of many in academia who believed that child-centered curriculum and critical pedagogy could get underprivileged, minority students to a level of proficiency that would enable them to be at the same level of competitiveness as other college or work applicants in the real world. Challenging the romanticism of academics, Lynn vented at the unlikelihood of colleges and universities changing their own scholarly academic emphasis in favor of student-centered courses designed in the absence of a syllabus, or the improbability of businesses hiring individuals who were critical of the world but lacked the minimal competency to do the job well. Frustrated with the circuitous arguments solicited by scholars and politicians alike, Lynn said angrily, “[F]ive years from now, we could be sitting
around this table, and we could [still] be talking about the same thing, and the kids will still not be making it” (Lynn, Inquiry Group Meeting #4).

The controversies surrounding NCLB thus appear to be somewhat more exaggerated in scholarship than they may be in real life. At the heart of the debate are the questions of what the purpose of education is and whether knowledge should be driven by scholarship, societal needs, children’s self-interests, or social justice. It is uncertain whether an impasse between all of the different stakeholders can be breached, but as long as education scholars are excluded from the discussion of educational goals held at meetings organized by governors and CEOs (Emery, 2007), and as long as administrators, teachers, and parents are denied a voice in education scholarship and policy briefs, it is unlikely that a workable consensus over the high-stakes standards and accountability movement will come to pass. As the participants in the study pointed out, there are as many pros to NCLB as there are cons. Therefore, instead of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, an open discussion to mete out the ideological differences among the stakeholders may help improve the design and the implementation of the statute.

An example of such collaborative effort can be seen in Massachusetts Department of Education’s attempt to establish a review process in which “scholars, educators, the business community, parents, and students” are asked to provide evaluation to the revisions of the curriculum frameworks in all subject areas through four different stages. In the first stage, the “Commissioner will appoint a panel of Massachusetts K-16 educators with expertise in the subject area and in 21st century skills, and representatives from the community to review the framework” to review and revise the curriculum frameworks, beginning with the English language arts. In the second stage, the “Commissioner will release a first draft of revised standards in order to solicit preliminary comment and international benchmarking by external
reviewers,” which would include scholars from private and public universities, the business community, and individuals recommended by the Board members. In the third stage, the revised draft will be “presented to the Board for discussion and vote to seek further public comment from Massachusetts educators, the public, and other state departments of education.” And in the fourth stage, a final draft will be submitted for a Board vote to accept the revision of the framework (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2009).

This wide-scale, checks-and-balances approach to creating, evaluating, and revising Massachusetts’s current standards and assessment system has also captured the attention of the federal government in its effort to create common core content standards. But as RttT pushes the development of national curriculum standards closer to a not-too-distant reality, it should be reminded that no amount of persuasion from Civil Rights-minded politicians or advocacy from minority scholars in education can replace the tangible voices of the students and parents for whom our present education system continues to fail. While the many “Public and Expert” meetings regarding the RttT Assessment Program has been well represented by prominent education scholars and researchers, policymakers, superintendents, psychometricians, business CEOs, and lawyers (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), it is questionable as to whether financially-strapped urban residents who are passionate about education but lack the “intellectual lingo” would be inclined to attend such meetings. Without the voices of the marginalized and the disadvantaged, the meetings would merely be an intellectual bantering among experts whose vision for “common core” standards is anything but. If there is one thing that can be learned from NCLB it is this: too much political idealism and too little frontline realism make a recipe for data manipulation, educator discontentedness, and untenable goals. If RttT is to achieve its intended objectives, it needs to embrace the idealism of all stakeholders and the realism of local,
state, and federal governments’ fiscal capacity. It needs, at minimum, to bring the meetings into the town halls and the school buildings of the very student populations it intends to serve. It is there that the terms “common” and “core” will be tested to their limits as they are critiqued and refined by those who rightly deserve a piece of the terms’ definition.

Conclusion

Although differences in curricular ideologies have fueled contentious wars among educators with regards to how to best educate children, the debates have also spawned new pedagogical tools that have drastically changed the instructional practices and curricular guidelines of schools. The seemingly irresolvable disagreement over whole language versus phonics in the 1990s, for example, has led to the advocacy and implementation of a “balanced literacy” program in schools across the country (Pinnell & Fountas, 1996; Pressley, 2006). Educators have also managed to creatively incorporate a mixture of teacher-directed pedagogy and student-centered learning, facts memorization and mathematical problem solving, whole class instruction and differentiated instruction, and pull-out programs and inclusion programs throughout their daily routines despite the tug and pull from each end of the spectrum. Schiro (2008) argued that it is the “[i]nability to appreciate differences in vision for the school curriculum and reach a consensus about critical philosophical and pedagogical issues [that has] made systemic improvement of the curriculum difficult” (p. 1). This is no less true with regards to the current debate over the standards and accountability movement.

All four curricular ideologies embrace notable qualities, but each also possesses major shortcomings. The reality is that there is no perfect ideology that would satisfy the needs and expectations of all stakeholders, and a compromise of the four is a seemingly unimaginable resolution. Yet despite the differences, I believe that all would broadly agree on the following:
(1) all children should have the right to acquire basic academic or life-functioning skills; (2) the goal of schooling is to ensure that children have a place in society upon graduation; (3) children learn best when they are interested in the subject matter; and (4) society is not perfect and we depend on future generations to improve it. To rectify the seeming impasse over NCLB, perhaps a balance of the four ideologies needs to be struck. At the very least, a dialogue between all stakeholders is in order, because at present it is the voices of the scholars and politicians that dominate the standards and accountability debate while the voices of school leaders, teachers, parents, and the students remain silenced.
CHAPTER SIX: MISCONCEPTUALIZING CULTURALY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Since the 1990s, culturally relevant pedagogy has been taught extensively in teacher education programs and promoted by scholars and practitioners as an effective pedagogical tool to work with students of diverse backgrounds. Many studies to date, however, have discussed the difficulties that preservice and inservice teachers have in implementing multicultural education or culturally relevant teaching in their classroom pedagogy (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 1995; Gay & Howard, 2000; Sleeter et al., 2004). Because little is being done to work with teachers to figure out how to put the theory into practice, this study was a grassroots attempt to work directly with a group of educators who were committed to social justice to discuss, apply, and assess the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy in their practice.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In her study of eight successful teachers of African-American students, Ladson-Billings (1994) attributed their effectiveness to what she called culturally relevant pedagogy. She conceptualized the term as a “pedagogy that empower[ed] students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 17-18). In 1995, she published two articles that laid the groundwork for culturally relevant pedagogy. She determined that the theory rested on three criteria: academic success, cultural competence, and critical or sociopolitical consciousness (1995a). She further emphasized those criteria by defining the term as a “theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (1995b, p. 469). Because she felt that teachers used academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness in markedly different manners, she also outlined in the latter article
three theoretical underpinnings that broadly defined the teaching behaviors that would satisfy the criteria of a culturally relevant pedagogue. She categorized the underpinnings under the headings of conceptions of self and others, social relations, and conceptions of knowledge, and she provided concrete examples for what each would look like for the benefit of practitioners in school settings.

Subsequent research using culturally relevant/responsive/sensitive/appropriate pedagogy as a theoretical framework provided varying definitions of the term. While several studies have remained true to the three-pronged paradigm (Barnes, 2006; Gay, 2002; Hefflin, 2002; Patchen & Cox-Peterson, 2008; Yoon, 2007), many others have utilized the theory in a manner that focused mainly on culture. For example, culturally relevant pedagogy has been defined as a means to use students’ cultures and strengths to bridge school achievement (Boutte & Hill, 2006), to validate students’ life experiences by utilizing their cultures and histories as teaching resources (Boyle-Baise, 2005), and to recognize students’ home cultures, promote collaboration among peers, hold high standards, and connect home life with school experiences (Neuman, 1999). Siwatu (2007) even stipulated that there is general agreement among culturally responsive pedagogues insofar as how the theory is used in facilitating learning, structuring classroom management, providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate knowledge, and helping students to maintain their own culture while navigating in the mainstream culture. It is questionable, however, that such general agreement exists, considering that the list fails to account for one of the major components of culturally responsive pedagogy, which is to challenge issues of power and openly confront racial and social injustices (Gay, 2000).

Moreover, recent studies have actually elicited their own theoretical framework for culturally relevant pedagogy. Howard (2001), for example, postulated three criteria that
constituted a conceptual framework for culturally relevant teaching practices for African American students, which included communication styles, culture and learning, and perceptions of knowledge. Culturally relevant pedagogues according to Howard (2001) were sensitive to the students’ use of expressive individualism, emphasized collaboration and the collective good, and possessed a critical view of knowledge. Meanwhile, Hefflin (2002) proposed a culturally relevant pedagogy framework for teaching literacy, which focused on culturally conscious themes in the literature, used call-and-response interaction patterns with the students, made communal connections with the students’ experiences, and made individual linkage to the literature. As innovative as these adaptations to the theory were, they nonetheless demonstrated how inconsistently culturally relevant pedagogy has been defined and utilized in scholarly research.

The theory’s varied usage was also evident at the classroom level. In Morrison et al.’s (2008) meta-analysis of 45 classroom-based research studies from 1995 to 2008, less than one-third of the classroom teachers in the studies that they reviewed utilized culturally relevant pedagogy as a way to promote academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Meanwhile, 42 of the 45 studies utilized the component of cultural competence for a variety of purposes, including using technology to create culturally responsive lessons (Duran, 1998) and studying African-American students’ perceptions of white physical education teachers’ use of step-dance to instruct in a culturally relevant manner (Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan, 2006). Even the researchers of the studies that Morrison et al. reviewed conceptualized culturally relevant pedagogy differently, with more than half of them bearing no reference to the sociopolitical consciousness component of the theory.
Although Ladson-Billings (2006) herself argued that being a culturally relevant pedagogue was more important than doing the work of culturally relevant pedagogy, one might wonder whether doing the work is tenuous because what it means to be a culturally relevant pedagogue is widely misconceived by scholars and practitioners alike. After a decade of the theory’s varied usage in the field of education, Ladson-Billings (2006) attempted to clarify the misconceptions around culturally relevant pedagogy by giving more concrete definitions and examples of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Her point was not to prescribe elements that would make a lesson culturally relevant, but rather to emphasize that a culturally relevant pedagogue is always conscious of all three components when planning lessons.

Most of the studies on culturally relevant pedagogy to date have been case studies, ethnographies, or descriptive studies, thereby employing data collection strategies such as interviews, observations, journaling, and examination of documents (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008). Only a few have entailed participant observation or action research methodologies, and in most of these cases, the researcher was also the teacher engaged in self-reflective practices (Lee, 1998; Sheets, 1995). Because of the inconsistency with which culturally relevant pedagogy is understood and applied in academic research and in the school setting, this study aimed to work with a group of administrators and teachers as co-researchers through collaborative inquiry to define, implement, and assess culturally relevant pedagogy.

Findings

Confusion over culturally relevant pedagogy was palpable in all facets of data collection. In an effort to articulate the findings cogently, I have organized this section in the following manner. In the first part, I will examine the district’s documents and the teachers’ pre-interviews
and analyze them with regard to Ladson-Billings’s definition of culturally relevant pedagogy. Second, I will describe the process that took place in the inquiry group meetings as the participants and I sought to move culturally relevant pedagogy as a theoretical model into actual classroom practice. Third, I will articulate the process of observing, analyzing, and crosschecking the classroom observations with the participants, along with the challenges that arose. Fourth, I will describe the perceived changes in the participants’ understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy in the post-interviews.

Examining the District’s and Teachers’ Interpretation of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In sorting through the district’s documents and the pre-interview transcripts on how the district and the teachers understood the term culturally relevant pedagogy, I categorized the data under academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Below is a closer examination on how Ladson-Billings, the district, and the teachers in their pre-interviews defined each component of the theory.

Academic success. Ladson-Billings (2006) regarded academic success as the emphasis on student learning, where academic achievement is prioritized over feel-good curricula and character education. Teachers who practiced culturally relevant pedagogy set rigorous learning objectives, engaged students in critical thinking, held high expectations and long-term goals for their students, and utilized real-life examples to help students understand difficult concepts.

In Centralia School District’s (CSD) “Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Statement,” two major themes exemplified academic success. One was high expectations and the other was same standards for all. According to the district, school leaders were expected to “model a belief in high expectations for all students where failure is not accepted as an option” (CSD, 2006, p. 2). To such end, the district had designated “closing the gap in achievement
among the various subgroups as a primary and urgent priority” (p. 1). In other words, there were to be no excuses for why all students could not attain the same minimal academic standards if high expectation was the district’s norm and the same standards were maintained for all students.

Surprisingly, in defining culturally relevant pedagogy, none of the participants made any reference to academic success in the pre-interviews. Although this idea was made in response to other questions, it was not conveyed when describing their understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy. In general, the participants regarded the students’ cultural capital as the means to build learning upon their personal experiences and to make the curriculum meaningful to them, but not necessarily as a way to promote rigorous academic learning.

Cultural competence. Ladson-Billings (2006) readily admitted that cultural competence was the most difficult of the three to describe. She articulated it as the means “to helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture” (p. 36). She saw it as a meeting of two worlds: utilizing the knowledge and experiences of minority students to bridge their entrance into the dominant society.

Of the three categories, I also found cultural competence to be the one that elicited the most diverse responses. Under cultural competence, three major themes emerged, little of which echoed Ladson-Billings’s proposal to promote the students’ understanding and knowledge of both their own culture and the culture that oppresses them. These three themes were to: (1) know your students; (2) build relationships with your students; and (3) affirm students’ cultural identities.

The theme that was most frequently mentioned both by the district and by the teachers was the importance of knowing your students. The district argued that “increasing knowledge
about students…[is] critical to maximizing staff’s ability to work with challenged and challenging population[s]” (CSD, 2006, p. 3). Similarly, the teachers also felt that in order to connect with the students, it was necessary to “know the students in front of you” (Karen, Pre-Interview) and to “be aware of your students’ cultural identities” (Amy, Pre-Interview). In other words, to know the students well required the teachers to know them beyond the walls of the school; it meant taking a personal interest in them as individuals, not simply as pupils behind a desk.

The second major theme, building relationships with your students, was heavily stressed in the district’s policy statement. For example, the document emphasized the “critical role of relationship building as a means of making instruction relevant to all students” (CSD, 2006, p. 3). For some teachers, building relationships meant celebrating holidays and multicultural months by having parents bring in ethnic foods or sharing about their cultures. One of the participants also found that students appreciated it when he spoke a few words in their native language. These strategies, while well-intentioned, only built relationships with the students in a superficial manner. In many regards, they merely highlighted the sense of otherness commonly felt by minority students (Troyna, 1987).

The importance of the third theme, affirming students’ cultural identities, was perhaps best articulated by Madison (Pre-Interview), who said, “It’s important for [the students] to have a sense of who they are….You don’t want people changing just to fit in.” The teachers attempted to accomplish this goal by using multicultural literature in the classrooms and connecting the students’ origins to the lessons at hand. Another participant felt that without a proper and positive image of oneself, it would be difficult for minority students to affirm and respect other cultures in turn (Will, Pre-Interview).
In summary, all of the participants readily provided examples of cultural competence in their definition of culturally relevant pedagogy. In the absence of the bridging element between the students’ cultures and that of the dominant culture, however, the participants’ use of cultural competence almost seemed cathartic as they sought to understand the cultures of the students that differed so much from their own. Despite their good intentions, their understanding of the term merely reflected the feel-good curricula that Ladson-Billings sought to dispel.

*Sociopolitical consciousness.* Ladson-Billings also saw culturally relevant pedagogy as being about “questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (1994, p. 128). She recognized, however, that teachers were often unprepared to discuss issues of social and racial inequality mainly because they lacked the awareness of “the larger sociopolitical issues…that impinge upon their students’ lives” (2006, p. 37). As in the case with academic success, while a couple of the teachers raised issues of social and racial inequalities in response to other questions in their pre-interviews, none of them mentioned the need to address sociopolitical consciousness in their definition of culturally relevant pedagogy.

This underdeveloped understanding of sociopolitical dilemmas was also evident on a district level. Nowhere in the policy statement did the district convey a sense of the need to challenge the curriculum or address issues of social inequality, largely because the district held tenaciously to the belief that the purpose of schools was to “eliminate the achievement gap by holding the staff accountable at every level of the organization” (CSD, 2006, p. 1). Moreover, the overtone of the PowerPoint handout presented by the Superintendent was one of urgency to close the gap, not necessarily to question it. Written on the slides included statements such as, “these disparities (between subgroups) are unacceptable” (emphasis in original) and “to advance
these goals WE MUST!” (CSD, 2007). This sentiment was echoed almost verbatim by the teachers when asked how they felt about the standards and accountability movement, which seemed to suggest that the district’s promotion of “cultural sensitivity,” “culturally relevant strategies,” and “culturally relevant service delivery” had more to do with ensuring that students met grade level proficiency on the standardized tests than with promoting their sociopolitical consciousness. While the district may not have foreclosed the conversation on sociopolitical consciousness, its rhetoric in the policy statement certainly did not encourage it.

Because of the range of responses in the participants’ understanding of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness, it became clear that a common definition of the theory was needed before we could proceed with constructing lessons grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy. Below, I articulate the process that we took in our attempt to define the term.

*Developing a Shared Understanding of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

At the fifth inquiry group meeting, the participants and I discussed Ladson-Billings’s (1995b) article and constructed a checklist for determining the characteristics that constituted culturally relevant pedagogy. In her analysis of how the teachers in her study achieved culturally relevant pedagogy, Ladson-Billings (1994) proposed the emergence of three theoretical underpinnings: concept of self and others, social relations, and concept of knowledge. These underpinnings were more concrete for practitioners to understand, as Ladson-Billings had provided bulleted examples of what culturally relevant behaviors would look like under each category.

Although I had come into the inquiry group meeting with the intent to define academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness, the participants had other visions
in mind. Because action research studies are driven by co-operative inquiry, in which “all those involved in the research endeavor are both co-researchers, whose thinking and decision-making contributes to generating ideas, designing and managing the project, and drawing conclusions from the experience,” (Reason, 1999, p. 207), a proposal from one of the participants, and concurrence from others in the group, led us also to conceptualize culturally relevant pedagogy by generating a list of characteristics that fit under concept of self and others, social relations, and concept of knowledge instead (see Appendix C).

On the surface level, there appeared to be a lot of overlap between the two lists of culturally relevant characteristics. A closer examination of the two lists, however, revealed a fundamental difference between how Ladson-Billings and the teachers viewed cultural relevancy. Interestingly, in Ladson-Billings’s (1995b) description of culturally relevant pedagogy, she wrote very little about the students’ culture. Most of her examples were about the teachers’ attitudes about the students, their emphasis on community building, and their style of teaching. Cultural relevance to Ladson-Billings was more about establishing a culture of high expectations, creating a community of learners, and critiquing knowledge as a socially constructed concept.

On the other hand, the participants’ concept of cultural relevance centered largely on the students’ themselves: their background, needs, family, and experiential knowledge. Everything else stemmed from a deep knowledge of the children, including how to push them toward higher level thinking skills, how to allow them to acquire and demonstrate knowledge in multiple ways, and how to make learning meaningful to them. The participants took to heart the word “culture” in their understanding of the term. This finding was consistent with their overemphasis on cultural competence in the interviews.
The disparity in the two lists was an interesting find and warrants much more attention in scholarly research. Why predominantly white educators focus primarily on minority students’ home culture when conceptualizing culturally relevant pedagogy rather than a wider culture that embraces high expectations and collegial support from the school, the community, and society at large may speak more to the pervasive issues of power, privilege, and prejudice. At present, however, such speculations cannot be substantiated without further inquiry.

Applying Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to Lesson Planning

After having collectively identified the characteristics of what the participants viewed as culturally relevant pedagogy, at the subsequent inquiry group meeting we broke off into groups to examine two curriculum guides that the teachers currently used in their classrooms. One of the teachers, Bob, had brought in a science unit on water using the Full Option Science System (FOSS) kit, which is a popular hands-on science module adopted by many schools around the United States. Immediately, the teachers began to engage in an informal conversation about the growing concern for water scarcity, particularly in light of the realities of global warming and population increase. That sparked a conversation between Will and Bob about how fresh water sources all over the U.S. are diminishing. With lakes and rivers drying up all over the U.S., Bob noted with irony that pretty soon there would be stricter immigration control along the Canada-U.S. borders than along the Mexico-U.S. borders. This later also led to a discussion about Hurricane Katrina, and how Bob had engaged a group of fifth graders in a conversation about whether the displacement of minorities might be racially driven.

Just in this short conversation, we turned a simple concept of water into what could be a lesson that touches on social/racial inequalities, environmental/social concerns, and higher level thinking skills. This example showed that unlike what many educators may believe, science is
not a subject that is culture and value free. Educators who are mindful of culturally relevant pedagogy can turn a seemingly neutral topic such as water into one that utilizes the students’ background and experiences to promote rigorous academic learning and sociopolitical consciousness.

Concurrently, Karen, Jamie, and Amy broke into a small group to discuss a third grade math lesson on measuring temperatures. The curriculum guide that they used was from Math Investigations, a hands-on exploratory approach to understanding mathematical concepts that was designed by Technical Education Research Centers (TERC). The lesson entailed multiple objectives: learning to read a thermometer in Fahrenheit and Celsius, graphing temperatures of different U.S. cities, and understanding the concept of negative numbers. To make the lesson more culturally relevant, the teachers decided to graph the temperatures of the students’ cities of birth. They also discussed the incorporation of different countries’ climates to help students understand that things like snow and humidity are not experienced globally. But in the end, they criticized the volume of objectives crammed into each lesson, and how it was virtually impossible to cover all of the mathematical concepts in sufficient detail. Karen pointed out, “You only have seventy minutes a day to teach math, and then they have to pass the test.” In essence, they were asking the question: Would the incorporation of culturally relevant pedagogy impede the students’ mastery in math?

I, however, entered the conversation from a different angle. I suggested to the teachers that perhaps a discussion on the U.S.’s insistence on the use of Fahrenheit as a system of measurement when no other country uses it might be fruitful. In other words, I raised the question of whether it was appropriate for the U.S. to compel the rest of the world to continue the use of the English system for the sole purpose of maintaining economic relations with the
U.S. This comment, however, drew sharp criticisms from Karen for my seemingly anti-American stance, which led her to question whether the imposition of one’s values in the name of culturally relevant pedagogy rendered one socio-politically conscious. Karen’s resistance to my proposition not only supported Ladson-Billings’s (2006) claim that teachers often lacked the awareness of larger sociopolitical injustices, but it also suggested that there may be confusion between ideological imposition with that of raising the students’ critical consciousness. The role of a culturally relevant pedagogue is to invite students to question, challenge, and critique structural inequalities that exist in society, not to replace one hegemonic ideology with that of another.

Describing the Process of Observing, Coding, and Reporting the Classroom Observations

In the following week, I observed one lesson in each of the five teachers’ classrooms that they had prepared with culturally relevant pedagogy in mind. After the lesson observations, I realized that a reorganization of the checklist was necessary. Because my own understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy had evolved as a result of ongoing synthesis of the literature and the inquiry group discussions, I proposed to the participants that reframing the checklist under the headings academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness might be more appropriate (See Appendix D). Using this revised checklist, I had the teachers code their own classroom observation transcripts for academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. I also had them critique my coding and reflection of their transcripts. Moreover, I asked the principal and the principal intern to examine my coding from an administrator’s point of view to discuss how they would challenge the teachers to move their lessons toward sociopolitical consciousness. Therefore, the data from the classroom observations were analyzed and crosschecked by three different parties—the researcher, the
teachers, and the administrators. In Appendix E I provided a brief description of each of the lessons and the number of instances in which the lessons exemplified academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness.

As can be seen, the participants and I differed greatly in our coding of the classroom observation transcripts. In general, the teachers saw fewer instances of their use of culturally relevant pedagogy in their lessons than I did. This was largely because the teachers coded in chunks while I coded for every occurrence. For example, whereas Madison marked the code “2” for cultural competence for the entire discussion on what the students knew about butterflies, I marked “2” for every instance in which she attempted to tap into the students’ prior knowledge. A more interesting finding, however, was that the teachers overwhelmingly emphasized the components of academic success and cultural competence in their use of culturally relevant pedagogy, and in some cases to the exclusion of sociopolitical consciousness. This seemed to suggest that the teachers possessed an incomplete understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and perceived sociopolitical consciousness as incongruous with the teaching of academic standards, or at least with the pressure to pass the test.

Indeed, when asked to reflect on her own lesson, Jamie readily admitted that she struggled with the concepts of sociopolitical consciousness while planning for the lesson. She particularly felt frustrated by the exercise because even though she wanted to go beyond teaching the academic content itself, “there [was] always the pressure to cover the material.” As a special education teacher whose students were already performing well below proficiency, pushing her students to meet grade level expectations was primary on her agenda. Her singular focus on the students’ academic success foreclosed her understanding of how to use the elements of cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness in her lesson.
One way to have pushed Jamie’s lesson toward sociopolitical consciousness while maintaining the rigor of high academic learning would have been to do as Will proposed later at the inquiry group meeting:

You[’d] have to consciously change the lesson…you’d have to talk about like when African-Americans were considered 3/5 of a vote…What does that mean? Out of every 5 African-Americans, you only counted 3… they were counted only for 3/5 of a human being (Will, Inquiry Group Meeting #7).

In other words, Will was aware that culturally relevant pedagogy asked for an entirely new way of thinking. Rather than teaching fractions from a purely mathematical perspective, culturally relevant pedagogy required teachers to teach mathematics “as a racialized endeavor” (Martin, 2009) in order to challenge social and racial inequalities.

Another example of teachers’ incomplete understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy was Karen’s lesson on the founding of the English colonies. Although she did touch on sociopolitical consciousness when she led the students into a conversation about who was in the country before the colonization of the Europeans and whose voices were missing from the curriculum, it was still puzzling as to why she didn’t challenge the teaching of the Eurocentric curriculum itself considering that her class was largely comprised of Latina/o and Hispanic students. At one point in her lesson, she went over the dates on the timeline presented in the book. When she came across the date 1565, she asked the class what was written in the caption. One student answered, “First colony, St. Augustine, Florida. Spain.” In response, Karen said, “The first one was in Florida. Great. Let’s go on now…What comes next?” In so doing, she quickly brushed over what could have been a salient point in connecting the students’ own cultures to U.S. history. Furthermore, when they came across the date 1620, Karen showed her bias when she said out loud, “Ah, I like that date—1620…Now why did I say I liked 1620?”
When I questioned her later in the inquiry group meeting why it was necessary for every student in America to know something about 1620, the Plymouth, and the Mayflower, but not about Cortez, the Spanish conquistadors, and the Franciscan frères who sought to evangelize Native Americans through means of flagellation, slavery, and deculturalization, Karen’s response to me was “because it’s the [State] curriculum and because it becomes too big to do all this [in the third grade]. It is repeated in junior high and other colonies are focused on then, when they are cognitively ready to take in more info at once.” In other words, Karen not only found it unnecessary to introduce sociopolitical issues when they deviated from the academic standards, but she also felt that it was premature to raise the students’ awareness to racial and social injustices at such a young age. Given her position as a white middle-class female, this assumption showed deep cultural biases. According to Conrad and Sellers (2005), African-American families begin instructing their children about racism in society and preparing them to navigate successfully in an oppressive environment through a process of racial socialization at a very young age. Thus, Karen’s attempt to shelter minority students from addressing racially sensitive issues revealed a misunderstanding of culturally relevant pedagogy, which may be because of an unintended cultural bias or an unpreparedness to confront issues that are racially and socially charged.

Post-Interview Observations

Overall, our inquiry group discussions on the classroom lessons were enlightening for some, uncomfortable for others, and raised challenges to culturally relevant theory in general. Whereas none of the participants made any mention of academic success and sociopolitical consciousness when describing their understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy in the pre-interviews, this was not so in the post-interviews. In the end, some continued to focus primarily
on the cultural competence component of the theory, such as when Karen defined the culturally relevant pedagogy as “being mindful of who’s in front of you…and bring[ing] into the classroom their culture and mak[ing] it part of your teaching,” or when Madison articulated it as having kids “share their culture with the class and celebrate them to make everyone feel that they belong here.” On the other hand, others began to think more about the sociopolitical consciousness component of the theory, such as when Bob argued that in order to promote good citizenship, the students needed to be “prepare[d] to deal with the shortcomings in America,” or when Amy challenged the standard curriculum for being “written for one group of students, but not for all the groups.” Nonetheless, the majority still felt that culturally relevant pedagogy was more fitting for classroom meetings and teachable moments than for instruction of core content areas. In essence, the participants more or less continued to have difficulty conceptualizing culturally relevant pedagogy as a three-pronged tool, where the promotion of the students’ academic success and critical consciousness is inseparable from that of cultural competence.

Discussion

In our effort to define, implement, and assess the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy, the participants and I repeatedly encountered obstacles that led us to question the viability of the theory for actual practice. Morrison et al. (2008) found that one of the challenges to culturally relevant pedagogy was that the theory “ultimately clashes with the traditional ways in which education is carried out in our society, thus making [it] seem herculean to many teachers” (p. 444). The participants in the present study did in fact find culturally relevant pedagogy a seemingly impossible task, especially for the newer teachers who were just becoming familiar with the curriculum. The teachers also felt overwhelmed by the limited length of time to cover the material so that the students met grade-level proficiency. These concerns were likewise
echoed by Morrison et al. (2008) who argued that culturally relevant pedagogy is ultimately a constructivist pedagogy, which stands in sharp contrast to a standardized curriculum and high-stakes tests. And while they continued to praise culturally relevant pedagogy as a “task that teachers must undertake if they wish to help fulfill our society’s ideals for equitable education for all” (p. 445), they did “call for future research that seeks to… parse out the complexities” (p. 444).

This study did just that, with unsettling results. The complexities extend much further than the challenges of designing time-consuming, real-life lessons that reflect a commitment to culturally relevant pedagogy in the face of high-stakes testing. The concerns that the participants raised spoke prominently to three critical challenges to the theorizing, research, and practice of social justice education. These challenges include the need to: (1) raise the race consciousness of educators and encourage them to confront their own cultural biases; (2) address systemic roots of racism in school policies and practices; and (3) adequately equip preservice and inservice teachers with the knowledge of how to implement theories into practice.

*Raising the Race Consciousness of Educators*

Gay and Howard (2000) cautioned, “Unless European American teachers seriously analyze and change their cultural biases and ethnic prejudices (toward self and others) they are not likely to be very diligent and effective in helping students to do likewise” (p. 8). Indeed, in their attempt to utilize culturally relevant pedagogy in their lesson planning, the participants revealed cultural biases about what they expected the students to know and what knowledge was considered important. Their frustration with the lack of time to plan and the pressure to cover materials seemed to suggest that while the participants embraced the principles behind the
theory, their unspoken preference for the traditional curriculum prevented their conceptualization of how to use the pedagogy effectively in their lesson planning.

It was not particularly surprising that it was Amy, the only non-white teacher in the study, who was willing to engage her students in thoughtful and self-reflective discussions about race and racism. Her status as a black, immigrant female in the U.S. afforded her a different outlook about the school experiences of minority students and the importance of cultural relevance in classroom instruction than her colleagues. Sleeter (2001) argued that although “preservice students of color bring a richer multicultural knowledge base to teacher education than do White students” (p. 95), white students’ race consciousness could be raised through inquiry-based scaffolding strategies such as learning to question, modeling, and supporting systems (Sleeter et al., 2004). Well-intentioned educators need to thoroughly examine how their hidden biases may undermine the value of culturally relevant pedagogy and how they may inadvertently sabotage the theory’s effectiveness in classroom instruction.

Addressing the Systemic Roots of Racism in School Policies and Practices

The participants’ skepticism toward the effectiveness of culturally relevant pedagogy also spoke to a larger issue of the persistence of racism in American schooling. Literature on critical race theory is fraught with examples of how school practices contribute to the suppression of intellectual rights of minority children (Ladson-Billings, 1998), and how culturally sensitive rhetoric often masks the interest-convergence agenda of the dominant group (Chapman, 2007; Milner, 2008). For example, on the surface, it may appear that NCLB has the best interest of underprivileged minority students in mind, particularly with its promise to “close the achievement gap…between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” (P.L. 107-110). A deeper analysis of the statute,
however, suggests that it may be inadvertently increasing, not decreasing, the failure rates of students already struggling in school (Gay, 2007).

Throughout the study, the participants repeatedly targeted NCLB as the singular cause of their having to narrow their instruction to focus on test coverage, reduce their usage of multicultural curriculum, and place an overemphasis on teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. While the participants in general lauded NCLB for its effort to level the playing field, raise expectation for the students so that the teachers couldn’t discount a group of kids, and stop the separation of power, knowledge, and authority, they also sharply criticized the statute for its poor implementation at the policy level and the punitive measures imposed on the educators for failing to meet annual yearly progress. Moreover, they complained about how stifling the district’s mandate to use scripted curriculum in mathematics had been, how wrong it felt to waste valuable instructional time teaching test-taking strategies, and how shameful that the school had virtually eliminated the training of students for citizenship and democracy at the expense of “producing efficient economic units” (Bob, Pre-Interview). One of the unintended consequences of NCLB, therefore, had been to increasingly normalize the curriculum in the district and push non-tested curriculum to the wayside so that all students were learning the same thing, at the same time, and at the same rate. Although the district’s rhetoric continued to promote culturally responsive teaching and differentiated instruction, teachers were at a loss as to how they were expected to teach scripted curriculum in an individualized or culturally relevant manner.

Gay (2007) argued that overtones of racism could be found in the false promises of NCLB, which claims to ensure high quality educational opportunities and achievement outcomes for everyone, when instead it may be “preserving the advantages of some groups over others, and sorting out those who mainstream society historically has deemed the ‘intellectually fittest’ from
the socially undeserving, than about providing genuine high-quality, egalitarian education for all students” (p. 282). As standard-based curriculum increasingly deposits the essential basic knowledge necessary for students to survive and function in the existing social world, minority students’ knowledge, culture, and language are also becoming increasingly standardized to the norm. It would appear then that NCLB seeks to maintain, rather than to alter, the racialized status quo, which flies directly in the face of culturally relevant pedagogy.

_Adequately Equip Teachers with the Knowledge of “How”_

Gay and Howard (2000) lamented, “We seriously doubt that existing preservice programs are adequately preparing teachers to meet the instructional challenges of ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically diverse students in the 21st century” (p. 1). Their sentiment was also shared by Ladson-Billings (1999), who argued that “multicultural teacher education continues to suffer from a thin, poorly developed, fragmented literature that provides an inaccurate picture of the kind of preparation teachers receive to teach in culturally diverse classrooms” (p. 114). Their distress is not without substance, as evidence from this study can testify.

As we worked to apply culturally relevant pedagogy into curricular planning, the question that kept surfacing was “How?” Will represented the participants’ frustration well when he commented,

> How do you do this (culturally relevant pedagogy) without deviating too far from the curriculum? Are our kids really mature enough to address such deep inequalities? Do they even know how? Do we as teachers?….It’s a great idea….[but] how do we do it? (Inquiry Group Meeting #7).

The call for help signifies a great shortcoming of teacher preparation programs and professional development programs. Not enough is being done to extend ongoing support to practitioners who have accepted and are willing to implement scholarly theories into their pedagogy. Perhaps a more sustainable, more collaborative methodology is needed in order to
support the teachers’ implementation of a theory into practice. Sleeter and Delgado Bernal (2004) found that even when they worked with teachers who already embraced the ideals of critical pedagogy, they ended up dismissing it because they did not know what to do with it in their classrooms. This study advocates a more hands-on, more praxis-oriented, and more collaborative model of research design that calls for inquiry-based discourse and iterative action and reflection in order to further support the work of teachers.

Conclusion

This project attempted to address two critical areas of teacher education: raising the race consciousness of educators, and working with practitioners to implement culturally relevant pedagogy into classroom instruction. Unlike most studies discussed in the literature, this study took on an on-site, co-participatory approach to working with administrators and teachers rather than with students in teacher preparation programs. The findings were in part overwhelming because they highlighted deep structural complexities in resolving issues of cultural bias among educators, the persistence and prevalence of racism in school settings, and the shortcomings of preservice programs and inservice professional developments to adequately prepare teachers to apply culturally relevant pedagogy to their practice. At the same time, however, the findings were also in part underwhelming because this study had several limitations. One, it was a small scale study involving eight participants at one school. Even though the study was conducted in the most ideal of circumstances—with teachers who were leaders in the school and in the district, a principal who was committed to racial equality, and a district that made eliminating the racial achievement gap its top priority—the findings cannot be broadly generalized. Nonetheless, the study can nonetheless yield valuable, information-rich findings that principals in other large urban settings can apply to their own schools. As Stake (1981) argues, a good case study can
“provide more valid portrayals, better bases for personal understanding of what is going on, and solid grounds for considering action” (p. 32).

Two, it was greatly limited in time. Raising educators’ race consciousness is not something that can be done in one college course, a professional development seminar, or in this case, eight weeks of inquiry group sessions over the course of three months. Action research scholars are highly critical of “drive by” research and contend that six months of participant observation is a minimum if one truly seeks to get to know the participants and the school climate well (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). This study came nowhere close to the minimum of six months, and as a result, was unable to provide the sufficient time for the participants to engage in critical self-reflection and make substantial changes to their classroom pedagogy.

Despite the limitations, however, this study gives hope to what a study of larger magnitude and of lengthier timeframe might yield. Throughout the inquiry group meetings, the participants and I wrestled deeply with just how systemically rooted racism was in the policies and practices of schools, and we pushed each other toward a greater consciousness of white privilege, cultural bias, and colorblindness. Moreover, we could also see small, but tangible, evidence of progress toward the application of culturally relevant pedagogy that went beyond celebrating holidays and highlighting minority students’ origins of birth, but instead touched on addressing social and racial inequalities. While existing literature is inundated with research that demonstrate how racism is prevalent in schools, how teachers are underprepared to address issues of diversity, and how a rift exists between theory and practice, this study reveals how the researcher and the practitioners can address these very issues at the ground level through inquiry-based discourse and ongoing reflection. The void in scholarly research is not in the knowledge
of theories but in the knowledge of how to implement them, particularly in a way that has a wide-reaching and sustainable impact on teacher education.
CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

What Did the Study Accomplish?

This study began with the intended purpose of accomplishing three objectives: To examine (1) the process involved in engaging the participants in inquiry-based dialogue to raise their race consciousness and co-construct a pedagogy founded on the principles of antiracism; (2) the changes in the participants’ perception and pedagogical practices as a result of their commitment to antiracism; and (3) how CRT can be utilized as a theoretical framework among practitioners to engage in antiracist education. Although the findings to each were alluded to in the previous three chapters, below I will more directly articulate how each objective was met and what conclusions can be drawn from the study.

Examining the Process Involved in Engaging Participants in Inquiry-Based Dialogue

The process of inquiry was no less than what Lytle (1996) described as an “A Wonderfully Terrible Place to Be.” It was a place in which the participants exposed their vulnerabilities and revealed unabashed sentiments. It was also a place where renewed visions of socially just and equitable education were conveyed. To engage in confrontational discourse about race and racism, particularly to reflect upon oneself as a “racist” who may unintentionally contribute to racism’s endemic nature, rendered all of us uneasy at one point or another during the eight-week inquiry group sessions. But it was in this place, where uncertainty and discomfort were intricately mixed with a sense of rejuvenation and fervor, that progress toward philosophical and pedagogical change was slowly in the making.

The process involved in raising the educators’ race consciousness first took on a journey to identify oneself as a racialized being, one who is raised with cultural perspectives and ideological assumptions that are rooted within a sociohistorical construct. We examined our own
racial identity using Helms’s White Racial Identity Development Model (1995) and Cross’s Black Racial Identity Development Model (1995). Those of us who were neither white nor black used Cross’s racial identity development model, as his stages of development more accurately reflected the experiences of racial minorities.

Consistent with the literature, several of the white participants had a difficult time placing themselves on the racial terrain (Frankenberg, 1997). In an attempt to dismiss oneself as white, Madison said, “We (pointing to herself and Karen) didn’t consider ourselves as white. We identified ourselves as Irish and Belgian” (Inquiry Group Meeting #1). Similarly, throughout the study, Bob spoke with pride about his poor, Catholic, Irish identity and his being “wicked out of place” among “generically white people” (Bob, Post-Interview). In other words, they engaged in a tactic of diversion in an effort to “diffuse attention away from the targeted topic” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 183). Rather than critically examining their positionality in society as whites, they highlighted their ethnicities so that they could avoid directly confronting their racial identities.

The use of strategies to avoid critical self-reflection, albeit largely unintentional, was no less true when we began to explore the issues central to CRT. As we discussed topics such as the cultural capital of whiteness, hegemony, power and the construction of knowledge, and the savior mentality, the feel of the inquiry group sessions became increasingly uncomfortable. While Jamie and Madison resorted to the tactic of silence by withdrawing from the conversations and appearing “mystified about how to acquire knowledge to overcome their ignorance” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 183), Karen became gradually more defensive to my seemingly anti-American sentiments. In essence, she challenged me to reflect on my own biased position, and to examine
whether my interest in the subject was more driven by personal vendetta or by an objective desire to uproot racism.

As we moved into the second phase of the study, it was evident that frustration and resistance had reached at its peak. When we attempted to collaboratively define culturally relevant pedagogy, Madison questioned,

I…noticed in the article that little data have been reported on the actual success of these programs….I do agree with it, but at the same time I’d like to know what research there is to support it before we tell teachers to take this into the classroom when it’s not going to work” (Inquiry Group Meeting #5).

In the subsequent meeting, after we had broken up into two groups in the attempt to make a curriculum more culturally relevant, Karen said sarcastically to Bob, “Now do you feel more culturally relevant?” (Inquiry Group Meeting #6). Furthermore, Will also expressed his skepticism when he said, “It seems to me like it would be just as easily to do this (culturally relevant pedagogy) poorly as we do everything else poorly. You know, it’s a great idea, but it’s very challenging” (Inquiry Group Meeting #7).

As I explained in chapter 6, the obstacles to the participants’ impasse to effectively define and implement culturally relevant pedagogy may have been grounded in issues of cultural bias, the systemic roots of racism in school policies and practices, and the inadequacy of preservice and inservice programs to train teachers on how to implement the theory into practice. Although the study’s intent was to co-construct antiracist pedagogy, we never successfully reached that point because we were obstructed by our inability to conceptualize culturally relevant pedagogy. By the end of the eight sessions, the participants were beginning to question less about how to overcome the obstacles and more about whether their inquiry was worth the effort.

The process of engaging in inquiry, therefore, is not an easy road to take. At its basis must be a willingness and a personal conviction to engage in critical self-reflection. Howard
argued that “[e]ffective reflection of race within a diverse cultural context requires teachers to engage in one of the more difficult processes for all individuals—honest self-reflection and critique of their own thoughts and behaviors” (2003, p. 198). Although the participants were individuals who were committed to the elimination of the racial achievement gap, many did not realize that they would be asked to engage in deep introspections of their own racial identity and their complicity in the perpetuation of white privilege. Moreover, many were unprepared to look critically at the beliefs and assumptions that they brought to urban education, but instead were ready to cast blame for the persistence of racism at the others out there. The process of inquiry cannot be sustained in the absence of a conviction to self-reflect. It is through self-awareness that one learns to “[think] critically about society and mak[e] a commitment to transformative teaching” (King & Ladson-Billings, 1990, p. 26). In other words, inquiry begins with a transformation of oneself, without which, teacher inquiry runs the risk of being “another thing to do” that is superficially explored and readily forgotten.

*Examining the Changes in the Participants’ Perception and Pedagogical Practices as a Result of Their Commitment to Antiracism*

In hindsight, it was unduly presumptuous on my part to think that after four weeks of training on examining one’s own racial identity and discussing the theories behind CRT that the participants would become committed to the ideals of antiracism. That being said, however, the study did find antiracist training to have effected subtle perceptual and pedagogical changes in the participants.

For one, when asked to describe what they perceived antiracist pedagogy would look like in the pre-interviews, the answers ranged from “I don’t know” (Jamie), to knowing about the students’ cultures (Amy), engaging in constructivist teaching where “children can see themselves in the classroom” (Karen), and talking openly about ideas and learning from them (Lynn). Bob
was completely taken off guard by the question as he answered, “I can see what a racist pedagogy would look like, but I can’t see what an anti-….I don’t really see…too much of a problem.”

In other words, at the beginning of the study, the participants viewed antiracist pedagogy in the same way that they viewed culturally relevant pedagogy. As I described in chapter 6, this entailed largely focusing on the students’ cultural competence to the exclusivity of the students’ academic success and sociopolitical consciousness. In the post-interviews, however, there was more of an emphasis on being critical of the policies and practices of the schools. For example, Jamie described antiracist pedagogy as being “thoughtful and think about where the information is coming from,” while Amy questioned the validity of the curriculum that is handed down from the top. Bob also saw it as being mindful of preparing students for good citizenship and recognizing that America as a nation has many shortcomings. Reflecting on her own definition of what it means to an antiracist pedagogue, Lynn said,

I thought it was just being able to have a conversation or bring people into the conversation, but you’re talking about changing the structures and changing the system. I’m not there yet, [and] so I am helping to perpetrate racism by doing this. Now that I’m aware, I’m really trying to change [the system].

According to Derman-Sparks and Brunson-Philips (1997), antiracist pedagogy requires teachers to develop a self-awareness of one’s own racial identity, understand how race and racism has played an role in the shaping of one’s identity, increase one’s knowledge of racially and culturally diverse groups, and become activists to combat racial inequities in society at large. Although this study attempted to raise the participants’ awareness to the principles behind antiracist pedagogy, the limited timeframe precluded the participants from making substantial growth in their understanding of their own racial identity, and even much less an understanding of other racial groups. Only those who were already at the Internalization-Commitment stage on
Cross’s model or the Autonomy stage on Helms’s model (see Appendix F) were prepared to engage in activism against racism.

Insofar as pedagogical changes went, therefore, only Amy consciously incorporated the learnings from the inquiry group sessions into her classroom instruction on a regular basis. She shared at one inquiry group meeting about how after she had done some of the readings, she decided to pull the class into a circle to share about how they felt about themselves, whether they felt differently from others, and how they felt they were treated by others. Amy was particularly intrigued by the use of counterstories, as she reflected on how her own experiences as an immigrant black female were markedly different from the views that her colleagues shared during the inquiry group sessions. She recognized that everybody had a story to tell, and that classroom settings often served as microcosms of hegemony when teachers unassumingly dismissed the voices of the students by simply not asking them to share their about their school experiences. Thus, as she engaged her students in the telling of counterstories, one Muslim girl had shared about feeling different because she had to wear a hijab (headcovering), and how she didn’t like it when other girls teased her about it. Another student also shared that she didn’t feel fit in because she was the only African-American girl in the class. By the end of the meeting, Amy recounted how she was passing the tissue box around as virtually every student had broken down in tears. Amy was mindful that when working with students of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, it was important to hear their voices and not just insert cultural referents into the curriculum in a superficial manner. She learned from this exercise that as a teacher, she needed “to be aware of what they [were] experiencing…each day of their li[ves] in the classroom.” Although it has become increasingly common for mainstream society to see Muslim women and girls wear hijabs on their heads, as children who live in a white dominant world where
headcoverings are not the norm, they continue to feel ostracized from their peers on a daily basis. Amy’s students’ experiences remind us how keenly aware children are of in-group and out-group identities, and as long as we choose to ignore their stories, we affirm their position as “others” in a society that values the knowledge and traditions of whiteness.

*Examining How CRT Can Be Utilized as a Theoretical Framework to Engage Practitioners in Antiracist Education*

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in using CRT as a framework to study the practice of racism in schooling. Chapman (2007), for example, used portraiture and CRT to examine how one teacher used reader response theory to allow students to respond to literature through interpretation of their own experiences. Meanwhile, Milner (2008) used CRT to analyze the interest convergence policies and practices prevalent in U.S. education. Yosso (2005) employed CRT to criticize the marginalization of minority experiences in schools to affirm the capital of whiteness. Despite the popularity that CRT has garnered in educational research, Ladson-Billings’s warning against the penetrability of the theory into classroom practice is not without foundation. This is because radical ideologies that run contrary to mainstream positions tend to be distorted and misrepresented. While symbolically teachers may embrace the ideals of CRT, their pedagogy may continue to reflect no more than the superficial celebration of ethnic and cultural foods, holidays, and songs.

Bearing this caution in mind, this study took on a different approach to utilizing CRT in educational research than in previous studies. Rather than employing CRT as a theoretical lens merely to examine the interplay of racism in the structures of schools, this study aimed to expose the participants to the tenets behind CRT and subsequently work with them to utilize it as the framework to engage in antiracist pedagogy.
When I first introduced the six tenets of CRT to the participants, they received the theory with enthusiasm. As we discussed critical race theorists’ objections to the legal system’s colorblind objectivity, Will immediately jumped in and cited the Supreme Court’s decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* (2007) as an example of such practice, where Justice Roberts argued that “[t]he way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race” (p. 2768). The plurality opinion of the Court was that the district’s attempt at creating a racially diverse environment in its schools failed to meet a “compelling government interest,” and that the use of race was not “narrowly tailored” in achieving this goal (Pullin, 2008). Despite the volume of social science evidence that highlighted the social, psychological, and intellectual benefits of racially diverse schools, the majority of the judges were unconvinced of the utility of any such evidence that did not already suit their political ideologies (Pullin, 2008). Thus, by disallowing the use of race in the district’s attempt to diversify its schools, the Supreme Court sent the message that a colorblind interpretation of the law superseded a local school district’s effort to dismantle de facto segregation.

In the ensuing weeks, however, CRT began to weigh on the participants’ nerves. As the participants wrestled with their own colorblindness, their skepticism toward the systemic nature of racism, their determination that the standardization of knowledge equalized power rather than fed into the power of the dominant group, and their questioning of schools as institutions of deculturalization, it became clear that CRT as a theoretical framework to examine the policies and practices of the school was more well received by those who were already conscious of race matters. Those participants who were at the earlier or middle stages of Helms’s and Cross’s models of racial development regarded CRT as rather extreme. It was as Ladson-Billings had
warned, that radical ideas would come under heavy scrutiny in settings largely influenced by the mainstream society.

This, of course, does not mean that CRT could not be used as a theoretical framework to engage practitioners in antiracist education. Those who are inclined to employ the theory in their endeavor to challenge the structural roots of racism in school settings would in fact find the breakdown of the tenets helpful in examining the various aspects of schooling worth questioning. The clearly defined objectives and its legal precedence make the attention to white privilege, colorblindness, interest convergence, dominant narratives, and other forms of oppression (i.e. gender, class, ableness) more readily discernible. Unlike critical pedagogy that prides itself on its heterogeneity and non-formulaic approach, which often leaves practitioners uncertain as to how to effectively engage students in emancipatory discourse, self-actualization, and resistance to hegemony, CRT is specific in its aim to critique and expose the structural inequalities rooted in society, using as its foundation a critical analysis of the law.

But like other forms of “radical” pedagogy, including multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and culturally responsive teaching, CRT has one major shortcoming: One cannot sustain the work of CRT without having arrived at the conviction that such work is necessary for the struggle toward a socially and racially just society. This is the reason why scholars advocate the importance of conscientization (Freire, 1970/2005), self-reflection (Gay & Kirkland, 2003), and critical consciousness (Howard, 2003). The challenge for all forms of “radical” pedagogy, therefore, is to find ways to sustain continuous reflexivity among educators and to engage in ongoing scholar-practitioner discourse to ensure that the theories do not become misinterpreted and transformed along the way. The task falls upon the scholars to work directly with school-based administrators and teachers to engage in continuous definition, implementation,
assessment, and reflection of the theory in the policies and practices of the schools. The warning that Ladson-Billings offers speaks more to the need for scholars to stand firm in their convictions and not become disengaged from practice rather than for scholars to be wary of the lifespan of new paradigms of thought.

Sadly, the prediction that she gave a decade ago regarding CRT’s likelihood to generate lively research and debates without making an impact in the classrooms or in the lives of minority students resonates rather accurately in education today. This was evident in the responses that the participants gave me when I introduced the theory in one of the inquiry group sessions. Although Karen stated that she had heard of the theory, she never understood what it meant. Meanwhile, Jamie confessed that she had actually never heard of the theory, and Will was glad to finally be able put a name to it rather than just supposing that people of color were upset and reacted in hostility to certain situations for some unexplained reason. Indeed, while the literature using CRT has been proliferating over the last decade, it has not reached the circle of practitioners in a tangible way. And unless scholars can convey to practitioners how the theory can be used in school settings, it is unlikely that CRT will make a substantial impact in the field of education.

Where to Go From Here?

As was evident in the previous section, time was the major limiting factor in this study. Eight weeks simply did not provide sufficient time to fully engage the participants in the process of inquiry, to make substantive changes in the participants’ perceptions and pedagogy, or to effectively utilize CRT as the framework for creating an antiracist education. But despite the limited timeframe in which this study took place, small changes were occurring, and the participants were beginning to see that racism permeated all facets of schooling, including the
curriculum, instructional practices, policy at the local and state levels, and the very ideologies
that educators held.

Although the study did not yield the structural changes in school policies and practices to
the extent that it had hoped, it did lay the foundation for such a change. At its core was a
principal who was committed to the ideals of social justice, and who saw it necessary to confront
racism—among other forms of oppression—at its root. Because of her conviction to address the
achievement gap between nonminority and minority students from a racialized perspective, she
had, over the years, encouraged the teachers serving on the school leadership team to attend
professional development trainings on topics related to race, white privilege, and the need to
engage in courage conversations. In essence, she had established a school culture that was
primed for critical discourse on race and racism. What the study provided was an opportune
forum to address racial inequalities among her staff, engage in inquiry-based dialogue within the
school itself, and move toward tangible changes in curriculum and instruction.

But time again served as the culprit to the progress that the participants could have made
if they had been willing to commit to a longer study in the beginning. It was only at the end of
the eight sessions that Lynn began to recognize that what she was faced with was a systemic
problem, not a problem with individual teachers being unaware of their racist tendencies. This
newfound awareness brought her closer to the principles behind CRT, and she was beginning to
understand that in order to effectively challenge the racial achievement gap, she needed to
establish a culture of antiracism in the school.

As Sergiovanni (2006) argued, successful principals build

strong and functional cultures [that are] aligned with a vision of quality schooling. Culture serves as a compass setting to steer people in a common direction; it
provides a set of norms defining what people should accomplish and how, and it
is a source of meaning and significance for teachers, students, administrators, and
others are they work. Strong and functional cultures are *domesticated* in the sense that they emerge deliberately—they are nurtured and built by the school leadership and membership (pp. 135, 138).

With Lynn’s resolution to address racial inequalities, the learnings from the study provided her with the tools necessary to begin the work of antiracism in her school. Not only that, but she had a team of teacher leaders who were also exposed to the tensions behind issues of power, position, and privilege in U.S. schooling, and who had wrestled with these tensions as they attempted to implement culturally relevant pedagogy into their classroom teaching. While an eight-week inquiry group study is limited in its effectiveness to transform school policies and practices, a principal who has been given the knowledge and resources to continue the work of antiracism *can* make substantial changes at the systemic level in the long run. The substantive contribution of this study is not in the immediate effects that may arise in the participants’ perceptions and pedagogies, but in the structural changes can take place when the participants’ increased race consciousness propels them toward ongoing self-reflection, critical discourse, and moral activism.

**Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy**

Over the past half century, U.S. education has made formidable strides toward the elimination of the racial achievement gap through efforts of desegregation, mandatory school attendance, the War on Poverty, and comprehensive schooling. However, much more work needs to be done still to confront the root of the problem: the enduring presence of racism in American schooling. As this study revealed, race and racism continues to be a topic that is difficult to broach, and more often than not, one’s acknowledgement of its presence is situated in the blaming of others rather than in confronting one’s own deep-seated prejudices. The attempt to raise educators’ awareness to the persistence of systemic racism and to design and implement
practices to counter it in classroom pedagogy was, therefore, a necessary endeavor toward making progress at a structural level. In the section below, I will describe the implications that this study has for future research, practice, and policy.

Implications for Research

Although action research has been criticized among social scientists as being too loosely structured and draws ambiguous lines between objectivity and subjectivity, this study garners support for the methodology, as traditional methods of case studies, ethnographies, and phenomenologies are ineffective in accomplishing the task of transforming educators’ existing ideologies to reflect pedagogical change. As Reason and Bradbury argue, “action research is about working toward practical outcomes, and also about creating new forms of understanding” (2001b, p. 2). Its rigor is founded upon the collaborative effort between researchers and participants to mutually determine the purpose, the direction, and the ongoing evaluation of the study. Meanwhile, its validity is founded on the ideological changes and the transformative actions that ensue as a result of one’s participation in the process of dialectical inquiry. As the term indicates, action research takes pride in the understanding and discovery of knowledge by embracing action as a process and a result. In quoting Francis Bacon’s work, “Thought and Conclusions,” Fals Borda (2001) writes, “In natural philosophy, practical results are not only a way to improve conditions but also a guarantee for truth…Science must be recogniz[ed] by its works. Truth is revealed and established more through the testimony of actions than through logic or even observation” (p. 30). In education, theory and pragmatism must go hand in hand, and such is also the aim of action research.

Insofar as the future direction of research on this topic goes, one area needing utmost attention is the inclusion of the voices of parents, students, and community members to generate
a more collaborative effort to confront systemic racism. It is not only the race consciousness of educators that needs to be raised in order to make structural changes to school visions, curriculum, and instruction. Unless parents, students, and community members of color in urban areas are made aware of their own oppression and are determined to transform their own circumstances, it is likely that antiracist efforts made by school personnel would become another attempt to “save” minority students from academic failure rather than critically examining the roles in which well-meaning educators take part in racism’s enduring nature (Popkewitz, 1998).

As Freire (1970/2005) argued, a pedagogy of the oppressed must be one in which the oppressor enters into solidarity with the oppressed. Real change occurs in concert with all stakeholders, not where one acts on behalf of another.

Furthermore, five of the six major themes that arose as findings from the study were wholly unanticipated. This study sought to address the broader question of race and racism in the teachers’ perceptions and in school structures. It did not intend to explore in detail the participants’ understanding and use of culturally relevant pedagogy, their reaction to the standards movement, the many stories that the participants told about their students without attending to the students’ own stories, the challenges surrounding how to putting CRT into practice, and the power issues that surfaced in the course of an action research study. Each of these topics should be given its own individual attention, as each has the potential to contribute further to the areas of teacher education, education policy, educational leadership, CRT, and/or action research.

Implications for Practice

This study bears evidence that much more inquiry-based discourse among practitioners in the field is needed in order to begin the work of antiracism. As the findings revealed, the
participants were largely unaware of racism as a systemic issue at the beginning of the study, and many remained unconvinced of their own white privilege even after being exposed to the tenets of CRT. While the participants regarded themselves as proponents of social justice, the cultural biases that they exhibited and their relatively unchanged classroom practices both spoke to the need to further encourage critical self-reflection and courageous conversations about race among school administrators and classroom teachers.

Appendix A provides a detailed description of the topics, discussions/activities, and readings that were explored over the eight-week inquiry group meetings. This appendix offers a helpful guideline for scholars, district leaders, curriculum specialists, principals, and/or teacher leaders who may be interested in engaging in racial discourse and beginning the work of antiracism in schools. Moreover, as the study also found, there were wide discrepancies in which culturally relevant pedagogy was understood and used at the school level. Appendix D, therefore, offers a list of culturally relevant characteristics under the categories of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness that administrators can use as an instructional supervisory tool or teachers as a map for lesson planning when engaging in the work of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Another area needing attention at the school site level is a critical analysis of the policies and practices presently in place. To engage in the work of antiracism, school administrators and teachers need to ask questions that directly challenge the structure of the schools. In what ways, for example, are racial minorities being inadvertently celebrated as “others,” and in what ways are they being excluded from conversations that govern the decision-making processes of the school? Is the presence of ELL and special education parents at meetings seen as token representatives, or is there a concerted effort to truly reach out and understand each group’s
interests and concerns? Does the curriculum take into consideration all viewpoints or is it written in such a way that biases one group’s experiential knowledge over another? Rather than seeing underrepresented student populations (e.g. racial minorities, English learners, students with special needs, chronically misbehaving students, etc.) as “problems” to be fixed, educators who embrace a CRT perspective seek solutions by examining the problems on a system-wide basis. Thus, instead of attributing blame to certain population of students for their lack of educational success, CRT-minded educators ask how the structures in place may be contributing to their failure.

Given the emphasis on standardized testing and AYP reporting, however, the question that naturally arises is: Are data-driven instruction and democratic education compatible? As with culturally relevant pedagogy where there is a wide misconception that “radical” forms of pedagogy is incongruous with academic success, there is also a great need to dispel the notion that an emphasis on critical pedagogy or antiracism is inconsistent with standards-based instruction. Let’s take for example a fourth-grade Centralia School District math standard that states, “Select and use appropriate operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) to solve problems, including those involving money.” On a purely algorithmic level, one could teach the students to solve the problem by giving them the following problem: One gallon of milk costs $4.00. How much does it cost to buy 2 gallons of milk? Enough practice of these types of questions would undoubtedly increase the chances of students performing well on this particular test item, but it would miss an apt opportunity to instruct in a manner that raises the students’ awareness to social and racial injustices. Instead, a pedagogy that focuses on critical problem solving would ask students to think about the cost of milk in terms of how affordable it is. If someone’s parent make $8.00/hour working as a sales clerk at a drug store, how much
would a person need to work in order to buy 2 gallons of milk for the family? Moreover, if
someone’s parent makes $100/hour working as a lawyer at a corporate office, how many gallons
of milk can she buy for her family? From there, the discussion can veer into whether the rise in
milk prices is fair to the working poor, what the health consequences of not drinking milk would
be, whether the price of milk should be adjusted by income level, how the government can assist
the financial needs of people who make less, whether everyone’s parents can actually get a job
as a lawyer, a doctor, or corporate executive so as to make more money, and what students can
do about the situation.

The latter approach not only far exceeds the minimal competency required by the
curriculum standard, but it also engages students in critical thinking skills on a computational,
political, and social level. By adopting a culturally relevant and CRT mindset, teachers can
make data-based instruction and democratic education go hand in hand, which in turn can also
substantially improve their practice as social justice educators.

Implications for Policy

With regards to the No Child Left Behind Act, this study seems to suggest that
policymakers and the business community may have more of an ally among practitioners than
scholarly literature and the media would have the public believe. Even among education
scholars, their contention is not against the setting of minimal competency standards or
increasing teacher accountability, but against the top-down approach to normalizing the
curriculum and the setting of putative measures for failure. At the base of their concern is the
question of equity, and whether the goals under NCLB actually help or hinder the achievement
of disadvantaged children.
The fact that NCLB was passed with bipartisan support was not a surprise. Its goals to eliminate the gap between minority and nonminority students, to raise teacher performance, and to provide tens of billions of funds annually to the nation’s neediest schools commended utmost praise from both parties. However, the policy was shortsighted in the implementation process, and it wasn’t long before the standards and accountability movement was met with resistance at the state and local educational levels. While several states filed lawsuits against the federal government on matters of school funding, others resorted to lowering minimum proficiency levels, altering categories of subgroups so that low-achieving students could be exempt from the test, focusing education on test-taking strategies, and manipulating the reporting of test data.

With the federal government’s impending decision to “end or mend” NCLB and its recent push toward common core content standards on a national level, the importance of voice becomes increasingly more urgent. The main folly of NCLB was that it was a top-down agenda that failed to consider the viability of its ambitious goals from the educators’ perspective. It made unreasonable, and often contradictory, demands that essentially made data reporting a farce. At best, it legitimately captured the progress made by targeted subgroups when specific interventions were made to address their needs. At worst, it falsely touted the gains made by underperforming schools in an effort to avoid penalization while hundreds of students were retained, pushed out, or had dropped out. While the Race to the Top program has made a stronger effort to include the voices of education scholars, researchers, practitioners, and community members, it runs a similar risk of data manipulation with its clause to tie student performance to teacher pay, retention, and tenure. Despite the oppositions raised by the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers, RttT continues to push for merit pay for teachers. Although the teacher tenure system does need a substantial makeover, a merit
pay system will not necessarily guarantee that “good” teachers are rewarded and “bad” teachers are dismissed. In all likelihood, it will lead to more test-driven instruction, outright cheating, and well-qualified teachers bailing out of already troubled schools because the fight is just not worth it. At a policy level then, it might be advisable for the Obama administration to heed the voices of frontline educators, on whom RttT sits on the brink of success or failure. Lest RttT fall prey to another game of data manipulation, the federal government might want to reconsider whether student achievement is directly (and solely) correlated with high quality teaching.

Conclusion

In 2008, U.S. witnessed for the first time in its history the election of a black man into the Oval Office. With his ascendancy to Presidency, Barack Obama became a symbol of racial harmony, as the majority of Americans congratulated themselves and the nation as a whole for finally having overcome “the problem of the color line.” In that moment in time, the U.S. went in an uproar as it celebrated the progress of black history, the unity of a nation that has been historically racially divided, and the promise of change, not just for black people, but for all people of color in domestic and international spheres.

In the aftermath of the election, however, Americans were once again reminded of the fact that the color line remains steadfastly unchanged. A once uproar of celebration erupted into an uproar of outrage from the black community as the nation witnessed the arrest of prominent African-American professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. for attempting to “break into” his own Cambridge home (Jan, 7/20/2009). We also read in the news of a hotel owner forbidding his Hispanic workers to speak Spanish and forcing them to Angelicize their names from Marcos to Mark and Martin (Mahr-TEEN) to Martin (Associated Press, 10/26/2009). We further decried the conduct of Dallas police officers for citing traffic tickets to the Hispanic community for not
being able to speak English (Associated Press, 10/23/2009). And just a few days ago, Chris Matthews, a well-known political commentator and a host of a syndicated news talk show, refueled racial tensions when he made the remark, “I forgot he was black” in response to President Obama’s articulateness in his State of the Union address (Washington, 1/28/09). As these accounts attest, the U.S. is far from being a post-racial society. In the language of CRT scholars, it continues to be as “pervasive,” “prevalent,” “persistent,” and “permanent” today as it has been since the founding of this country.

Today, the problem of the color line is plagued less by outright hostility and blatant discrimination than it is by political savviness and colorblindness. The examples above speak volumes beyond incidences of individual pathology; instead, they are manifestations of white privilege that is deeply harbored in the sentiments of the dominant group. Behind every high profile case of racism, there are countless others that are left unnoticed, dismissed, or silenced. The task of antiracists, therefore, is to make visible the invisible and to make conscious the unconscious. It is to expose the unjust laws and the discriminatory practices that have been sugarcoated in an overtone of colorblindness. It is to make aware the deep-seated racial ideologies that have been rendered unconscious by feel-good “multicultural” sentiments. In the field of education, the challenge to eliminate the racial achievement gap is intricately tied to the struggle to continuously awaken and reawaken the race consciousness of educators, for the work of antiracism is only sustainable if it rests on the ongoing praxis of conscientization and moral activism.
### Appendix A

#### Weekly Inquiry Group Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Inquiry Group Discussion/Activities</th>
<th>Assigned Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Pre-Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Phase 1: Raising Educators’ Race Consciousness Through Discussion of Literature</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Participants were asked to read an excerpt from Tatum’s article, “Talking about race, learning about racism: The application of racial identity development theory in the classroom” (1992).</td>
<td>• Tatum, B. (1992), pp. 10-17.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• McIntosh, P. (1990), pp. 31-36. |
|      | 2. 1. Endemic Nature of Racism  
2. Cultural Capital of Whiteness | • We discussed issues of white privilege, the pervasiveness of racism, colorblindness vs. color consciousness, the theory of hegemony, and the legal means by which the dominant group seeks to reassert its “natural rights.” | • Ladson-Billings, G. (1994), pp. 30-34.  
| 3    | 1. Power and the Construction of Knowledge  
2. Critique of the Standard Curriculum | • We discussed Foucault’s (1980) theory of power and knowledge, and whether the present-day standards movement imposed the knowledge of the dominant group onto minority racial groups or that it equalized the right to knowledge for “all” students. | • Popkewitz, T. (1998), pp. 1-7.  
| 4    | 1. Savior Mentality  
2. Acculturation or Deculturalization? | • We discussed unintentional racist beliefs transpired through the mentality of “rescuing” minority students from a state of oppression. We also discussed whether the purpose of schools | • Ladson-Billings, G. (1995b), pp. 475-482.  
was to prepare minority students to function in an existing, white-
dominant world or to prepare them to challenge an existing unjust
world.

### Phase 2: Applying Theory into the Co-Construction of Antiracist Pedagogy

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Defining Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- We broke up into small groups to construct a “checklist” of characteristics that exemplified culturally relevant pedagogy.</td>
<td>- Villenas, S., Deyhle, D., &amp; Parker, L. (1999), pp. 35-39.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Applying Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to Lesson Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teachers brought in curriculum guides, broke up into small groups, critiqued the curriculum guides for any hidden curriculum, and attempted to make the guides more culturally relevant.</td>
<td>- Freire, P. &amp; Macedo, D. (2003), pp. 354-364.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Classroom Observations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Coding and Crosschecking Classroom Observation Transcripts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Teachers reviewed and coded their own transcripts from the classroom observations.</td>
<td>- Lawrence, S. &amp; Tatum, B. (1997), pp. 162-178.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The principal and the intern reviewed the researchers’ coding of the classroom observation transcripts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- We discussed the challenges in planning and teaching a lesson based on culturally relevant pedagogy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Review of Concepts and Final Reflections</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I reviewed with the participants the key concepts that the study intended to cover using case studies scenarios and we discussed the major lessons from the inquiry group sessions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Post-Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Definition and Counter-Definition of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Webster’s Dictionary</th>
<th>Counter-Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Any of the different varieties or populations of human beings distinguished by: a) physical traits such as hair, eyes, skin color, body shape, etc.; b) blood types; c) genetic code patterns; d) all their inherited characteristics which are unique to their isolated breeding population.</td>
<td>“A concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies (emphasis added)” (Omi &amp; Winant, 1994, p. 55).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Designation of a population or a subgroup as having a common cultural heritage, as distinguished by customs, characteristics, language, common history, etc.</td>
<td>“In contrast to biologically oriented approaches, the ethnicity-based paradigm was an insurgent theory which suggested that race was a social category...Ethnicity itself was understood as the result of a group formation process based on culture and descent” (Omi &amp; Winant, 1994, p. 15).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>The ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of a people or group, that are transferred, communicated, or passed along, as in or to succeeding generations.</td>
<td>“‘Culture’...included such diverse factors as religion, language, ‘customs,’ nationality, and political identification” (Omi &amp; Winant, 1994, p. 15).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>A doctrine or teaching, without scientific support, that claims to find racial differences in character, intelligence, etc., that asserts the superiority of one race over another or others, and that seeks to maintain the supposed purity of a race or the races.</td>
<td>“A system of advantages based on race” (Wellman in Tatum, 1997, p. 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>Suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of other races, creeds, regions, occupations, etc.</td>
<td>Belief in one’s own superiority over others such that one feels that she or he is entitled to the system of privileges based on power (Young, Unpublished Dissertation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>A showing of partiality or prejudice in treatment, specifically action or policies directed against the welfare of minority groups</td>
<td>An action, usually with malicious intent, done towards minority groups based on one’s belief in his/her own superiority. Typically occurs when one feels that his/her right to the system of privileges is being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hegemony</strong></td>
<td>Leadership or dominance, especially that of one state or nation over others.</td>
<td>threatened (Young, Unpublished Dissertation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. The “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.</td>
<td>Webster’s New World College Dictionary, Third Edition (1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The apparatus of state coercive power which “legally” enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent” either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Comparison of Ladson-Billings’s and the Participants’ Definitions of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladson-Billings (1995b)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept of Self and Others</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Believed that all the students were capable of academic success</td>
<td>- Be ready to learn from students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Saw their pedagogy as art—unpredictable, always in the process of becoming</td>
<td>- Be flexible to adapt to the needs of the Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Saw themselves as members of the community</td>
<td>- Be inclusive of all students’ experiential knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Saw teaching as a way to give back to the community</td>
<td>- <em>Know</em> your students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Believed in a Freirean notion of “teaching as mining” or pulling knowledge out</td>
<td>- Attend to the voices/stories of your students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Instill and create a community of belief in students’ success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Relations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maintain fluid student-teacher relationships</td>
<td>- Encourage students sharing knowledge with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students</td>
<td>- Tie curriculum to family connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Develop a community of learners</td>
<td>- Encourage higher level thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another</td>
<td>- Set high expectations for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bring in outside resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept of Knowledge</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowledge is not static; it is shared, recycled, and constructed</td>
<td>- Acknowledge that there are multiple ways to acquire and demonstrate knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowledge must be viewed critically</td>
<td>- Be mindful to apply curriculum to real life circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers must be passionate about knowledge and learning</td>
<td>- Be critical of knowledge/social inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers must <em>scaffold</em>, or build bridges, to facilitate learning</td>
<td>- Teach students to be metacognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assessment must be multifaceted, incorporating multiple forms of excellence</td>
<td>- Be continuously learning and challenging knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Coding for Classroom Observation

1—*Academic Success*
- Encourage higher level thinking skills
- Set high expectations for all students
- Teach students to be metacognitive
- Expect students to continuously learn and challenge knowledge
- Acknowledge that there are multiple ways to acquire and demonstrate knowledge
- Instill and create a community of belief in students’ success

2—*Cultural Competence*
- Know your students
- Be inclusive of all student’ experiential knowledge
- Attend to the voices/stories of your students
- Be flexible to adapt to the needs of the students
- Tie curriculum to family connections
- Move curriculum and instruction back and forth between students’ home and students’ school life
- Encourage students to share knowledge with others
- Be mindful to apply curriculum to real life circumstances
- Be ready to learn from students

3—*Sociopolitical Consciousness*
- Raise students’ awareness of social/political/racial/gender inequalities
- Engage students in discourse about how to challenge injustices
- Attend to curriculum in a *critical* manner:
  - Who constructed/developed the curriculum?
  - Whose voices are missing from the curriculum?
  - Why is this important for the students to know?
  - What else should the students know besides what is written here?
Appendix E  
Classroom Observation Data for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Subject/Grade</th>
<th>Lesson Description</th>
<th>AS</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>Math 3rd (SPED)</td>
<td>Jamie reviewed the concepts of numerator, denominator, writing and reading fractions, and comparing fractions through direct teaching. She then challenged the students to make a sum of 1 using cutout fractional pieces. Although the task was baffling at first, the students all eventually came up with complicated equations such as $1/2+1/4+1/4=1$.</td>
<td>R  27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P  6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Science K</td>
<td>Bob introduced the concepts of air currents by showing the students a video of him parachuting out of an airplane to demonstrate how classroom learning can be brought to real life. He then took the class out to the blacktop to show how air moves bubbles.</td>
<td>R  3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P  4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>Lang. Arts K</td>
<td>Madison read a story called <em>From Caterpillar to Butterfly</em> because the class had decided the day before that they wanted to learn more about butterflies. As she read the story, she asked questions about where students had seen butterflies and what they knew about butterflies. She also introduced vocabulary words such as “molt,” “chrysalis,” and “metamorphosis.”</td>
<td>R  14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P  2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Social Studies 3rd</td>
<td>Karen taught a lesson on the founding of the English colonies where the students read from <em>If You Lived in Colonial Times</em>. She went through each date on the timeline with the students, emphasizing particularly the years 1620 and 1776. She asked probing questions about why the Pilgrims decided to come to the new land, who was there before the arrival of the Europeans, and how the students might be able to connect their stories to the colonists’ experiences.</td>
<td>R  22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P  8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Class Meeting 3rd</td>
<td>Amy capitalized on a “teachable moment” to hold a discussion about respect for racial and cultural differences. One African-American girl shared that sometimes other kids would tell her that she couldn’t play in their games. When Amy asked why that was so, a Latino boy answered, “Maybe it’s because they don’t like your race.” The conversation turned into whether it was possible or even advantageous to be colorblind to skin color when it is the most noticeable aspect of one’s physiology.</td>
<td>R  21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P 10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R=Researcher’s Coding  P=Participant’s Coding  AS=Academic Success  CC=Cultural Competence  SC=Sociopolitical Consciousness
Appendix F

Racial Identity Models

Cross’s Model of Black Racial Identity

I. Preencounter
   - Embraces the beliefs and values of white dominant culture
   - Seeks assimilation into white culture
   - Rejects one’s own culture

II. Encounter
   - Recognizes that one could never truly be white, despite all efforts to adopt a white identity
   - Becomes more aware of racial differences and the continuing existence of racism in society
   - Develops anger towards the dominant group

III. Immersion/Emersion
   - Seeks affirmation of one’s own racial identity
   - Avoids association with whiteness (to the point of glorifying one’s own race and denigrating whiteness)
   - Begins to channel anger to the discovery of one’s own cultural heritage and identity

IV. Internalization
   - Feels secure in one’s own sense of racial identity
   - Becomes less defensive about one’s race
   - Becomes more willing to establish meaningful relationships with those outside of one’s own race
   - Recognizes the oppression of other minority groups and is ready to build coalition with them

V. Internalization-Commitment
   - Actively strives to promote the causes of the oppressed
   - Commits to fight injustices on multiple fronts (e.g. Race, gender, socioeconomic, etc.)
   - Forms alliances with white and nonwhite activists to challenge forces of oppression
Helm’s White Racial Identity Development

I. Contact
- Is unaware of the presence of racism in society
- Does not recognize the privileges one bears on society as a white person
- Is afraid of people of color based on stereotypes
- Sees someone of color who acts white as an anomaly (e.g. “But your English is so good!”)
- Is largely surrounded by a circle of white friends

II. Disintegration
- Feels discomfort, guilt, shame, and sometimes anger towards one’s own white identity
- Begins to understand the unmerited advantages that whites have over people of color (e.g. Knows that one would not be discriminated based on race)
- Attributes blame on people of color for their own lack of success (e.g. Black parents don’t care about their children’s education, and that’s why they’re failing)
- Tries to ease guilt by convincing other whites of their prejudices

III. Reintegration
- Seeks to understand what it actually means to be white
- Accepts white privilege as the way things simply are and criticizes people of color for attacking them when they have no control over their being white
- Identifies more strongly with whiteness because one senses hostility from minority groups

IV. Pseudo-Independent
- Begins to challenge the belief of white superiority
- May still behave in ways that unintentionally perpetuate white privilege (e.g. “Bilingual education prevents students from learning English.”)
- Tries to disavow one’s own whiteness by associating with people of color
- May sense rejection and feel disconnected from whites as well as people of color

V. Immersion/Emersion
- Seeks to learn the role whites played in the construction of societal norms (e.g. Laws, customs, speech, etc.)
- Understands that whites have perpetuated a system of privilege for themselves at the expense of others’ rights and liberty
- Seeks to align oneself with the mentality of antiracist activists (e.g. Believes that one has the courage and conviction of abolitionists, white leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, etc.); however, may only “talk the talk” but not “walk the walk”

VI. Autonomy
- Actively challenges institutional racism and its system of white domination
- Confronts racism and oppression on a daily basis
- Forms alliances with people of color in their struggle for justice and equality
- Engages in counterhegemonic efforts by attempting to overthrow their own privileges
Appendix G

Interview Protocol for Pre- and Post-Inquiry Group Sessions

Recognition of Racism in Society & Self

1. How aware are you of your race in everyday affairs?

2. In what ways do you feel that racism is still an issue in society today, if at all?

3. Which statement rings more true for you: “It is important to affirm minority students’ cultural identities by using their background knowledge to empower their thinking” or “It is important to acculturate minority students into the mainstream culture so that they can have a better opportunity to compete in the real world”? Why?

4. When educating minority students, do you feel that it is more appropriate to “see and treat all students in the same way” or “see color differences in your students and you treat them differently because of them”? Please explain.
   a. Please define your concept of multicultural education.

5. What factors do you think contribute to the racial achievement gap?
   a. How do you work with minority students who are struggling in your class?

6. How would you describe someone who is a racist?
   a. By that definition, would you consider yourself a racist? Why or why not?

Building an Antiracist Pedagogy

7. I understand that the district is strongly promoting the concept of “culturally relevant pedagogy.” How have you attempted to apply that concept to your curriculum and instruction?
   a. In what ways do you find the curriculum that you currently use to be biased towards middle class whites?
8. How do you build upon your students’ culture and experiences to engage them in learning that is meaningful to them?

9. Please describe your last lesson in which students were expected to work together to solve a problem that was grounded in real life context.

10. How do you feel about affirmative action programs that purposely attempt to bolster the representation of minorities in schools and/or employment so that more minority voices are heard?

11. In what ways do you feel that the current standards movement positively affects minority students’ educational experiences? And conversely, in what ways do you feel it negatively affects their educational experiences?
   a. How would you give minority students and parents a voice in what is taught in light of the standards movement?
   b. How do you challenge your students to think critically about the materials that are taught to them? And by critically I mean by addressing societal inequalities. Please give an example.

12. Pre: What would an antiracist pedagogy look like to you?
   Post: How would you describe antiracist pedagogy to another teacher?
   a. How would you continue your efforts to promote an antiracist pedagogy in your classroom?
REFERENCES


