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"Courageous conversations": Rural South Georgia Teachers Reflecting on the Role of Race and Racism in the Education of Rural South Georgia Students

Lawanda P. Gillis

"COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS": RURAL SOUTH GEORGIA TEACHERS

REFLECTING ON THE ROLE OF RACE AND RACISM IN THE EDUCATION OF

RURAL SOUTH GEORGIA STUDENTS

By

LAWANDA P. GILLIS

(Under the Direction of Delores D. Liston)

ABSTRACT

The requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* has forced school systems throughout the United States to consider the achievement gap between White students and non-White students, which had not previously been a factor in determining school success for federal and state funding. However, acknowledging the gap is not enough. Schools must move beyond acknowledging the gap to developing strategies to close the gap.

A professional development course entitled *Courageous Conversations About Race*, written by Curtis Linton and Glenn E. Singleton was taught to thirty-seven teachers in a rural South Georgia school system. Eight of the teachers agreed to participate in this research project. The teachers, two Black females and six White females with teaching experience ranging from one to over twenty years, represented elementary, middle, and high schools. The participants' reflections on racism, institutional racism, whiteness, and white privilege were analyzed through the theoretical framework lens of Critical Race Theory. Findings of this research show that teachers express a desire to move toward developing strategies to close the racial achievement gap. However, the history of racism in the patriarchal South is deeply embedded into these women's personal identity and presents challenges that must be overcome before real change can occur.

INDEX WORDS: Achievement Gap, Action Research, Critical Race Theory, Institutional

Racism, No Child Left Behind, Racism, Self-reflection, Whiteness, White Privilege

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LAWANDA P. GILLIS

A.A., Middle Georgia College, 1987

B.S. Ed., Georgia Southwestern University, 1988

M.Ed., Georgia Southwestern University, 1989

Ed. S., Georgia Southern University, 1991

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Major Professor:	Delores D. Liston
Committee:	Yasar Bodur
	F. Erik Brooks
	Hsiu-Lien Lu

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DEDICATION

This study in "courageous conversations" is dedicated to the devoted and courageous educators who participated in my study and to all my students throughout the years who taught me to look into the eyes of the soul, for if I look only at the covering of the soul I miss the beauty of the soul within.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

When canaries are dying in the coalmine, it means that the air is toxic for everyone.

(A. M. Blankstein, keynote address, September 25, 2008)

The requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 has forced school systems throughout the United States to consider the achievement, or non-achievement, of subgroups of students that previously had not been a factor in determining school success for federal and state funding. The achievement gap between White students and Black students has been well documented since the mid-1960s without significant narrowing of the gap. Public educators, further frustrated by the requirements of *No Child Left Behind*, often blame factors that are external to the school and not related to the quality of teaching and learning such as social, economic, or political factors. This kind of thinking places the blame for our failure to meet the needs of our minority students on the students themselves.

Singleton and Linton (2006) stated that "the racial achievement gap exists and persists because fundamentally, schools are not designed to educate students of color, and educators continue to lack the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to affirm racial diversity" (p. 5).

This dissertation is action research based on the theoretical framework of critical race theory. A professional development course entitled *Courageous Conversations About Race* was taught to thirty-seven teachers and one paraprofessional. The course was designed by Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton (2006), authors of the book, *Courageous Conversations About Race*. A copy of the book was provided for every participant. Handouts and overhead transparencies from the accompanying facilitator's guide were also used. Participants viewed video clips of

Glenn Singleton teaching parts of the course. Video clips were accessed through *PD360*, a subsidiary of School Improvement Network, owned by Curtis Linton. Participants were asked to participate in critical reflections of who they are, how they view cultures different from their own, and their own whiteness and how it is reflected in their teaching practice. The intention of this study was to "move educators beyond acknowledging the racial gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 2).

Research Questions

> *Teaching is about creating change and giving hope.* (Gibson, 2009, p. 17)

Ladson-Billings (1994) argues that one of the central principles of culturally relevant pedagogy is the belief that students from culturally diverse and low-income backgrounds are capable learners. Culturally relevant teaching is cultivated when teachers engage in honest, critical reflection that challenges them to see how their inner self influences their students in either positive or negative ways. "Critical reflection includes an examination of how race, culture, and social class shape students' thinking, learning, and various understandings of the world" (Howard, 2003, p. 197).

The research questions are:

1) To what extent did teachers in Dodge County respond to a professional learning course on conversations about race?

   a) How did the participants engage in critical reflection?

   b) How did the participants move beyond acknowledging the reality of the racial gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it.

Merely ameliorating the racist tendencies of teachers will not resolve the socio-cultural problems faced by underachieving students. However, it can result in changes that we can

control within the school, changes that can and will make a difference in the achievement of

these children as evidenced by high-performing schools with high percentages of culturally

diverse and low-socioeconomic student populations (Haycock, 2009). Landsman (2004) states:

> If educators read and reflect, engage in ongoing dialogue, immerse ourselves in other
> cultures, create safe classrooms, and challenge racial definitions of intelligence, then
> schools will stop using racist assumptions to determine a child's potential (p. 32).

Singham (1998) found a spectrum of favored explanations for the causes of the gap,

which he defined as follows:

1. Socioeconomic Model - The liberal interpretation that the gap is the result of economic
   disparities between two ethnic communities that can be traced back to the legacy of
   slavery and other forms of oppression that Blacks have suffered. Proponents of this
   model argue that the educational disparities are *caused* by the economic disparities.

2. Sociopathological Model - The conservative interpretation that the Black educational gap
   is caused by social pathologies within the Black community. They believe that the sixties
   removed all legal roadblocks to Black advancement and we have achieved a color-blind
   society. They point out that other minority groups, such as Asians who are sometimes
   economically worse off than Blacks, excel in school. They point to unstable families;
   poor parenting skills; lack of drive and ambition; negative peer pressure and poor choice
   of role models; high levels of teenage pregnancies; drugs; and crime; and lack of parental
   involvement in their children's education as the causes of a lack of interest in education
   among Black students.

3. Genetic Model – Proponents of this model conclude that the educational disparity is a fact of nature, the result of long-term evolutionary selection that has resulted in Blacks simply not having the genetic ability to compete equally with Whites. (pp. 9 – 10)

Singham completed this research over twenty years ago, but elements of each of these beliefs are obviously still the prevailing interpretations of Black experience. The results of the 36th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (Rose & Gallup, 2004) show that 74% of the respondents attribute the achievement gap between Black and Hispanic students and White students to factors other than schooling. The same poll shows that 88% of the respondents felt that it was somewhat to very important to close the achievement gap between Black and Hispanic students and White students; 78% of them believe that Black children and other minority children in their community have the same educational opportunities as White children, down only 2% since the 1978 study. Furthermore, 56% of the respondents believe that it is the responsibility of the public schools to close this gap (Rose & Gallup, 2004). Interestingly, the "problems" identified by the respondents are not related to education, yet the public, as represented by these respondents, believe the solution is the responsibility of the public schools. There are many educators who believe that the Black students in their classrooms are equally as capable, and sometimes more capable than the White students of achieving academically, but are frustrated because they do not see the achievement gap narrowing in their classrooms and they do not understand why. They believe that because they are teaching everyone the same way that everyone should "get it" equally. Economic disparities and social pathologies, defined by Singham (1988) as Socioeconomic Model and Sociopathological Model as favored explanations for the racial achievement gap, are not problems isolated in Black families. The school system discussed in this study has only 40% of

the student population identified as non-white. The Black student population is 35% of the total

student population. Yet, 65% of the total student population is identified as economically

disadvantaged. If the Socioeconomic Model and the Sociopathological Model were complete

explanations for gaps in achievement, we should be seeing socioeconomic achievement gaps

more prominently than racial achievement gaps. According to Linda Darling-Hammond (1997):

> The fundamental problem is that we have pushed the current system as far as it can go,
>
> and it cannot go far enough. If we care about all students and about the fate of the society
>
> as a whole, we cannot ignore real problems or merely seek to "get around" the present
>
> system. We must re-create it so that it, in turn, reshapes the possibilities for the great
>
> majority of schools (p. 27).

Where do we start to redesign schools to educate students of color? How do educators

develop the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to affirm racial diversity? Laws and mandates

have not worked. Beginning with the southern education movement in 1901 thru *Brown v Board*

of Education in 1954 thru the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 thru the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001,

education was the civil rights issue of the 20th Century and remains the civil rights issue of the

21st Century. Laws have been written, passed, and mandated. Yet, education continues to

privilege Whites over other ethnic groups as evidenced by achievement gaps and higher dropout

rates for non-Whites. While progress has been made, it has become evident that mandates are not

going to close the achievement gap between White students and Black students. Some believe

that closing the gap can and must start in the classroom with the relationship between the White

teacher and the non-White student. Even though a productive learning environment involving

Black students, especially Black male students, and White female teachers is difficult to establish

and maintain (Irvine, 1991; Noguera, 2003; and Titone, 1998), it is not impossible. We must

"educate the White teacher as ally" (Titone, 1998, p. 167) so that the teacher/student relationship can be built, strengthened, and maintained. As White educators, maintaining the role of ally is the toughest part because who we are and how we think is reflected in what we say and how we react in the classroom. Palmer (1998) maintains the following:

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject (p. 2).

Overview of Dodge County

Dodge County is located in the east-west center of the state in an area some would define as the southern part of Middle Georgia and others would describe as the northern part of South Georgia. The landscape is filled with acres of tall Georgia pines and assorted species of oak trees. Azaleas and dogwoods in full bloom provide a breath-taking view and a feel of Southern hospitality in the spring. In the summer months, fields of corn, cotton, or peanuts and green pastures of grazing cattle make for a pleasant Sunday afternoon drive. Friends and acquaintances are commonly seen catching up on the latest news in the aisles of the local Walmart. The decisions of the school board and other local politics, including election-day antics, keep the hometown tongues wagging. In addition to keeping up with the county gossip, many unplanned parent-teacher conferences take place in the aisles of Walmart or one of the other local stores.

The neighborhoods, housing subdivisions, and churches in the county seat of Eastman are still almost completely racially segregated. The church I attend, which is the largest Baptist church and located in the center of town, has three or four Blacks in attendance on any given Sunday. They are not consistently the same people.

The estimated 2007 population of Dodge County was 20,042, comprised of an estimated 69.1% White and 29.9% Black population. The percent of the population ages five to nineteen is 20.43%. The per capita income is $21,124. Eight and one-half percent of our teachers are minority; 84.3% are female; 64.4% of our students are economically disadvantaged. In 2007, we had 419 reported cases of child abuse and an at-risk population, ages 10 – 16, of 1,923 based on the number of juvenile court commitments (Boatright, 2009). The following table gives a snapshot of our population and socioeconomics.

Table 1

Dodge County Socioeconomics

Income Level	Total	Median Income by Subgroup		
		White	Black	Hispanic
Median household income in 1999	$27,607	$30,988	$21,791	$18,500
Characteristic	Percent of Total	Percent of Each Subgroup		
		White	Black	Hispanic
Head of household female, no husband	21.9%	13.3%	48.0%	15.8%
Head of household female, no husband; living below poverty level	33.1%	21.3%	44.3%	-
Children ages 0-17 living below poverty level	19.4%	13.9%	31.2%	7.2%
Education high school graduate or higher	66.3%	69.6%	57.3%	29.5%
Not completing high school – ages 25 and over	33.7%	30.4%	42.7%	70.5%
Students retained in 2006 – 2007, Grades K-12	5.7%	54.9%	41.5%	2.1%

Note. Data taken from *The Georgia County Guide*, compiled and edited by Susan R. Boatright, 2009. The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. Data were not available for Hispanic, Head of household female, no husband, living below poverty level.

Dodge County adjoins Telfair County, home of Herman and Eugene Talmadge. Herman Talmadge, first elected Governor of Georgia in 1946, ran his campaign on the promise that "if I'm your governor, they ['Nigras'] won't vote in our White primary the next four years" (Roche, 1998, p. 11). Talmadge's two opponents in this race had more votes than Talmadge until the last few hours when Talmadge's home county of Telfair reported "finding" an additional fifty-eight "misplaced" write-in votes that gave Talmadge the Governorship.

Talmadge won the 1948 election for Governor with the promise to set up a Fair Employment Practices Commission and to "prevent the white women and children in Georgia from working 'under a Negro foreman or …beside a Negro" (Roche, 1998, p. 16). Running for his third term as governor in 1950, just four years before the *Brown v Board of Education* decision, Talmadge promised, "As long as I am Governor, Negroes will not be admitted to white schools…The good women of Georgia will never stand for the mixing of the races in our schools" (p. 17).

The 1954 ruling in *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* altered the course of southern politics. Georgia Governor Herman Talmadge declared, "'Georgia is going to resist mixing the races in the schools if it is the sole state of the nation to do so'" (Klarman, 2004, p. 389). Georgia passed an amendment creating the option of private segregated schools just six months after the Supreme Court decision. Talmadge, serving as Senator after his Governorship ended in 1955, continued to urge Georgians to stand strong against the Supreme Court ruling. Talmadge and his successor, Governor S. Marvin Griffin, "denied that *Brown* was the law of the land and vowed that the South would never 'surrender'" (Klarman, 2004, p. 427). According to Talmadge, as long as the local people stood strong there was not much the federal government could do to enforce its ruling (Roche, 1998). And stand strong they did. So strong that it was eleven years

before the first Black student entered the halls of the rural, South Georgia Dodge County High School. The year was 1965 and I was a freshman that year.

Mr. William Pitt Eastman built Dodge County's first school in 1873. In the fall of 1897 the foundation for a new building was laid, the building where I attended school in grades first through eighth. It is also the building where I now work, housing the Board of Education and Central Staff. According to Cobb's (1994) *History of Dodge County*:

> … in 1932 Dodge County had 44 modern school buses that "transport 2,000 students every morning and afternoon to and from school. Every white child in Dodge County can remain at home, regardless of where they live in the county, and through the facilities of transportation finish an accredited four-year high school in Eastman, the accredited county high school" (p. 116).

Six years later, in 1938, Peabody High School, the segregated Black high school, was built on the corner of Herman Avenue and Congo Lane, the center of the Black community in Eastman. A Black historic Presbyterian church is located across the street directly in front of the school. The school symbolized everything, and probably even more, to the Black community than the area rural schools did to the outlying White communities. A Black friend once explained to me how close the community was because of the school. Everyone knew all of the children, their parents, and their grandparents. The teachers knew the families and saw them regularly at church, in the grocery store, and at community events. Children knew that anything they did, deed or misdeed, would be reported to parents and grandparents. The entire community played a part in the education of their children. This was lost with desegregation.

Desegregation was fought for by some Black parents and a small group of Whites, who recognized that separate educational institutions would never be equal. Blacks have, since

stepping on American shores, recognized the value of education. There are several historical accounts of slaves placing their lives in jeopardy in order to learn to read and write. The strong belief in the desirability of an education was carried with them when they emerged from slavery. Ex-slaves "viewed reading and writing as a contradiction of oppression" (Anderson, 1988, p. 17). Literacy and formal education were viewed as a means to liberation and freedom.

Black schools were usually lacking in funding and proper facilities. Black parents were expected by White school boards to fund the majority of the expenses, resulting in double taxation of Black land and business owners. The only help from White school boards was materials and facilities no longer used by White children. Vanessa Siddle Walker (1996) gave an account of an incident in North Carolina where a group of Black parents, requesting a new facility, was told by the White school board that if the Black parents would supply the lumber for the school, the board would supply the labor to build the school. Black landowners donated the timber and parents cut the timber, which was then used to build a White school.

Though lacking in funding and facilities, Black segregated schools are remembered as "having atmospheres where 'support, encouragement, and rigid standards' combined to enhance students' self-worth and increase their aspirations to achieve" (Walker, 1996, p. 3). Teachers were well trained and took a personal interest in their students. Teachers, as members of the community, knew each student's family and socio-economic status. The school was like a family where teachers and principals had parent-like authority.

Parents instilled in their children a respect for teachers and expected their children to obey and respect teachers and administrators. Vanessa Siddle Walker (1996) wrote:

During the era of Negro segregation, teachers were valued by the community as representatives of their people who made it. Few other job opportunities were open to the

educated populace, so Negroes who had attained the status of "teacher" through their

educational efforts were to be emulated and respected (p. 81).

Parents visited the school only when invited. Uninvited visitations were considered an

interruption to the learning process (Walker, 1996). Today Black parents often feel unwelcomed

in the schools.

Five years after the first Black students integrated the White Dodge County High School,

in 1970, Peabody High School was closed and the students were integrated into the White high

school and other area White schools. (Note that this was sixteen years after the *Brown v BOE*

ruling.) The building was renovated and reopened as an integrated junior high school. Many

White teachers left the profession at this time, refusing to teach Black children. Many Black

teachers were never hired to teach in the segregated schools. November 20, 2004 the Peabody

High School building was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1990, the community schools in Dodge County were consolidated into two elementary

schools, one middle school, and one high school. This caused a lot of political controversy in

Dodge County. The rural communities did not want to lose their community schools and the

feeling of family experienced in these schools. The higher Black/White ratio in the rural schools

might have also been a factor. The Herman Avenue building was once again renovated and

named Dodge County Middle School, housing all students in grades six through eight. I was

transferred from one of the rural community schools to the new Dodge County Middle School

and continued teaching there for eighteen years.

A new high school was built in 2006 and Dodge County Middle School was transferred

to the former Dodge County High School. At the time the decision was made by the Board of

Education to move the middle school to the old high school building, plans were made public to

renovate the Herman Avenue building and move the county's fourth and fifth grades to this building. Before renovation could be completed, a new superintendent was appointed and she informed the Board that it would be too expensive to open an additional school since we would not receive additional state funds for an assistant principal, media specialist, nurse, funds to stock an additional library, funds for utilities, etc. Since this building is located in a Black neighborhood and has a rich Black history, the decision by the Board to close this building stirred strong emotions in the Black community. In 2008 the Board decided to move our alternative school from a neighboring county and house it in the building along with Dodge Connections, a community service organization. The building, named by the White school leaders, was named *Peabody Complex* in an attempt to appease the Black community. The fate of this building remains a source of controversy. Some of our Board members want to close the building to cut cost and the Black community feels they have been deceived. They were promised in good faith that after a year for renovation the building would be reopened as a school for 4th and 5th grades. Instead, the decision was made to close the school and add additional classrooms at each of the two elementary schools. Thus, the Black community feels the first pinch as budgets are squeezed in the current difficult economic times. But it is more than a financial pinch for them; it erodes a vision, a symbol of hope and the promise of equal education for Black children.

The promise of equal education has eluded Black families in Dodge County as well as in most school systems in Georgia. In 2008, 67.9% of the Black seniors graduated from Dodge County High School; 84% of the White seniors graduated. Interestingly, only 2.2% of the Black students missed more than fifteen days of school during the school term ending in 2008; 4.6% of

the White students missed more than fifteen days. The chart below shows the achievement gap

for Dodge County students in 2008.

Table 2

2008 Achievement Gaps for AYP in Dodge County: Percentage of Students Not Meeting

Standards

	CRCT Math	CRCT Language Arts/Reading	GHSGT Math	GHSGT Language Arts
Total	25.7%	7.2%	23.2%	9.5%
White	20.3%	5.5%	12.8%	4.0%
Black	35.3%	9.7%	34.5%	14.5%
Hispanic	17.2%	6.9%	-	-
Economically Disadvantaged	21.4%	8.9%	30.6%	14.8%

Note: Data retrieved April 11, 2009 from http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ayp2008 Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) is administered in grades 1-8. The Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) is administered for the first time to students in the 11th grade. Data was not reported for the Hispanic population on the GHSGT because there were not enough students to comprise a subgroup for reporting.

The achievement gap possibly leads to the increased dropout rate for Black children. This in turn leads to welfare dependency, crime, low-level drug dealing, and single moms living below the poverty line, which contribute to distrust and disillusionment. Hence, the races are further segregated. Whites resent supporting welfare mothers and prison inmates and Blacks resent a system that was supposedly designed to improve their quality of life through equal education but, for the most part, fails to deliver.

Racial Autobiography

The student/teacher relationship is founded, developed, and maintained on respect and love – for ourselves and for each other as human beings (Titone, 1998, p. 171).

I was born in South Georgia just two years, seven months, and twenty-eight days before the United States Supreme Court attempted the burial of Jim Crow through its decision on *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka.* My birth came only thirty-one years and twenty-four days after women received the right to vote through the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

The 1896 Supreme Court approval of Jim Crow was evidence that citizens of the United States, especially in the South, believed that human beings belonged to four different races and that separating the races was not an act of repression, but actually promoted Black interests by preventing friction between African Americans and Whites. White parents relayed this belief to their children. Educational institutions such as Harvard, Columbia, and Yale endorsed it. Today many southern Whites continue to believe that there are different races at different stages of development and that a race's state of development is evidenced by its behavior, or culture (Walker, 2003, pp. 15 – 16).

The passage of the Nineteenth Amendment on August 26, 1920, giving women the right to vote, was evidence that gender inequality flourished along with racial inequality. I was born

into the White man's world. I would have the right to vote when I turned eighteen years old, but I would not receive equal pay for equal work when I joined the work force.

I was not born into an economically privileged family. My parents worked along beside the Black workers picking cotton and cropping tobacco during the hot South Georgia summers. My daddy was the overseer for the landowner. Daddy was provided a very small wage and a house for his family. I am not sure how often Daddy was paid because I remember him charging groceries from payday to payday. The houses were always in poor condition. The houses never had running water or indoor plumbing. They did have electricity. Heat in the winter was provided by an open fireplace or a wood burning heater. Cooling in the hot summers was provided by open windows. During those days, fieldwork lasted almost year around. The laborers would start breaking land, getting ready for planting, in January. Preparing the land for planting would take until time to plant because even after tractors were available, the first tractors were not much faster than plowing with mules. The crops were fertilized and hoed to keep down the weeds until harvest time. The last cotton was not picked until November. Livestock also had to be cared for and fences had to be built and repaired. Most large landowners employed only one overseer that received a regular wage. Everyone else worked by the day.

My daddy could neither read nor write, but was extremely quick and accurate with mental math problems. Mama said that Daddy was not allowed to go to school. He was made to work so that his younger brother could attend. My mama, though she only received a third-grade education, was an avid reader, reading mostly the Bible. Mama said that she got so far behind in school because her daddy usually did not have the money to buy her books and she was embarrassed to go.

I was raised in Southern Baptist traditions and was taught that the man is the head of the household and the home and children are the woman's responsibility. I attended all-White Baptist churches and an all-White school until my first year in high school in 1965. My pre-school childhood memories consist mostly of climbing trees in my backyard and playing with paper dolls cut from a Sears and Roebuck catalog. My economically poor upbringing did not prevent me from realizing that there was a status quo difference between Blacks and Whites. During this time race overshadowed class for poor and middle-class White farmers (Roche, 1998). Rizvi (2004, p. 85) explains that the racist differentiation served to divide the working class both materially and ideologically. Poor Whites were not "as poor" as poor Blacks nor were they considered as inferior because of genetics. bell hooks (2000) explains, "All black people knew that white skin gave any southern "cracker or peckerwood" (ethnic slurs reserved for the white poor) more power and privilege than even the wealthiest black folks" (p. 111). There was a distinct difference in poor Whites and "White trash." Poor Whites, as well as poor Blacks, tried to find work and earn respect. They were also law abiding and patriotic. "White trash" was not ashamed of their poverty and saw themselves as above the law and, as a consequence, was dangerous. "Privileged-class southern white folks sometimes saw white trash as more disgusting than black folks, but at the end of the day they lived by the creed that white stands with white and white makes it right" (hooks, 2000, p. 113). We were poor Whites. My daddy always worked and as soon as my daddy was able to purchase a vehicle my mama started working outside the home to help provide for the family. I was taught to value education. Before I graduated from high school my daddy was able to leave the farm life and work for the Georgia Department of Transportation. Before he died, he was able to build a modest brick home for himself and Mama. I will never forget how proud Mama was to have her own home.

During my elementary school years, classes were divided by ability groups. I was always in the "top" group. My mama was an extremely talented seamstress who made my sister's and my clothes in the latest styles so that we never looked much different from our peers who were more economically privileged. Therefore, I never felt that I did not fit in with my peers, but I remember seeing my permanent record on the teacher's desk and reading where my fifth grade teacher had written that I "tried too hard to fit in." As a child, that comment hurt me deeply. I now realize that my fifth grade teacher probably thought that I should not fit in with my peers more economically privileged than me. Today I am grateful that I did not know as a child growing up that I was "culturally deprived," "economically disadvantaged," "underprivileged," "at-risk," "latch-key child," and a "child of poverty." I did not know until adulthood that all of those labels fit me as an elementary and high school student. I felt loved and I believed that I could achieve anything that anyone else could. I question now whether I would have had this confidence if I had been aware of the labels potentially affixed to my name.

I do not remember seeing restrooms or entrances to buildings marked "White Only" or "Colored." I do remember Black people sitting in the balcony of the local theatre separated from the White people. I also remember wondering how they got there because I did not see them enter the theatre. I remember all-White waiting rooms at local doctors' offices, all-White patrons of local restaurants, and all-White congregations in the churches I attended. I do not remember ever questioning this practice. I just accepted it as "the way things were." Just as the lads in Paul Willis's *Learning to Labor,* I assumed that it was "'natural' that people belonged to supposedly different 'races,' which constituted distinct and separate communities" (Rizvi, 2004, p. 87).

It was eleven years after the attempted burial of Jim Crow before the first Black student entered the all White South Georgia high school I attended. One of the first Black males to

attempt to desegregate the high school is now assistant principal at the same school he tried to attend. His sister, a friend and peer, told me the story. She said that her parents agreed for their son to be among the first Black children to desegregate. These children were kept in the library all day and were not allowed to attend classes. After two weeks, his parents sent him back to the Black high school because he was not receiving any education at the White high school. Eventually, one Black female was allowed to attend classes. The time was 1965. The time lapse between the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v Board of Education* and desegregation (if you call one Black student desegregation) in this South Georgia school system is indicative of the South's resistance to desegregation.

I was a freshman the first year of desegregation in Dodge County so I did not have any classes with Brenda, but I still remember that she was pretty and well groomed. I recognize now that my memory is tainted by stereotypical expectations. The pervasive ideology was that Blacks were lazy, dirty, and ugly, so my memory has aspects of perpetuating that stereotype in exceptionalizing Brenda. I also remember that I never thought about how lonely and isolated she must have felt. I realize now that she probably spent most of her days in fear. I remember that when the school yearbook was distributed, many students cut her picture from their yearbook. When I graduated three years later, in 1968, there were still only two or three Black students attending our high school.

Although I was a high achiever, no one at school ever talked to me about the possibility of higher education. I thought that because my parents could not afford to send me to college, education beyond high school was out of the question for me. So I dreamed of playing professional basketball even though professional sports for women were probably nonexistent at the time. I began working immediately after graduation and ten months later, at the young age of

seventeen, I married my current husband. We soon became the parents of three boys. Even though I loved raising our boys and being a mama, I became restless. I wanted more. It was about this time that I became aware of the Women's Rights Movement. However, in my very sheltered life, I thought these women were fanatics and bra burners. I was not conscious of the common thread of beliefs that I shared with these bold women. I enjoyed teaching our boys and teaching other people's children in Sunday School and Bible School so I decided that I would like to become a teacher. I admit that having a schedule the same as my children was a consideration, but I do not think that I decided on teaching only because it was an "acceptable" choice for a woman. I originally started back to school to major in accounting. I love math and had enjoyed the jobs that I held as an accounting clerk. I just was not content until I changed my major to education.

My first experience with Black students was in my own classroom my first year of teaching in 1988. I believed that I "did not see color" and that I could and should treat everyone the same. I did not understand that race and/or culture are an important part of who we are and to disregard one's race and/or culture is to marginalize the individual. Ladson-Billings defines "not seeing color" as "dyconscious racism," an "uncritical habit of the mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 31-32). Ladson-Billings explains that this does not mean that I was racist in the conventional sense. I did not consciously deprive or punish African American students based on race. However, my "dyconsciousness" failed to challenge the status quo and accepted the given as inevitable (p. 32). I have viewed my students as wanting of White teachers' attention, care, and love – and thought that if I gave that attention, care, and love than I had dealt with the racism in my classroom (McIntyre, 1997, p. 131).

I am now at a point Carter (1997, p. 202) calls "disintegration." Through many hours of reading, studying, and reflecting, I have come to realize that the humanistic or "color blind" racial perspective is not accurate. I have learned that the contention that "Whites are intellectually superior to Blacks" is a socially constructed phenomenon. I have realized that race does matter and that racism does exist. The discovery process associated with disintegration is wrought with emotional turmoil. I fought against this discovery. I wanted to continue wearing my mask of dyconscious racism because to remove it meant that I must confront the realities. Curry (1995) explains:

> It is not enough for us to know of racism and sexism, however; we must go beyond knowing to confronting these realities. This means bridging the gap between knowing and acting upon our knowledge…When we are able to confront both racism and sexism, we will begin to understand the oppression is greater and more complex than racism and sexism alone (p. 31).

I am beginning to bridge the gap between knowing and acting upon my knowledge of racism and sexism. I have come to the realization that my Whiteness is both visible and invisible. My actions and my perceptions of others manifest my whiteness. As I have grown more aware of my White privilege, it has simultaneously awakened my awareness of the oppression of minorities. My role as an educator placed me in a privileged position to view how race, class, and gender shape our expectations and attitudes towards others. These expectations are critical in forming relationships with students whom deserve the best education possible. My underlying assumptions and stereotypical beliefs have the potential to create further obstacles rather than clearer pathways to academic success for the students not like me in my school system. As I interrogated my Whiteness and the privileges associated with it, I became motivated to

consciously pursue transformative attitudes in others and myself that will bring success to all students. I am no longer in the classroom where I directly impact student achievement, but I am in a position to impact teacher training and influence policies in my school system.

I do not know if I would have reached the point of disintegration if I had entered any other profession other than education. I sincerely believe that it was the children who made the difference for me. They tried to learn from this White teacher with all of my biases and stereotypical beliefs. They worked with me even when I was working against them. They accepted me when I was subconsciously rejecting them. The children, my students, have taught me so much more than I have taught them.

Significance of My Study

Vivian Paley (1995) discusses in her book, *Kwanzaa and Me,* interviews with Black parents revealing different views Black parents have concerning their children attending segregated schools vs. desegregated schools. One Black mother explains that while economics might have something to do with children being treated differently in desegregated schools, it is more than economics. She explains that it is subtle institutional racism and it begins with the teachers. At some level, every teacher brings his or her biases into the classroom. She goes on to explain that Black children can be supported and allowed to grow in a White school and it can be done by White teachers. She had seen it happen with her own children. She further explains that White teachers can be role models as long as they respect and encourage Black children to express their differences, their culture and knowledge. A Black father interviewed by Paley also refers to "subtle, intellectual racism". He explains when Paley asks if it is a matter of racism:

Yes, it is, a subtle, intellectual racism. It's because white people don't feel comfortable and can't interpret things going on with an African American kid. Not only him, of

course, but I know there is less tolerance for black cultural differences. There are always

these indirect put-downs, especially for the boys. White boys are seen more often as

smarter, better prepared for school. There are lower expectations for black boys. It's very

subtle, these put-downs, … Let me explain something. There are differences in parenting

and socialization in my culture that are not put into context by white teachers. The

African American culture is different in style and substance and those differences are

seen negatively (p. 21).

Mandates and laws purported to equalize education for all students have been enforced,

but there remains disproportionate academic outcomes for different racial groups. Teachers are

not being prepared to deal effectively with increasing diversity. Educational funding remains

unequal. Curriculum remains mostly Eurocentric and legislators, teachers, school boards, and

communities remain resistant to dealing with the changing diversity of our schools' population.

There are many factors that contribute to this disparity, some of which are not a part of

the school experience. Many factors, however, can be linked to the school experience. Singleton

(2008) completed a study in Ohio, which shows achievement gaps at various income levels on

the ACT (Figure 1 on the following page). Note in the graph that Asian students in the lowest

income bracket scored higher than Black students in the highest income bracket. The gap noted

here could be due to teacher expectations based on the stereotypical belief that Asian students are

perform well in math and science. This study asks teachers to consider their stereotypical beliefs

about all cultural groups of students and to reflect upon and evaluate their teaching practice to

consider if they provide equity for all students within their classrooms.

Figure 1
Average ACT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity in Ohio, School Year 2003-2004.

Average ACT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity in Ohio, School Year 2003-2004
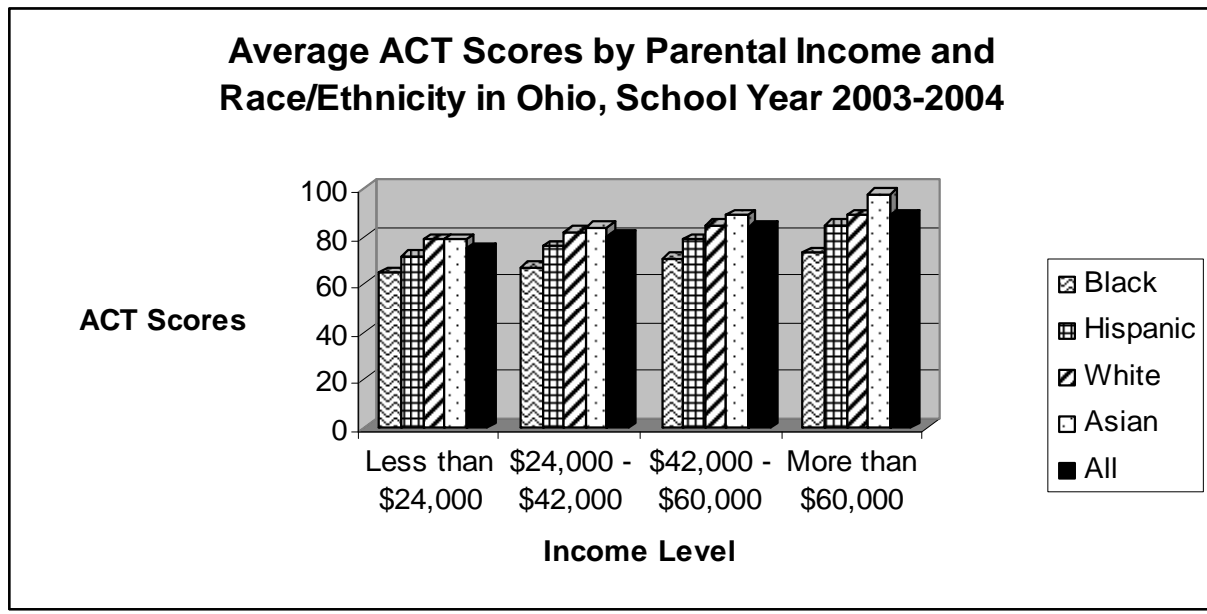
Note: Reproduced from *Courageous Conversation & Courageous Leadership,* presented by G. E. Singleton,

February 2, 2008. The National Title I Conference, Nashville, TN.

Gary Howard wrote almost ten years ago:

> We have dealt with the "what" and the "how" of multicultural teaching and learning, but we have not adequately addressed the "why" and the "who." Too often as White educators we have seen the problems as "out there," and we have conceptualized our role as one of "helping minority students." Seldom have we helped White educators look deeply and critically at the necessary changes and growth we ourselves must achieve if we are to work effectively with the real issues of diversity (Howard, 1999, p. 3).

We must move beyond the rhetoric of "it's the family" or "it's poverty" or "it's stereotyping" and begin to think complexly about what we can do within the schools and within individual classrooms if we are serious about closing the achievement gaps.

If subtle institutional racism begins with the teachers, as the parent in Paley's book said, then the end of institutional racism can begin with the teachers. My research will encourage teachers to engage in difficult self-assessment and to take responsibility for what they can control by examining and challenging the system of racial biases and residual White advantage that persist in our schools.

There are numerous articles about diversity training for pre-service teachers, but research on diversity training for teachers in the field is sparse. Research on southern White teachers' critical reflections on racism is practically nonexistent. Singleton and Linton (2006), authors of *Critical Conversations about Race,* contend that courageous conversations serve as a strategy to eventually eliminate the racial achievement gaps. Such conversations help build the passion educators, students, and families need to address systemic racial inequities and the resulting achievement inequities (p. 32).

Dodge County teachers have never been offered any kind of diversity training, required or optional. My research invited them to engage in conversations that will help build passion to address the racial inequities and achievement inequities in our school system. My research can serve as a model for other school systems similar to ours. White teachers can serve as role models for Black students when they learn to give voice to Black students by encouraging them to express their differences, their culture and their knowledge.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Dealing with the Angst

Becoming grounded in a particular theoretical framework caused me much angst during the course of my doctoral studies. I flip-flopped around existentialism, feminism, ethics of care, and even pragmatism, seeing fragments of who I am in each of these frameworks. I began to recall as a teenager and young adult making the comment, "I wish I were a man." Pondering why I had made such a comment so frequently, I realized that it was my frustration at the inequities I experienced as a female and also probably the feelings of exclusion I had experienced, but not acknowledged, growing up in poverty. As an adult, I remember an incident many years ago when we were going to purchase a new car for me. My husband had found a car that he thought I would like and had worked out the purchase price, calling the dealership to confirm the selling price just hours before I was to go to see if I agreed with his selection. After I agreed to purchase the car, the salesman asked me to wait a few minutes. He left and returned a few minutes later with the paperwork. The price of the car was several thousand dollars higher than the price quoted to my husband. I gave the salesman a chance to make the correction, but I was treated as if I was the one who did not understand. He even brought the sales manager in to show me how I could not be correct. These men thought that because I was female I would buy the car at any price and not question their authority. I cannot remember anything ever, before or after, making me so angry. I recognized immediately that I was receiving this treatment only because I was a female attempting to make a major purchase without the presence of "my" male authority figure. In the whole scheme of inequities, this was a minor incident, but it is an example of sexism that had nothing to do with class and everything to do with gender.

Even though the teaching profession is dominated by White females, sexism is alive and well. Early in my teaching career, I agreed to coach cheerleading. I soon realized that coaching cheerleading is a yearlong job. After football and basketball seasons end, it is time to select a new squad for the following year and practice begins for the next season. During summer vacation there is camp and fund raising because cheerleaders did not receive any athletic funds. We even purchased items such as a sound system for the gymnasium with part of our fund raising proceeds. After coaching for a couple of years, the school system decided to add intramural sports to our school's athletic program. I resigned as cheerleading coach when I became aware that the male intramural coaches were paid for one semester of work three times what I was paid for the entire year. I knew that another female teacher would accept the position and that my resignation would not make a difference, but I resigned because of the principle of inequality. As I began to understand the meaning of feminism, I realized that I have always been a feminist activist, at least on a personal level.

Experiencing inequitable treatment tends to make one less tolerant of any form of inequality: sexism, racism, or classism. Even so, as I began to see my theoretical framework evolving into critical race theory, my angst was intensified. I questioned how I, as a White female, could speak and write as a critical race theorist.

I grew up in the late 1950s and early 1960s, an era when race and class divisions were rigidly defined around most cultural, social, and political fronts. Blacks and Whites, males and females, rich and poor were rarely allowed by the popular culture to view each other as equals. Whiteness was a signifier of pride for even the poor and working-class Whites. Whites, of every class, were taught that as Christian Whites, we know right from wrong and we have the responsibility to see that right is done. Furthermore, it was our responsibility to help and direct

those "others" who do not know right from wrong (Frye, 1995). White women received a level of respect because they "belonged" to a White male. I find respect gained by association to be degrading; even so, I continue to take advantage of the white, heterosexual privilege it affords me. Frye explains this so well in her statement, "A white woman's whiteliness is deeply involved in her oppression as a woman and works against her liberation" (1995, p. 126). In an attempt to compensate and find liberation, over my lifetime I have felt that I had to prove myself worthy as a woman and as an individual. As a White female, I have experienced inequality and I understand the self-imposed need to prove my self worth.

Feminism

Digiovanni and Liston (2005) define feminism as:

…a theoretical and political position that affirms the basic equality and human dignity of all people. Feminists proclaim this equality/equity for all people regardless of gender, race, social class, ethnicity, national origin, sexual preference, religion, physical ability, and mental status (p. 125).

bell hooks (2000) points out that the "feminist movement was the first movement for social justice in this society to call attention to the fact that ours is a culture that does not love children, that continues to see children as property of parents to do with as they will" (p. 73). Feminist politics:

remains the only movement for social justice in our society that focuses in a primary way on the concerns of women and children. If women are to play a meaningful role in struggles to end racism and classism, they need to begin with feminist consciousness…Radical/revolutionary feminist politics bring a message of hope as well as strategies to empower women and men of all classes (hooks, 2000, p. 110).

As a female born, raised, and an employed professional in the patriarchal South, feminist theorizing provides a way for me to examine my identity and experiences; it shapes my theory/explanation of what is happening in any situation and in life in general. Theories offer explanations about how things work and how and why people interact as they do. Theories also cause us to ask new questions and see power dynamics and relationship we might otherwise miss or misread (Frisby, et al, 2009). Frisby, et al (2009) further explains:

> The danger of not drawing on existing feminist theories in action research in deductive ways is that some of the sources and consequences of gender inequalities may be overlooked, misunderstood, or difficult to name because of entrenched power hierarchies within a community. Feminist theories can be used as tools to question how gender inequalities are built into all aspects of life including,…work and economy, education, law, government policies,…culture…(p. 16).

Certainly, sources and consequences of gender inequalities are an integral part of the relationships between teachers and students, but what part do these sources and consequences play in unequal education of White children and children of other ethnic groups and/or races? As White, middle-class, female teachers we cannot know or understand the lived experiences of the Black females in our classes, who experience daily both gender and race inequities. Berry says, "Minority males tend to focus on the negative consequences of their minority status while discounting the benefits accruing to them through a patriarchal social structure," (1995, p. 46), but do the Black males in our classes understand their participation in sexism? In a society where Black males are taught mostly by White females, how much does sexism by Black males contribute to the achievement gap? Even though feminist politics is a movement for social justice that focuses on the concerns of women and children, it can also obscure the vision and/or

understanding of the feminist researcher doing action research. Marilyn Frye (1995) says that a White woman is not in a good position to analyze institutional or personal racism. According to Frye, a White woman's decisions about what to do about racism cannot be authentic. Yet, I must ask myself, in the words of Linda Alcoff, "…if I don't speak for those less privileged than myself, am I abandoning my political responsibility to speak out against oppression, a responsibility incurred by the very fact of my privilege?" (1995, p.232). I must be cautious as I analyze my research through feminist theorizing, remaining vigilantly aware that my views, as well as the views of the participants in this study, will only be partial because of our own situated experiences and knowledge.

Analysis from the feminist framework provides accountability to my study by including critical reflection on the meaning of whiteness and the implications of White privilege. According to Hall (1999), many feminists of color and White feminists have argued this is one way White women can be accountable for White privilege.

Critical Race Theory

Inclusion of feminist theorizing in Critical Race Feminism is important because of the interconnectivity of race and gender in social injustices and inequities. Discussions of race and/or gender are incomplete unless they are informed by an awareness of the ways in which race is gendered and gender is raced (Hall, 1999). In fact, critical race theory builds on feminist insights into the relationship between power and the construction of social roles and the patterns and habits of patriarchy and other types of domination (Delgado & Stafancic, 2001).

Definition. The definition of critical race theory that I consider to be the best definition for my theoretical framework is a synthesis of three definitions taken from Cornel West (1995), Delgado and Stefancic (2001), and Sleeter and Bernal (2004). I define critical race theory as an

analytical framework (Sleeter and Bernal, 2004) and intellectual movement (West, 1995) used by activists and scholars to address social justice and racial, class, and sexist oppressions; to transform the relationship among race, class, gender, and power; and to remake the world to reveal silenced suffering and to relieve social misery (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Critical race theory "works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination" (Matsuda, 1991, p. 1331).

Themes. The first theme of critical race theory is ordinariness, meaning that racism is ordinary, the usual way society does business. Racism is part of the everyday experiences of most people of color in this country (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), thus making it invisible. This invisibility makes racism difficult to address or cure. The invisibility of racism makes critical self-analysis by the participants of this study essential for them to become aware of the habits of mind and deed that we, as White, middle-class females in the South, have become so acclimated to that we fail to recognize them.

The second theme of critical race theory is "interest convergence" or material determinism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Racism advances the interests of both White elites and working-class people. Therefore, only a small segment of people have reasons to eradicate it. Further, reforms undertaken in the supposed "interest" of eradicating racism generally have benefits to the Whites or they would not get support. The self-knowledge gained by the participants in this study through critical reflection can produce profound change and there are many reasons why many White women may not want to change (Frye, 1995).

The third theme is social construction which holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Race corresponds to no generic or biological reality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to Frye (1995), being White is being a member of a certain

social/political category, like being a member of a fraternity or political party. "Membership is maintained by those people who are, in their own and each other's perception, unquestionably in it" (Frye, 1995, p. 115). Frye goes on to say, however, that if you are born to people who are members of the social/political category of whiteness, you are socialized and inducted into that club. Does this mean that we, members of the White social/political category, can never deny membership and if we cannot deny membership are we destined to protect the privileges afforded to its membership? Do levels of membership exist? Certainly, Whites living in poverty do not have the same privileges as middle-class and wealthy Whites. Middle-class Whites do not have the same privileges as wealthy Whites. White females are not afforded the same privileges as White males. If levels of membership exist, is it possible to move among levels but not withdraw membership completely? How does all of this play out in our classrooms? Are White teachers protecting membership rights for themselves and their White students? Do Black teachers feel that the White students in their classes already have enough of an advantage and that Black teachers should channel their energy and resources to help minority students? These questions might not be answered by this study, but to know if it is possible to eradicate racism and sexism the answers must be considered in future studies.

The fourth theme of critical race theory, differential racialization, supports theme two. Differential racialization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) shows ways that the dominant society racializes different minority groups based on current needs to benefit White elites, such as the labor market. If you do not believe that differential racialization remains active, consider the story told by Jonathan Kozol (2005). Kozol was visiting a predominately Black and Hispanic school in Los Angeles, Fremont High School. Kozol's interview with one of the female students, who had plans to go to college, revealed that the student had been told that she had to take a

sewing class the previous year and now was told that she had been assigned to take a class in hair-dressing. The student's desire was to take an AP class. A male student, hearing the conversation, spoke up and said, "Listen to me. The owners of the sewing factories need laborers. Correct?" "You're ghetto, so we send you to the factory. You're ghetto, so sew!" (Kozol, 2005, ¶s 89-95). Even the students recognize how the dominant society racializes different minorities and feel powerless in our schools.

The fifth theme is intersectionality or anti-essentialism. Intersectionality is the idea that each race has its own origins and evolving history. However, no person has a single, unitary identity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). A White female teacher may be Jewish, or a single mother, a lesbian or married to a Black man. A Black male student may be from an upper middle class family, or prefers classical music, or living in a predominantly White neighborhood. Everyone has potentially conflicting, overlapping identities and loyalties.

The final theme of critical race theory is unique voice of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Minority status brings with it a presumed ability to talk about race and racism. The voice-of-color thesis holds that because of their different histories and experiences with oppression, people of color may be able to communicate to Whites experiences that Whites are not likely to know (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As the participants in this study engage in self reflection of White privilege and critical analysis of their racial biases, they will, hopefully, give the minority students in their classrooms voice to communicate their experiences so that the White teacher will know each student as an individual rather than a member of a social/political category.

Education. Critical Race Theory was not introduced into education until 1994, three years after the publication of Jonathan Kozol's, *Savage Inequalities,* in which Kozol writes about the inequities that exist between the schooling experiences of White middle-class students and those

of poor African-American and Latino students. The inequities Kozol writes about continue to exist in 2009. Schools in wealthier school district receive more per pupil funding than schools in poorer neighborhoods. Inner city schools, located in poorer neighborhoods with a majority Black student population, receive less funding and employ the least experienced teachers.

In addition to the Ohio study completed by Singleton (see Figure 1) which shows the average scores on the ACT by race/ethnicity and parental income, Singleton also reproduced the results of the 1995 average SAT scores by parental income and race/ethnicity in California.

Figure 2

Average SAT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity

1995 Average SAT Scores by Parental Income and Race/Ethnicity
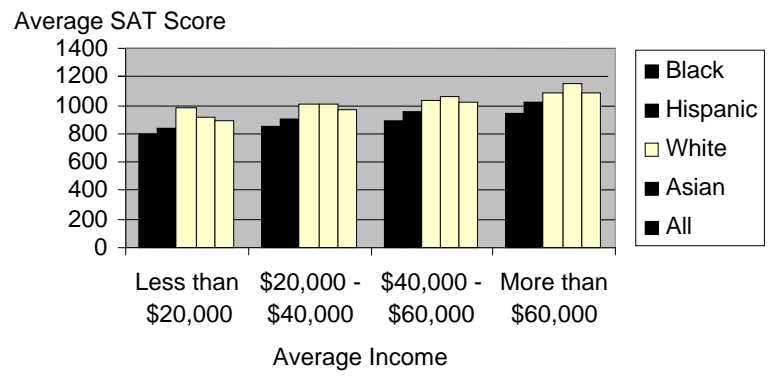
Note: Reproduced from *Courageous Conversations About Race* by G. E. Singleton & C. Linton, (2006), Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, p. 30.

Both the Ohio study and the California study show that achievement gaps exist between Black students and White students at all income levels. I was unable to find more current comparative SAT data, but as Singleton points out, "…what significant racial reforms have occurred in the K through 12 system and in the American economic structure over the past ten years that would create a dramatic shift in the data (2006, p. 30)?

Ladson-Billings (1995) explains:

…race continues to be significant in explaining inequity in the United States is that class – and gender – based explanations are not powerful enough to explain all of the difference (or variance) in school experience and performance…Class and gender do not explain all of the educational achievement differences apparent between whites and students of color (p. 51).

The last year that I was in the classroom (2006 – 2007), I was completely caught off guard by how little Black students knew about their history. I was teaching two segments of eighth grade Georgia History for the first time in my teaching career. I planned a class debate for the unit on the Civil Rights Era. The debate was "Dr. Martin Luther King's dream has been realized" vs. "Dr. Martin Luther King's dream has not been realized." When asked how many believe that Dr. King's dream has been realized, every student raised his or her hand. This was probably the best unit I ever taught. The students completed the necessary research and were prepared for the debate. During the preparation time leading to the debate, the students talked about it so much outside of class that we had visitors come in to observe the debate. The perception of both Black students and White students of the realization of Dr. King's dream was changed by this assignment.

I should not have been surprised by Black or White students' lack of knowledge of history. Ladson-Billings covered the Black history in our Social Studies books fairly completely in a ten-page essay included in *Critical Race Theory Perspectives on the Social Studies* (2003). Ladson-Billings points out in her essay, "The social studies can serve as a curricular home for unlearning the racism that has confounded us [as] a nation. Yet, we still find teachers continuing to tell us lies" (2003, p. 8). Critical Race Theory examines the way racism is made invisible through the curriculum.

In summary, White supremacy and patriarchy are linked. Both the lens of Critical Race Theory and the lens of Feminist Theory are necessary to analyze inequities in our schools. "For white feminists, being critical of white privilege involves questioning how racism and sexism shape our interactions with both men and women of color (Hall, 1999, ¶ 15). Critical Race Theory challenges the prevalent conversation on race and racism as it relates to education by examining how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups within our schools (Solorzano, et al, 2001).

Feminism and critical race theory support my study by providing the framework to address social justice and the concerns of children, particularly non-White children. The participants in my study considered the relationship between power and the construction of social roles and patterns as they reflected on White privilege and their possible role in supporting institutional racism that perpetuates the racial achievement gap. Critical race theory with feminist insights provided the framework to work toward eliminating racism in the classroom through courageous conversation.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative literature dealing with professional development designed to move teachers beyond acknowledging an achievement gap between White students and non-White students toward developing a strategy for eliminating it is scarce. Thus, in this review I explored and synthesized a variety of literature to reveal the existing knowledge about the history of education in the South, the achievement gap, White teachers and racism, and professional development on diversity training. Some of the more scholarly names that appeared most often and were cited more frequently included Ronald Ferguson, Linda Darling-Hammond, Kati Haycock, Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Christine Sleeter.

Literature was initially located through searches of electronic databases available through the Zach S. Henderson Library at Georgia Southern University. These databases included EBSCO, ProQuest Dissertation Abstracts, University of Georgia Electronic Theses and Dissertations, ERIC, and JSTOR. The following search terms were used to locate references: teacher attitudes, achievement gap; racism in education; professional development in education, teacher expectations, White teachers, and diversity training in education. Reference sections of each book and article found provided additional references and also provided an indication of the completion of my review of literature.

The literature is organized in the following manner: a.) research focusing on the social and political context of the achievement gap and inequities in education, b.) the achievement gap, c.) White teachers and unintentional racism, and d.) changing teachers' attitudes and practices through professional development.

Social and Political Context

Educators have always known that relationships play a big role in making positive things happen in a school or building. But, since 1980, we have concentrated our energies and efforts in schools on achievement and higher test scores. We use so many different approaches to teaching, dissecting it and discussing it endlessly. Yet we seldom recall the most important part of teaching and learning is directly related to the relationship that exists between the teacher and the student (Peters, 2006, p. 37).

Past Context. Education is highly politicized. Education, particularly in the South, has always been and continues to be controlled by White patriarchal standards. Even though segregated Black schools in the South were "controlled by Blacks in the sense that they were administered by Black principals, staffed by Black teachers, and served a Black student population" (Irvine, 1991, p. 35), it was the White patriarchal powers that controlled funding, made personnel decisions, and sought to control the level of education Blacks received (Anderson, 1988).

The dream of desegregation was to provide equal education for all students. However, the efforts of desegregation were compromised by the elements of White patriarchy. The White patriarchal powers appeared to meet the laws of desegregation regarding compliance, but these powers were, and continue to be, working to undermine the dream of equality in any form – academic, social, or political. White patriarchy contrived to protect what Cheryl Harris termed "Whiteness as treasured property in a society structured on racial caste (Harris, 1993, ¶10). Harris further stated:

In ways so embedded that it is rarely apparent, the set of assumptions, privileges, and benefits that accompany the status of being white have become a valuable asset that

whites sought to protect and that those who passed sought to attain – by fraud if

necessary. Whites have come to expect and rely on these benefits, and over time these

expectations have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by the law. Even though the

law is neither uniform nor explicit in all instances, in protecting settled expectations

based on white privilege, American law has recognized a property interest in whiteness

that, although unacknowledged, now forms the background against which legal disputes

are framed, argued, and adjudicated…(Harris, 1993, ¶10).

The sharing of the benefits of the treasured property of whiteness was the ideology upon which

desegregation was based. Recognizing that separate educational institutions would never be

equal, some Black parents and a small group of Whites fought a bitter battle for desegregated

educational institutions for their children.

Brown v. Board of Education was passed in 1954 by the Supreme Court of the United

States in an attempt to give Black children access to White educational institutions which would,

theoretically, provide equal education. Desegregation in the South forced White teachers (mostly

White women teachers) to tolerate a few Black children in their classrooms. "*Brown* created (and

continues to create) environments where African American and other minority students and

White women teachers share dysfunctional relationships built on fear, ignorance, mistrust, and

resentment" (Hancock, 2006, p. 95).

Present Context. Almost fifty years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision,

another attempt to equalize access to education was implemented. The *No Child Left Behind Act*

(NCLB) was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002. According to NCLB

literature, the Act claims to "continue the legacy of the *Brown v. Board* decision by creating an

education system that is more inclusive, responsive, and fair" (A Guide to Education and *No*

Child Left Behind, 2004, The History of *No Child Left Behind*). This claim is founded on an accountability system based on academic standards and assessments and includes achievement for all students and provides sanctions and rewards to hold all public schools accountable for student achievement (Executive Summary of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, 2004, Increased Accountability). Test data is disaggregated by subgroups of students such as race/ethnicity, students with disabilities (SWD), limited English language proficiency (LEP), and economically disadvantaged. Schools must meet Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and avoid sanctions against them. For example, in 2008 and 2009 Georgia schools must have 59.5% of each subgroup and total student population taking the test to meet or exceed predetermined standards in mathematics on Georgia's Criterion Referenced Competency Test. The bar rises to 67.60% in 2010. Georgia secondary schools must have 74.90% of the students passing the mathematics portion of the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) in 2008. The bar rises to 81.20% in 2011.

Minimum graduation rates are set for secondary schools. Graduation rate is "defined as the percentage of students who graduate from secondary school with a regular diploma in the standard number of years" (Elementary and Secondary Education, Part A, 2005, NCLB1111(b)(2)(C)(vi)). Interestingly, a low graduation rate for a minority subgroup does not prevent a secondary school from making Adequate Yearly Progress in Georgia. Former United States Secretary of Education Paige issued regulations stating that graduation rates did not have to be disaggregated by minority subgroups for accountability purposes (Honaker, 2007).

My experience has been that there are some positive effects of the *No Child Left Behind Act.* For example, at the middle school where I taught, the gap in test scores between the White students and the Black students had been consistently widening over a five-year period. The

subgroup of Black students did not make AYP in 2006, but did in 2007 with all students being tested on grade level. There is still much improvement that needs to be made in addressing the needs of all of our students in the schools in my district, but concern over making AYP has, at least, caused us to question why we have a gap in achievement between racial/ethnic groups and we have started looking for ways to address the needs of all of our students. However, there is concern that some schools/systems find ways to address the problem that do not meet the needs of the students. A report jointly released by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, The Urban Institute, Advocates for Children of New York, and The Civil Society Institute (Orfield, et al, 2004) includes profiles of twelve states, including Alabama and Florida. The findings of the report show that students continue to be "withdrawn" [by school officials and sometimes without parental knowledge] from school for "lack of interest," "academic failure," and "poor attendance." "…many share deep concern that, as districts face growing pressure to raise test scores in order to make AYP, officials will accelerate the practice of encouraging low achievers to leave school" (Orfield, et al, 2004, p. 21). Although withdrawing "underachieving" students was not the intention of NCLB, it can cause the undermining of safety nets for struggling students rather than expanding them. Linda Darling-Hammond (2004) states that the "accountability provisions of the NCLB actually create large incentives for other schools to keep such students out and for all schools to hold back or push out students who are not doing well" (p. 19). It is possible for a school's average scores to decrease significantly with individual student's scores actually dropping, but percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards increase if several of the lowest scoring students "disappear." Georgia only includes the scores of *full academic year* (FAY) students for AYP purposes. Consider, for example, a school with a population of 240 students. The school population is 59% White and 41% Black; 63% of the

school population is on free or reduced price lunch and 16.7% are students with disabilities. Suppose 156 (65%) of the total population meets or exceeds the standards in mathematics on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Test in 2008 with an average score of 820. In 2008 the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for mathematics was 59.5%. The Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) is the percentage of students and student subgroups determined by the Georgia Department of Education that must meet or exceed the standards on a particular subsection of the test in order for the school to make AYP. Therefore, the school would make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) if only the total population was considered. However, 59.5% of the students in each subgroup large enough to count must also meet or exceed the standards. According to Table 3, the school would not make AYP in three subgroups: Black students, student with disabilities, and low socioeconomic status.

Now, suppose the average score was only 802, but the school had removed, prior to testing, five Black, low socioeconomic students with disabilities who were expected to be unable to meet the standards. The data would change significantly. The school would exceed the AMO in three subgroups: White students, Black students, and low socioeconomic students. The school would make AYP because the subgroup of students with disabilities is not large enough to count (must be at least 40) toward AYP determination. The school could make Adequate Yearly Progress by removing five students that fit into all three subgroups even though the test score average dropped a significant eighteen points. Table 4 shows the results of removing the five students.

Table 3

Data for School not Achieving AYP

Subgroups	FAY Students	Did Not Meet	Percent	Meet or Exceed	Percent
White	142	42	29.6%	100	70.4%
Black	98	42	42.9%	56	57.1%
SWD	40	25	62.5%	15	37.5%
Low Socioeconomic	152	64	42.1%	88	57.9%

Table 4

Data for School Achieving AYP

Subgroups	FAY Students	Did Not Meet	Percent	Meet or Exceed	Percent
White	142	42	29.6%	100	70.4%
Black	93	37	39.8%	56	60.2%
SWD	35	20	57.1%	15	42.9%
Low Socioeconomic	147	59	40.1%	88	59.9%

Georgia schools are already struggling to stay afloat financially. Since the release of the initial state funding dollars, school systems in Georgia received notification that their funding will be reduced by 2% in 2008 – 2009. The preliminary budget for 2009 – 2010 shows much higher reductions in funding. Graduation coaches are being cut for many middle schools and state dollars have been eliminated for academic coaches in our schools. Reduced funding on already strained budgets coupled with the requirement to make AYP in order to continue receiving vital, though inadequate, state and federal dollars increases the temptation for schools to justify to themselves that sacrificing a few low achievers for the good of the many is an acceptable practice.

Black male students are disproportionately represented in the group of students identified as low achievers and/or high school dropouts, making them vulnerable to be targeted as low achievers encouraged to 'leave school'. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education, an average of 60% of our country's Black male students fail (Holzman, 2004, Foreword by R. A. Smith). In 2001 – 2002 only between 30% and 40% of the Black males in thirteen states, including Georgia, graduated with their peer group (Holzman, 2004, Summary). Graduation rates are significantly lower in districts with higher percentages of low socioeconomic status students [those eligible for free or reduced-price lunches] (ACTE, 2007).

Pedro Noguera (2003) explains:

There is considerable evidence that the ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds of students have bearing on how students are perceived and treated by the adults who work with them within schools. However, we know less about the specific nature of the perceptions and expectations that are held toward Black males and how these may in turn affect their performance within schools. More to the point, there is considerable

confusion regarding why being Black and male causes this segment population to stand

out in the most negative and alarming ways, both in school and in the larger society (p.

433).

Are the students who are from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds than the majority

of the adults who work with them within the school affected more negatively? Hancock (2006)

purports that the "crisis of urban schools pivots on a delicate point where African American

students and white women teachers must find mutual respect and relationship in an effort to gain

academic, personal, and social growth" (p. 96). The majority of adults working with African

Americans and other ethnic groups of children will likely continue to be mostly White females.

According to the *Digest of Education Statistics: 2007*, published by the National Center for

Educational Statistics, during Fall 2005, 57.1% of the students enrolled in public elementary and

secondary schools were White, a decrease of 7.7% since 1995; 17.2% were Black, an increase of

0.4% during the same period; and 19.8% were Hispanic, an increase of 6.3% since 1995 (*Digest*

for Education Statistics: 2007, Table 40). The change is even more dramatic in Georgia with the

White population of students decreasing from 58.2% in 1995 to 49.2% in 2005. The Black

population of students increased from 37.8% in 1995 to 39.2% in 2005. The Hispanic population

of students in Georgia increased from 2.2% in 1995 to 8.7% in 2005 (Table 40). Data from the

same report show that in 2003-2004, 83% of the nation's public school teachers were White,

7.9% were Black, and 9% were other non-White. Almost 75% of our public school teachers were

female (*Digest for Education Statistics: 2007,* Table 65).

  Future Context. Case No. 05-908, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle*

School District No. 1 and Case No. 05-915, *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*

was argued before the U. S. Supreme Court on December 4, 2006. The arguments in both cases

challenged the constitutionality of school districts' use of race-conscious plans to assign their students to schools. Both school districts had adopted a voluntary plan to desegregate their schools. The Jefferson County, Kentucky school district was formerly under a court-supervised school desegregation plan. The Seattle school district was not. During the hearings Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wondered why the Jefferson County school system's switch from assigning students based on race under a court supervised desegregation plan to using a voluntary plan suddenly made the idea legally suspect (Trotter, 2006).

The Court struck down the race-conscious assignment policies in Seattle and Jefferson County on June 28, 2007. The Court ruled that the school officials' decision to use race as a factor in their voluntary efforts to create more integrated public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment rights of White students who did not get their first choice school assignments. According to the majority opinion written by Justice Roberts, their ruling on the rights of White plaintiffs was consistent with the spirit of *Brown* by stopping the assignment of students on a racial basis (Cornell University Law School, 2007).

Hundreds of social scientists and lawyers presented evidence to the nine justices on the harms of racial segregation and the benefits of integration during the time between the hearing of the cases and issuance of the decision (Wells, Duran, & White, 2008). Following the Court's ruling, Wells, et al (2008) conducted research with forty-two 1985 and 1986 graduates of the Seattle high schools and Louisville high schools. The research team conducted qualitative in-depth interviews with nineteen graduates from three Louisville high schools and twenty-three graduates from the Seattle high schools. A semi-structured, open-ended interview protocol was used by the researchers. The racial/ethnic identities of the graduates were: twenty-two identified

themselves as White, fourteen as African American, four as Asian/Pacific Islanders, and two as mixed race. The findings/results of the research were:

1. The graduates said they learned to be more accepting of and comfortable with people of other racial backgrounds. They believed the experience changed them, making them more open-minded and accepting of people who differ from them racially and culturally.

2. Desegregated schools prepared them for a global economy and society. They said that, in the work setting particularly, they draw on the skills they learned in their desegregated public schools.

3. Most graduates would have grown up in race isolation without diverse public schools. White graduates tended to emphasize how their experiences in racially mixed high schools had made them more open-minded and more accepting of other racial/ethnic backgrounds than other White people they knew. African American graduates noted that their experiences validated perpetuation theory because racially mixed schools made them feel less intimidated by, fearful of, or subservient toward Whites. (Wells, et al, 2008)

The long-term results of the high court's ruling in the *Parents Involved* and *Meredith* cases remains to be seen. Since the ruling, more districts are seeking federal aid for voluntary magnet schools. Among the forty-one new recipients in 2007, thirty-one grants went to voluntary magnet plans (Walsh, 2007). Charter schools present the potential for segregation because they are free from state and federal regulations and are only required to meet standards negotiated between the school and state officials. According to an article by Associated Press and printed in *Education Week* (2007), Lake Oconee Academy in Greensboro, Georgia intentionally excludes the county's Black and low-income students. The school potentially gives enrollment preference

to children living near Lake Oconee, the predominately White, affluent section of the county. Despite the controversy, the charter school was approved and is now serving students.

Further complicating the potential for segregated schools in Georgia was the passing of HB 555 and HB 251 in the 2009 Legislative session. House Bill 555 requires each local board of education to make its unused facilities available to local charter schools. Furthermore, local boards are required to renovate, repair, and maintain the school facilities of charter schools unless otherwise agreed upon by the petitioner and the local board in the charter (Georgia General Assembly, n.d.). A charter school for gifted children has been mentioned in Dodge County. If such a school is petitioned and the petitioners request use of the Herman Avenue building (see History of Dodge County), the local board of education will be required to provide the building and upkeep, stretching local, state, and federal funds and decreasing the dollars available to the remainder of the student population. House Bill 251 is even more troubling. House Bill 251 provides the option for parents to enroll their child in another school within the local school system if the school has classroom space after its assigned students have been placed (Georgia General Assembly, n.d.). Dodge County has two elementary schools. South Dodge is located at the south end of the county and has the high poverty rate of 71.23%. North Dodge is located at the North end of the county and currently has fewer students, but the same number of classrooms. HB 251 provides the potential for the two schools to become segregated racially and/or socioeconomically.

The United States, including our southern states, has the most diverse student population in its history. Yet our schools remain largely segregated either as individual schools or within schools and segregated schools continue to be unequal. Even though most American parents believe their children benefit from integrated education, and there is a body of evidence that

those beliefs are correct, we seem to be experiencing a continuing expansion of segregation for both Blacks and Latinos and a serious backward movement in the South.

The Achievement Gap

…a student not known is a student ill-taught (Sizer, 1991)

James D. Anderson (2004) focuses on the achievement gap over time. Anderson begins with the Black-White literacy gap early in our national history. The Georgia Colony enacted legislation forbidding the teaching of slaves to read or to write in 1770. The second great educational reform movement by African Americans in the South was the ex-slave led campaign to establish state-supported public education as a right of citizenship in each southern state. As late as 1890 there was relative equality for Black education, which enabled African Americans in the South to narrow the literacy gap, the largest achievement gap in their history. The third educational reform was the elementary school attendance gap. Whites regained control of southern state and local governments in the late 19th century and halted the spread of public schools among Black children. During the first half of the 20th century the dominant White South used state power to repress the development of Black public education. Preceding the test score gap was the high school completion gap. Many Whites who tolerated or even supported elementary education for Black children viewed secondary schools as too much education for unskilled and semi-skilled laborers. During the first half of the twentieth century African American youth in the South were mostly excluded from public secondary education. The number of four-year public high schools for White students in Georgia increased from four in 1904 to 122 in 1916. At that time Georgia had no four-year public high schools for Black students. In 1940 12% of the African Americans age 25 to 29 were high school graduates compared to 41% for Whites in the same age category. (Peabody High School, the Black high

school in Dodge County was built in 1938.) As late as the 1950s, more than two-thirds of the

Black high school age students were not enrolled in public high schools.

In 1960, just eight years before I graduated from high school, eighth grade was the last

grade completed by the vast majority of the South's African American school children. Georgia

ranked third in the nation in denial of educational opportunities for African American children.

Fortunately, between 1987 and 1997, the gap in high school completion between African

Americans and Whites in the 25 – 29 year-old age group narrowed to the point where there was

no significant difference in 1997. In response to the next achievement gap, the test score gap,

Anderson responds:

> The history of past victories over other critical achievement gaps provides the only record
>
> of the strengths and possibilities for engaging what may be the last frontier in a series of
>
> achievement gaps dating back to the early National Era (2004, p.11).

Kati Haycock is a well-recognized name in research concerning the achievement gap in

the United States. The Education Trust, of which Haycock is the Director, completes research all

over the United States. They learned that adults, no matter what part of the country they were

from, always gave reasons for the achievement gap that were about the children and their

families. The reasons included, "they're too poor," "parents don't care," "they come to school

without an adequate breakfast" and "they don't have enough books at home." The findings of

The Education Trust agree with the results of the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (Rose & Gallup,

2004) mentioned in Chapter One of this study. However, the young people give very different

answers. They talk about teachers who do not know the subjects they are teaching; counselors

who consistently underestimate their potential and place them in lower-level courses; and

principals who dismiss their concerns. The young people also mentioned a curriculum and set of

expectations that are so low-level that they literally bore the students right out the school door. In Haycock's words, "We take the students who have less to begin with and then systematically give them less in school. We give the students less of everything that we believe makes a difference" (2001, ¶11).

McKinsey and Company is a management consulting firm that helps many of the world's leading corporations and organizations address their strategic challenges. The Social Sector Office of McKinsey and Company works with global institutions and philanthropies to address chronic, complex societal challenges in health, education, and economic development. The research of the Social Sector division of McKinsey and Company reports that on average, Black and Latino students are roughly two to three years of learning behind White students of the same age. Massachusetts has among the highest overall scores on the NAEP, but Blacks and Latinos in Massachusetts are eight times more likely to under perform in fourth grade math than Whites. Whites significantly outperform Blacks and Latinos at each income level (McKinsey & Company, 2009; Singleton & Linton, 2006). McKinsey and Company found that in 2002, tenth grade White students from the $25K to $50K income level performed about the same as Blacks in the $75K+ income level on the ELS, a standardized test with a national mean.

According to McKinsey and Company, the cost of the achievement gap is tremendous. If the gap between Black and Latino student performance and White student performance had been closed in recent years, the GDP in 2008 would have been between $310 billion and $525 billion or higher, or two to four percent of the GDP. The report pointed out that the magnitude of this impact will rise in the years ahead as demographic shifts result in Black and Latinos becoming a larger proportion of the population and workforce. "Put differently, the persistence of these

educational achievement gaps imposes on the United States the economic equivalent of a

permanent national recession" (McKinsey & Company, 2009, Introduction).

The impact on individuals is also alarming. There is a link between early performance in

school and subsequent rates of high school graduation, college attendance, college completion,

and ultimately earnings. Early test scores are important indicators of a student's life chances, but

they do not set the future in stone (McKinsey & Company, 2009). Williams reported that the

penitentiary system can predict with accuracy the number of prison cells to build by the number

of students in the public schools who are reading below grade level in the second grade

(Williams, 2008). There is hope, however. Within a state, districts with similar demographics can

also have very different levels of achievement. In some areas the racial gap has been overcome.

McKinsey's report points out:

> …the wide variation in performance among schools and school systems serving similar
>
> students suggests that the opportunity and output gaps related to today's achievement gap
>
> can be substantially closed. Many teachers and schools across the country are proving
>
> that race and poverty are not destiny… (McKinsey & Company, 2009, Introduction).

Sagor and Cox (2004) use the Cognitive Dissonance Theory to explain the achievement

gap. Cognitive Dissonance Theory is based on the finding that whenever our attitude and

behavior are in conflict we experience heightened levels of anxiety and stress. When our

attitudes and behaviors are in agreement, stress is reduced. Sagor & Cox (2004) contend that it is

important to add role to social reality of the classroom when this phenomenon is applied. For

example, consider a defeated and discouraged learner. This child would probably describe math

class as "boring," "stupid," or "dumb." On days when the teacher is absent, this is the student

who is "destined and ordained" (p. 13) to make the substitute miserable. When we analyze his

experience through the lens of cognitive dissonance, we see that although his attitude is disappointing and his behavior inappropriate, it is quite logical and rational because it reduces his psychological stress. The most common adult response to this child's attitude and/or behavior is to send the child to the principal or counselor hoping he or she will be able to "scare" or "persuade" him to change his attitude and/or behavior. Unfortunately, this rarely happens.

According to Sagor and Cox (2004), the two most significant institutions that impact young people are school and family. When individuals or groups are consistently treated differently by social institutions such as schools, one should expect them to behave differently. Sagor and Cox (2004) use Institutional Pathology theories, in contrast to clinical theories, to focus interventions on altering the flawed institutions rather than the victims of the at-riskness. For example, if we find that success of non-White males at our schools is dependent on their learning to "act white," then it is both logical and fair to change our system to be more accommodating and appreciative of African American maleness. In addition, Sagor and Cox (2004) state:

> "if we believe that it is deep-seated racial attitudes that are causing differential treatment of African American males in our schools, and we understand that such treatment is negatively impacting the self-image of these students, thereby placing them at risk, then an honest attack on at-riskness would include an attack on all aspects of institutional racism" (p. 22). We must recognize that the institutions where we work, the public schools, often engage in practices that serve to disproportionately place particular children at greater risk of failure (p. 23).

We can decrease the at-risk factor for many of our children if we do everything in our power to change the dysfunctional organizational practices we control.

Janice Hale (2004) says that if we are going to equalize learning opportunities for African American children, especially low-income children, then we need to take a look at what is going wrong with their education. Hale explains that the power structure hides the path to high academic achievement, frustrating African American individuals who seek it. Whites function with ease in the power structure because we are part of the culture that makes the rules.

According to Hale (2004), 85% of African American households that send children to school are headed by females. A mother who must spend a majority of her energy supporting her family, she has a limited amount of time to negotiate the ins and outs of school and to support her children's academic achievement. Her primary concern is to keep a roof over the family's head. The teacher should be the equalizer in the classroom. All children should be taught so that the success of the child does not depend on the skills of the parent. In other words, the teacher should not send projects home that children cannot complete by themselves.

Linda Darling-Hammond (2004) adds to the research on *No Child Left Behind* mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Darling-Hammond points out that some policies on standards-based reforms take into account differences in the initial performance of students and the many nonschool factors that can affect achievement. Georgia standards do not, holding schools to similar standards despite dissimilar student populations and resources. Darling-Hammond (2004) raises many questions from this policy strategy. Will investments in better teaching, curriculum, and schooling follow the press for new standards? Or will standards and tests built upon a foundation of continued inequality simply certify student failure more visibly and reduce access to future education and employment?

Grade retention as a response to low test scores appears not to improve educational achievement for those who are held back and increases their likelihood of dropping out. Many

studies have found that grade retention increases dropout rates (Hess, 1986; Safer, 1986, Rumberger & Larson, 1998). Georgia students are given the opportunity to retake the *Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test* in third, fifth, and eighth grades if they do not meet standards in math in third grade and in reading and math in fifth and eighth grades. If the student does not meet the standards on the retake, the student is supposed to be retained even though the student is more than four times as likely as students who were not held back to not complete high school or receive a GED (Rumberger & Larson, 1998 as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2004).

Teacher quality is one of the most important determinants of student achievement (Ferguson, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2004). Tracking students in lower ability groups and in less academically challenging tracks is a likely contributor to the achievement gap because these students receive lower quality teaching (Ferguson, 1998, Oakes, Wells, Jones & Datnow, 1997). Ferguson (1998) did find that there is some evidence that the fit between home and school learning environments can be improved. He did not, however, find clear support for the proposition that Black teachers are significantly better than White teachers in helping Black children improve their scores on standardized tests. "There is tentative evidence that teachers' social class backgrounds might be as important as race, and in complicated ways (Ferguson, 1998, p. 367). Ferguson's research shows that schools can and do affect test scores and the Black-White test score gap.

Further research completed by Ferguson (1998) found three different conceptions of bias in the debate of the Black-White test score gap. They are:

1. Unconditional race neutrality which requires that teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors is uncorrelated with students' race. Teachers, who are unbiased, expect the same, on average, of Black and White students.

2. Conditional race neutrality is the assumption that teachers' perceptions and expectations are unbiased if they are based on legitimate observable predictors of performance, i.e., past test scores and past grades.

3. Race neutrality conditioned on potential gives equal expectations and aspirations in regards to Black and Whites who have equal potential. Ferguson acknowledges that is difficult to prove how potential differs from past performance.

It is of major concern to African Americans that teachers underestimate the potential of Black students. "My bottom line conclusion is that teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors probably do help to sustain and perhaps even to expand, the black-white test score gap" (Ferguson, 1998, p. 313).

Taylor's (2005) research eight years later confirms Ferguson's statement, at least as it relates to African American males. Taylor used qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis to determine African American males' perceptions of instructional strategies. Taylor used a conceptual framework, which she developed, of core concepts of African American male achievement. Taylor found that African American males:

1. Need teachers who care about them.

2. Think teachers' attitudes affect students' learning.

3. Believe a good teacher-student relationship, built on trust, is required for students to be successful.

4. Need role models, family members, and teachers to provide motivation for them to succeed in school

Taylor's findings support the need for staff development that includes extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Teachers need to understand the value that encouragement can bring to

African American males. Teachers must understand the males themselves, what their needs and concerns are, and how to motivate them (Taylor, 2005).

Irvine (1990, 1991) emphasizes Taylor's findings even more strongly. Irvine found that Black children's achievement is only minimally influenced by their own perceptions, but significantly influenced by the teacher's perceptions. "…for black students, it was the teachers' perceived evaluation that was more strongly related to the students' academic self-concept" (p. 49). Irvine purports that teacher attributes of warmth, affection, and enthusiasm have been found to be highly correlated with student achievement.

According to Irvine (1990, 1991) teachers socialize and condition students through the hidden and the stated curriculum. They consciously and unconsciously instill in students their appropriate role in the institution by delivering messages, sanctions, and rewards about appropriate behaviors and expectations. The message is so powerful and effective because "the relationship between a teacher and a student rivals the relationship between a parent and a child" (p. 47). Irvine gives the following staff development competencies for prejudice reduction:

Principals and teachers should have an understanding and sensitivity about

1. the nature of racism and prejudice from a cognitive as well as affective perspective

2. Afro-Americans' and other minorities' cultural heritage and history

3. the unique characteristics of black children's relational style of processing information

4. black children's language and the instructional methods necessary for translating this language to standard English

5. skills and behaviors brought to school by black children that have made them more developmentally precocious infants than are majority children

6. the differences in black and white parenting styles

7. the role black parents and their community play in students' achievement

8. the negative impact of low expectations and the resultant self-fulfilling prophecy

The preponderance of research above confirms that the social institutions of schools and the teachers and administrators that lead the students in those schools are to some degree responsible for the achievement gap between White students and non-White students. As educators, we have a responsibility and obligation to meet the challenge set before us so that no child is left behind.

White Teachers and Unintentional Racism

But we also need just plain good teachers. They can be white. That's fine. I just want teachers who love kids and will work at it, who are not afraid to teach African-American studies, even though they are white and might make mistakes. The kids will teach them. They will make them into good teachers, no matter what race they are.

(Marshall's response to Julie, Landsman, 2001, pp. 126 – 127)

The above quote is from Julie Landsman's, *A White Teacher Talks about Race,* (2001), and clearly defines a "plain good teacher." A good teacher loves kids – all kids. A good teacher will work at becoming a better teacher and is not afraid to step out of his or her comfort zone to do what is best for kids. Good teachers who are also White are better teachers of students of color if they confront their whiteness and the privileges associated with the color of their skin. Good White teachers of students of every race and ethnicity must confront their own racist attitudes to avoid the "perpetuation of whiteness and teaching practices that might function to sustain racist practices and ideology in the schooling of students of color" (Hyland, 2005, abstract).

Hyland's ethnographic study describes the roles of four White teachers in the United States during and after participating in a seminar on teaching antiracism. All four teachers worked in the only African American neighborhood school in a small Midwestern city. Hyland found that the ways these teachers understood their roles as teachers of Black students are intimately linked to how closely their practice represented what is known as culturally relevant pedagogy. Hyland chose these particular four teachers because they described themselves as good teachers of Black students. Even though the teachers described themselves as good teachers of Black students, the role each teacher adopted relates to the perpetuation of whiteness and how such a relation is embedded in her everyday teaching practice and might function to sustain racist practice and ideology in the schooling of students of color. For example, Sylvia was born Hispanic, but describes herself as White. She hopes her students will learn from her and begin to act more like White people. A special education teacher regarded herself as a watchdog for discriminatory acts and was willing to step in when the situation presented itself. Yet, she viewed special education referral, testing, and service delivery practices as race neutral. She admitted that she rarely tries to facilitate students getting out of special education, even when their goals have been met or exceeded. She felt they will always need special education services and declassifying them would be an education injustice (Hyland, 2005). Self-described as good teachers of Black students, both teachers practiced unintentional racism.

McIntosh (2004) compares White privilege to male privilege. "…Whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege" (p. 104). McIntosh lists twenty-six daily effects of White privilege in her life and asks tough questions. She stated:

I have met very few men who truly distressed about systemic, unearned male advantage and conferred dominance. And so one question for me and others like me is whether we will be like them, or whether we will get truly distressed, even outraged, about unearned race advantage and conferred dominance, and, if so, what will we do to lessen them (p. 107).

Solomon, Partelli, Daniel, & Campbell (2005) conducted a qualitative study of 200 Canadian teacher candidates' responses to McIntosh's (2004) article mentioned in the previous paragraph. Solomon, et al identified three primary strategies that teacher candidates used to avoid addressing whiteness and its attendant privileges in Canadian society:

- Ideological incongruence – refers to the dilemma experienced by individuals when their ideological or belief sets are incompatible. For example, a teacher may, in theory, support equitable representation of the school population in the gifted program, but may be unwilling to see it implemented.

- Liberalist notions of individualism and meritocracy – We all have the same opportunities, or at least, access to the opportunities. The failure or success of a particular individual or group is inexorably linked to individual effort and agency.

- Negation of White capital – attempted to deny the existence of White privilege and its attendant capital and material benefits. Negation of capital elicited a wide range of emotions related to the implication that they possessed unearned privileges. The emotions ranged from anger and aggression towards the author of the article and minorities in general to a sense of guilt. People who negate White capital strongly believe rewards afforded them are due to individual efforts. They also advocate that minorities have been privileged at the expense of Whites.

These themes highlight and underscore the continued difficulty that teacher candidates have in addressing the notion of race and White privilege in schools and point to the importance of continued research and work in the areas of social difference and oppression in education.

The implication this study has for my study is that teacher educator must help teachers understand their own racial identity formation and provide the learning space to work with the ranges of emotions and feelings of indignation that might evolve from an exposure to White privilege and the "myth of meritocracy" (Solomon, et al, 2005, p. 147).

Spencer (1999) used qualitative and quantitative data to explore the predictors and correlates of a hyper masculine identity, which is often associated with male youth's troubled social relationships and inadequate school success. Spencer's theoretical framework was a theory-driven point of view; an identity-focused cultural ecological (ICE) perspective. The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological System Theory (PVEST) represents the undergirding theoretical synthesis that guided her ICE perspective about school adjustment.

Spencer points out that schools often mirror societal attitudes, thus increasing the probability of negative teacher perceptions, cultural misinterpretations, and stressed intergenerational relations. Spencer found that no matter how marginal academic performance appears, inferred teacher evaluations matter to young people. Teacher are "significant others" so, negative teacher perceptions as a source of stress matter as important contributors to reactive and maladaptive coping strategies for young people. Spencer states that the trend level significance of the negative teacher perception variable suggests that teachers can be trained to communicate less negative feedback. Spencer suggests that educator training programs should include a clinical component which should aid the individualization of teacher insights and responsive strategies to individual student needs versus group assumptions. This approach also provides

opportunities for exploring one's own feelings, reference-group orientation, attitudes, and thinking about student diversity independent of one's own ethnicity, gender, race, and national origin (Spencer, 1999).

Thompson, Warren, and Carter (2004) used regression analysis in their study to identify the characteristics of teachers in an underperforming high school who were most likely to blame students and their parents for students' low achievement. [Low performing schools are usually mainly populated by students of color and students from lower socioeconomic status (Thompson, et al, 2004)]. A questionnaire with eighty questions and statements was completed by 121 teachers. Respondents were 75% white and 54% males. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents agreed with the statement that when students fail a test or an assignment, the student is largely to blame. The aggression analysis identified the following characteristics, in order of strength, of teachers who were most likely to blame students and the students' parents for the students' low achievement:

1. Also blamed parents for students' under achievement

2. Unlikely to believe their department-level colleagues were outstanding educators

3. More likely than others to admit that they did not treat students in the way in which they would want their own children's teachers to treat their children

4. Believe most of the students did not want to achieve

5. More likely to have a masters degree and/or a doctorate

6. Believe their colleagues at the school were outstanding educators

7. Likely to state they made the curriculum relevant to their students' lives

8. Believe all students have strengths and talents

9. Unlikely to permit students to work collaboratively

The research of Thompson, et al indicates the need for professional development that is aimed at improving teacher attitudes and beliefs about students and parents, and helping teachers to understand how their attitudes affect the quality of instruction that students receive.

Alice McIntyre (1997) completed a qualitative participatory action research project where participants critically reflected on their understandings of multicultural education and their positions as White students involved in a teacher education program. McIntyre found that by White educators questioning and confronting their own White identities and challenging the meaning of being "white" teachers, they can more effectively pursue teaching practices that significantly alter the way White student teachers are educated about themselves and about multicultural education. McIntyre expressed that she also experienced a reconstruction of her own meaning of whiteness as a result of participating in this project. The experience was transformative for the researcher and one that continues to impact her life in important ways. McIntyre indicates the need for further research in the saliency of White teachers' racial identities and the relationship between racial identity and the system of whiteness, and how both inform teaching practice.

The study most similar to my study was completed by Mary Elizabeth Kelly (2006) through Emory University in Atlanta. Kelly's Dissertation Chair and one committee member, Vanessa Siddle Walker and Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, are well known authors in the field and are both quoted in this study. Kelly's study was a qualitative case study utilizing in-depth interviews and classroom observations to collect data. The purpose of Kelly's study was to examine White middle school teachers' perceptions about the factors influencing the racial achievement gap. Her participants were three White male and three White female middle school teachers.

Kelly found that White middle school teachers tend to attribute the achievement gap to factors related to children's parents and community. Her participants named factors related to school, but did not address factors related to teaching. Kelly found that the perspectives of the teachers in her study were most related to their background experiences and not their pre-service or professional development training.

Kelly's study differs from this study in several ways. First, this study is not limited to teachers in a certain grade level or limited to only White teachers. Kelly was collecting data on teachers' attitudes and did not attempt to influence or change the teachers' perceptions about the factors influencing the achievement gap. This study established a baseline for teacher attitudes related to the achievement gap, but focused on whether those attitudes can be changed through profession development training.

Changing Teachers' Attitudes and Practices Through Professional Development

A wide selection of studies dealing with diversity and/or anti-racism training for teachers was found through my searches. However, most of the research focused on diversity training for pre-service teachers. Sleeter (2001) made the following conclusions concerning pre-service teachers:

- White pre-service teachers bring very little cross-cultural knowledge, experience, and understanding to teaching.
- They possess stereotypical beliefs about urban students.
- They have little knowledge of racism, discrimination, and structural aspects of inequality.

My experience is that teachers benefit more from professional development when they possess background knowledge and experience. Experience and knowledge of racism and structural inequity are essential for critical reflection. Therefore, for the purpose of my study, I

have limited the review of literature in the area of anti-racism professional development to studies where the participants are experienced teachers.

Blake's (2001) study focused on teachers from nine suburban school systems in the Northeast. The teachers were part of a collaborative called Empowering Multicultural Initiative (EMI) during 1996 – 1997. Blake's purpose was to examine teachers' thinking, beliefs, and classroom practices after their participation in the antiracism professional development course. According to Blake:

> In most cases teachers are unprepared to deal with racism directly, and they avoid any confrontation or discussion of it in classrooms and in schools. This avoidance is not simply due to teachers' lack of awareness or to racism in society and schools. More importantly it is due to their inability to begin to understand their own personal biases and how teachers and administrators reproduce patterns of discrimination within classrooms (Blake, 2001, p. iv).

The results of Blake's research show that teachers reported some form of transformation in their thinking and in some cases their behavior. The greatest amount of transformation for these teachers occurred in the instructional phase in the areas of curriculum development and pedagogy. The most significant aspect of an anti-racist education for these teachers appears to be transforming knowledge to action.

Blake's personal story and lived experiences give him a different perspective and possibly a different interpretation of his research than I could have as a White female teacher. Institutional racism is Blake's lived experience. Blake attended a segregated school with all Black teachers for the first eight years of his schooling. He received a clear message that he was smart and could achieve anything he desired. High expectations were set for all students. As a

result, Blake's goal was to become a medical doctor. His goal was strongly supported and encouraged by his parents and teachers.

In 1965, Blake moved to Boston and attended an integrated school system. He had only White teachers at his new school. Blake quickly noticed that White students were getting better grades, given more attention and support, and seemed to be a higher priority to the teachers. The White teachers made him feel that there were limitations to what he could do and that he wasn't as smart as his White counterparts. The message from his Black peers was that being smart and wanting to do well in school was "acting white"(Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Blake's life long dream to become a doctor was shattered when he entered college and realized that he had not been provided the appropriate courses and opportunities to complete the science demands of medical school. These issues raised questions for Blake that led him to concentrate on education and focus on the impact or manifestations of institutional racism, which shuts doors on opportunities for students like him.

Vaught and Castagno's study is an ethnographic examination of teacher attitudes towards race, racism, and White privilege in response to anti-bias in-service trainings in two major United States urban school districts. Vaught's multi-sited ethnographic study of racism and the achievement gap took place in a West Coast urban district. Castagno conducted a multi-sided ethnographic study of multicultural education was in an urban district located in the Rocky Mountains. Data was collected through formal and informal interviews, observation, and participation in the two school districts. The methodology of both studies was critical methodologies and critical feminist approaches. This enabled the researchers to make central to their practice and purpose the challenging of societal power inequities. The general theoretical

framework is Critical Race Theory, but more specifically Cheryl Harris's concept of Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993).

Vaught and Castagno found that awareness of "whiteness as property" (Harris, 1993) did not lead to empathy amongst the teachers. Instead, awareness resulted in a reinvention of meaning that reified existing, culturally constructed, racist frameworks. The researchers also found that the structural dimension of racism was allowed to persist unchallenged due to the districts' failure to take action in creating institutional change in conjunction with the trainings.

Vaught and Castagno suggest that professional development is a healthy and essential part of change, if the training focuses on structural elements of racialized achievement inequities. Effective professional development should also give all teachers tools to understand their position in structural systems and systemic change rather than focus on guild and innocence. The researchers point out that raising individual awareness of whiteness as property cannot serve as the only solution to the achievement gap.

Schniedewind's (2005) study examined the impact of racial consciousness on the practice of a group of five exemplary teachers. Schniedewind described exemplary as "consistently reflective about their consciousness of race and how racism affects their practice" (p. 280). The teachers participated in a long-term professional development program in diversity education and also took advantage of subsequent follow-up opportunities. According to Schniedewind, "Professional development opportunities in diversity education provide an important arena for practicing teachers to expand their consciousness about race, racism, and whiteness and to gain support to apply that awareness to their practice" (p. 280).

The five educators in this study teach in a school district in the mid-Hudson area of New York. The school district, located in a semi-rural community, made a system-wide commitment

to diversity education during the 1990s. The study body is primarily White with about 18% students of color and about 15% eligible for free or reduced price meals.

During the initial thirty-hour professional development course in diversity education, the teachers:

1. examined their own experiences with and attitudes about racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination;

2. investigated ways in which bias, often unconscious and unintentional, exists in schools and society; and

3. increased their repertoire of skills, strategies, and materials for making their classrooms and schools more multicultural and gender-fair.

Schniedewind concluded that professional development opportunities can "raise consciousness by providing information and by experientially engaging teachers with issues of race, racism, and whiteness and help them apply these understandings to their daily school interactions" (Schniedewind, 2005, p. 288). This study indicates the importance of long-term opportunities for teachers to explore racial beliefs and attitudes together and to critically reflect over time.

Hanlon's (1999) qualitative study is the story of twelve secondary teachers and their active engagement in a personal and professional exploration of their perceptions and understandings of how racism and other forms of marginalization story their lives and how these stories affect the way they have come to know their work, relationships, and students. Three strands of inquiry were intertwined during the course of a semester seminar as the teachers' stories unfolded. Narrative and narrative inquiry were used to create collaborative discourse communities. Data collected included background of the school and school population,

autobiographical writings, interviews, recordings of seminar sessions, journals, and researcher reflections. Hanlon used a complex combination of theoretical frameworks in her research. The overarching framework is ethic of care. Ethnographic grounded theory was used to interpret the teachers' personal narratives. Hanlon listened for reoccurring ideas and understandings about self and others. A racial identity development theory was used as a tool for analysis and interpretation of teachers' stories and reflections as a means to understand how and where individuals were positioned in terms of their racial identity and how this positioning might affect the way they see and relate to their students both White and non-White.

Hanlon's (1999) research suggests that if teacher education programs focus on personal domain, and promote self-reflection and dialogue in the analysis of racism and other forms of marginalization prevalent in schools and in society that the use of narrative and narrative inquiry hold promise to change teachers' perspectives and practices.

In summary, the review of literature reveals a history of racism and sexism in education. Federal and state mandates do not appear to be effective in closing the achievement gap between gap between White students and non-White students. A vital component to closing the gap is the relationship between the teacher and the student. White female teachers can be role models for non-White students. However, White teachers must first understand White privilege and examine their own racial biases and attitudes. Sleeter (1992) states, "Changing what teachers do is very difficult, particularly in areas that are informed by deep value commitments and beliefs, and reinforced by taken-for-granted, institutionalized processes and relationships" (p. 205). Professional development can teach new skills and help teachers examine institutionalized "isms" that marginalize some students.

Missing in the literature are studies of diversity training in the southern states of the United States where racism and sexism have a long and deeply entrenched history. Also missing in the review was action research and a combination theoretical framework of critical race theory and critical feminism.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Action research is continual professional development – a direct route to improving teaching

and learning. (Calhoun, 2002, p.18)

This study was action research designed to move teachers beyond acknowledging the

reality of the racial achievement gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it. Sagor

(2005) defines action research as "A disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those

taking the action. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the actor in

improving or refining his or her actions" (p. 1). Sagor (1992) compares the teaching profession

to other professionals. He points out that doctors, lawyers, engineers, and architects spend as

much time interacting with their colleagues as they do serving their clients. Teachers, on the

other hand, live in a different world. Although they work in the same building with other

teachers, they rarely have time for professional conversation. According to Sagor (1992):

> This dearth of collegial stimulation would be bad enough if teaching were a profession
>
> with a certain and finite knowledge base. But the problems of teaching are ever changing,
>
> and absolute solutions are usually not to be found. Successful teaching is a mixture of art
>
> and craft honed through experience. In such a profession, a lack of meaningful discourse
>
> with fellow professionals can have disastrous effects (p.2).

Reparation of the disastrous effects caused by the lack of conversation among educators about

racial inequality and institutional racism is the ambitious goal of the professional development

course used in this study. Meaningful discourse with fellow professionals is an essential element.

Pine and Hilliard (1990) state:

Discussions and debates about racism create anxiety and conflict, which are handled differently by different cultural groups. For example, whites tend to fear open discussion of racial problems because they believe that such discussions will stir up hard feelings and old hatreds. Whites tend to believe that heated arguments about racism lead to divisiveness, loss of control, bitter conflict, and even violence. Blacks, on the other hand, believe that discussion and debate about racism help to push racial problems to the surface – and, perhaps, force society to deal with them (p. 596).

Pine and Hilliard (1990) also contend that professional development for administrators, teachers, and support personnel is necessary. Such professional development courses should be designed to empower us to understand and address the unconscious and overt effects of institutional racism and not put people on the defensive.

The authors of the professional development course used in this study, *Courageous Conversations about Race* (Singleton & Linton, 2006), contend that all members of the school community need to be able to talk about race in a safe and honest way in order to exercise the passion, practice, and persistence necessary to address racial achievement gaps. "Courageous Conversation serves as a strategy to eventually eliminate these racial achievement gaps. Furthermore, such conversations help build the passion educators, students, and families need to address systemic racial inequities and the resulting achievement inequality" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 32). Engaging in this dialogue helped build mutual understanding necessary for educators to discover what we need to collectively foster equity.

This research was guided by the research questions:

1. To what extent did teachers in Dodge County respond to a professional learning

course on conversations about race?

    a.) How did the participants engage in critical reflection?

    b.) How did the participants move beyond acknowledging the reality of the racial gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it?

2. To what extent did teaching a professional learning class on conversations about race affect my understanding of racism and whiteness in education?

My interest in the achievement gap began several years ago when I was chair of the Data Collection Committee for our school accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). I began to see a pattern emerging as I collected and compared the test score data over a five-year period. The gap between our White students and our non-White students, who were almost all Black, was gradually widening. The "achievement gap" had never been brought to the attention of the teachers at my school and, at that time, I did not understand the connection between the gap and curricular and pedagogical practices in the school. Shortly thereafter, the No Child Left Behind Act was implemented and almost everyone in education became interested in the achievement gap.

My interest in the achievement gap and my quest for answers were fueled through my studies in the doctoral program. I began to see my teaching practice change as I learned more about White privilege and institutional racism. My Black students started making comments like, "You care about us" or "You are different from the other teachers." When students recognize that you care about them as if it is more the exception than the rule, it is a humbling experience and a powerful motivator to want to change the education experience for these students. I realized through my reflections of my teaching practice that I was once no different from most other White, middle-class, female teachers. My teaching practice changed because of new

knowledge gained and I believe that other teachers will also change their teaching practice when they can see the biased practices currently taking place. The journey to this destination can be painful and unnerving. Teachers must be led on this journey in a safe, non-threatening environment and must be provided tools for changing their teaching practice to begin to close the racial achievement gap.

I chose to lead this professional development class for several reasons. First of all, as an administrator in the system, professional learning for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators is one of my responsibilities. Secondly, I grew up in this area and I am familiar with the culture. I have worked in the school system for over twenty years. The relationships that I have established by working with many of the teachers as a peer and by leading many professional development classes provided a safe environment where the teachers could be more open and honest concerning their own views and student expectations. Lastly, I have made this journey and have experienced the anger, denial, guilt, and finally the reality of the racial achievement gap and my participation in sustaining the gap. The relationship with the teachers and my personal experiences equip me with the skills to open "courageous conversations" about race and to help sustain the conversation when it gets uncomfortable.

Several professional learning courses geared to closing the racial academic achievement gap are available. *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You* (Davis, 2007) and *How to Increase Minority Student Achievement,* a professional learning course offered through PD 360, an online professional development source sponsored by School Improvement Network, were considered in addition to *Courageous Conversations,* (Singleton & Linton, 2006). *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You* (Davis, 2007) is limited to culturally relevant teaching strategies and will be an effective follow-up study for the participants of this course. *How to*

Increase Minority Student Achievement features many acknowledged experts in this field, several of whom are quoted in this study, including James Comer, Kati Haycock, Gary Howard, Sonia Nieto, Beverly Daniel Tatum, and Bonnie Davis, author of *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You. How to Increase Minority Student Achievement* is based on the Equity Framework, a research based model that ties together the critical elements of leadership, school culture, and teaching and learning (n.d., www.pd360.com). I chose to teach the professional learning course, *Courageous Conversation*, because it is a strategy for school systems to close the racial achievement gap that offered the participants the opportunity to engage in in-depth conversations and examine personal biases that might hinder the implementation of effective teaching strategies. Specifically, a Courageous Conversation:

- *engages* those who won't talk

- *sustains* the conversation when it gets uncomfortable or diverted

- *deepens* the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful actions occur (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 16).

While directing a statewide California project, Glenn Singleton created and developed Courageous Conversations. The California project was aimed at redesigning the admissions process in the state university systems to align with high school restructuring. Mr. Singleton recognized that school reform initiatives and traditional diversity training fail to consider the impact of race and racism on student achievement disparities. He created Courageous Conversations so that K through 12 and higher educators could examine why students of color were not gaining access to effective schooling and admission to college (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

The professional development course was guided by the following questions posed by the authors of course:

1. What is it that educators should know and be able to do to narrow the racial achievement gap?

2. How will educators know when they are experiencing success in their efforts to narrow the racial achievement gap?

3. What do they do as they discover what they don't yet know and are not yet able to do to eliminate the racial achievement gap? (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 3).

This study employed critical self-reflections of the participants to explore their understanding of whiteness and White privilege and their definition of racism, institutionalized racism, anti-racism, and equity. The textbook used in the course provided questions that were used for reflection by the participants.

Study Design

The design of this study is action research because it is inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action (Sagor, 2005). Action research has the potential for empowerment and includes a greater diversity of voices. Anderson, et al, (2007) state, "…we believe empowerment begins with a group of educational practitioners who view themselves not merely as consumers of someone else's knowledge but as knowledge creators in their own right" (p.7). This study is designed to empower the participants to move toward developing strategies for eliminating the achievement gap between White students and non-White students in the school district.

A five-day, 30 hour, professional development course written by Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, entitled *Courageous Conversations About Race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools* (2006) was taught by the author of this research. The class was taught during the

summer break and was open to all teachers in grades kindergarten through grade twelve in the Dodge County School District. Thirty-seven teachers and one paraprofessional participated in this professional development course. A small group is necessary to allow the time for group interaction that is essential to the success of this course.

After a brief introduction of the course, participants were advised that they are not required to complete the class if they feel uncomfortable with the subject. I was advised by Mr. Linton (personal communication, April 29, 2009), one of the authors of the book used in this course, that one of the first things that I should do when I introduce the course is to confess that I am White and I understand the White experience, but I can never understand the Black experience. Confessing my Whiteness and my inability to know the Black experience is important for all non-White participants to know that I am not claiming to know their experiences. I explained my research project and asked for volunteers to participate in my research. No differences were made with the participants of this project and the other class members except I collected data only from the participants, with the exception of the Participant Survey and the Course Evaluation.

The Facilitator's Guide written by Linton and Singleton (2007) was used as a guide for the course because it was designed by Linton and Singleton to accompany the study of the book and provide assistance to group facilitators such as myself. Singleton and Linton have provided chapter reflection and group discussion questions, activities, journal writing prompts, and resources for extending learning. The authors have taught this course for schools and school systems throughout the United States. Video clips of Mr. Singleton leading the course were used throughout the class. Incorporating the video clips of Mr. Singleton provided a perspective from a Black male in addition to the White female leading the professional development class. Glenn

Singleton is the executive director of Pacific Educational Group, Inc. (PEG). PEG was founded in 1992 to address systemic educational inequity by providing support to districts in meeting the needs of underserved students of color. In 1995, Singleton developed Beyond Diversity, a nationally recognized training center aimed at helping educators identify and examine the powerful intersections of race and schooling. Curtis Linton is a co-owner of The School Improvement Network where he is co-executive producer of *The Video Journal of Education and TeachStream.* Mr. Linton has spent the last ten years documenting on video and in print the improvement efforts and best practices of the most successful schools and school systems across North America. He has written or produced dozens of award-winning video-based staff development programs. His areas of expertise include closing the achievement gap and improving minority student achievement, using data, leadership, effective staff development, brain research, differentiation, action research, and coaching. Each year Mr. Linton visits over a hundred classrooms and schools, capturing what they do to succeed with all students at the classroom, school, and system levels (Singleton & Linton, 2007).

The authors of the course divide the course into three parts. The first part is: Passion: An essential characteristic of anti-racist leadership. Discussions will center around 1.) What is so courageous about this conversation and why it is so difficult; 2.) Why race?; and 3.) agreeing to talk about race. Passion is the essential element to move the conversation forward. The conversation must move beyond the basic awareness of the racial patterns found in student achievement data to question why the data show a gap.

Part two is: Practice: The foundation of anti-racist leadership. The course covers six conditions of courageous conversations. "Closing the achievement gap begins with an examination of self rather than others" (p. 73). The six conditions are:

First condition: Getting personal right here and right now

Second condition: Keeping the spotlight on race

Third condition: Engaging multiple racial perspectives

Fourth condition: Keeping us *all* at the table

Fifth condition: What do you mean by "race"?

Sixth condition: Let's talk about whiteness.

When educators have developed *passion* for addressing the racial achievement gap, the skills necessary to tackle institutionalized racism must be developed. Singleton and Linton (2006) state:

> Only when educators isolate race as a topic in their school improvement discussions are they certain to focus on issues that directly impact students of color and White students alike. Isolating race helps educators to understand and simultaneously to develop real solutions to racial achievement disparities (p. 96).

As the participants develop greater understanding of the six conditions listed above and engage in the reflections, exercises, and activities, they will master the *practices* needed to internalize Courageous Conversation and enhance their focus and effectiveness in addressing the racial achievement gap in their classrooms. Mastering the practices, however, is not enough to make a long-term difference. We must maintain explicit focus on the way in which race impacts achievement.

Part three is: Persistence: The key to anti-racist leadership. This section considers: 1.) how anti-racist leaders close the achievement gap; 2.) exploring a systemic framework for closing the racial achievement gap; and 3.) using courageous conversation to achieve equity in schools.

Cultural transformation is difficult. Achieving sustainable results takes a great deal of time and requires maintaining a focus along the course of action. Persistence is the key to equity/anti-racist leadership.

Participants of the class were provided a copy of the textbook, *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* by Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton (2006). Handouts provided in the Facilitator's Guide were also distributed during the course. Overhead transparences provided in the Facilitator's Guide were converted to PowerPoint slides for class viewing.

Prior to beginning the conversations about race, participants completed a survey (Appendix A) developed by the researcher to establish a baseline of the participants' knowledge and attitudes about racism and inequities in education.

The researcher kept a daily journal for personal reflections and to record daily class activities and reactions of participants. Audio recordings of class sessions were not feasible due to the size of the group and the large size of the classroom that was used for teaching the class. The researcher believed that video recording the classes would hamper the spontaneity and authenticity of the participants' responses and reactions. The researcher took brief notes of comments and reactions during each class session that were recorded in the researcher's journal each day at the end of class.

Participants' Reflective Thinking

Change usually happens over a period of time. Participants in this professional development class responded to reflection prompts throughout the class, but they will also need time to process the ideas presented in the class and record their reflective thinking after the course has ended. John Dewey (1910, 1991) laid the foundation for establishing a knowledge

base about reflective thinking. Dewey argued that reflective thinking must be an educational purpose and aim in order for learning to occur. Milner (2003) contends that teachers' reflective thinking could be essential in leading them into deeper understanding around areas that might otherwise be ignored, misunderstood, misrepresented, misinterpreted, or unsettled. Milner states, "…I have come to believe that there is often a void in teachers' reflective thinking where diversity is concerned" (p. 173). Classroom teachers have been taught to reflect upon what they are doing and why they are doing it to strengthen and/or change their practices. Reflection on diversity is seldom taught or practiced, thereby creating the void in reflective thinking. The class helped fill that void by asking participants to keep a journal throughout the week as a means of recording their reflective thinking on diversity and racism. Schön (1983) indicates that reflection monitors our actions during and after teaching. He distinguishes between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Participants who agreed to participate in this study shared their reflection-on-action through their journals. The journals of the participants agreeing to participate in this research were collected. Each participant was given the opportunity to place his or her journal in a sealed envelope with no identifying marks to be collected by a third party and delivered to the researcher. However, all but one participant hand delivered her journal to the researcher. The participant that did not hand deliver her journal sent it through interoffice mail but it was never delivered. The participants' journal comments are identified only by a pseudonym in this research.

The research participants were provided the opportunity to interact through an online blog. The same pseudonym used for the journals was also to be used for the blog. The researcher thought that the participants might express their thoughts and feelings more freely if their identifications were unknown and that the pseudonymous identification would also prevent the

participants' need to please an administrator. However, the participants decided that because of comments they made in class and the specific content of their journal writings pseudonym identifications to the researcher would be futile. Pseudonyms are used for research reporting.

Setting

Dodge County School System is located in a rural area of middle Georgia. There are two elementary schools (grades K – 5), one middle school (grades 6 – 8), and one high school (grades 9 – 12). All four schools are Title I schools with 64.4% of the students qualifying for free or reduced price meals. The school population is approximately 34% Black, 62% White, and 2% Hispanic or other.

The achievement gap on state required testing shows a 15% point gap between White students and Black students on the state required criterion referenced test in mathematics and a 4.2% gap in Language Arts on the same test. The gap increases at the high school level. Even though the high school graduation test is considered to be a less rigorous test than the criterion referenced test, there remains a 21.5% point gap between the Black students and the White students on the math portion and a 10.5% point gap on the Language Arts portion. The Hispanic population was too small to form a subgroup.

Participants

The participants were volunteers from the professional learning class. The first day of class, after explaining what the class is about and giving the attendees the opportunity to opt out of the class if they felt uncomfortable, I asked for volunteers for this research project. The Consent to Participate form (see Appendix C) was given to all attendees. Eight teachers out of thirty-seven in the professional development class signed the consent forms and agreed to participate in this research project. Each school in the district was represented by at least one participant.

Participants included two White teachers from grades three and four; two White middle school teachers and one Black middle school teacher; and three teachers from the high school. The high school teachers included a White English teacher, a White special education teacher, and a Black social studies teacher. The Black high school teacher's journal was lost in transit and she did not participate in the blogs because she does not have a home computer. She remained in the study, however, because of the relevance of some of her class participation comments. The teaching experience of the participants ranges from one year in a regular public school to over twenty years teaching experience.

Data Sources

Five data sources were utilized to determine participants' attitudinal changes on racism and to determine if the participants moved toward implementing strategies for closing the achievement gap. Data for this dissertation included 1.) A survey; 2.) journals; 3.) Internet blogs; 4.) audio recording of a class activity; and 5.) researcher field notes and journal. The survey was a written survey prior to professional development to determine the participants' attitudes and beliefs concerning racism and responsibility for the achievement gap. Journals and Internet blogs were used to document the participants' reflective thinking. Journal writing prompts were provided by chapter in the *Courageous Conversations Facilitator Guide,* (Singleton & Linton, 2007) (See Appendix B). Finally, the researcher's field notes and journal were used to document class participation comments and to help analyze all data. Field notes were made daily during the professional development class. Daily journal entries were recorded by the researcher to record the researcher's reflective thinking during the research period. The transcribed audio recording of the class activity involving two of the research participants is a backup to ensure accuracy of the researcher.

Data Analysis

The ability to justify the validity, credibility, and reliability of the researcher's conclusions was the goal in analyzing the data. Qualitative analysis involves the fragmentation and regrouping of data derived from various sources (James, et al, 2008). All data was coded for common codes or families of evidence as it was collected. Although common codes could have been prepared in advance based on the body of research reviewed, the researcher did not want to be influenced by previous research and made the decision to let the common codes or families of evidence evolve in the current research. Common codes included anger, denial, guilt, or eagerness to change. The researcher used colored post it notes for coding. The data were also tagged with memos for further investigation when appropriate. The collection of hard data prepared by the respondents and the opportunity of the participants to respond anonymously ensured the accurate portrayal of the participants' various points of view. The accurate portrayal of the participants' points of view lends validity to the research.

Credibility was provided by the standards by which the researcher and the participants adhered. The accuracy or honesty of the participants' responses can be validated by common themes throughout the various sources of data or a change over time in reflective thinking as identified by the same pseudonym. The researcher provided credibility by accurately reporting the data.

Reliability indicates that the classroom practices of the research participants changed as a result of this study, thus improving education in our community (James, et al, 2008). Reliability will be further enhanced if the results could be of interest across other school systems.

Limitations

Teachers in the Dodge County School System have not received any type of system sponsored diversity training in at least the last twenty years. Any diversity training that any teacher might have received was on an individual basis and delivered from a source outside of the school system. A limitation of this study is the lack of system support for diversity training even though the achievement gap has been acknowledged. The teachers may interpret the lack of system support as a lack of expectations by administration in general. This might give teachers the preconceived notion that closing the achievement gap is not the responsibility of the school system.

A second limitation is that the research participants are volunteers from the professional development class. This limited the research participants to those teachers willing to discuss the issues of racism and the achievement gap.

The third limitation is that the researcher was also the trainer and an administrator in the school system. The participants might have felt the need to please or appear favorable to the researcher even though the researcher does not act in a supervisory capacity over teachers. The researcher attempted to curtail this limitation by assuring confidentiality and by providing the participants the opportunity to respond anonymously.

The fourth limitation was the time factor involved in this research. Effective change takes place over time and teachers need frequent reinforcement for focus to be maintained.

The fifth limitation was the number of research participants involved. The research participants were volunteers from a group of thirty-seven teacher participants in a professional development class.

The final limitation was other teachers in the workshop expressed different points of view that cannot be shared and analyzed because they are not participants in the study. One example is the multiple stories of experiences of racism told by Black teachers.

Conclusion

Dodge County Schools, the setting for this research, are small rural schools whose students usually perform at or above the state average on most achievement and/or state mandated tests. Our graduation rate is almost 80%. Three of our four schools are Title I Distinguished Schools, a title earned by making Adequate Yearly Progress for three or more consecutive years. We have no schools in Needs Improvement status. Yet, we have an achievement gap between our White students and our non-White students. Sadly, just as with most other school systems in the state, the achievement gap was first noticed after the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act.* So far, our solution to closing the achievement gap has been to offer remedial classes.

This dissertation is action research designed to address the responsibility of the teacher and the school in closing the achievement gap. Several studies have followed the practices of teachers in urban areas after the teachers participated in a professional development course on diversity and/or institutional racism. Researchers have studied pre-service teachers receiving multicultural training. On the other hand, action research based on professional development on conversation about race and institutional racism in southern rural Georgia where racism and patriarchal practices are deeply embedded is new territory. In fact, Mr. Linton (2006), one of the authors of the professional development course, warned me to be prepared to receive angry responses from some of the participants (Curtis Linton, personal commentary, April 29, 2009). My research answers, through the lens of critical race theory and feminism, how teachers in

southern, rural Georgia responded to a professional learning course on conversations about race.

Did the teachers move beyond acknowledging the reality of the racial achievement gap toward

developing a strategy for eliminating it? My research can begin to open the door for truly

equitable schools for all children.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers' attitudes and perceptions of the causes of the racial achievement gap could be modified. Will engaging teachers in "courageous conversations" about race and racism lead them to begin to take ownership of some of the responsibility for closing the gap? This research addressed the following questions:

1. To what extent did teachers in Dodge County respond to a professional learning course on conversations about race?

    a. How did the participants engage in critical reflection?

    b. How did the participants move beyond acknowledging the reality of the racial achievement gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it?

The findings of this study are divided into five major sections. In the first section, I provide an overview of each of the teachers and describe their backgrounds as revealed through their journal writings. The second section is a description of the professional learning course, in-class activities, and responses of the participants. The third section is the participants' responses to the journal writing prompts and blogs. The fourth section is the Interracial Dyad. Finally, the fifth section is an analysis of common themes in the teachers' reflections.

Overview of Teacher Backgrounds

The eight teachers who participated in this study are Julie, Sally, Sara, Grace, Maggie, Ann, Deb, and Betsy. This section uses shared biographical information to introduce each teacher.

Julie. Julie is a 58 year-old Black female teacher who teaches high school social studies. Teaching is a second career for Julie. She has been teaching for sixteen years. Julie holds a B.S.

in Secondary Education. Julie is from the local area and is old enough to remember

desegregation in Dodge County even though she only attended segregated schools in grades 1-

12. Julie was raised in a two-parent home with a domineering father and a submissive mom. Julie

stated in class that, as a child growing up, she did not respect her mom because she thought that

she was weak. She had a deep respect for her dad because he was tough and taught her to "not

take nothing off nobody." As an adult, Julie gained respect for her mom when she realized that

her mom was probably emotionally stronger than her dad. She stated that she now understands

that her mom did what she had to do to keep the family together. The first day of the professional

development class Julie stated that she had "never experienced racism." Julie has never married

and has no children. She has, however, helped raise some of her nieces. She has a very strong

personality and was very vocal in class.

Sally. Sally is a 46 year-old White female teacher who teaches math at the middle school.

She holds a M.Ed. in Middle Grades Education and has been teaching for 17 years. Last year she

began working on her gifted certification and now teaches two classes of gifted math in the sixth

grade. Sally has been the middle school Teacher of the Year and has served on the School

Improvement Team. She has a daughter in college and a son in high school. Sally's mom is from

Germany and met Sally's dad when he was stationed in Germany during World War II. She

stated in class that her mom was not accepted by her dad's family when he initially brought her

to the U.S. as his wife. Sally shared in her journal that her mom had never seen a Black person

until she came to the United States in 1954. Her mom's reaction to Black people was shock,

curiosity, and fear. Sally was also outspoken in class and sometimes her comments stirred some

controversy. She would listen to the opposing viewpoint and seemingly effortlessly steer

controversy into a learning experience for the class.

Sara. Sara is a 30 year-old Black female teacher who also teaches sixth grade at the middle school. She holds a B.S. in Middle Grades Education and has been teaching for nine years. Last school term Sara was one of only two Black teachers on a staff of about fifty-five teachers at the middle school. She and Grace are friends at school, but did not mention associating outside of school. Sara was in the gifted program in elementary through high school. She talked about being the only Black child in gifted and shared in her journal that the other Black girls would not associate with her after she was identified as gifted. She shared how lonely she felt in school. Today she works in a school with almost all White teachers and lives in a predominantly White neighborhood. She shared in class that she has told her son to "act White."

Grace. Grace is another sixth grade White female teacher. Grace is 40 years old. She holds an Ed.S. in Middle Grades Education and has been teaching for twenty-one years. Grace was Teacher of the Year in a neighboring county before coming to Dodge County and has been Dodge County Middle School's Teacher of the Year. Grace is married and has two young children. Grace and Sara are friends at school and their sons play together after school. Grace shared in class that she often goes to Sara for advice when she is not sure if she handled a racial problem correctly.

Maggie. Maggie is a 48 year-old White female who teaches third grade. Maggie has a M.Ed. in Elementary Education and has been teaching for about twenty-four years. Maggie was born and raised in Dodge County but taught in South Georgia for several years before returning to Dodge County. Maggie was brought up in a home with a "stay at home" mom, working father, and three sisters. She was in the third grade when Dodge County schools were desegregated.

Ann. Ann is a 42 year-old White female special education teacher at the high school with 15 years of teaching experience. She is also a single mom raising three children. Ann was raised

in Dodge County in a home with both parents and three siblings. She shared in her journal that you were not allowed to share feelings or emotions in her home. Ann rarely vocalized an opinion or thought during the professional development class.

Deb. Deb is a 35 year-old White female teacher who teaches fourth grade at one of our elementary schools. She has a M.Ed. in Middle Grades and Elementary Education and has been teaching for about ten years. Deb taught in the prison system before joining the faculty at our elementary school. Deb has received extensive bullying training and works with the students and teachers at her school with bullying prevention. She has also presented at state conferences on bullying. Deb shared that she grew up very poor and did not have many friends until she entered high school. She always felt that she was not accepted by her peers because of her economic status. Deb did not give specifics about her socioeconomic status growing up, but mentioned several times in her writings being "poor" and not being able to wear name brand clothes.

Betsy. Betsy is a 37 year-old White female teacher who teaches English at the high school. She has a M.Ed. in Secondary Education and is just beginning her second year in our school system. Prior to coming to Dodge County to teach, Betsy taught at an alternative school for troubled boys. Teaching is a second career for Betsy. She entered the teaching profession through the Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP). She has been in the teaching profession for nine years. Betsy was born and raised in Dodge County. Her mom is also a teacher. Betsy shared in her journal that she and her sister were raised to judge people by their character and not by their race or family background. She had Black friends in school and was often called a "zebra" by her White peers. She stated that it would have been easier to conform and give up her Black friends, but she is glad now that she remained true to her friends. Betsy did not vocalize a thought or an opinion in the professional learning class but shared in her

journal that her quietness was because she was in deep thought throughout the week. She said that she was having "courageous conversations" within herself.

Table 5 provides a brief description of the participants.

Table 5

Descriptive Overview of Research Participants

Name	Age	Race	Teaching Experience (years)	Education	Professional Assignment	Background Experience
Julie	58	Black	16	B.S. Ed.	High School Social Studies	Rural segregated South Georgia
Sally	46	White	17	M.Ed.	Middle School Math	Rural desegregated South Georgia
Sara	30	Black	9	B.S. Ed.	Middle School Social Studies	Rural desegregated South Georgia.
Grace	40	White	21	Ed.S.	Middle School Science	Rural desegregated South Georgia. Both parents are educators.
Maggie	48	White	24	M.Ed.	Elementary – 3rd grade	Rural segregated and desegregated South Georgia
Ann	42	White	15	M.Ed.	High School – Special Education	Rural desegregated South Georgia
Deb	35	White	11	M.Ed.	Elementary – 4th grade	Rural desegregated South Georgia
Betsy	37	White	7	M.Ed.	High School English	Rural desegregated South Georgia. Mother is also an educator.

"Courageous Conversations" Professional Learning Workshop

The morning registration opened for this class, we were immediately inundated with registration forms. The intention was to limit the class size to thirty participants, but the registration forms were being hand delivered and faxed into the office so fast that it was impossible to tell the correct order. After the first thirty-eight registrations, response slowed enough that we were able to start a waiting list. I would like to believe that the response was the result of concern and motivation. The reality is that there was a stipend attached to the course completion for fulltime teachers. The first thirty-eight registrations consisted of seven teachers from one elementary school and eleven from the other elementary school. There were twelve teachers from the middle school, seven from the high school, and the hospital-homebound teacher. The racial and gender makeup of the class was twenty-eight White females, one White male, eight Black females, and one Black male (a paraprofessional who needed the professional learning credits for certification renewal). The Black teachers were well represented in the class with about 24% compared to only about 10% of the total certified teaching staff is Black.

The first day of class after I welcomed everyone I explained that some of the things that we would be talking about might be uncomfortable for some people. If that is the case, you are free to leave at any time without any repercussions. I further explained that I am a White woman and that no matter how much I study and converse with people of different races that I can never know what it is like to be a member of another race. I thought that it was important to make these comments before asking the participants to complete the Participant Survey because of questions on the survey. The survey results are in Table 6 on the following pages.

Table 6

Participant Survey Results

Statement	Percent Responding				
	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always
I believe that all students can learn.	0	0	0	16%	84%
I treat all my students the same.	0	0	22%	54%	24%
I believe that all students in my classroom have an equal opportunity to learn.	0	0	11%	29%	61%
I believe that all students in my classroom have an equal opportunity to achieve at a high level.	0	5%	13%	42%	39%
I have high expectations for all of my students.	0	3%	5%	13%	79%
I believe that all students in my school have an equal opportunity to learn.	0	0	21%	39%	39%
I believe that all students in my school have an equal opportunity to achieve at a high level.	0	3%	32%	42%	24%
I provide equal attention and assistance to each child in my classroom.	0	0	26%	42%	32%
Diversity in my classroom makes my job more difficult.	5%	8%	42%	21%	24%
I am comfortable teaching children from different races and ethnic backgrounds	0	0	3%	8%	89%

Participant Survey Results continued:

1. I have observed or witnessed racial prejudice in my school.

    16% Never

    24% Infrequently

    47% Occasionally

    13% Frequently

    0%   Not Sure

12. In my opinion, the achievement gap between Black and Hispanic students and White

    Students is mostly related to

    5%   The quality of schooling received.

    86% Other factors.

    8%   Don't know.

13. In my opinion, the person more/most important in determining how well or how poorly

    students perform in school is/are

    48% The student himself/herself.

    28% The student's teachers.

    20% The student's parents.

    4%   I don't know.

14. I have experienced gender bias.

    18% In a shop or restaurant

    21% In school as a student

    29% In school as an employee

    18% At a sport or public event

   47% By way of disrespect

   16% By way of mistrust

   24% By insults and name calling

15. I have experienced racial bias.

   21% In a shop or restaurant

   24% In school as a student

   24% In school as an employee

   16% At a sport or public event

   50% By way of disrespect

   26% By way of mistrust

   34% By insults and name calling

In the following question, please rank in order from most likely to least likely. 1 = most likely;

5 = least likely.

When a student in my classroom is not academically successful, the most likely reason is:

Cause	1	2	3	4	5
	Most				Least
I have done all that I could do to meet the needs of the student.	17.6%	-	11.8%	11.8%	58.8%
The student does not have the mental ability.	20.6%	8.8%	23.5%	35.3%	11.8%
The student does not care about learning.	23.5%	23.5%	29.4%	8.8%	14.7%
There is little or no parental support.	17.6%	52.9%	14.7%	11.8%	2.9%
The student is from a low socioeconomic background and the child's basic needs are not being met.	20.6%	14.7%	20.6%	32.4%	11.8%

The Six Conditions of Courageous Conversations were introduced (See p. 83 in Chapter 4) and we analyzed each school's test data focusing on racial achievement gaps. The workshop participants were given the opportunity to sign the *Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations,* (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 67). The four agreements are: I agree to stay engaged, experience discomfort, speak my truth, and expect and accept non-closure. Their signature indicated their commitment to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race. All of the research participants signed this agreement.

Based on the comments made in the journals and in the workshop evaluations, some of the activities the attendees participated in during the week seemed to have more impact than others. The remainder of this section contains details of some of those activities.

The workshop participants were provided a copy of the Courageous Conversation Compass . The compass is divided into four quadrants: believing/moral, thinking/intellectual, doing/social, and feeling/emotional. The participants were asked to consider the following four topics and determine where they place themselves on the compass as they think about each topic: Affirmative Action, bilingual education, O. J. Simpson trial, and Indian gaming. There was not much discussion with this activity probably because it was early in the week and the participants had not yet found their comfort zone. However, references were made later in the week, particularly relating to Affirmative Action.

Participants investigated the meaning of *racism, institutional racism, anti-racism,* and *equity.* Many of the participants commented, either in class or in their journals, they had never heard of the term *institutional racism.*

The Racial Consciousness Flow Chart (See Appendix C) exercise was used to engage the participants in the following conversation:

- What does it mean to admit "I don't know I don't know"?

- What are the inherent weaknesses of "I don't know but I think I do"?

- How can admitting "I know I don't know" impact a teacher's efforts?

- What kind of *will* needs to be enacted to advance from "I know I don't know" to "I know I know"?

During the course of the week participants would often comment, "I didn't know I didn't know that" or "I didn't know, but I thought I did" as different topics would be introduced and discussed.

The Color Line Experiment (See Appendix E) was used to open a discussion on *whiteness.* Each of the thirty-seven workshop participants scored a series of twenty-six questions to obtain a total score of how race impacts them personally. The participants lined up in numerical order according to their score with the lowest numbers on the right and the highest numbers on the left. Most of the twenty-nine White participants were astounded to see that a true color line had been formed which placed the White teachers on the left and the Black teachers on the right. The mean score for the White teachers was 108.9 and the median score was 109. The mean score for the nine Black teachers was 70 and the median score was 75. Many of the participants had never heard of the term *whiteness* and some were offended by the term.

Each participant was given a copy of the poem, *I Dream* (See Appendix D) which was written by a high school student. The objective of this activity was to note how different racial groups react to a racially explicit writing sample. Most of the White teachers reacted by trying to analyze whether the writer was bi-racial and had a good home life. The Black teachers' responses were that they know exactly how he feels.

Singleton and Linton (2006) identified eight characteristics that describe the nature of communication in Courageous Conversations. According to Singleton and Linton *White talk* is often verbal, impersonal, intellectual, or task oriented. *Color commentary* is often nonverbal, personal, emotional, or process oriented. White teachers learned when analyzing the various examples of each form of communication that the folded arms, sighs, rolling of the eyes, and refusal to offer direct eye contact that they often see in their students, particularly Black females, is a form of nonverbal communication. The workshop participants began to classify comments or responses in class as color commentary or white talk, often crossing color lines.

The activity that seemed to have the most impact on the workshop participants was the Interracial Dyad. The participants individually examined an interracial dialogue between two educators. This activity and the color line activity were the two most mentioned in the journals and the workshop evaluations. The two educators that participated in this dialogue are both participants in this study. A partial transcription of the dialogue is included in the next section.

The final activity was the workshop evaluation. Thirty-seven teachers and one paraprofessional participated in the professional learning workshop and all workshop participants completed the workshop evaluation, as well as all workshop activities. The workshops participants understood that the data from the Participant Survey and Workshop Evaluation would be used in this study. Many of the workshop participants had not been vocal during the week which made me uncertain about how they were handling the topic and the activities. The analysis of the evaluations revealed that 14% of the participants requested a follow-up workshop; 27% suggested that this workshop be required for all teachers; and 46% suggested that the workshop be required for all administrators. Some of the more frequent comments made on the

evaluations include: "We were able to talk freely," "It opened my eyes to many things," It made me realize things I never thought about," and "I gained self-awareness."

Teacher Reflections

Julie. Julie's journal was lost in transit to my office and she did not participate in the blogs because she does not have a home computer. However, Julie was very outspoken in class and I made many notes about her comments in my field notes.

Julie commented the first day of the workshop that she has never experienced racism. Her "color line" score was the highest score of the nine Black teachers, scoring higher than twelve of the White teachers. Recall from the previous section that the Color Line Experiment was used to show how race affects your life. Several days later, Julie became very emotional during a class discussion and had to leave the class. When she returned she apologized for her emotional outburst and explained that she had thought that she had never been affected by racism. "I am seeing now that I have been. A lot of things from my past are beginning to surface this week and I'm having to deal with a lot of feelings and emotions that I've never allowed myself to face before now."

Throughout the week, Julie used the word *assimilate* frequently. She explained that she had been assimilated into our [White] culture and had learned to 'act white.' "In fact," she explained, "I'm so good at it that I've lost some of my own culture." At one time, Julie attended the same church as me. Some of the younger Black teachers mentioned how lonely and isolated they sometimes feel in their work environment. Julie pondered over this for awhile, then said, "You know, I've never reached out to Camille," referring to the young Black teacher who teaches across the hall from Julie and who was also taking this professional development class. "I just always assumed the math people were taking care of her. I've never thought about how

she might feel. I'm going to do better from now on." The young teacher that Julie was referencing was Julie's student a few years ago and enlightened Julie to the fact that she was scared of her when she was in her class.

Julie is a tall, large-framed Black woman with a demeanor that exudes authority. Despite her tough exterior, her sense of humor occasionally comes through. The discussion had turned to how sexism filters into racism. Julie spoke up and said, "Well, I've never had a man to try to rape me, chase me, or act inappropriately towards me. But that might not be a good thing considering I've never caught one."

Sally, as mentioned in her background description, sometimes made comments in class that stirred controversy. One such incident happened with Julie. Sally made the comment, "God loves everybody the same."

Julie responded very angrily, "No! He doesn't. I don't believe that!" Sally was caught completely off-guard by Julie's comment and was speechless. She looked at Julie with stretched eyes in total disbelief that someone would make such a comment. Julie continued, "I have had things happen in my life when I didn't feel like God loved me. I'm over that now, but you can't tell a kid who doesn't have anything to eat when he gets home that God loves him. You can't tell a child that has just been beaten or sexually molested by a parent or other family member that God loves them. They are not going to believe you."

Sally took a few minutes to absorb the situation and calmly responded, "You know, I've never had anything really bad to happen to me. It's easy for me to believe that God loves me. I see what you are saying. I just never thought of it in that way."

I went by Julie's room the first week of school. She showed me a paper where she had written dozens of cultural descriptors, many taken from the textbook used in this class. She had

given every student in her class a copy and they were busily writing a description of themselves using the appropriate cultural descriptors.

Sally. Sally registered for the professional development class because she had already started seeking answers to how to help children not like her. She wrote in her journal:

> I don't really know what I need to know to narrow the racial achievement gap. I've read Ruby Payne's book about poverty, but sometimes those issues might not be related.
>
> I had one student this past year that really caused me to ponder the race issue. He is a black male that is intelligent. He often missed school, drug in late, slept through class, purposefully didn't follow instructions, would sneak behind my back. Often went to ISS [In-school suspension]. One day he showed up at school beaten up severely. He lost during a gang fight. The school had to seek medical attention for him. He didn't want anyone to know he was smart.

Sally had never considered the racial achievement gap. She focuses on the achievement of all of her students, but has never "given much thought" to the color of her students' skin when she looks at test scores. She has noticed that the two gifted math classes that she teaches has only two Black students each and no other non-white students. She commented:

> I am embarrassed to say that I have not given that situation much thought. Even more sad is the fact that it seemed normal to me to have a class full of white kids in gifted with only a few blacks because over the last 20 years it has always been that way.
>
> I feel so mean, harsh, low down, stupid …when I say that I have always attributed the low numbers of high achieving blacks to the manner in which so many of them live…young pregnancies, several children with different fathers, grandmothers raising their children.

Sally had never heard of the term *institutionalized racism.* She admitted that she subconsciously knew that it existed, but assumed it was the norm. She stated, "I can't begin to explain how low this makes me feel." Sally never discussed the racial underachievement with parents for fear of offending them. She feels that if the roles were reversed she would feel like her race was "being picked on" and being "treated as inferior." She notes that we offer classes and other ways to help increase test scores, but have not stated to the public that it is to close a racial achievement gap. "All hell would break loose if it were directed toward black or nonwhite people."

Sally believed that because she cared enough about her students that she could make the right decisions for them. She believed that because she loved her students, no matter what their skin color, that they would know/feel that she cared for them and their futures. She said, "*I didn't know what I didn't know.*" She was surprised to hear some of the Black teachers in the class say that they were teased for acting white or that they felt uncomfortable in a class that was majority White. "I was really shocked when a good friend of mine [referring to Sara] confessed that she told her child to 'act white'!"

Sally describes race in her life as much different than it was several years ago. She admitted to changing her daughter's school when she realized that it was 87% Black and confesses that she would do it again because she doesn't want either of her children to be the minority. She wonders what it would be like to have a Black woman's hair or beautiful skin coloring and never have to worry about getting a tan. She is most racially conscious when she is shopping. She is uncomfortable in situations where Whites are the minority. She believes that she is racially unconscious in her classroom and that race does not impact her relationships as far

as friendships go, but would find it difficult to accept a Black or other non-white person as son- or daughter-in-law.

Responding to her affiliations racially, Sally talked mostly about church. She mentioned a Black man being nominated as a deacon. Even though she was not aware of any negative comments made, she wondered what people were thinking. She believes that there would be tension if more Blacks became involved in leadership positions in the church.

The most recent multiracial conversation that involved Sally was during the presidential race. A Black friend asked her if the reason she didn't like Barack Obama was because he is Black. She said not, but continued to say that she believed that many Blacks voted for him only because he is Black. "Oh my goodness, what a horrible conversation followed – mostly me apologizing."

Sally cannot identify with Pablo in the poem "I Dream," because she has never experienced those feelings.

Sally did not specifically use the characteristics of White Talk and Color Commentary to describe her typical communication. She noted that she usually uses correct grammar and a professional manner in the classroom, with colleagues, and in parent conferences.

Reflecting on her family's history in this country, Sally noted that as a new U. S. citizen, her mom learned American culture from South Georgia country farmers and attributes this to the reason for the feelings her mom has today. Sally describes her racial history in this way:

> My mother is 79 and if my dad would be living he would be 88. This generation of people in this area still say 'nigger.' They don't think anything about it, they just use the term as they've always used it. Not long ago a friend of our family offered the service of one of their employees, describing him as a 'good ole nigger.'

The history of this area of the U.S. has truly had an impact, especially with the views of the older generation bearing down on us. For example, my family is completely and totally against interracial marriages. To be honest, I am, too. For no particular reason except that it has been instilled in me since the beginning. Phrases like, 'I don't have nothing against them, but I don't want any in our family' has had a big impact on my upbringing.

Sally described the three views of herself as follows:

The 'me' I see is white. The 'me' you see is white. The 'me 'I think you see is a white female who loves all God's children. What you do not see is the struggles and mixed feelings trying to blend today with the past in regard to racial equality.

Sally acknowledged that she learned this week as she listened to her nonwhite coworkers honestly express themselves that there are privileges to being White. However, she points out that she once did not get a job because she is White. It bothers her that we have a Miss Dodge County pageant for all young females and a Miss Black Dodge County for only Black females. She is also bothered by the fact that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is accepted but an organization for the advancement of poor Whites would be considered prejudice.

I do believe that 'things' are becoming more blended and balanced, but I am thankful to have had my own eyes opened to things that 'I didn't know that I didn't know' this week. I am glad that I was able to listen to my fellow coworkers who are black express themselves in a way I never imagined.

Sara. Sara says that she has done nothing to address the racial achievement gap in her school, but she will be implementing new techniques and teaching culturally relevant curriculum.

She noted that she thinks having courageous conversations opens the door to the problem so that we can change. Sara's feelings about racism and institutionalized racism have not changed since taking this class, but she is more aware of "how much of a problem it really is at this point." The example she gave of institutionalized racism in her school is with the gifted program. Minorities are under-represented "based on recruitment practices." Sara stated, "I don't think teachers expect for black students to be 'gifted' therefore, they do not recommend them for testing. No one has pushed this issue at my school, to my knowledge."

Sara credits No Child Left Behind legislation with forcing schools to do whatever is necessary for students to succeed, but doesn't see much evidence of equity at her school. She plans to speak to the teachers in her school about integrating into their lessons books written by minorities or that have minority characters. She believes this will benefit everyone by teaching all students to respect differences.

Sara's racial consciousness was developed when she was in the second grade. She was the only Black student in the gifted class. The students made no effort to interact with her and the teacher did not try to encourage interaction. When she returned to her regular education classes the Black students did not accept her. "I did not realize until I was in my twenties that my lack of black girl friends throughout school related back to this experience."

When Black students do not achieve as she thinks they should, Sara automatically thinks that it is due to "poverty, at-risk, parental involvement, etc. – everything but race." She thinks this is because she would not allow herself to believe that race, "something uncontrollable," could affect a person's academic success. Sara says that being one of only two Black teachers at her school is "a big one for her." Her family is the only Black family in her neighborhood, but the recreational activities she and her family are involved in are all Black people. She has not

faced any racial tension in any of these places, but notes that it would be "understandable" if there are tensions of which she is not aware.

Sara referenced this professional development class to a time when she experienced multiple racial points of view. She is concerned that some of the White teachers in this class have the idea that Black parents do not want their children to be academically successful, but Black parents want their children to be successful just as much as White parents. She felt this class was a positive experience because many of the teachers accepted the fact that they are wrong in this assumption and are willing to see the problem and work for a solution.

Sara related to Pablo in the poem "I Dream." She also noted that a lot of students she works with must relate to Pablo. "His ideas seem to be felt throughout minority communities. Black students often feel left out when teachers are acknowledging students for their success in school."

Sara described her typical communication style as follows:

What stood out to me on the White Talk/Color Commentary was the fact that black talk is very emotional when talking to white people one-on-one about race. It changes though when talking at my job. I tend to speak on the intellectual style. I am more casual when I am around people of my own race. Dualities is the word I would use. Dual world, one being white in my professional role as a teacher and the other being black as a mother, at home with my family.

Sara's dual world reminds me of the words of W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1989), in *The Souls of Black Folk.* Du Bois wrote, "One ever feels his two-ness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 5).

Sara did not reflect on her family's history in this country. She described herself as, "The 'me' I see is a smart, black girl. The 'me' you see is an African American female. The 'me' I think you see is a black female."

Sara did not reflect on what it means to be White or the meaning of *whiteness.*

Grace. Grace did not acknowledge having done anything to address the racial achievement gap in her school. She noted that participating in this workshop has helped develop an awareness of race differences which will equip her to help meet the needs of all students.

Grace's understanding of racism and institutionalized racism changed when she realized that we often do not hold all children to the same standard of educational expectations. She noted that by not realizing that we do this, we are hindering our students' education.

Grace's racial consciousness began when she was in the first grade. She made friends with a Black girl and was excited to tell her family about her new friend. She told her brother that her new friend was the same color as him. She thought this was correct because her brother has a darker complexion than Grace. The brother quickly informed her that he was the same color as Grace. She noted that as a 5 and 6 year-old she accepted her new friend as an equal. The more time she spent in school, the more she began to see the differences and feelings that exist between Black and White children. When Grace was in middle school there was a group of Black boys that tried to stir racial issues. They accused Grace of being a racist. Grace had a Black male friend that defended her and tried to prevent the boys from picking on her.

Describing race in her life, Grace said that she takes a lot of things for granted. After hearing the courageous conversations in this workshop, Grace realized that she had been oblivious to how Black people feel. She thought that she treated all of her students the same. She didn't know what she thought she knew.

Considering her racial affiliations, Grace noted that she lives and works in a predominately White environment and often feels the pressure of racial tension amongst staff members at work. The recreational places Grace has visited in the last year have been an all White experience. She has witnessed discrimination against her own child at recreational events because he is not as athletic as some of the other team members. Grace stated, "Truthfully discrimination exists in this world, not only among races, but within the same race."

Recalling a time when she experienced multiple racial points of view, Grace related that her niece had recently given birth to a biracial baby boy. Her father-in-law was very upset and wanted to blame the Black boy. The birth is still creating "some feelings" because they all looked at the baby's skin to see if he looked Black. Her father-in-law is adamant that the baby is not Black. Grace stated that her eyes have been opened and she is working to change her opinions.

Grace's typical communication style tends to be personal in most situations. In a professional setting, she communicates on a personal level expressing and sharing her own story and experiences. Grace struggled with responding to the journal prompts. She stated:

I am very unsure of many of my responses to these questions. I feel lost. This is a tough topic to discuss because I have never been asked to examine things in this way.

It [Courageous Conversation Compass] can help bring balance, honesty, openness, and a better understanding to interracial conversations about race. The best courageous conversation occurs when all aspects meet in the middle creating a balance for authentic and fulfilling dialogue. Using the compass can cause one to examine one's thinking, beliefs, and feelings.

Grace did not feel that she knew enough about her family's history to determine if it has had an impact on her values and beliefs. Her parents taught her to treat others as she wants to be treated. In her family, there was a difference in being friends and dating others from another race. She had many Black friends at school, but was surrounded by all White neighbors and friends at home. Grace described herself as follows:

The 'me' I see is fair to all persons, that sees color, but tries to make sure that all my students are treated equally. I do my best to treat all people with the respect that they deserve. You give respect in order to get respect.

The 'me' you see is a person that is genuine and caring with respect for others. Sometimes you may feel that I treat my black students different because of previous experiences.

The 'me' I think you see is a person that treats all people fairly regardless of their color. I seek to keep peace with all people if possible.

I have never looked at ethnicity and race in this way before. I have never really considered how it feels to be black, Hispanic, etc. I do know that there are differences in value systems.

Grace described herself as being emotionally reactive to the notion of white privilege. She feels that her privileges in life have come about because of who her parents are and the life's lessons they taught her more than because she is White. She believes that many of her privileges have come because of choices she has made, such as hard work and determination. She does acknowledge that she might not be aware of white privilege because she is White. Grace points out that she has seen an advantage to being Black. "Blacks have been better able to speak out about things that they feel are racially biased. However, if a white person calls attention to a

similar situation, they will oftentimes be viewed as a racist." Grace was unable to define whiteness, but noted that being aware of the term *whiteness* and *white consciousness* can help her be more mindful of all her students' feelings, both revealed and unrevealed. "It has been through this class that I have gained a better understanding of how my black friends have felt and viewed events as well as others' actions."

Maggie. Maggie said she attempts to help close the racial achievement gap by reviewing student information cards and records to learn about the students'/families' background. Maggie did not make any comments about her students' families or backgrounds. She works with the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher to help some students. Maggie encourages all students to not feel 'threatened' and to participate in conversations.

Maggie's definition of *racism* did not change after the Courageous Conversations workshop. She defined racism as, "differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others." Her definition of *institutionalized racism* did change. She now defines *institutionalized racism* as, "prejudice connected with the power to protect the interests of the discriminating group. She gives an example of teachers asking, "How many black students are in your room?" as an example of institutionalized racism. Maggie stated, "I believe institutionalized racism persists because we (Whites) don't realize we are doing anything wrong. It's like a habit. I believe the teachers that took this class will go back and try to change this." Maggie defines equity as all students having the opportunity and support to succeed. Those that have the greatest need receive the greatest level of support. Maggie gave certain 'programs' in the school, such as Special Education, Response to Intervention (RTI), Early Intervention Program (EIP), English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and after-school programs, as examples of equity.

Maggie gave the Courageous Conversations workshop as the example of developing her racial consciousness. She said, "I think I know because I care. However, I don't know because I am not in a 'color' situation/group."

Maggie was not sure of the meaning of the term *racial unconsciousness*, but she thinks it means "not seeing race as a [an] impact on our lives. Maggie grew up in a White neighborhood and continues to work in a predominately White school. She said her parents were not prejudice because, "My father was a big sports fan, worked in insurance, and dealt with Blacks and got along well with them." Desegregation started in Dodge County when Maggie was in the 3rd grade. The *"four blacks out of 24 students"* was not a "big deal" to her. She described, "Black students, teachers, and administrators gradually became common in Dodge County." She has Black friends, but admits to sometimes feeling 'somewhat threatened' by men of a different racial group if she is alone with them. She finds this especially true with Browns because she does not know what they are saying. [Maggie is referring to Hispanics and her inability to understand Spanish.]

Maggie acknowledges that race can be a factor in the academic struggles of nonwhite students, but points out that family, economic status, community, mobility, and language are also factors. She believes that family and community values are a large influence on a student's achievement and behavior. The example she gave was when she first started teaching she taught in a small county in a community that was 95% White. The problems in this school resulted from family values. Maggie believes that addressing racial diversity can have a negative effect if one group is viewed as "being better than another." Addressing racial diversity can have a positive effect when "bringing out 'good points' of race." The example she gave of "bringing out 'good points'" was teaching the contributions or accomplishments of Fredrick Douglass, Rosa Parks,

George Washington Carver, Jackie Robinson, and Cesar Chevaz. She pointed out that 3rd grade teaches about these famous people in Social Studies.

Maggie does not view the need for diversity at her school since the students are young and "more or less accept one another regardless of color." She feels comfortable at her school but confesses that she might feel differently if the ratio of 'color' were different.

Maggie's example of a time when she experienced multiple racial points of view was a story about a White student telling her that another White student had commented to a Black student that 'Whites were better than Blacks.' She handled this situation by advising the Black student to ignore the White student because he was just trying to "be trouble" and make her mad. She spoke with both students and told them, "We are all the same in God's eyes. No one is better than another." Maggie spoke with the White student and told him he was wrong in trying to stir trouble. When Maggie spoke with the parents of the White child, they told her that they felt that Whites are better than Blacks and voice it at home. Maggie told the parents that it not acceptable at school to voice this opinion.

Maggie sees Pablo's experience from the poem, "I Dream" more so in students that are new to the school than in students of color.

Maggie describes her form of communication as "half white – half color" because her 'talk' is mainly verbal, personal, emotional, and task oriented. She feels that she needs to work more on the social level of the Courageous Conversations Compass by actually 'doing' what is needed to address the racial achievement gap.

Maggie does not think that her family has been affected by the racial binary in the United States. Describing herself, she says, "The 'me' I see is an American, white female. That remains

the same with the 'me' you see, and the 'me' I think you see." She did not experience any struggle or conflict in constructing this description of herself.

Maggie has never thought of herself as privileged because she is White. She feels that what she has become is a result of how she was raised, learning from mistakes, taking education seriously, and working hard. She now realizes that being White does have benefits. When she lived in a larger town in south Georgia, the landlords of the apartment she lived in interviewed her before she moved into the apartment. She can look back now and realize that no people of color lived in those apartments. To Maggie, white means being without color. The only characteristic of whiteness that Maggie could give was feeling comfortable in most environments. Maggie stressed again:

> I believe hard work and good morals make a person successful. This goes for a person of any color. I wish we could put the issue of slavery, segregation, and prejudices behind us. I also wish society could move away from believing Whites are privileged just because of our color.

Ann. Ann has not made any efforts to address the racial achievement gap in her school because she previously has not known any strategies to use. She expects identical success from all her students regardless of race. Ann believes that support is available to any student who falls in the gap. She believes that Courageous Conversations can provide for a dialogue to open so that your colleagues can provide perspectives that you may not have. Courageous Conversations can also aid in analyzing yourself each day so that you do not unconsciously fall into racial biases.

Ann stated that racism is not only acting on or possessing beliefs, but it also includes being an innocent bystander. She believes that being apathetic towards racism perpetuates

racism, which can lead to institutionalized racism. She could not give an example of

institutionalized racism in her school or school system. Ann says that many individual teachers

go out of their way to reach each student regardless of race. She was reminded of a teacher at the

middle school who, as a high school senior in 1996, stood against the long-term tradition in

Dodge County of segregated proms.

Ann stated that all students are able to receive support according to their willingness to

accept support and participate. She wrote:

If intrinsic motivation exists equally, everyone can benefit from equity. Families have

responsibility to provide equity as much as possible. The groups benefitting (most always

this same group) are the groups that have supportive familial units and/or have intrinsic

determination to succeed.

Ann's racial consciousness was developed early when she heard adult males in town

speak in very hateful, racist manners. She is very sensitive and these comments were very

disturbing to her. However, she thinks there has been improvement in the community because

she rarely hears these comments anymore. She said that being subjected to racist slurs and

attitudes during her childhood undoubtedly caused her to blame individual shortcomings on race

when she became an adult. She is aware of this and has worked to change her attitude.

Ann described race in her life by describing how her family members make hateful

remarks or call names. She finds it incredible that people would think, much less voice, these

things. She does not experience herself as a racial being, but has been asked questions that made

her realize that other persons consider her race. She thinks she sees race in terms of opposite of

another person's race. She is most racially aware when she is in the minority or if someone

exhibits racial hatefulness. Ann believes that inhibitions and/or fears in regard to developing a greater racial consciousness is within itself racist. She stated:

Many times when we create theories we begin to stereotype others. Sometimes we have to assume too much when we try to become conscious. We should try to treat others on an individual basis. We discriminate when we treat an individual as part of a stereotyped group.

Reflecting on an occasion when she redefined race, Ann wrote:

An 'expert' in anthropology suggested that one use the term 'people groups.' People are more broadly effected [affected] by proximity rather than skin color or ethnicity. I veered away from attributing personal or group traits to race because I found too many counterexamples. Overall, I don't find the need to use the term, but when I must I just name the race African American, for example.

Ann chooses her affiliations based on interest or factors other than race. She affiliates with whomever her work needs dictate in the school setting. She attends the same church as me. Her daughter receives most of her tennis instruction from African Americans which Ann describes as high quality, positive experiences. Her family is a member of the local golf club swimming pool, which has no Black membership.

Ann has not noticed any racial tensions in many years. She refers to a local "gang problem," but thinks this is not a racial problem, but a familial, cultural problem. She has noticed, however, that the young men "bullied" into joining gangs are Black.

Ann thinks that the lack of diversity sometimes exists due to comfort zones. She wrote in her journal:

There may not be diversity in churches because of differences in styles of worship. I was once taught (and some may say that this is a racist teaching itself) that African Americans portray what is called 'verve' in the homes and other places. I, as a white person (in church, for example), prefer quiet structure where I am able to meditate and concentrate. There is the swimming pool situation. I don't recollect hearing many black persons expressing a like for swimming. So, sometimes personal preferences and cultural differences may cause a lack of diversity in some places. Then again, if all people felt equally welcome, we may all vary our interests and habits.

Reflecting on a time when she experienced multiple racial points of view, Ann recounted a time when she worked with an African American co-worker that had trouble staying current with her job responsibilities. Ann felt that each person was responsible for their caseload and if he/she managed his/her time wisely he/she would not fall behind in his/her work. The other African American coworkers told Ann that "it was only right to help her." Ann believes that her coworkers perceived her as being selfish.

Ann compared Pablo's feelings in the poem, "I Dream," to how one feels when they live in a small town. In small towns everyone knows "all of your business" and all about your family. As a result, "preconceived notions are placed upon you." Courageous Conversations have caused Ann to think that a minority child is more likely to stereotype himself/herself as less capable than other students.

Ann describes her communication style as a mixture of referring to other situations and studies and statistics and also including her personal feelings or inquiring about the other person's feelings. She does not have a separate communication style for interracial settings. She is quick to refer to feelings and opinions because she "was reared in a household where you

could not speak your mind and emotions were more or less shunned or outlawed so today I greatly value this."

Ann described the Courageous Conversations Compass as a great way to set the ground rules for discussing racial issues. The compass will be like a safety net for understanding the sensitivities of others and will allow participants to feel 'permitted' to discuss issues they would not usually feel comfortable discussing.

Ann does not know much about her family's history. A remnant that came to her mind was two churches in a small, rural community where she grew up. The two churches were one black, one white – almost identical buildings standing only yards apart.

Ann would like to hope that her children have not been hampered by her family's connection and participation in the American racial culture, but realizes that they probably have picked up negative views from the school, community, and a couple of family members.

Ann describes the 'me' I see, the 'me' you see, and the 'me' I think you see as the same, mother, teacher. Most people see her in these roles and do not know much about her personal feelings.

Ann places herself in the emotional quadrant of the Courageous Conversations Compass in her reactions to whiteness and white privilege. She does not feel that she has received any tangible benefits that she has not earned. Ann "was offended on page 45 by the all-inclusive remark white people tend to demand certain privileges*.*" [This statement was written in Ann's journal. I was unable to find this remark on page 45 of *Courageous Conversations about Race* (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Ann could be referring to another book or used the incorrect page number.] Ann could not give an instance where she benefitted from White privilege.

Betsy. Betsy was unaware that she has been addressing the racial achievement gap. Her focus has been to make all of her students feel emotionally safe, which entails valuing them as individuals. She plans to make her efforts more concentrated and effective as she "learns what she thought she knew, but actually did not know."

Betsy understood the meaning of racism before the Courageous Conversations workshop, but has changed her understanding of how her 'whiteness' has allowed her to be privileged, something she had never considered before this workshop. She recognizes that we are not aware of institutionalized racism. She never connected, even with civil rights and affirmative action, that 'whiteness' still holds the power to make the school rules and norms. "Recognition is the first step to change." Betsy's example of institutional racism in her school is the school trying to make students "meet a cookie-cutter approach when in fact we should be valuing the diversity of our students."

Betsy believes that equity is important for students to feel empowered. "Until they are empowered, they will not and cannot take the school system seriously or rely on it as a means of success. Until they are empowered, they will see school as a necessary evil and will not benefit."

Betsy's racial consciousness was first raised when her uncles condemned her mother for allowing her to have Black friends. This was her first realization that parts of society held negative connotations toward black/white relationships.

Betsy is more conscious of race now that she is a teacher than she was when she lived and worked in Atlanta. She worked for an advertising/marketing firm in Atlanta and the focus was on the product rather than people. "In teaching," she explains, "I have to look at the students as who they are. I have to look at my students as a whole person and not as a stereotype. The student is my product." She described her consciousness as:

I am actually more conscious of everything about myself now that I teach. The responsibility is enormous – I represent a world and a future to my students. Everything I do or say has some effect or reaction whether positive or negative. I am not afraid to develop a greater racial consciousness. I believe it is necessary to be an effective, honest teacher and person.

I have chosen to quote Betsy's journal for most of the remainder of this section because to summarize her remarks will diminish their potency. In the following section Betsy is responding to a time when she redefined race and her racial affiliations.

Six years ago I attended my first "Children of Poverty" workshop. At this time, I learned that poverty was not just lack of money, but lack of any basic need – love, safety, emotions, acceptance – and/or money. This is the time when I began using the 'children of poverty' as a label. In my classroom, children of poverty included whites and nonwhites, -- black and Hispanic. I didn't specifically name race because I had been taught to look for other factors. Now I understand that I don't need to be 'colorblind' in that I need to realize and validate the diversity of my students in order to lead them. They need to know that who they are – all of who they are – is important and valuable.

My workplace, DCHS, is predominantly white. My church is predominantly white. I frequent no social clubs, but the recreation areas I frequent are racially mixed but still predominantly white.

I have never tried to justify my church. It is an old country church that honestly is boring to me most of the time. We have 2 – 3 Hispanic families that attend sporadically and two multi-racial children who attend with grandparents. The congregation – most of them – are open to more diversity – but the community around the church is not

diversified. Perhaps doing things the same old stoic way has been a defense mechanism to keep the congregation white.

> People are simply not comfortable discussing race. You are afraid of saying something offensive unintentionally. Realistically, the only way to get the conversation going is to just do it – fear and all. Being afraid is no excuse to ignore the conversation, because research proves our children are not benefitting from our silence. If our children, our students, our future are our true concern, we have to meet our fear head-on opening our mouths, minds, and hearts.

Recalling a time when she experienced multiple racial points of view, Betsy wrote:

I met my best friend in 1992 when I entered a college health class. I sat down beside her and she immediately informed me that she did not like "white" people. From that beginning, we have forged a friendship, spanning 17 years. Our friendship has been a 17 year process of experiencing multiple racial viewpoints. We do not always agree, but we listen to each other and we discuss and we cry and we sometimes agree to disagree. My friendship with Kelli has forced me to acknowledge multiple racial viewpoints and has prevented me from shying away from tough conversations.

> I believe I connect with his [Pablo in the poem, "I Dream"] feelings. I believe *e*very person – or at least myself – wants to feel special for some reason. For as much as a white woman can understand, I believe I do connect with Pablo's feelings. I want for my daughter to feel valued, loved, and accepted. I also want that for my students. I believe I connect on a human level. I was raised to value people – not race, religion, or family background. I was raised to respect people for who they are – including differences. I

believe my personal make-up allows me to connect with others because I value connecting with others.

Most of my students at ALC [an alternative school where Betsy taught before coming to Dodge County to teach] did not feel value or worth and the majority of my students were nonwhite. They typically were students who had been labeled behavior problems – either by the school system or judicial system. So many commented to me that I was the first person who treated them like a person and not a "problem". I saw how just doing what seemed natural to me actually had a great impact on my students. How much more will a collective effort – a conscious, real effort – to confront racism and respect the diversity of our students impact our students?

Betsy describes her typical communication style using the characteristics of White Talk and Color Commentary in the passage below.

I am actually a combination of White talk and Color Commentary. I am by nature a listener. I want to hear what others have to say. I hate to be dismissed or undervalued, so I work to be inclusive and value my students, their parents, and my colleagues. I have been more quiet [quieter] in this workshop than I ever have in my life. I know racism is present. I know I want our school culture to change. I honestly don't know why I have been quiet. I have felt very included but I have not actively – vocally – participated. I have been lost in my own thought. I have really started thinking about myself and my classroom. I have been more introspective during this workshop – having conversations within myself.

I guess I have felt limited in a way. I express myself better in writing so I have turned to this journal rather than vocalizing my thoughts. No one has made me feel uncomfortable – but this journal is the path I have chosen to express myself.

I will not say that I will keep my compass [Courageous Conversations Compass] handy and refer to it as I encounter situations. I will say that the use of the compass has made me think about my reactions in a different way. The entire workshop has made me think more authentically about my reactions to issues regarding race.

Betsy reflects on her family's history in this country:

My family actually discussed race. My mom was a teacher and my dad, a civil servant at Robins. They taught me to respect all people and to judge a person by his or her actions and not his or her race, religion, or family background. Being raised this way has made being an adult easier, but it was tough growing up. I had black friends and treated them as friends no matter where we were. It was an understood 'white' reasoning that you associated with blacks when you had to – at work or school – but that was it. My parents didn't subscribe to that. And I didn't either. I was called a "zebra" by some of the white kids because I openly had black friends. It would have been easier to conform, but I chose not to do so and I'm glad I didn't. I view people for who they are as a person – a sorry person is a sorry person whether red, yellow, black, or white. A good, honest person is made no less or more good and honest by his or her race. This is how I live at home and in my classroom.

The "me" I see is first name, maiden name. The "me" you see is first name, maiden name. The "me" I think you see is a complex mixture of first name, maiden name and first name, married name.

I do not identify myself as a white woman. My race does not define me. Now I find that it doesn't define me because I am white and it hasn't had to define me. I'm sure my students see me as a white teacher when they first meet me, but my experience is that they move to seeing me as Mrs. Pinkerton. Actually from Mrs. Pinkerton to Mrs. P and Mama P to some. I don't think my race confuses relationships because my students are very open and accepting – they are actually very open to seeing us as people.

Betsy reacts to white privilege:

I didn't realize I still had a privilege from being white. Now I understand how it is thriving because of institutionalized racism. I cannot pinpoint in actual time/circumstance when I received white privilege. I understand through this workshop that my life has been filled with white privilege because the entire social, political community system is in essence established on and functions by institutionalized racism. There are some assumptions that are made about me because I am white, but I don't feel stereotyped by that. Perhaps that is because I have never felt it to be "bad", "wrong", or disadvantageous to be white. I don't have a negative connotation to being white. If I did, the stereotype would be more of a problem.

I don't know what "whiteness" is. I would characterize myself as a decent person because I: love my family; would die for my children; love my country; try to do good with no harm to others; and work for what I have.

I consider other people to be decent if they do these things. Race doesn't matter in my personal judgment. Again, that is how I was raised. I realize this is not the norm. Therefore, to truly be a decent person I have to stand up against and break the cycle of institutionalized racism.

Betsy seems to understand white privilege and institutionalized racism better than most of the other research participants, even though she admits to first becoming aware of the terms through this workshop. Yet, she does not "know what 'whiteness' is." Betsy's inability to define *whiteness* has caused me to question whether or not the term was adequately defined in the workshop.

Deb. Deb did not relate anything she has done to address the racial achievement gap in her school or system. She had, however, made notes throughout her journal of things she can do. The notes in her journal indicated that she was constantly thinking and jotting down ideas. Her notes included ideas such as posters; music; discussion immediately if bullying behavior is observed regarding racial tension; let he kids tell what they would do; research; ask a knowledgeable person; pull more resources; take a stand; give everyone a voice; and if someone says 'hate' ask them to give reasons why they hate that person. Deb wrote in her blog that the student/teacher relationship is vital in order for achievement to take place. She was unaware of just how much cultural/racial identity within the classroom affects the learning of the students.

Deb defined racism as "not doing anything; prejudiced." She defined institutional racism as "not addressing it [racism] and believes that without the Courageous Conversations workshop no one realizes institutional racisms exists.

Deb gave two instances when her racial consciousness was raised. The first example was when she was a middle school student. A Black boy who had the same last name as Deb called her "albino" because of her fair skin. The second example was when she was enrolled in a typing class at the local technical college. The teacher was Black and Deb felt that the teacher favored the Black students in the class. The teacher did not expect as much from the Black students as

she did from Deb. Deb talked to the teacher and told her that she felt "picked on." Deb wrote in her journal:

> The pain and suffering each day was devastating because I was working so hard in class. I could not please her yet any student of color was doing less than me yet getting extra help and praised. Because of this workshop, I have confronted my feelings. I realized that I did the right think. I can identify the stages [of racial consciousness] easily. Furthermore, I learned that possibly she [the typing teacher] acted unconsciously.

Deb stated that she was not conscious of race in her life until the Courageous Conversations workshop. She said that she never saw different colors in her classroom and believes that she has always been fair to each child. She viewed each child as an individual with different goals. Deb stated that she has never been treated unfairly because of her race. Yet, she gave an example [see previous paragraph] of a time when she felt a Black teacher had treated her unfairly. Deb said that she was a misfit in school because of her economic status. She never fit in with the 'popular' group because of her home and non-name brand clothes. Her parents, however, provided her with all the support to meet her basic, spiritual, and emotional needs. Regardless of her economic status growing up, Deb has always viewed herself as equal to everyone else. Her best friend from 5th grade to high school was Indian. Deb does not like to hear racial jokes or negative comments regarding any race.

Deb's example of a time when she redefined race was when she had defended students in order to deter the known stereotypes of a particular group. She veered away from naming race in these situations because it would have made both her and the students uncomfortable. Deb has never dealt with tensions due to her racial affiliations. She is as comfortable around Hispanics

and Blacks as she is around Whites. She said, "Older people tend to hold inferiority or grudges, because they lived in that time. They won't let it go."

Deb did not address a time when she experienced multiple racial points of view and did not identify with Pablo in "I Dream." She analyzed what she thought the poem was saying.

Deb described her typical style of communication as relaxed at home, "proper" in the classroom, and professional during meetings. She sometimes uses the language of the parents in parent conferences in an effort to try to make the parents feel comfortable. Deb stated in her journal, "Socioeconomic status does affect language. You can tell a lot by someone's verbal communication." Deb does not feel limited by language because she has been exposed to a variety of cultural languages.

Deb defined Courageous Conversations as building relationships among educators, students, and families. We need to recognize that race is a factor that "intersects so many other issues."

Deb does not believe that her family has been affected by its history in this country. She has always lived in all-white neighborhoods. Deb's family taught her to treat all people equally.

Deb was able to recognize white privilege. She "feels whites are treated differently in society. There is [are] less 'hesitants' in anything white people need or do. White privilege is in a sense invisible. Possibly, at times, it can be seen as unearned privileges due to the amount of melanin in our skin." Deb finds white privilege to be a challenge because she prefers to earn privileges rather than be given them for her color. She never realized until the Courageous Conversations class that she is favored in public businesses due to her demeanor and color. Deb noted that society views whites as superior to all races. Deb stated that people often isolate

themselves into different groups. She said, "Many blacks have made it that way. They want to be separate."

Deb believes that White Americans need to become knowledgeable regarding cultural differences and need to respect those differences. Quoting Singleton & Linton (2006), she wrote, "With consciousness comes action, and with action comes transformation" (p. 204).

All of the research participants have at least alluded to some level of consciousness awareness through the "courageous conversations" workshop. Confirmation of consciousness through action and transformation remains for further research.

Interracial Dyad

Several of the research participants have talked about the difficulty of interracial conversation. Singleton and Linton (2006) "imagine a time when educators will not need to establish parameters simply to have an everyday conversation about race" (p. 139). Courageous Conversations helped to open the door to those conversations and provided safety parameters for the conversations. The culminating activity for this week-long Courageous Conversations workshop was the Interracial Dyad. For this activity, the moderator used a process of constructivist listening to guide three people through an exercise called *15-Minute Race.* Participants used specific prompts and parameters to investigate their own racial perspective in contrast to their partner's. The participants included one White female educator and one Black female educator, respectively Person A and Person B, and one White female Moderator. Person A and Person B responded to prompts given by the moderator. The moderator's directive was to listen and, at the conclusion of the conversation, help A and B recognize their differing styles of conversation known as White Talk and Color Commentary (Singleton & Linton, 2006). The participants are both participants in this research. The two teachers work together and are friends.

As the conversation progressed, it became more of a personal conversation than a response to prompts. Person A is Grace, Person B is Sara, Participant 1 that comments at the end is Julie, and the moderator is the researcher. The summary of the transcription of the dialogue follows:

Person A – White

Person B – Black

Person A is responding to the prompt to share the first words that come to her mind when she thinks about race.

A: *This has been a very difficult topic because I haven't looked at things quite, um, the same perspective. My eyes have been opened a lot this week to other people's way of thinking. Um. When you first think of race you first automatically think of, uh, the Black culture. Um, But I've had to stop and think about other students who have been in my classroom that would also be a different race. Uh, one thing that, uh, comes to mind too when you think of race is the multicultural or biracial. I know, uh, a personal, well, actually that is something that is going on in our family now and I had actually talked to [B] about that this school year a little bit and kinda told her what was going on and we talked about difficulties that that child may face because of being discriminated against and how little boys of mixed race fair better than little girls and things like that.*

Participant B is defining racism:

B: *Um* (clearing throat), *I define racism as, uh, I don't know, things that went on in my classroom this year. Like if a student had a problem and one teacher just, you know, ignored something because of the race. You know. Uh, I don't know. Racism is not acknowledging diverse groups of people, not accepting people for, uh, the color of their skin. Um, racism, to me is exclusive, like leaving somebody out because of, uh, I haven't seen you being that way*

(speaking directly to A) but I mean I have had situations at school where I feel like people have been racist. I keep it inside. I don't talk about it. Uh, it's a hot topic.

The participants were responding to the prompt to tell about one experience involving racism and a student in their school.

A: *…But then I think about some students, in particular, that I taught that I know I had a lot of trouble with as far as their behavior. But, I was telling Mrs. ____ about a student in Telfair that, uh, she came from a family that was just known as causing trouble and, uh, it was a Black young lady, and somehow I just I just reached her and I worked with her and she was willing to talk to me about her problems before she talked with anyone else in the school and she walked off campus one day and when the police picked her up and brought her back to talk to the principal she said, "I'm not talking to her, talking to the principal. She said I'm not talking to the principal. There's not but one person here on this campus that I will talk to and that's Mrs. (A) and, you know, I just feel like that I had been able to have that kind of relationship with all of my students then maybe I could have made a difference somewhere, but, uh, I don't know if that's exactly what you're looking for, but…*

B: *Uh, I have not personally had any racist experience, but I have had some students to have one. It was in an inclusion, my inclusion classroom and we were in the computer lab and, uh, one of the boys was. There were two different groups. There was a Black boy and a White boy and, uh, I don't know what they were arguing about or whatever, but the White boy ended up calling the Black boy the "N" word. I thought, "Oh, Lord." I was like, Oh, Jesus, what am I supposed to do? Because I didn't want to push it because I'm a Black teacher and it would be like, "Is she just pushing it because she a Black teacher? But I didn't want him to get away with it because it is wrong. So, what I did, was to, um, have those two go out in the hall. They talked*

about it and then I talked to the White student why that was inappropriate, don't use that word. Nobody should be using that word. I mean, that's pretty much it. I didn't send him to the office. You know, I told the parent. I told his stepmother and she talked to him or whatever and that's how I handled it.

In the next passages B and A are sharing one feeling each has about dealing with racism.

B: (Voice shaking throughout this response) *Okay, dealing with racism is, uh, I don't like to deal with it. I feel like over the years I have learned how to, uh, hide it, hide my feelings, fit in, try to cover it up. Uh, you know, like when I walk in, in the mornings and we do our little meeting, uh, and I'm the only Black person in the room, I just, you know, walk in and I realize, I'm the only Black person in the room and I just try to say, " I hope they don't notice I'm the only Black person in the room."* (laughter) *Then I get afraid, like if a topic comes up I'm going to have to be the only one to defend it, uh, I feel like I represent the kids sometimes, uh, it's really hard to deal with. I don't know. Keep talking? Okay, um, uh, I don't know, Mrs. Gillis. It's emotional.*

A: *It is a very difficult topic and you know, I've had trouble this week in that, you know, in that I realized that I haven't seen things, uh, I guess for the way they really are. Uh, I, I, didn't quite understand. And even sitting in this class and talking about this topic and listening to everybody, I still realize that me, as a White person, I still have trouble understanding, because, you know, we say you don't really understand until you've actually walked in somebody's shoes. Well, you know, we can't really do that. Now we can listen and try to understand, but even then you still don't really understand until you've been in that person's situation. And, you know, like I told you earlier, I'm the type person that if you see me do something that you feel is racist or whatever, I would want you to tell me. You know, "Are you sure you handled that the right way?*

Or, you know, I would hope that you and I would have the kind of relationship to where you would come to me and tell me. Um, there's sometimes when I've handled situations in my classroom and I would go home at night and think about it and think, "Okay, now, did I handle that in the right way?" I've actually gone back and talked to students again and tried to get them to understand where I was coming from, my point of view and there were some students though that I never could get'em to understand. They would just determine that I did what I did because I was being racist and I don't know, I just …It's very, very difficult... I mean, it's a difficult topic.

The class participants were given an opportunity to respond to the dialogue they just heard. Some of the responses were:

Participant 1: *And the word 'racism', it's not easy to say it, even for me.*

Participant 2: *One thing I want to bring out, maybe I'll put it this way, when B was discussing her experience with the two students in her room, and I think that her, and that happens a lot. If I understood her right, her immediate reaction was, you know, she felt the emotions as far as what the boy said, but, I guess she didn't just want to seem like, you know, like she had to justify herself for addressing it with the White student because it was, because she was a Black teacher and it was made toward the Black student. And I think sometimes, you know, there is our fear. We fear that just because that happened which it happens a lot because I experience with some kids this year with the same thing and you know, she felt like she had to justify herself. I don't want them to think I'm just taking up for this student because he's Black. It's a term, you know what I mean? And you took care of it but you still had it in your mind like I don't want this to be just because this child is Black. I don't want the White student to think that I'm really just harping on that. And what A, she, I guess what I mean is you've had some self-reflection, and*

like you said you could never know what it feels like to wake up to be anything else but a White

female and that's okay because you're never going to able to do that. But to know that you are

open to the fact that, you know, I know that sometimes things might come up and I might not act

in the appropriate way so B, correct me. You know everybody's not that accepting. They think

their way is correct, this is it, this is my feelings and that's enough. But for you to get that, you

know, kind of like a 'but' statement. You know, if you ever see it, let me know. And I know you

will take it and you won't be offended by her saying anything to you and you will actually think

about it and think, "Well, maybe I did." And that does take courage.

B: *When I heard it I was like, it just took me a minute. Like I hadn't heard that in so long, You*

know, like, "People still say that word?" I had to take a minute.

Participant 3: *I think that, for once, I can say that A, you own up to it. You didn't say, "Well, I*

don't think there's a problem with race." You realize there is a problem and you're willing to do

whatever is necessary and that's the only way we'll be able to change anything is to get over this

denial. And you've gotten over that denial. You're not denying that there is a problem with race

and saying that it doesn't exist. And that makes this week worth it. 'Cause now you can see, you

can start the year saying, "Okay, what can I do to make sure all my students are achieving

where they need to be?" And until we get past this, well, there's not a problem with it and it

doesn't exist, nothing will ever change. That's what I got out of it.

Singleton & Linton (2006) state,

> Historically and still to some degree today, racial discourse in the United States is
>
> governed by the cultural parameters of the dominant White population. Consequently,
>
> when discussing race and racial issues, White people tend to engage from a place of
>
> certain authority, even though they have quite often been remiss in conducting their own

racial introspection. In contrast, people of color initially tend to communicate in the interracial forum in a more cautious and tempered manner (p. 121).

The interracial dyad between Sara and Grace had no characteristics of White Talk. The conversation had all the characteristics of Color Commentary. The conversation was verbal, but not authoritative. Value was not placed on expressing oneself and controlling the conversation. Initially, there was nonverbal communication with neither participant making eye contact with the other, but as the conversation progressed they began to make eye contact with each other but never with the audience. The conversation was personal with both participants speaking in first person and sharing her own story and experiences. The conversation was emotional with both participants interested in qualitative analysis and feelings. A related a personal story about a biracial child in her family. A and B expressed several times the difficulty they were having with the conversation. B expressed, "It's emotional."

The conversation was also process oriented. Both participants expressed the need to be respected, validated, and affirmed. A said, "If I ever do anything like that I want you to tell me." B was concerned about how the White student would react if she corrected him for saying the 'n' word. B said that she sometimes feels like she represents the kids and A asked during the conversation, "Who are we here for?"

Analysis of Common Themes

Several common themes emerged in the teachers' reflective writings and conversations. The common themes are reflective of the body of research on the racial achievement gap.

Ordinariness. Ordinariness is the first theme of critical race theory and means that racism is ordinary, the usual way society does business. Racism is made invisible because it is such an integral part of the everyday lives of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Julie, who is

Black and lived during part of the Jim Crow era, stated the first day of class that she had "never experienced racism." Sara, who is also Black, told her son to "act White" indicating that she is aware of racism, but stated that she does not like to think about it as if not acknowledging racism makes it nonexistent. Sally, Sara, and Ann are White teachers who did not recognize racism. Sally had never "given much thought" to the color of her students' skin. She also stated that she "subconsciously knew that *institutional* racism existed, but assumed it was the norm. If you do not "see" race, you are not participating in racism. Sara was not aware of racism and Ann "has not noticed any racial tensions in years." Maggie thought that institutionalized racism exists because Whites "don't realize we are doing anything wrong." Julie blocked her experiences of racism from her consciousness indicating that racism was invisible to her until this workshop. Sally, Sara, and Ann saw racism as normal confirming the Ordinariness theme of Critical Race Theory in this study.

  Social Construction. The third of the six themes of Critical Race Theory, social construction, says that race and races are products of social thoughts and relations. Several of the research participants referred to the "way I was raised" or "the way I grew up." Sally referred to her German mom learning the American culture from "South Georgia country farmers" and refers to "the views of the older generation bearing down on us." Ann thinks diversity exists because of "comfort zones," giving examples of differences in styles of worship and referring to the way she was taught. Deb stated that "older people tend to hold inferiority or grudges because they lived in that time." Social Construction theme of Critical Race Theory was evidenced in this study through the comments of Sally, Ann, Deb, and other participants who made references to the "way I was raised" or "the way I grew up."

Lack of ownership. Critical Race Theory examines how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups within schools (Solorzano, et al, 2001). When the current educational theories and practices were examined in this workshop, the teachers did not accept ownership for the racial achievement gap. Several of the teachers were not even aware that there is a racial achievement gap. Sally said that she hasn't given much thought to the color of her students' skin when she looked at test results. Ann stated that support is available for any student who falls through the cracks. Deb stated that they [the teachers] were not aware that there was an achievement gap. Most of the teachers attributed low achievement to either the Socioeconomic Model or the Sociopathological Model (Singham, 1988). Deb thought the cause of the gap was economic. Grace stated that low socioeconomics is often used to refer to low achievers. Ann thinks families have the responsibility to provide equity and Maggie said that family and community values are a large influence on student achievement and behavior. Sara thinks of poverty, at-risk, parental involvement – everything but race, when Black students do not achieve.

Common background experience. The fifth of the six themes of Critical Race Theory, intersectionality or anti-essentialism, is the idea that each race has its own origins and evolving history. All of the teachers in this study were raised in the local area with its history of racism and sexism. The White teachers were raised and continue to live in White neighborhoods. All of the teachers work in a predominately White environment. Julie and Maggie attended segregated schools for at least a portion of their elementary school careers. Sally and Ann experienced racist attitudes in the home environment. Only Deb and Betsy talked about having close friends of another race. Interracial relationships are not accepted in Sally's and Grace's families. The

family histories of the teachers in this study are embedded in the patriarchal racist history of South Georgia – each race's history deeply affected, but continuing to evolve.

Dyconscious racism. Dyconscious racism is a form of Ordinariness, the first theme of Critical Race Theory because it justifies inequity and racism as "the existing order of things as given" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, pp. 31 – 32). Prior to the workshop all of the White teachers were at a point Ladson-Billings (1994) calls "dyconscious racism." Ladson-Billings defines dyconscious racism as an "uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" (pp. 31 – 32). Sally doesn't see color in her students. Maggie thinks that because she cares she is not in a "color" situation. Deb never saw different colors. Ann does not consider race and has "the same expectations for all her students." Betsy did not name race in her classroom because she had been taught to look for other factors.

Denial of White privilege. Sally, Deb, and Betsy were not aware of white privilege before the Courageous Conversations workshop. Sally learned from her nonwhite coworkers as they expressed themselves during the workshop. She also talked about Black privilege referring to the NAACP and the Miss Black Dodge County pageant. Deb recognizes white privilege, but feels challenged by it. She wants to earn privileges rather than be given them because of her skin color. Betsy cannot pinpoint an actual time/circumstance when she received white privilege, but understands through the Courageous Conversations workshop that her entire life has been filled with white privilege because of the entire social, political community system. Grace, Maggie, and Ann continue to deny white privilege. They believe that any privileges they have are because they have earned them through the choices they have made such as hard work, determination, and high morals.

In summary, all of the teachers in this study indicated that they were not aware of a racial achievement gap prior to the data being presented in this workshop. All of the teachers acknowledged racism exists, but were unaware that racism has an effect on student achievement. Some of the participants seem to try to justify racism by citing incidences of reverse racism. All of the teachers in this study claimed to have the desire to make the changes necessary to have an equitable classroom for all students. I argue that some of the teachers either do not have this desire or they continue to lack understanding of "equity." I will discuss this further in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

All we own, at least for the short time we have it, is our life. With it we

write what we come to know of the world. Alice Walker, *Anything We Love Can Be Saved (¶ 10)*

bell hooks (2000) said, "If women are to play a meaningful role in struggles to end

racism and classism, they need to begin with feminist consciousness" (p. 110). There appeared to

be no feminist consciousness among the participants in this research. When completing the

Participant's Survey on the first day of class, almost half of the participants in the professional

development workshop reported experiencing gender bias by way of disrespect. Twenty-nine

percent reported experiencing gender bias as a school employee and 24% reported experiencing

gender bias by insults and name calling. Since only 24% of the class was Black, at least some of

the White participants had to have reported experiencing gender bias in some form. Yet, no

research participant made any reference to gender inequity in discussions or writings. The

inability or failure to recognize and/or join a movement against inequities one has experienced

limits one's ability to recognize and actively participate in overcoming other social injustices.

Since the participants' surveys were anonymous, it is possible, but not likely, that none of the

research participants reported experiencing gender bias.

Responses to the Participant's Survey agreed with the findings of Thompson, Warren,

and Carter (2004). Thompson, et al, found that 57% of the respondents in their study agreed with

the statement that when a student fails a test or an assignment, the student is largely to blame.

Forty-eight percent of the respondents in this professional development class agreed that the

student is the person most important in determining how well or how poorly students perform in

school. The achievement gap between Black and Hispanic students and White students is mostly

related to factors other than the quality of schooling received, according to 86% of the respondents in this workshop.

The findings of this study regarding the extent to which teachers in Dodge County respond to a professional learning course on conversations about race support the findings of Haycock (2001), Kelly (2006), and Solomon, Partelli, Daniel, & Campbell (2005). Both Haycock and Kelly found that teachers, as well as other adults, attribute reasons for the achievement gap as poverty, the students' community and family, and student motivation. The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (Rose & Gallup, 2004) also supports these findings.

Solomon, et al (2005) identified three strategies that teachers used to avoid addressing whiteness and its attendant privileges, all of which emerged in this study. The first strategy is ideological incongruence which refers to the dilemma experienced by individuals when their ideological or belief sets are incompatible. For example some of the teachers in this study support racial equity in theory but are unwilling or unable to acknowledge white privilege. Equity cannot be established without first acknowledging inequity exists. Ideological incongruence is similar to the social construction theme of critical race theory in that the teachers' ideologies "that framed their understanding of self, and their positioning in society, have been socially constructed" (p. 154).

The second strategy is Liberalist notions of individualism and meritocracy. We all have the same opportunities or access to the opportunities. The failure or success of a particular individual or group is linked to individual effort and agency. Grace's success is due to the choices she made, such as hard work and determination, indicating that anyone who works hard and has determination can succeed. Maggie believes that family and community values are a large influence on a student's achievement and behavior. Ann believes that there is equity when

intrinsic motivation exists equally. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory we see that Grace, Maggie, and Ann represent the liberalist ideology of the importance of individual choice and effort, unable to, or refusing to, admit to the destructive impact of racism.

The final strategy is negation of White capital, which attempts to deny the existence of White privilege and its attendant capital and material benefits. Negation of capital elicited a range of emotions from anger and aggression to a sense of guilt. People who negate White capital strongly believe rewards afforded them are due to individual efforts. "There is also a clear belief that minorities are the ones who have been privileged at the expense of whites" (Solomon, et al, 2005, p. 158). Grace pointed out that she has "seen an advantage to being Black" and Sally was concerned that the NAACP organization is an accepted practice for Blacks, but an organization for the advancement of "poor" White people would be seen as racist.

All of the White teachers in this study negated the existence of White capital to some degree. Strong emotions were elicited from three of the teachers and one of the teachers expressed a sense of guilt. Grace referred to discrimination existing "not only among races, but within the same race" and was "emotionally reactive to the notion of white privilege." Ann did not feel that she had received any tangible benefits that she has not earned. Several teachers indicated a belief that minorities are the ones who have been privileged. Sally mentioned that if the achievement gap was publicly directed toward Black or nonwhite people, "all hell would break loose." She also referred to the Miss Black Dodge County Pageant and the NAACP. She was bothered by the idea that these are acceptable but a Miss White Dodge County or an organization for the advancement of poor Whites would be considered prejudice. Grace has seen an advantage to being Black.

The findings in this study also support the findings of Blake (2001) and Schniedewind (2005) in some instances. Blake (2001) found that after participation in an antiracism professional development course, teachers reported some form of transformation in their thinking and in some cases, their behavior. Schniedewind (2005) concluded that professional development opportunities can "raise consciousness by providing information and by experientially engaging teachers with issues of race, racism, and whiteness and help them apply those understandings to their daily school interactions" (p. 288). Most of the participants in this research project seemed to demonstrate a change in their attitudes and indicated they planned to change their behavior. Deb had made notes throughout her journal of changes she plans to make. A recent visit to Julie's classroom revealed her students busily writing self-descriptions using culturally appropriate terms. Sara plans to ask her peers to begin to include culturally relevant curriculum. However, it is important to note that change happens over time and continuous work is needed to impact real change.

Most of the teachers in this study indicated some form of transformation in their thinking and also indicated intentions to change their behavior. The teachers indicated a raise in their consciousness level pertaining to race and racism more so than whiteness. Julie, who thought that she had never experienced racism, had to leave the class one day because she was so upset. She was beginning to realize that she had been affected by racism and she was having to deal with emotions she had never allowed herself to face before now. She indicated that she plans to offer support to the young Black teacher across the hall from her. Sara believes that having courageous conversations opens the door to the problem so that we can change and she has become more aware of "how much of a problem it really is at this point." She plans to share ways to help close the racial gap with her peer teachers. Grace indicated that her understanding of racism and

institutionalized racism changed when she realized we often "do not hold all children to the same standard of education expectations." Maggie's definition of institutional racism changed after the workshop. However, she gave certain 'programs' in the school, such as Special Education, Response to Intervention, and the Early Intervention Program, as examples of providing equity. Deb made notes throughout her journal of ways she could help close the racial achievement gap. Betsy was unaware that she was already addressing the achievement gap by focusing on making all of her students feel emotionally safe. She stated that she plans to make her efforts more concentrated and effective. On the other hand, Ann could not give any examples of institutional racism in her school. She stated that many individual teachers "go out of their way to reach each student regardless of race." Sally indicated guilt and embarrassment for never giving "the situation" [racism] much thought, but gave no indication that she intended to make any changes. She seemed to try to justify her lack of knowledge by giving examples of reverse discrimination and the "impact of the history of this area of the U.S." Even though the teachers were not familiar with institutional racism all but one of them indicated that they had moved toward some level of recognition of its existence and were able to give examples such as "cookie cutter expectations" and low numbers of Black students in the gifted program.

All but one of the teachers in this study indicated that they had moved beyond acknowledging the racial achievement gap and began to develop strategies for eliminating it. Several of the teachers mentioned including a more culturally relevant curriculum. Others plan to acknowledge race in the classroom and implement strategies to give nonwhite students voice and help them feel safe and valued. However, the findings indicate differently for four of the participants. Grace, Maggie and Ann continue to deny white privilege. Sally believed that "because she cared enough about her students that she could make the right decisions for them."

Julie, Sara, Deb, and Betsy were able to acknowledge racism and institutionalized racism even though it was very painful for Julie and Sara. Deb, like myself, is possibly better able to acknowledge racism because of inequities she experienced growing up as a member of a low-income family.

The teachers in this study seem to continue to struggle with some level of consciousness of racism and institutional racism. None of the participants had heard of the terms *whiteness* or *institutional racism* before this professional learning workshop, yet most of them were able to recognize some form of institutional racism in their respective schools. White privilege, on the other hand, stirred strong emotions in several of the participants. The participants appear to be experiencing great angst as they struggle with the battle between who they are as products of Southern culture and their intense desire to provide equal opportunities for all students.

Researcher's Response

Professional development is one of my responsibilities as Director of Curriculum and Instruction in my school system. Student achievement is also a major focus of my job responsibilities. Recognition of a racial achievement gap in my school system prompted this professional development course, *Courageous Conversations about Race* (Curtis & Linton, 2006). I have facilitated many professional development classes, but none have impacted me as much as this one. Having grown up in this area, I was knowledgeable of the racial history but I was not fully aware of how deeply our history is embedded into who we are. Ruby Payne says that it is difficult to overcome generational poverty. It is also challenging to overcome generational racist attitudes.

Teaching a course like Courageous Conversations offers the potential to reinforce White privilege. Phillion, et al (2008) found in their study of pre-service teachers in a Honduras study

abroad program that some of the teachers were "unable, and possibly unwilling, to recognize their Whiteness, and therefore unable to associate it with privilege" (p. 379). The inability or unwillingness to recognize Whiteness potentially reinforces White privilege. Grace, Maggie, and Ann continue to deny white privilege. They believe that any privileges they have is because they have earned them through the choices they have made such as hard work, determination, and high morals. Conversely, they believe that people do not achieve because they do not have good work ethics, determination, and high morals. Grace, Maggie, and Ann may return to their respective classrooms and make changes in an attempt to close the achievement gap. However, it is likely that these changes will be out of a sense of duty to help the underprivileged more than from an effort to establish true equity in their classroom.

The journey from acknowledging the existence of a racial achievement gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it is a multi-step process. For me, those steps were denial and anger, acknowledgement, guilt, acceptance, and finally action. The teachers in this research project are at different steps in this process. Grace, Maggie, and Ann are probably between denial and anger and acknowledgement. They still deny white privilege, but have experienced enough evidence of racism and institutional racism that they cannot deny its existence. I believe that Grace, Maggie, and Ann are experiencing the most angst at this point. Sally is between acknowledgement and guilt. Even though she had never "looked at color" when analyzing her students' test scores, she was thinking about the impact of race when she enrolled in this professional development class. She noted several times that she "felt low-down", "mean", "harsh", and "stupid" for attributing the number of low-achieving Blacks to their home life. Sally is not ready to move to acceptance because she cannot accept that her "love and acceptance" for all of her students is not enough to close the racial achievement gap. Deb, Betsy, Sara, and Julie

are closest to acceptance and action. Continued "courageous conversations" are imperative to move all of the participants to the action stage.

Whether because of guilt or denial, the potential exists for teachers to negate the modern definitions of race and Whiteness by tracing the terms back to their religious meaning. For example, historians and theologians such as Albert Raboteau (1995, 2004), W.E.B. Du Bois (1903,1989), and J. Cameron Carter (2008) used the terms "race", "whiteness" and "blackness" in their historical and theological accounts of the origin of racial identifications and differences. Carter (2008) contends that "modernity's racial imagination is religious in nature" (p. 5). Carter further contends that Jews were cast as a race group in contrast to Western Christians. The racialized Jews were deemed a religion of the East and inferior to Christians of the West. This racial imagination proved to be a racist imagination of White supremacy. Therefore, because Blacks originated from the East (Africa), they are viewed as inferior to Whites. I asked author Glenn Singleton if he had ever had this happen in any of his presentations. He has never had anyone to ask him about the religious meanings of the terms used in the book. He assured me that the terms as used in the text have no religious affiliation. Mr. Singleton responded in an email:

> …wanted to take a moment to reiterate my position, as author of *Courageous Conversations About Race*. As we explain in the narrative around the fifth condition, a "working definition" for race primarily causes us to observe how race is lived today. We do not suggest that the reader get bogged down in historic, philosophic, anthropologic or religious definitions and constructions as these can detract us from truly observing and understanding the detrimental ways in which race is transacted today. Following the Sixth Condition is an examination of Whiteness and not White people. This is to open us

to a conversation about race as a system of power that we all play into. Arguments about who can be 'racist' seem technical and so we present the idea that we all perpetuate 'whiteness' as a color, cultural and/or consciousness as a racial hierarchy, which often creates barriers to accessing quality education for those who are not members of the culture and/or those who cannot or choose not to adopt the norms of a white group that holds dominant power in our system of schools (G. E. Singleton, personal communication, August 31, 2009).

Mr. Singleton's explanation helped me understand that Black people like Julie and Sara can participate in whiteness as a racial hierarchy by their assimilation into White culture and by "acting White." Sara referred to "dualities" in her life affirming the "two-ness" referred to by Du Bois (1989). Sara says her role is white as a teacher and professional and black as a mother and wife. She is living "two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois, 1989, p. 5). She perpetuates whiteness by continuing to "act white" in her role as a teacher and by telling her son to "act white."

In analyzing the data, I realized that both the research participants and the workshop participants would often tell a story to illustrate an experience or how they felt about race. Critical race theory emphasizes story-telling and narrative as ways to get at the truth. The fifth theme of critical race theory is unique voice of color, which says that minority status brings a presumed ability to talk about race and racism. People of color can communicate to Whites experiences that Whites are not likely to know (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The Black teachers told stories of their experiences with racism and the White teachers told stories to show they were colorblind and/or not racist. The stories aligned with the findings of Lee Anne Bell (2009) in "The Story of the Storytelling Project: An Arts-Based Race and Social Justice Curriculum,

Storytelling, Self, Society." Bell found that many of the stories from White respondents were about how they were colorblind, or how they were not themselves racist. Many of the respondents of color told stories to illustrate how racism is an ongoing and real aspect of their lives. Several of the White participants in this study told stories to show how they are not racist. Grace told the story of her Black friend in first grade. Maggie told the story about her apartment in South Georgia. Deb told a story about her experience with a Black teacher. Betsy told the story about her Black friend who did not like White people. Sara, one of the Black teachers, told her story about being the only Black child in her gifted class. Many other Black teachers in the workshop told stories of their experiences with racism, but these teachers are not participants in this research. Storytelling and narrative have limitations as methodology. People choose which stories they tell. Grace told stories about her Black friend and her relationship with Sara to show that she is not racist. Yet, she continued to deny white privilege. The teachers in this study express a desire to move toward developing strategies to close the racial achievement gap. However, their narratives reveal that the history of racism in the patriarchal South is deeply embedded into these women's personal identity and presents challenges that must be overcome before real change can occur.

One of the limitations of this study was other teachers in the workshop expressed different points of view that cannot be shared and analyzed because they are not participants in the study. One example is the multiple stories of experiences of racism.

The courageous conversations that took place in class and through the teachers' reflections enlightened me to the struggles of Black teachers. I have thought about how Black teachers must feel lonely at work, but I was not aware of how isolated some of them feel both at

work and at home. I asked one of the teachers who did not participate in this research project if I could keep her journal as a daily reminder least I forget.

Implications

The findings of this study have implications for follow-up training, research, and additional teacher and administrator training.

Change takes time. Teachers participating in anti-racist training need time to reflect and absorb and then receive additional training. Some of the teachers who participated in this professional development course have requested the opportunity to come back together for more courageous conversations after they have had the opportunity reflect and to work with their students for a while. Follow-up training would provide the opportunity for the teachers to reinforce new knowledge and provide an opportunity for them to begin developing strategies for closing the racial achievement gap.

Further research is needed that looks at the long-term effects of Courageous Conversations. Do teachers begin to implement strategies for closing the achievement gap that are affective? Does the culture of the school begin to change?

Finally, closing the achievement gap has to be a system initiative that begins with "courageous conversations." Training needs to be continued until every teacher and every administrator has participated in many "courageous conversations", racism and institutional racism are recognized and identified, White privilege is acknowledged, and an initiative is in place to close the achievement gap. Administrative buy-in is imperative for the success of any initiative at the school or system level.

Next Steps in Action Research

Byrdon-Miller, et al, (2003) stated, "Perhaps one of the first challenges [of action research] is tackling and changing or improving the places within which many of us practice" (p. 22). The research for this dissertation was, for the researcher, meeting the first challenge. As a practitioner whose job responsibilities include improving teaching and learning and professional learning for the school district, the challenge was to confront the achievement gap between the White students and the Black students in the school district and to begin a process for change. This action research began with a group of thirty-seven classroom teachers who were willing to engage in "courageous conversations" about race and racism, but more specifically, the research began with eight classroom teachers who were, not only willing to confront their belief system, but who were also willing to share their reflections for the purpose of this research.

Action research is on-going – a work in progress. This research will continue as the researcher observes the teaching practices of the participants for indications of change that provides equity for all students. Additional professional learning opportunities will be provided that will allow the participants to continue to engage in "courageous conversations" about inequities within their individual classrooms and within the schools in which they teach. The participants will continue to reflect on their teaching practices and learn strategies for providing equitable classrooms for all students. Professional learning opportunities will be offered for additional teachers and administrators to engage in "courageous conversations" and to reflect on cultural beliefs and inequitable practices within the classroom and school building. Effective teaching strategies and institutional practices for equality will be offered for all system practitioners. Data analysis will also continue for indications of a narrowing of the achievement gap that indicates changes in the schools' culture.

The researcher will continue to learn how to trigger learning processes with adult learners and to use her own learning as a way of confronting the many barriers faced in working for progressive change (Taylor & Pettit, 2007) to provide equity for all students within the school district.

Conclusion

The requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* forced school systems throughout the United States to consider the achievement gap between White students and non-White students. Prior to the enactment of this law, schools and school districts were not required to consider the achievement of many subgroups of students within their populations. The enactment of the law caused schools and school districts to, not only acknowledge achievement gaps between subgroups of students, but to also begin to close those gaps in order to continue receiving some state and federal funds.

This research considers the contributing factors within the classroom that might be causal factors for the achievement gap between White students and Black students in a rural South Georgia school district. A professional development course entitled *Courageous Conversations About Race*, written by Curtis Linton and Glenn E. Singleton was taught to thirty-seven teachers in the school system. Eight of the teachers agreed to participate in the research project. The teachers, two Black females and six White females with teaching experience ranging from seven to over twenty years, represented elementary, middle, and high schools. The participants' reflections on racism, institutional racism, whiteness, and white privilege were analyzed through the theoretical framework lens of Critical Race Theory as part of an action research project. Findings of this research show that teachers express a desire to move toward developing strategies to close the racial achievement gap. However, the history of racism in the patriarchal

South is deeply embedded into these women's personal identity and belief systems and presents

challenges that must be overcome before real change can occur.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Please circle the answer that most accurately depicts your belief.

1. I believe that all students can learn.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

2. I treat all of my students the same.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

3. I believe that all students in my classroom have an equal opportunity to learn.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

4. I believe that all students in my classroom have an equal opportunity to achieve at a high level.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

5. I have high expectations for all of my students.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

6. I believe that all students in my school have an equal opportunity to learn.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

7. I believe that all students in my school have an equal opportunity to achieve at a high level.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

8. I provide equal attention and assistance to each child in my classroom.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

9. Diversity in my classroom makes my job more difficult.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

10. I am comfortable teaching children from different races and ethnic backgrounds.

   never   almost never   sometimes   almost always   always

11. I have observed or witnessed racial prejudice in my school.

        never   infrequently   occasionally   frequently   not sure

12. In my opinion, the achievement gap between Black and Hispanic students and White students is mostly related to

     _____The quality of schooling received

     _____Other factors

     _____Don't know

13. In my opinion, the person most important in determining how well or how poorly students perform in school is/are

     _____The student himself/herself

     _____The student's teachers

     _____The student's parents

     _____I don't know

Please check all that apply in the following questions.

14. I have experienced gender bias

     _____In a shop or restaurant

     _____In school as a student

     _____In school as an employee

     _____At a sport or public event

     _____By way of disrespect

     _____By way of mistrust

     _____By insults and name calling

15. I have experienced racial bias

_____In a shop or restaurant

_____In school as a student

_____In school as an employee

_____At a sport or public event

_____By way of disrespect

_____By way of mistrust

_____By insults and name calling

In the following question, please rank in order from most likely to least likely. 1=most likely;

5=least likely

16. When a student in my classroom is not academically successful, the most likely reason is

_____I have not done all that I could to meet the needs of the student.

_____The student does not have the mental ability.

_____The student does not care about learning.

_____There is little or no parental support.

_____The student is from a low socioeconomic background and the child's basic needs are not being met.

APPENDIX B

Journal Writing Prompts

Chapter 1:
1. What do you need to know and be able to do to narrow the racial achievement gap?
2. How will you know when you are experiencing success in your efforts to narrow the racial achievement gap?
3. What will you do when you discover what you don't yet know and are not yet able to do to eliminate the racial achievement gap?

Chapter 2:
1. What have you done to address the racial achievement gaps in your school or system?
2. How can the strategy of Courageous Conversation impact these efforts?

Chapter 3:
1. In what ways has your understanding of *racism* and *institutionalized racism* changed since completing the *Equity Terms* exercise?
   - In what ways have you and/or your colleagues identified and distinguished between these two terms?
   - How has there been an acknowledgement of the reality of institutionalized racism even though individual racism may not always be present?

2. Where do you see the phenomenon of *institutionalized racism* existing in your school or school system?
   - Describe the forces that allow institutionalized racism to persist.
   - Who has made an effort to change this institutionalized racism, and what have they done? What has your role been in these efforts?

3. Why might *equity* be a powerful guiding force for schools? What evidence of *equity* have you seen in your school or school system?
   - Where equity exists, what have been the benefits?
   - Where equity does not exist, what student groups are benefiting and what groups are not? Describe the difference.

Chapter 4:
1. Reflect on the significance of Overhead 2: Racial Consciousness Flow Chart.
   - Write about an experience in which you believe your racial consciousness was developed.
   - Trace your consciousness-raising experience through the stages outlined previously.
   - What were the hardest aspects of your experience to acknowledge and examine while moving through this flow chart? What new discoveries did you make?

Chapter 5:
1. Describe race in your life. Specifically address the following:
   - How race plays out in your life personally, locally, and immediately.
   - Your perceived racial consciousness and racial unconsciousness.
   - How you experience yourself as a racial being.
   - The situations and circumstances in which you believe yourself to be most racially aware.
   - The degree to which your personal racial awareness impacts your relationships with people of your own race as well as those of a different race than your own.
   - A circumstance in which you believe you would benefit from having greater racial consciousness.
   - Your inhibitions and/or fears in regard to developing this greater racial consciousness.

Chapter 6:
1. Give an example of an occasion when you "redefined race." Which labels other than race have you used to describe the academic struggle of student of color groups? Why is it that you veered away from explicitly naming race in this situation?
2. Consider your own affiliations racially, such as your workplace, religious institution, social clubs, and recreational places that you frequent.
   - What is the racial composition? How this changed over time?
   - If racial diversity exists, are tensions present due to race or racial differences? Describe them.
   - In what ways has race relations been addressed – or not addressed? Why is this so? What are some positive and negative pressures that exist about addressing racial diversity? What role have you played in alleviating these pressures?
   - If little diversity exists in your gathering places, why do you believe this is the case? When considering your racial surroundings and affiliations, how do you reconcile personally with this reality?

Chapter 7:
1. Recall a time when you experienced multiple racial points of view. What was the situation and how were the differing perspectives managed? How did this affect the dialogue that ensued? In what ways was it a negative or positive experience for your personally?
2. Participate in the implementation exercise and read the poem "I Dream" by Pablo Vega. What is he communicating about he impact of race on his life both in and out of school?
   - How do you personally relate to what Pablo is saying? Do you tend to connect with or disconnect from his feelings? Is your degree of connection due to your own race or other factors? Explain.
   - Con you relate Pablo's experience to students with whom you worked? Describe your own students' situations, especially as they relate to school.

Chapter 8:
Please refer to Understanding White Talk and Color Commentary (p. 123).

1. Describe your typical communication style using the characteristics of White Talk and Color Commentary. How and to what degree does your typical communication style change when you are in the interracial professional setting such as a staff meeting, parent conference, or classroom situation and race is the presenting topic?
   - What are the influences that have led you to have this communication style in interracial professional settings?
   - To what degree, if any, do you feel limited in your ability to dialogue interracially? Explain.
   - How does this communication style and level of limitation compare to your personal or more casual interracial interactions outside the professional setting?

2. In what ways might the Courageous Conversation Compass serve as a ProMISE of Racial Healing? How can the Compass help you to better understand your own thoughts and emotions in regard to race? In what ways can the Compass help you engage more authentically with the "racial other" in a Courageous Conversation?

Chapter 9:
1. Reflect on your own family's history in this country. How has your family been impacted actively or passively by the U. S. racial binary, eugenics, and/or White flight phenomena? Where do you see lingering evidence of these historical events in modern U. S. race relations? How might these events affect the schooling of children of color and White children in this country today?
   - How has this history impacted your family's racial attitudes, beliefs, and values?
   - Has anyone in your family tried to rectify or address this history of race and your family's role in it?
   - Have your children benefited from or been hampered by your family's connection and participation in the American racial culture?

2. Answer the following statements:
   Racially speaking…
   > The "me" I see is _____.
   > The "me" you see is _____.
   > The "me" I think you see is _____.
   Is each of these responses the same? How are they different? How do you think some of your closest colleagues and/or older students might answer these questions? Do you experience struggle or conflict as you complete these sentences? What do you believe to be the reason for this dissonance?
   - Before now, have you ever had to separate your ethnic identity from your racial identity? What was the cause of this and how did it impact you?
   - What about your personal and professional relations? In what ways do they tend to be described racially or ethnically? Has this confused the relationships?

Chapter 10:
1. Using the Courageous Conversation Compass, where do you locate your reaction to White privilege? If you are White, does this challenge your self-identification in society?

If you are a person of color, how do you cope with the daily injustices triggered by White privilege?

- If you are White, in what ways have you benefited from White privilege? Reflect on some of the earliest and most recent moments when you believe you benefited from having White skin. At the time, how was the preferential treatment justified?
- If you are a person of color, can you recall some of the earliest and most recent occasions when not having White skin has worked against you? In these occasions, did the denying of opportunities afforded to White people appear to be deliberate or unconscious?

2. What does it mean to be White, and how has Whiteness been socially constructed in your own life? Without comparing White to other races, what do you believe to be the characteristics of Whiteness? How do these characteristics of Whiteness affect you?
   - Cite specific occasions when you have observed these White characteristics in your own life.
   - How does it feel to identify explicitly with White culture and consciousness? In defining Whiteness, does the process and the derived content take on similar or different feeling as when defining the culture and consciousness of various groups of color?
   - To what degree do you feel these characterizations of Whiteness are accurate?
   - What do you believe to be the benefit to educators in explicitly defining White culture and understanding White consciousness?

Chapter 11:
1. Summarize your understanding of "stereotype threat." How has "stereotype threat" affected the following:
   - You as an educator. Explain how it may affect you professionally.
   - Your students. Have they also been affected by stereotype threat? Specifically, which student populations have struggled because of this threat? Explain how. In what ways might you have created or allowed for classroom circumstances in which students feel vulnerability brought on by stereotype threat?
   - How might educators support students so that they can effectively negotiate stereotype threat?

2. Can you think of someone who exists in a racial Third Culture? What can you recall about his/her experience of negotiating two distinct racial cultures? In what ways have they attempted to reconnect with their own culture? To what degree have you observed this person engaging in a struggle to embrace White culture and to be viewed positively and accepted fully by White people?
   - To what degree, if any, is Third Culture a defining part of your own experience?
   - If you have not found yourself to be a part of a Third Culture, what benefits did you derive from this reality?
   - If you have existed in a Third Culture, what, if any, price did you pay for this reality?

Chapter 12:

1. Consider whether or not you feel that your school system is "good enough" for your own child. How many of your colleagues would choose your school system for their own children? How does your answer affect your passion for, perspective about, and practice toward improving schooling for our most needy students?

   - In what ways does your child's school differ from the school at which your work? What is similar about the two schools?
   - In what ways does the focus on equity in your school compare to that which exists in your child's school?
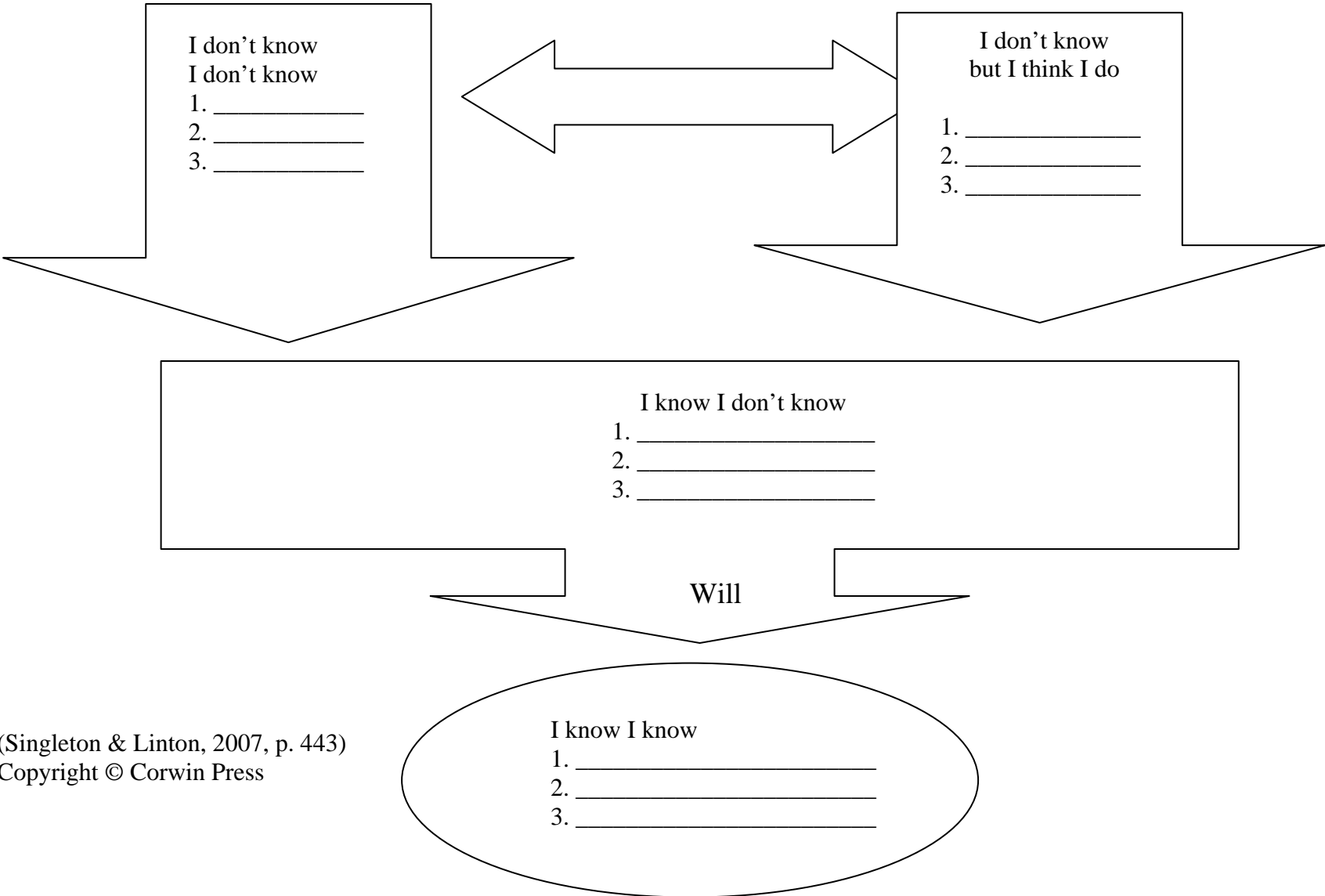
Chapter 13:

1. Review the reflection by Graig Meyer on page 241 of the book. As a White person, in what ways do Graig's experiences and perspective as an anti-racist leader align with your own? If you are a person of color, what connections do you see between Graig's personal journey and the racial triumphs and challenges experienced or expressed by your White colleagues engaged in this work?

   - In what ways might this type of self-reflection support educators in more effectively addressing racial achievement gaps?
   - What is courageous about what Graig has expressed and/or experienced? What have been some of your own courageous expressions/experiences that have lined your journey toward becoming an anti-racist leader? In what ways might you exercise greater courage?

2. Commit to paper your personal thoughts about the journey you have made throughout this book. Where did you begin in your understanding of race? Where are you now? How will your increased will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to examine race impact your personal and professional endeavors? How will you continue your learning? What new commitments can you make toward engaging in equity/antiracist work?

(Singleton & Linton, 2007)

APPENDIX C

RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS FLOW CHART

Figure 4.2   Racial Consciousness Flow Chart for Exercise

I don't know
I don't know
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I don't know
but I think I do

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I know I don't know
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Will

I know I know
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

APPENDIX D

I DREAM

I Dream

I am from a clash of Color,
From an idea of love, modeled for others' perception.
I see me as I am, but am hidden from others' views.
I am who I am, but a living contradiction to my peers.
I see life as a blessing, a gift granted to me.
Why should my tint describe me? Why should my culture degrade me?
Why should the ignorance of another conjure my presence?
Too many times I've been disappointed by the looks,
By the sneers and misconceptions of the people who don't get me,
Who don't understand why it hurts.

I dream of a place of glory and freedom,
Of losing the weight of oppression on my back.
I dream of the enlightenment of people,
Of the opening of their eyes.
I dream for acceptance,
And for the blessing of feeling special just once.
One moment of glory… for the true virtue of my life.
For the glimmer of freedom, and a rise in real pride.

--Used with permission of Pablo Vega
Chapel Hill High School, North Carolina

(Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 112)

APPENDIX E

COLOR LINE EXPERIMENT

To help participants appreciate the impact of race on everyday experiences, have them do the following:

1. Respond to each question with the following score:
  5 if the statement is always true for you.
  3 if the statement is sometimes true for you.
  0 if the statement is seldom true for you.
2. After totaling their scores, have participants form into a color line, with the lowest numbers on the right and the highest numbers on the left.

Because of my race or color….

		Score
1.	I can be in the company of people of my race most of the time.	
2.	If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting/purchasing housing in an area I can afford and in which I would want to live.	
3.	I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.	
4.	I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.	
5.	I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely and positively represented.	
6.	When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my race made it what it is.	
7.	I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.	
8.	I can go into most supermarkets and find the staple foods that fit with my racial/ethnic traditions; I can go into any hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.	
9.	Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.	
10.	I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might mistreat them because of their race.	
11.	I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.	
12.	I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.	
13.	I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.	
14.	I can remain oblivious to the language and customs of persons of color without feeling, from people of my race, any penalty for such oblivion.	
15.	I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a racial outsider.	
16.	I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.	
17.	If a police officer pulls me over, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of race.	

18.	I can conveniently buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.	
19.	I can go home from most meetings of the organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied-in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, feared, or hated.	
20.	I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.	
21.	I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.	
22.	I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me.	
23.	If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.	
24.	I can comfortably avoid, ignore, or minimize the impact of racism on my life.	
25.	I can speak in public to a powerful group without putting my race on trial.	
26.	I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.	
	Total Score	

Reflective Discussion:
After the participants have totaled their answers and lined up according to their scores with the highest score on the left and the lowest score on the right, make the following observations:

1. Have all women raise their hands. Based on their placement in the line, discuss the effects on privilege caused by the discrimination of women.

2. Have all people with masters or doctoral degrees raise their hand. Based on their placement in the line, discuss the ability of advanced education to overcome discrimination.

3. Have all black people raise their hands. Have all brown or Latino people raise their hands. Have all Asian people raise their hands. Have all people of races other than white raise their hands together. Have all white people raise their hands. Discuss the obvious line between white people and people of color. What does this say about the effects of discrimination?

SEMINAR EVALUATION FORM

SEMINAR EVALUATION FORM

CONTENT

1. How well did the seminar meet the goals and objectives?

2. How will you apply what you learned during this seminar in your daily professional life?

3. What professional support will you need to implement what you have learned from this seminar?

4. How well did the topics explored in this seminar meet a specific need in your school or district?

5. How relevant was this topic to your professional life?

Process

6. How well did the instructional techniques and activities facilitate your understanding of the topic?

7. How can you incorporate the activities learned this week into your daily professional life?

8. Were a variety of learning experiences included in the seminar?

9. Was any particular activity memorable? What made it stand out?

Context

10. Were the facilities conducive to learning?

11. Were the accommodations adequate for the activities involved?

Overall

12. Overall, how successful would you consider this seminar? Please include a brief comment or explanation.

13. What was the most valuable thing you gained from this seminar?

Additional Comments

APPENDIX G

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY - SUPERINTENDENT

COLLEGE OF Georgia Southern University

DEPARTMENT OF Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading

June 17, 2009

Dear Dr. May,

My name is Lawanda Gillis and I am a doctoral student in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern University. My proposed dissertation is entitled *Courageous Conversations: Rural South Georgia Teachers Moving Toward Developing a Strategy for Eliminating the Achievement Gap.* As part of my dissertation research, I am interested in closing the achievement gap between White students and non-White students. As I am sure you are aware, the No Child Left Behind Act has caused educators throughout the United States to move beyond acknowledging the existence of an achievement gap to looking for ways to close that gap. The purpose of my research is designed to move teachers beyond acknowledging the reality of the racial achievement gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it.

I will be leading a professional development course in your system entitled *Courageous Conversations* and participants in this course are potential participants in my research project. This letter is to request your permission to ask participants in the professional development class to volunteer to participate in my research. The volunteers will be asked to complete a survey, keep a journal during the research period, and participate with the other participants in a blog. I will also conduct three classroom observations of each research participant during the first three weeks of school during the 2009 – 2010 school term. Information obtained from the surveys, journals, blogs, classroom observations, and interviews will remain confidential and will be maintained for three years in a locked cabinet in my home. After that time the records will be destroyed.

Extensive steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality for all participants. Pseudonyms for teachers' names and schools where they work will be used in this study to provide anonymity for them. Those who are interviewed will be provided transcripts of all interviews so they can make changes prior to the analysis of the data. Teachers will have the right not to answer questions posed, as well as the right to withdraw from this study at any point during the research process without penalty.

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Enclosed is a copy of the proposed consent document, survey, and rubric for observation. Upon completion of the study I will send a copy of my findings to you at your request.

I appreciate you considering my request to perform this research project. Please sign below to let me know your decision in conducting this research with teachers in your school system and return a copy of this letter to me in the envelope I have provided you at your earliest possible convenience.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me, Lawanda Gillis, at (478) 374-4868 (home), (478) 231-8235 (cell), or by email at lpgillis@bellsouth.net. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Delores Liston at Georgia Southern University at (912) 871-1551 or listond@georgiasouthern.edu

Thank you in advance for your assistance in my study of moving beyond acknowledging the achievement gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it.

Respectfully,

Lawanda Gillis
Doctoral Candidate, Georgia Southern University

Please sign below and indicate your willingness for selected teachers in your school system to participate in this dissertation research project outlined above, and return in the envelope provided. Please keep one copy of this letter for your records.

_____Yes, you may contact the principals at the schools where the selected teachers work to ask permission for these teachers to participate in this study.

_____No, you may not contact the principals at the schools where the selected teachers work to ask permission for these teachers to participate in this study.

_____   _____
Superintendent's Signature   Date

APPENDIX H

INFORMED CONSENT

COLLEGE OF Georgia Southern University

DEPARTMENT OF Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading

Dear Educator:

My name is Lawanda Gillis and I am a doctoral student in Curriculum Studies at Georgia Southern University. My proposed dissertation is entitled *"Courageous Conversations": Rural South Georgia Teachers Reflecting on the Role of Race and Racism in the Education of Rural South Georgia Students.* As part of my dissertation research, I am interested in closing the achievement gap between White students and non-White students. As I am sure you are aware, the No Child Left Behind Act has caused educators throughout the United States to move beyond acknowledging the existence of an achievement gap to looking for ways to close that gap. The purpose of my research is designed to move teachers beyond acknowledging the reality of the racial achievement gap toward developing a strategy for eliminating it.

Participation in this research will include completion of the professional development course, *Courageous Conversations*, recording your reflections of this course in a journal, interacting with other participants through blogging, three classroom observations, and three post observation conferences following the observations.

The only risk to you in this study is the possibility of identification as a participant. Pseudonyms for your name and school where you work will be used in this study to provide anonymity for you. I will be the only person with access to your information. All information will be maintained for three years following the completion of this study and will be contained in a locked cabinet in my home. Transcripts of all interviews will be provided to you so any changes that you want prior to the analysis of the data can be made. You have the right not to answer questions posed, as well as the right to withdraw from this study at any point during the research process without penalty. All results of this research project will be made available to interview participants upon completion.

The benefit you will receive from participating in this study is the possibility of being empowered to move toward developing strategies for eliminating the achievement gap between the White students and the non-White students in your classroom. Your students will also benefit if you develop and implement these strategies.

The research period begins with the first day of this professional development class and continues for three weeks after the 2009 – 2010 school term begins. Your investment of time will include reflection time, journaling, and blogging.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call me, Lawanda Gillis, at (478) 374-4868 (home), (478) 231-8235 (cell), or email me at lpgillis@bellsouth.net. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Delores D. Liston at (912) 871-1551 or listond@georgiasouthern.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study please contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 478-0843.

You are not required to participate in this research and you may end your participation at any time by notifying me. You are not required to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty for deciding not to participate and you may decide at any time that you don't want to participate further and may withdraw without penalty or retribution. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: *"Courageous Conversations": Rural South Georgia Teachers Reflecting on the Role of Race and Racism in the Education of Rural South Georgia Students*
Principal Investigator: Lawanda Gillis, 2891 Hawkinsville Hwy, Eastman, GA 31023, 478-374-4868, lpgillis@bellsouth.net
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Delores D. Liston, P. O. Box 8144, Statesboro, GA (912) 871-1551, listond@georgiasouthern.edu

_____

Participant Signature   Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____

Investigator Signature   Date