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The 2014-2015 school year marked the first year that majority of the students in America’s public schools were non-White (Klein, 2014). Despite the shifting demographics, there still remains a persistent struggle to ensure that all students receive a quality education and this problem is even more pervasive for students of color (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The projections for the demographic shift of the United States population are well known yet the teacher population remains severely mismatched. Irvine (1991) explains that a lack of “cultural synchronization” between teachers and students can negatively impact student success. As a result, much focus has been given to the need to improve teacher education and training programs. More specifically, research literature continuously demands pre-service teachers must be able to understand and employ culturally responsive pedagogy to effectively reach and teach diverse learners.

As Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals presents its third volume, the articles that compose this issue discuss topics of teacher preparation, the role of race and racism in schools, marginality, and parental involvement. Combined, the articles tackle pertinent issues that are consistently faced in urban schools and environments. In a solution-oriented fashion, the authors have contributed recommendations towards improvement of education.

In the first article, Russell examines the experiences of Black teenage girls in predominantly-White suburban neighborhoods. Utilizing the Black feminist intersectionality framework, the author adds to the literature on the lived experiences of Black girls in academic contexts, the navigation of their identities, and the significant impact that race and racism has on their academic and social experiences. The second article by Acosta provides implications for teacher education and the need to be sure that prospective African American teachers are not being marginalized in teacher education programs. She argues that Black educators...
employ a complex pedagogy that is culturally influenced and that examining how successful Black educators define their practice could enable teacher educators to be able to assist, engage and support African American pre-service teachers. This research supports the need to understand what it means to teach from culturally centered perspectives and how examining effective pedagogy for African American children can inform the preparation of African American teachers.

The third article by Ferguson and Boudreaux, delivers data on pre-service teachers’ attitudes toward English language learners in mainstream classrooms. While survey data reveals that this sample population of pre-service teachers has positive dispositions towards ELL students, the authors did find evidence of a lack of confidence in teacher abilities and instructional practices needed to reach and teach this population of students. The authors argue for training and relevant coursework to be incorporated into teacher education programs to reinforce and sustain such positive beliefs about English language learners in the classroom.

In the fourth article, Jordan delivers a unique performance piece that confronts the “inner eye of the dominant world”. The concept of the “inner eye” can be understood as what others see when they look at you even though these thoughts and feelings may never be verbalized. The author’s prose illuminates the power that curriculum in schools can have if it allows for and encourages the opposition of dominant and oppressive ideologies.

In the fifth article, Watson, Robinson, Hollis and Talley-Matthews utilize DuBois’ notion of the “color line” and argues that it persists even today in the 21st century. Through a comprehensive review the authors utilize data to demonstrate evidence of the color line on both social and economic levels. Lastly, the authors address the impacts of urbanization, school discipline, and cultural mismatch in schools. The last article by Johnson examines existing literature on parental involvement in urban schools. His research reviews the common lenses through which parental involvement in schools is most often assessed. Recommendations are provided on how schools can approach and improve parental involvement.

It is my desire that the amalgamation of research presented here can assist all education stakeholders as we continue our endeavor to ensure equitable education for all.

Tempestt R. Adams
Editor
References


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On the Margins: LGBTQ Youth in American Public Schools

A Commentary

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The authors featured in this volume of Urban Education Research and Policy Annuals address the needs and perspectives of populations who are often marginalized by public schools: students and teachers of color, English language learners, and parents in urban communities. These authors shed light on the differential treatment that members of these groups often receive in public school settings and propose ways that educators can better serve these populations. In so doing, the authors in this volume are contributing to an extensive body of literature that describes and prescribes education for low-income students, students of color, and urban students and families.

In recent years, scholarship has emerged to suggest the marginalization of another group of students in American public schools: sexual minority and gender non-conforming youth. Often referred to by the acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer), these students are conservatively estimated to comprise approximately five percent of the American middle and high school population, or one million students (Cianciotto & Cahill, 2012).

Given the historic marginalization and discrimination LGBTQ individuals have faced in the United States, it is perhaps not surprising that these patterns of exclusion are mirrored in schools. Homosexuality was classified as a mental illness by the American Psychological Association until 1973, and was a criminal offense in many states until the Supreme Court ruled anti-sodomy laws unconstitutional in 2003 (Bryant, 2008). Recent court rulings have made marriage equality more widespread (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.), but LGBTQ people continue to face discrimination in the workplace: no federal law currently exists to protect LGBTQ individuals from discrimination (Human Rights Campaign, 2014), and LGBTQ people on average earn less than their heterosexual, cisgendered peers (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Although public opinion has shifted in recent years in favor of allowing same-sex marriage, a
recent study suggests that homophobia continues to be more widespread than surveys indicate (Franke-Ruta, 2013).

It is important to note also that schools have historically played a role in socializing students into normative gender roles and heterosexual relationships. Whether consciously or not, teachers begin to reinforce behaviors along gendered lines as early as preschool (Cahill & Adams, 1997). Horn (2007) points out that in later years, students also police each other’s gender expression. School dress codes have long prescribed gender-specific notions of appropriate appearance (Smith, 2012). Mayo (2014) describes how rituals like school dances work to affirm and perpetuate heteronormativity.

The recently released 2013 National School Climate Survey, conducted biennially by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, provides insight into the school experiences of American LGBTQ youth (Kosciw, Gretaky, Palmer, & Boesen, 2014). While this most recent edition of the survey does indicate that schooling conditions for LGBTQ youth have improved somewhat since the inaugural survey in 2001, many of the statistics are still cause for alarm. Homophobic and transphobic language remains pervasive in American schools; over two-thirds of LGBTQ students surveyed reported hearing homophobic remarks frequently at school, and over half had heard them from teachers or other school staff. Physical safety is a concern as well; almost one-third of LGBTQ students reported that they had skipped school in the last month due to feeling unsafe at school, while 36% had experienced physical harassment at school within the last year. The vast majority of these students could not see themselves reflected in school curricula or access any LGBTQ-related information through their school library. While the presence of a school Gay-Straight Alliance, or GSA, was found to be a protective factor, only about half of students reported that their school had one (Kosciw et al., 2014). Overall, the results of this survey suggest that schools are still not welcoming and safe places for sexual minority and gender non-conforming youth in the United States.

The National School Climate Survey serves as a reminder that discussions about school equity and inclusivity must include sexual orientation and gender expression as well as race, class, language, and culture. As several authors have pointed out, homophobia and constricting definitions of gender harm all students by limiting their self-expression, not just those who identify as LGBTQ (Horn & Nucci, 2003; Wyss, 2004; Horn, 2007; Mayo, 2014). Making schools into safe places for LGBTQ youth will contribute to the larger project of making schools safe for everyone.

References


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Negotiating Identity: Black Female Identity Construction in a Predominantly-White Suburban Context

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"I’m convinced you cultivated your sense of self-love as an embryo somehow knowing you’d need it later on, reach in, it’s there, tucked away, it’s there, use it, it’s there—in a world that doesn’t see you" -Nayyirah Waheed

This study was engendered by my own academic experience in United States public schools as well as my childhood in segregated predominantly-White neighborhoods. I attended a predominantly-White elementary school where I distinctly remember various incidents involving racism and sexism. This research questions what resources Black girls with virtually no physical access to the Black community are using to conceptualize Blackness and further their own identity as Black girls. The girls involved in this study do have access to a myriad of popular media images of Blackness and Black femaleness as well as the ideas of Blackness and culture in their own families and homes, but limited access to Black communities and spaces of communal socialization. The questions addressed in this study are: (1) what are Black middle school girls’ perceptions about schooling in a predominantly-White environment? (2) how does Black middle school girls’ identity construction affect their academic and social decisions? and (3) how do Black girl’s race, class and gender identity interact in this predominantly-White environment?

While some studies review the topic of Black girl achievement and experience from an asset oriented perspective (Brock, 2005; Brown, 2009; Evans-Winter, 2005; Rollock, 2007), there is still a dearth in the research. Research indicates that school structure and community may influence socialization practices as well as academic orientation of students (Carter, 2008; Diamond, Lewis & Gordon, 2007; Graham & Anderson, 2008; Stanlaw & Peshkin, 1988). Thus, it is imperative to study Black girls in various social and academic contexts to fully understand the complexity of the axis of oppression, class, race and gender, they experience.
of oppression, class, race and gender, they experience. There are few studies done on Black girls in predominantly-White suburban environments (Banks, 2005; Carter, 2008; Proweller, 2005), and those that are generally focus on private schools or girls who have been bused to high income suburban environments from other areas (Holland, 2013; Proweller, 2005). However, the practices of upper/middle class suburban Black girls have much to reveal about what strategies or tools Black girls use to persist, when they have a range of resources.

How Black girls experience an oppressive educational system, mass media representations, and daily pressures of racism and sexism has been shown to vary by environment (Holland, 2013; Proweller, 1998; Rollock, 2007). Research must acknowledge this precarious position and the variation in the experiences of Black girls in order to adequately address needs and inform policy around Black girl achievement, as the need for attention to Black girls and Black girls’ education has been demonstrated. Bowser (2007) and Pattillo-McCoy (1999) refer to the paradox of the Black middle class because of the interplay of privilege and vulnerability. Noting that members of the Black middle class occupy a very marginal space, both studies noting that the relationship and proximity of Black middle class neighborhoods to lower-income areas makes them vulnerable to similar experiences of residents of poverty stricken areas. Thus, the designation as middle class does not mitigate issues of race experienced by the impoverished community. These studies point to the importance of the intersection of race, class and gender. This work takes a closer look into the experiences of Black girls who are integrated in White communities and the impacts of residential isolation.

This is a multiple-case study that employed an intersectional theoretical framework to analyze data. The study involves five individual cases of Black teenage girls who each live and attend school in a predominantly White suburban area. This multiple-case study is exploratory as it is used to explore what can be learned from these girls’ experiences. This qualitative approach focuses on illuminating how these Black girls experience their environment and the educational and social repercussions of their marginalization. This work examines participant’s experiences consistently defending themselves against prominent stereotypes as well as defending their competence to their classmates and educators. Previous research focuses on deficiencies and pathologies of Black girls aimed at controlling or managing female reproduction fail to recognize the multitude of structural stressors that negatively affect Black females. Thus, reform efforts and the multitude of programs aimed at improving educational outcomes for this group are not adequate as they do not consider the assemblage of issues confronting these girls. Grounded in Black feminism, this work is a political act that seeks to uncover knowledge that can impact the lived reality of these girls and in this sense is not neutral (Collins, 2000).

**Literature Review**

While there has been overwhelming scholarly attention focused on the achievement gap and issues of class and cultural factors (Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2009; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) including cultural deficiencies (Jensen, 1969; Payne, 2008; Payne & Evans, 1995; Ravitch, 1990), and access to resources (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner,
experiences of Black students who do have seemingly equal access to resources. However, data indicate that even in well-resourced schools Black students are still the lowest achievers, with lower college going rates and lower participation in advanced courses (Darity et. al 2001, Klopfenstein, 2005, Ogbu & Simmons, 1998). Various studies have cited the gap in performance of Black and White students in well-resourced high performing schools (Diette, 2011; Paige & Witty, 2010; Sandy & Duncan, 2010). Ferguson (2002) found that the “gap” between affluent Black and White students was even higher or larger than that of lower socio-economic status Black and White students.

The normative discussion of the Black/White achievement gap is hampered with deficit-based ideology about Black student underachievement or capabilities. Some investigations of the underachievement of Black students generally concentrate on the experiences of inner-city students and have noted structural issues and inequalities with school resources and cultural differences (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Milner, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Oakes & Saunders, 2004; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). However, the current literature on urban Black identity development does not take into account the diversity of the Black experience including that of suburban Black students.

Davis and Welcher (2013) found that race remains an enduring obstacle to educational equity for poor as well as non-poor Blacks. Thus, more research is needed to understand the experiences of middle and upper middle class Blacks in high achieving schools that contribute to inequitable educational outcomes. In a post-racial America it is important to investigate the interplay of class and race. While moves against affirmative action policies in California (Proposition 209) and Michigan indicate a belief in a post-racial America, others argue that class does little to lessen the impact of race or racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Feagin, 1991; Feagin & O’Brien, 2010; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Hughes & Thomas, 1998). This stance has been dubbed the “Race matters” argument (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1998; West, 1993). Lacy (2004) found that middle class Blacks engage in “strategic assimilation” navigating the pressures of racism using Black socialization practices. Venturing from the discussion of resources, this study focuses on the often unspoken or un/underaddressed ways that Black children, specifically girls are being underserved.

Aside from the deficit-oriented literature on Black students as a whole, there is a specific “gaze” from the larger culture that describes Black adolescent girlhood in terms of promiscuous sexuality and deviant behaviors (Tolman & Higgins, 1996). Thus, Black girls are seen as students who have to overcome both race and sex, characteristics that make them inherently inferior. Women and girls are often the target of blame for the community in the overwhelming focus on unfit or uneducated, often welfare or teenage mothers. This rhetoric of the unfit teen mother allows girls to be seen only in terms of reproduction and population control, reducing individuals to simply numbers (Hendrixson, 2002).
Numbers are then used to incite moral panic around an issue overwhelmingly associated with Black and Latino girls.

The idea of support for marginalized students has often been explored for students in urban contexts (Darling-Hammond, Noguera, Cobb & Meier, 2007; Oakes & Saunders, 2004), but this present study has implications for theory and practice as it explores the experiences and needs of Black suburban middle school girls as well. Specifically, in high achieving schools Black students are still struggling with achievement and access as they are less likely to be enrolled in advanced courses which affects their academic self-concept and college enrollment prospects (Darity et al., 2001). Diette’s (2012) study of North Carolina middle schools found:

“(1) Black students are underrepresented in Algebra 1 in essentially all schools in North Carolina; (2) the largest disparities occur in schools that are highly integrated while the disparities are reduced in schools that are either large majority White or large majority non-White; (3) schools with a larger share of White teachers are related to larger disparities between Black and White students; (4) the marginal effects of racial composition on the relative disparity in enrollment are significantly larger for Black females than Black males” (p. 322).

These results speak directly to the need for further research on the experiences of Black students in predominantly-White suburban schools as they are often highly capable students with resources including science labs, latest technology and fully equipped libraries, who are either overlooked or discriminated against in school. It is imperative to research the experiences of Black girls as they are marginalized both as Black students and as women, operating under a stigma of inferiority about both. This study investigates how identity formation, in a predominantly-White context, affects the academic choices and outcomes of Black middle-school girls. Interrupting the conversation on resources and program access, this study probes further to understand if Black teenage girls in predominantly-White communities are being underserved or isolated in other areas or ways that may affect the supposed achievement gap.

Drawing upon identity work like Murrell (2009), who uses situated-mediated identity theory to explain that educational attainment is “much less a matter of an individual’s disidentification with school and more a matter of the school context’s disidentification with the student” (Murrell, 2009, p. 97), this work further explores identity formation and academic self-concept among Black middle school girls in a predominantly-White environment to assess the need for possible structural and emotional supports.

It is imperative to research the experiences of Black girls as they are marginalized both as Black students and as women, operating under a stigma of inferiority about both.
Methodology

This is a multiple-case study that employed an intersectional theoretical framework to analyze data. This framework recognizes that girls navigate issues of race, class and gender simultaneously (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). While both Black girls and boys suffer from a deficit approach to education, girls occupy an especially precarious position as they are seen as the producers of this community (Burman, 1995). Their position as future mothers of these deviant children and their own “sexual deviance” marks their bodies in specific ways. In this position Black girls are both hypervisible and invisible, with the control of their Black bodies and reproduction being top priority and programs and their voices rarely if ever heard (Brown, 2009). Addressing both issues of racism and sexism, this research uncovers ways that Black girls’ middle/upper middle class status mitigates issues of racism and sexism in predominantly-White contexts.

The study examined five individual cases of Black teenage girls who each live and attend school in a predominantly-White suburban area. This multiple-case study is exploratory, as it is used to explore what can be learned from these girls’ experiences about the interplay of class and race. A case study design was used to illuminate the girls’ perceptions and what decisions girls were making, how they make decisions based on those perceptions and how their academic decisions are affected (Schramm, 1971). To ensure validity I used informant review, conducting follow-up interviews in which each participant verified the details of the transcripts. After individual cases were analyzed, codes were used to reveal general commonalities among cases (Yin, 2003). Codes, as well as interview and observation notes, were used to develop a profile for each participant then conducted a cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to identify main themes (Patton, 2002).

An intersectional analysis using Black Feminist theory is required as the data illustrated issues of class, gender and race in the girls’ lives (Collins, 1999). Class, gender, and race are inextricably interrelated, requiring an examination of the dynamics of difference and sameness (Cho et al., 2013). Black feminist theory argues for the analysis of Black women’s experience coping with the matrix of racism, classism, and sexism understanding race does not exist without class nor class without race or sex. I analyze how modes of power that affect each girl’s identity development operate in the context of structures of inequity (Crenshaw, 1989). These interviews point to the way racial power aligned with class privilege are normalized in predominantly-White settings, as a reflection of hegemony in the larger society.

This study employed counter-storytelling, where girls are given a platform to share their experiences from their own perspectives. Counter-storytelling recognizes that the experiences and knowledge of people of color is genuine and critical to their understanding and urges scholars to analyze race as theorists maintain that racism is normal in U.S. society (Delgado, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1998) explains, “The primary reason, then, that stories, or narratives, are deemed important among CRT scholars is that they add necessary contextual contours to the seeming “objectivity” of positivist perspectives” (p. 11). This study uses counter-storytelling to illuminate ways that Black middle school girls in predominantly-White environments experience the environment and navigate obstacles of racism, sexism and classism.
The group of participants was selected through telephone appeals after being suggested by other girls in their friendship group. The initial participant, Ariel, I knew during my time in Charlotte, working in childcare and I had met all participants in some form before I began my research. After girls and their parents accepted my invitation to participate in the study, I spent time in each of their homes conducting four interviews. The girls live in the same neighborhood, but were all interviewed individually. Parents were not invited to participate in interviews, but were told that the results of the study would be shared with them when the research was concluded. I wanted girls to be as comfortable as possible sharing information about their experience in schools, although they were aware parents would be able to read the results of the study with the pseudonyms they were assigned. The most difficulty came from coordinating schedules with middle and high school girls. Many interviews were rescheduled because of athletic or social obligations that had been forgotten. As my time in the area was limited two participants’ interviews were limited to three, two had four and one had five. There were also a few interruptions during interviews from siblings or parents; however, these distractions allowed me to observe daily life and interactions in the girls’ households.

Data Collection

From November 2013 to February 2014, I collected data on five middle and early high school girls in a large southern metropolitan city. Data for this multiple-case study (Schram, 2006) was collected over a period of four months using qualitative methods including interviews, visual methods, and participant observation. For the purposes of this paper, I used only the interview data in order to address the significant commonalities among participants. I conducted both semi-structured interviews with each girl three to five times over the course of my study. Each interview was transcribed and coded using the grounded theory data analysis method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In this analysis, I initially used open coding going line-by-line and breaking down data into parts, comparing the similarities and differences of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the open coding portion, I initially pawed through the data to see what kind of themes stood out, highlighting words and concepts as I went along. Sandelowski (2000) observes that analysis of texts begins with proofreading the material and simply underlining key phrases. Similarly, Ryan and Bernard (2003) refers to this method as the ocular scan method, or eyeballing. Because this is a multiple-case study, it was important for me to make comparisons between paragraphs and across informants. This required the compare and contrast approach to coding, which is used to decide the ways that texts are similar or different from each other (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) also refer to this method as the “constant comparison method” as it happens throughout the coding process. I employed this method during the entire open coding process. Lastly, during the open-coding portion, I used a word-based technique called key-words-in-context (KWIC) method, where I read the text noting words that were used a lot (key words), and then analyzed the context of which the word was used to begin identifying broad themes. Ryan and Bernard (2003) note “in this technique, researchers identify key words and then systematically search the corpus of the text to find all instances of that word or phrase” (p. 88).

Next, I conducted focused coding, where I
used them to synthesize and conceptualize data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As noted by Goulding (1998), conceptualizing is the process of grouping similar items according to some defined properties and giving the items a name that stands for that common link. In conceptualizing, “we reduce large amounts of data to smaller, more manageable pieces of data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 121). The themes developed are reflective of commonalities among each participant.

There was no dropout in the study as consent was given for five girls that participated until the completion of the work. All interviews were open-ended semi-structured interviews. In drafting a protocol for each case I created interview questions; however, those questions changed as the actual interview revealed new directions for the research. Interviewing girls in their homes gave context to the work, while conducting these interviews separate from parents gave participants a platform to voice their daily truths allowing for more in depth conversation.

**Participants**

Purposeful sampling was used to select five participants from a majority White neighborhood and school. A neighborhood and school cluster in a predominantly-White area was identified, and Black teenage girls that were both residents of the neighborhood and a student at the selected schools were asked to participate. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant as well as the neighborhood and school to ensure anonymity. All five girls are residents of a predominantly-White community and attended the local predominantly-White middle school or high school. Of the participants four were in eighth grade and one was in tenth grade. The girls range in age from 13 years old to 15 years old. Each student self-identified as Black and was born in the United States; however there was diversity in cultural background with two students having parents from Africa and one from the Caribbean. Participants belong to varying family structures including two parents, single parent and extended family structures. All information included was self-reported by participants.

> Throughout the study, I was careful to consider my subjectivities and to be conscious of how they might affect the work.

**Reflexivity**

Throughout the study, I was careful to consider my subjectivities and to be conscious of how they might affect the work. As a Black female who grew up in a similar area and socio-economic conditions as the participants, part of the subjectivity I bring to the research is my sense of racial identity and class privilege, which may not be shared by the girls. To ensure I did not project my own feelings or make unfair assumptions I consistently asked for clarification from each participant throughout the interview and used follow up interviews to receive confirmation of my analysis to ensure their stories were accurately represented. I also feel my racial background and gender were key factors in my ability to gain access to participants as both parents and students may have felt more comfortable discussing sensitive topics with me. Throughout my study with the girls these thoughts are reflected in my daily journal entries.
Findings

Kendall

Throughout our discussions, Kendall briefly mentioned various issues in school although she showed some inability to name the source of racial or class injustices. For example, when asked about what changes she would make to her school, Kendall noted that she would like to attend a school with more Black people and indicated that she would like for more Black teachers to teach advanced classes. She also noted that she did not personally experience racism in school, “I would just change the fact that there would be more Black or minority teachers teaching honors classes.” However, when I probed further as to why she would like more Black teachers for her advanced courses or more Black students she indicates that they would create a more equitable or fair environment. Kendall went further to give an example of unfair treatment she felt both she and her friends had experienced because of their race, explaining that “umm yea in like 6th grade my math teacher, Ms. Cane, I felt like she singled out umm some of my friends and I because she didn’t help us as much as she helped other students and she didn’t show us the same attitude as she did towards other people-- the White people.”

Kendall indicated that race in her school was inextricably tied to class. In her upper-middle class environment, Kendall experienced race in very specific classed ways. I noticed that throughout the interview she used the terms rich and White interchangeably. In terms of class, Kendall also remarks that she feels pressure in her school and goes further to say that another school with more of a diverse group of students would ease some of the pressure to have material items and fit the mold. However, as I asked further questions about class I noted that Kendall’s issues where not only class related. While class was a problem, Kendall specifically noted wanting more peers of the same race for comfort. I separated the class and race themes because Kendall indicated that issues with class were more related to pressure for material items, while her issues with race were related to beauty and image concerns. Finally, while Kendall mentions various areas of inequity and racism in her neighborhood and school she also noted that her peers do not often discuss issues of race.

Ariel

Like Kendall, Ariel, a northern transplant attending the neighborhood high school, revealed a post-racial attitude, a belief that our society no longer has issues with racism, a strategy she uses to negotiate her marginal status as a Black girl in an overwhelmingly White environment. However, as our conversation began, her answers revealed that she has adopted this attitude as a way to deal with her marginalization because of race. In our initial interview, Ariel noted that cliques did exist but she wasn’t sure how or why they formed, guessing that people just gravitated to each other because of similar interests. However, later on in the interview Ariel notes that the students also do form groups seemingly around racial lines stating, “they just don’t feel like they need to experience other people.” Ariel also explains that her group of friends is not aligned by race but more so by class interests; however, their class interests ensure them a space amongst the White group. Although she is Black, one friend is Latino and the other White. When asked how that happened, she goes on to say that they hang around the White group because she and her Latino friend can fit in with the White people, but her Latino and White friend cannot fit in with the Black people, because they do not share their interests. Ariel however does go back and forth between the Black and White groups, and shares similar interests with the Black
Interestingly, while Ariel notes enjoying or more so participating in activities with White rich kids such as bonfires or kickbacks in large country club homes with outdoor fire pits and movie rooms or activity rooms, she went on to say that she enjoyed her community in the Bronx more because it felt more like home and she was more comfortable, indicating that she is making the best out of her current situation but generally feels uncomfortable. When asked if there were times she felt isolated, Ariel very matter of factly responded “of course!” Ariel mentioned a specific experience in her marketing class where the class was discussing a political situation dealing with race and specifically singled her out as the only Black person in class, and thus the representative for the Black community, to discuss her reaction to the story. Ariel says she remarked “no comment” and noted she did not like the teacher singling her out.

This situation highlights many teachers’ actions or feelings, which indicate racial issues should only be of consequence to “other” races or people. Ariel also mentioned that she feels particularly uncomfortable in her honors classes because she is the only Black student and situations like the one she described fuel her discomfort and marginalization. Additionally, being constantly silenced by shame or discomfort, affects academic experiences and outcomes because class participation is stifled as well as the relationship with the teacher which could possibly impede Ariel’s comfort with asking for any assistance. Ariel explained that this is a regular occurrence in most of her classes and she deals with other teachers the same way, simply saying “no comment”. Although, when I specifically asked her about expressing her discomfort she said that she has stood up for herself in the past.

Ariel discussed preferring her geometry class because the teacher is Black. She feels that the teacher is nicer to her and although she is still the only Black student she does not feel singled out. Geometry is the only course that Ariel has with a non-White teacher. Ariel mentioned that she believed the few Black students that were in the school were in lower level classes “because they don’t want to do the work.” When I questioned her further about how students are placed she said you just sign up for them, although she noted these decisions could be discussed with guidance counselors. I asked her if she ever thought the guidance counselors were suggesting these lower level classes and she said she never thought about it. This example is an illustration of the personal or individual responsibility narrative that has dominated the discussion on Black “underachievement.” Like many, Ariel has bought into the narrative without considering any possible larger or structural issues, even the ones that affect her. This also indicates her inability to or discomfort in naming inequity.

While later in our conversation Ariel notes that most of the Black students that went to her school left last year for another high school, she does not readily relate the issues they experienced to her isolation in class. When I asked why the students left her school she said that “cause I guess they didn’t like the atmosphere, I guess they felt like they were I don’t know like singled out.” She went on to say that she also felt singled out, “yea, like when I wear my scarves and stuff to school they always have to say something to me, but when the White girls wear their little scarves they don’t say anything they just walk around or like a bandana, it’s just really annoying.”

Being constantly silenced by shame or discomfort affects academic experiences and outcomes.

This situation highlights many teachers’ actions or feelings, which indicate racial issues should only be of consequence to “other” races or people. Ariel also mentioned that she feels particularly uncomfortable in her honors classes because she is the only Black student and situations like the one she described fuel her discomfort and marginalization. Additionally, being constantly silenced by shame or discomfort, affects academic experiences and outcomes because class participation is stifled as well as the relationship with the teacher which could possibly impede Ariel’s comfort with asking for any assistance. Ariel explained that this is a regular occurrence in most of her classes and she deals with other teachers the same way, simply saying “no comment”. Although, when I specifically asked her about expressing her discomfort she said that she has stood up for herself in the past.

Ariel discussed preferring her geometry class because the teacher is Black. She feels that the teacher is nicer to her and although she is still the only Black student she does not feel singled out. Geometry is the only course that Ariel has with a non-White teacher. Ariel mentioned that she believed the few Black students that were in the school were in lower level classes “because they don’t want to do the work.” When I questioned her further about how students are placed she said you just sign up for them, although she noted these decisions could be discussed with guidance counselors. I asked her if she ever thought the guidance counselors were suggesting these lower level classes and she said she never thought about it. This example is an illustration of the personal or individual responsibility narrative that has dominated the discussion on Black “underachievement.” Like many, Ariel has bought into the narrative without considering any possible larger or structural issues, even the ones that affect her. This also indicates her inability to or discomfort in naming inequity.

While later in our conversation Ariel notes that most of the Black students that went to her school left last year for another high school, she does not readily relate the issues they experienced to her isolation in class. When I asked why the students left her school she said that “cause I guess they didn’t like the atmosphere, I guess they felt like they were I don’t know like singled out.” She went on to say that she also felt singled out, “yea, like when I wear my scarves and stuff to school they always have to say something to me, but when the White girls wear their little scarves they don’t say anything they just walk around or like a bandana, it’s just really annoying.”
Layla

Layla was the only one of my interviewees to indicate that she does not see race as a factor in her life. In fact she stated that her school experience is not affected by race noting, “my race doesn’t determine how smart I am or my ability to learn.” Layla seemed to use her race as motivation to be better than or different from stereotypes; however, she did not name or describe the actual stereotype she was distancing herself from. Also, struggling with issues of naming, Layla reported that while people socialized according to race, including herself, race is never discussed among family or friends because it simply “doesn’t come up”. In fact, throughout the interview Layla rarely used racial terms instead opting to use neighborhood codes that indicate both race and class. When describing a group of White students she characterized them as “people who live in the country club” rather than White. This also indicates the importance of class, as this is the most privileged neighborhood in the area.

In addition, unlike the other girls Layla indicated that she enjoyed her classes. She said that she had a friend in every class, so she felt comfortable. When I asked her whether she had ever felt uncomfortable or isolated in any class, Layla said “yaa like one time when I had an elective and there were like none of my friends in there and no one I could talk to, so I didn’t really talk to anyone in that class.” Layla further explained that she had nothing to discuss with the students because they had nothing in common. Layla’s experience or level of comfort is telling as she is in the lower level or “regular” academic track. Her experience there, surrounded by a diverse group of students, versus the girls in the upper track is telling of the impact of diversity or peer support in the classroom. The level of comfort experienced in these courses may be impetus for her to stay in these classes rather than venture into advanced classes where she could risk the same isolation she felt in the elective she took.

Layla’s commentary on the atmosphere in her school and community also seemed to negate the possibility of a post-racial society as she explained that the students were more so tolerant of each other as racial groups than comfortable. Similar to Kendall’s comments on “being friends with anyone who would be friends with her,” Layla stated that she would speak to people and they would speak to her and while they may not have anything against her she knew they would just never be friends. This statement suggests that while there may not be any racial slurs being hurled, it is because the borders or lines have been set (in silence) and Black students know not to cross them, not to step out of the margins. Layla stated that race does not play a part in her daily life, but went on to explain the ways she navigates issues of race that are present. While Layla experiences racial tension and has developed strategies to cope, she demonstrates an inability to verbally identify these struggles.

Michelle

Likewise, Michelle indicated struggling with attempting to be a member of the “in crowd” or accepting her place in the margins stating “people in my class aren’t really accepting of me, I’ve tried to be friends but they’re not my friends.” She went on to say that this sometimes affected her work noting “some girls don’t have a problem with me, but it’s still not like we are gonna do partner work and you’re the one that’s gonna be chosen first or you’re the one that I’ll do the project or the assignment with.” However, Michelle felt her experience in school was much...
group and White popular group) and are more free to talk to White girls.” She explains that it is different for guys and for Black girls as she shares “a lot of Caucasians feel that we are ratchet, ignorant and over the top.” Here Michelle indicates that Black males and females experience both daily school life and relationships differently. She feels that she has to negate a stereotype specific to Black girls.

Like the other girls, Michelle reported having had only one experience with a Black teacher in her middle school career. She feels that course was a better experience because the teacher had rules that she respected and felt she gave the appropriate punishments for students. Michelle mentioned feeling that many of her White teachers do not give deserved punishments to students and cited an ongoing issue in her Spanish course. She explains that as the only Black student in this course she does not have any friends in the class and further isolating is her decision to wear natural or curly hair. She goes further “I wear my hair in a ponytail, and this boy is like ummm excuse me can you move your afro? I can’t see and the whole class bursts out laughing.” Michelle explained that “can you move your afro” is now an ongoing joke in that classroom, which the students receive no recourse for. She noted that the teacher may say something to quiet down the class, but it does not go further than that. When asked how she deals with situations like this Michelle stated that her mother told her to “make them feel small” by acting unaffected. Michelle states that she feels the White students in her school expect her to act “a certain way and they expect the Black people to be really like mean and grumpy and like really like ignorant and obnoxious but they expect you to act a certain way and say certain things, they don’t want you to be sophisticated or polite or anything that’s not what their expectation is.”

Mainly finding fault with teachers and administrators for lack of support, Michelle said the main thing she would change about her school would be to increase diversity among teachers and administrators. For this reason she is avoiding the local high school instead applying for an early college program. As the youngest of four sisters she feels her mother is aware of the increased racial issues at the high school and would like to avoid them with her. However, currently Michelle is supported by her group of Black girl friends that she describes as “different” and girls who “don’t care about what other people think.”

**Discussion**

The commonalities found among each girl include class and race related marginalization, resistance to marginalizing norms, resistance to stereotypes, post-racial beliefs, difficulty naming inequity and dis-identification with the larger Black community. In this study I found that school perception differed somewhat by academic track, in turn possibly affecting the academic decisions or desires of the girls. While all girls reveal general marginalization in school, girls that participated in the upper-track or advanced courses indicated a heightened sense of marginalization and need for peer
The data collected demonstrated that the girls accept the margin as the norm agreeing to their place as the “other” and on occasion feigning “Whiteness” to fit in with their White peers. Also, they retain very little authority in “choosing” friends or friendships and simply are forced to allow the relationships to choose them because essentially they are what is “left over.” These results support Davis and Welcher’s (2013) findings that class does not mitigate issues of racism and difference.

Also, participants’ experiences reassert the validity of Black feminist theory assertion that Black women experience a matrix of oppression dealing with sexism, classism and racism. Girls exhibit a struggle to navigate classist and racist pressures, but also note feeling their experience is very different from Black boys in the same environment. The participants illustrate the consistent presence of racism and importance of race in their environment. To develop strategies to improve the academic and social experiences of these girls the endemic nature of racism to structures, including schools, must be addressed.

Each participant developed strategies to deal with their racial difference and marginalization, indicating that their race and gender contributed to a daily struggle intensifying the school experience. Further, the participants indicate that the heightened class distinctions in their school as the girls all noted that there was an upper-tier of the school occupied by students identified as super rich or “country clubbers.” However, this study complicates simple understandings of simple racial difference as participants associated issues of race with specific issues of image, beauty, teacher treatment, class selection and friendship, and issues of class with extra-curricular activities and worth. While the girl’s middle class status does not reflect the particular type of vulnerability that Bowser (2007) and Patillo-McCoy (1999) suggest in reference to the interplay of privilege and vulnerability, peer isolation and adult (racism) characterized their experience as Black girls in a predominantly-White suburban community.

Participants exhibited a need for critical education that will help them deconstruct issues that confront them including racism and classism amongst others. A critical education would give them the resources to understand why they may be isolated in advanced courses or why they feel administrators target them or teachers single them out. The ability to think critically could also give them the agency to defend themselves and confront inequity to make the space more comfortable for them.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

The results of the study indicate that research and policies addressing the achievement gap must be race specific as race is a specific disadvantage point for the girls, even in their upper middle class position. Often the discussion of disadvantage is reserved for lower socioeconomic status African Americans; however, this work illustrates the racial inequities present regardless of class position and can be intensified by class. These results are specifically pertinent to this Southeastern school district as race specific policies have been dismantled in the past two decades leaving students in extremely segregated schools, stranding middle and upper middle class African American students in isolating predominantly-White suburban enclaves (Smith, 2004). This research indicates areas for research including tracking practices in predominantly-White public schools, teacher perceptions of African American children in
teacher experiences in predominantly-White schools, school hiring practices, teacher preparation programs and school disciplinary policies.

While some of the girls tried to adopt a raceless or post-racial identity by avoiding discussions of race and negotiating majority spaces thus fitting in, their difficulties, including being singled out by administrators and teachers and experiences of racism, negate the idea of a post-racial society and illustrate what race and ignoring racism is doing in these girls’ lives. Particular to these girls is the interplay of class and race as they are members of the upper-middle class yet they still experience life at the “bottom.” Race, class and sex or gender has a serious effect on the girls’ educational outcomes as the navigation of the various structural hierarchies and stereotypes about Black people are an additional obstacle for these girls. Negotiating this “in the middle” identity creates a more complex middle school experience for these girls and has important implications for their self-concept and academic trajectory.

References


Ethics of Exemplary Black Educators: Implications for Teacher Education and the Preparation of Prospective Black Teachers

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It is a well-documented fact that African American teachers have a positive and meaningful impact on the educational success of African American students’ learning (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2005; Evans 1992), rates of school attendance (England & Meier, 1986; Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shuan, 1990), and participation in advanced classes (Klopfenstein, 2005). Indeed, research has highlighted the beliefs and practices of exemplary African American teachers (Foster, 1997; Milner, 2006; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Ware, 2006), yet there are far fewer African American teachers in classrooms today than ever before (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). Recent reports on teacher demographics indicate that there has been an insufficient number of African American teachers prepared to enter and remain in the teaching force for a significant period of time. For example, the US Department of Education reported that in 2012 African Americans comprised 8.6 percent of the teaching force while European Americans made up 68%. It was also reported that in the 2009 – 2010 academic year, nine percent of undergraduates in teacher education programs identified as African American, while 68% identified as European American.

Unsurprisingly, the dramatically shrinking pipeline of African American educators in public schools coincides with the marginalization of prospective African American teaching professionals (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Delpit, 2005; Dilworth & Coleman, 2014; Scott & Rodriguez, 2014). That is, far less attention is focused on meeting the professional and pedagogical needs of prospective African American teachers and overwhelmingly emphasizes the need to help European American, English-speaking, young females “deal” with an increasingly diverse public school population (Cook, 2013; Delpit, 2005; Villegas & Davis, 2007). As a result, many African American teachers are intellectually marginalized from the learning environment in teacher education and subsequently have difficulty leveraging their cultural knowledge and ways of thinking in the
(Cook, 2013; Knight, 2004; Meacham, 2000; Scott & Rodriguez, 2014). Working with practicing Black educators who consistently promote achievement for African American students may provide a productive way to help teacher educators understand the pedagogical needs of prospective African American teachers, and think carefully about how best to meet these professional needs (Irvine, 2002; Perry, 2003). Black educators enact a sophisticated and complex pedagogy linked to the social realities of African Americans as a cultural group and founded on culturally specific ethics, or ways of thinking about teaching (Foster, 1994; Irvine, 2002). It is these underlying culturally-influenced ethics that powers their pedagogy (Howard, 2002; Ware, 2002). Examining the ways exemplary Black educators make sense of the critical elements that define their practice can help teacher educators rethink what it means to teach African American children well from a culture-centered perspective and restructure their own instructional approaches in ways that support prospective African American teachers in learning how to draw on their cultural resources in support of student learning and achievement. Given both the pervasive educational underachievement of African American children in US schools, as well as the need to increase the number of African American teachers, finding ways to successfully prepare African American teachers stands as a serious responsibility of teacher educators and a promising approach towards helping African American students demonstrate educational excellence. This article will share findings from a qualitative study with community-nominated successful Black educators about the nature of their cultural insights, which can inform the preparation of African American teachers. The study’s guiding question was **what culture-systemic ethics do exemplary Black educators employ in their teaching of African American children?**

**Literature Review: Preparing African American Teachers**

Research focused on African Americans educator preparation has included individual, qualitative case studies that report on student experiences during and after program participation (Knight, 2002; Meacham, 2000; Scott & Rodriguez, 2014). Overwhelmingly, findings indicate that African American students in teacher credentialing programs experience a range of psychological turmoil that alienates them from the learning environment. Knight’s (2002) case study of an African American female in an educator preparation program reported that this prospective teacher expressed feelings of invisibility among her predominantly White peers and instructors. The researcher described how this potential African American teacher struggled to find and project her individual voice and reconcile the dominant theoretical perspectives that often worked against her own notions of social justice and education. Furthermore, the researcher reported that the participant rarely participated in coursework or field experiences that enabled her to capitalize on her insights. Similarly, Meacham (2000) revealed the cultural limbo experienced by two African American preservice teacher participants in a yearlong ethnographic study. According to the researcher, the African American preservice teachers experienced deleterious conundrums, which pressured them to “repudiate cultural experiences and perspectives” and “conform to dominant linguistic norms and expectations” (p. 572). The author argued that both
in educator preparation programs have to psychologically navigate an often racially hostile learning environment at the expense of their own cultural integrity. More recently, Scott and Rodriguez (2014) examined the experiences of African American male preservice teachers as part of a larger phenomenological study of African American academic persistence and career aspirations in education. Findings reinforced earlier studies in which participants described grappling with physical and intellectual marginalization within their programs. Interestingly, the researcher also reported that participants experienced a lack of significant role models to emulate in their programs and stereotype threat. Though limited, the research on the experiences of aspiring African American teachers in traditional educator credentialing programs suggests that programs may not be designed in ways that are responsive to the interests, needs, and experiences of prospective African American teachers. Such a pronouncement may be complicit in the declining presence of African American teachers and warrants further research into the nature of educator preparation for African Americans. The current study explored the cultural ethics of community-nominated, successful Black educators in an attempt to highlight the kinds of cultural insights teacher educators should seek to build on and refine in their preparation of African American student teachers. This approach positions teacher education programs as viable avenues for African American educator preparation and situates the perspectives and practices of Black educators as an exemplary model of pedagogical excellence.

Theoretical Framework: African American Epistemology

This study imported African American epistemology as the theoretical lens (Gordon, 1990). African American epistemology is critical to educational theory, policy, and practice because it produces a mode of social theorizing about education representative of the interests of the African American community at large. Gordon’s (1990) theoretical model provides a comprehensive account of the origins of African American epistemology by examining the writings and activities of early Black intellectuals. Her work connects the influence of this culture-centered perspective to education given the tremendous emphasis on educational attainment noted in the cultural artifacts produced by African American people. According to Gordon (1990) the themes embedded in African American epistemological positionality include: self-help, self-determination, service, nationalism, economic autonomy, and political power; and coalesce into a powerful frame of reference upon which many African American people interpret their existence, decipher dominant ideology, and organize for change (Gordon, 1990). These themes acted as the ideological foundation upon which many Black educators

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\text{"Fully understanding the schooling experiences of African American children necessitates an examination of how these experiences unfold in relation to African American thought."
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envisioned, designed, and organized the kind of teaching they perceived to serve the interest of students and the community. Therefore, as Gordon concludes, “African American epistemology goes hand in hand with African American educational theory” (Gordon, 1990, p. 94). Fully understanding the schooling experiences of African American children necessitates an examination of how these experiences unfold in relation to African American thought. In the present study, African American epistemology provided this powerful analytical tool as heuristic for analyzing and interpreting the culture-systemic ethics that guide the work of exemplary Black educators in ways that can help teacher educators better meet the pedagogical needs of African American student teachers.

Researcher and participants function as co-researchers and as co-subjects.

Methodology

Collaborative inquiry was the methodological organizer for this qualitative study (Bridges & McGee, 2011; Heron & Reason, 1997). As part of a larger continuum of participatory research approaches, collaborative inquiry methodology emphasizes a view of inquiry which “allows us as human persons to know that we are part of the whole, rather than separated as mind over and against matter” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p.2). The principles embedded in collaborative inquiry emphasize inclusive participation, mutuality, and the co-construction of knowledge through deep interpretive processes (Bridges & McGee, 2011). In practice, collaborative inquiry operates as a process of cycling between four overlapping elements: (1) reflection, (2) the collective construction of knowledge fostered through dialogue with peers, (3) action, and (4) further group-decision-making (Heron & Reason, 1997). These individual components overlap and are well integrated into a sophisticated iterative process. The process involves reciprocity in the construction of the research agenda, interpersonal relationships between group members, systematic individual and group feedback, and continuous dialogue and reflection. Therefore, researcher and participants function as co-researchers and as co-subjects. Studying issues in African American education demanded this approach as a way to eliminate the existence of empty perceptual space between the researcher and participants wherein participants are objectified in the research process (Dixon, 1976). As objectified “others”, participants, particularly those of African descent, are researched in ways that reduce them to a set of pathological conditions. Such treatment perpetuates pernicious misconceptions of African American inferiority and intellectual ability, and has produced marginal improvements for African American children (King, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Tuck, 2009). Instead, as King (2008) states, “Researchers need methods of inquiry that can capture the beneficial effects of [community] knowledge that provide support for community members’ roles in contributing to and assessing the social utility of teachers’ knowledge and pedagogical skills in the context of community change and survival needs” (p. 708). A collaborative inquiry methodology enabled the intellectuals involved to collectively theorize back and construct a vision of pedagogical excellence for African American children that builds on the cultural orientations of people of African descent.
Participant Selection

To create the collaborative inquiry group, community nomination was used as a purposive sampling technique. According to Foster (1993), community nomination is a process by which research participants are selected through “direct contact” with local African American-communities, and is designed to capture an emic, or insider perspective. To carry out this process, I visited a predominantly African American church, after-school program, and community organization on separate occasions. At each site, I invited parents and guardians of school-aged African American children to participate in a structured conversation about good teaching and good teachers for their children. At the end of this hour-long conversation, each parent recommended teachers that met the collectively generated descriptions. Teachers from these lists were contacted and a total of four educators plus myself composed the research collective. Table 1 displays information about each participant.

Data Collection & Analysis

Data were collected through five partially structured research meetings that followed a similar format, which included time for reflection, debriefing, textual and visual elicitation, new theorizing, and group decision-making. My role throughout each research meeting was one of lead researcher; however, leadership in this respect meant coordinating and facilitating the meeting. It also demanded that I demystify the research process and share my knowledge of educational research in order to support group decision-making and action. Group members used facial expressions, verbal and non-verbal cues, gestures and reenactments to negotiate, probe, challenge, and refine ideas. As the lead researcher, I was careful not to let my comments assume sole authority or dictate the discussions. That is, I used voice similar to that of a portraitist in which, “voice never overshadows the actor's voice, though it is sometimes heard in duet, in harmony, and in counterpoint” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 85). Conversations of this nature enabled the group to gather thick descriptions and detailed analysis from our collective cultural standpoint.

Additionally, I implemented a process to strengthen authenticity and one to strengthen reciprocity as we worked together. Theses two processes were noted as essential features of collaborative inquiry, and work to help individuals and groups to, “become empowered to understand, produce knowledge and bring about active positive

Table 1. Participant information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Educ. Level</th>
<th>Teaching Exp (No. of years)</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>School size</th>
<th>% of African American students</th>
<th>% of students free or reduced lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antionette</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Elem.</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalonda</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Elem.</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriett</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Elem.</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geneva</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Elem.</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cultivate an ethos of authenticity and reciprocity in the inquiry process.

Implementing processes to create a reciprocal, authentic research space created the conditions necessary for the group to function in ways that genuinely built on the collective knowledge, experience, and perspectives of African American educators. Additionally it structured an environment that enabled the collective to move fluidly between the different elements of collaborative inquiry. Figure 2 presents a research collective ecology. Or rather displays the context within which the research meetings were carried out. Understanding more about how ecological factors related to the collection of data influence the production of data was beyond the scope of this study. However, it is an area of study important to research focused on African American educational improvement.

Each research meeting was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim in preparation for data analysis. Data were analyzed both collectively (with participants) and independently utilizing a systematic, inductive approach (Hatch, 2002). First, I independently organized the data into large, overarching categories, or themes that represented
the group’s initial perspectives. This began after the first research meeting and categories were added or modified after subsequent meetings. This step was necessary to organize the data in a way that could later be used for collective analysis. Next, data were presented in these categories to the group for our collective theorizing and analysis. This process consisted of reading the categorized transcripts, interrogating the thinking reflected in the transcripts by posing questions and seeking clarification, reflecting on the ideas presented in the transcripts, and refining the ideas presented to reflect group consensus. We then created an initial list of possible domains to describe group perspectives on the ways that culture influenced pedagogy. According to Hatch (2002), domains help researchers discover how individuals and groups “organize their understandings and operate in their worlds” (p. 165). In the next step, we read the domain sheets in order to identify and refine salient codes. Through this we developed interpretations and found examples from the data to support our thinking. In the final step, we looked across the codes, which resulted in broad codes. The collective analysis was a significant analytical step because it enabled us to make sense of our teaching within a “racialized discourse” that fully acknowledged the complexities of culture in teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Additionally, it was important because it provided a culturally specific proxy for the subsequent independent analysis of data. As a final analytical step, I applied African American epistemology (Gordon, 1990) as a theoretical framework to better understand how the domains were connected to dominant cultural themes encapsulated in African American epistemology. I read the emergent themes from the collective analysis. I searched for similarities, differences, and relevant distinctions between the educators’ explanations and descriptions of each cultural theme. This merging of theory with data produced overarching themes that represented both the thinking of the group and some of the dominant perspectives embedded in African American cultural knowledge. This layer of analysis was used to provide theoretical language as a complement to the research team’s theorizing and analysis. Figure 3 captures the analytical process and highlights the construction and co-construction of knowledge in each phase.

Findings

Three themes emerged that are relevant to the discussion of preparing African American teachers. These themes highlight the ethics the group of accomplished Black educators in this study theorized formed the powerful foundation of their pedagogy. The first theme, **ethic of service**, highlights cultural solidarity as an important component of teaching African American children well. The second theme, **ethic of adaptive expertise**, highlights the centrality of a student-centered approach to teaching African American children well. The last theme, **ethic of critical studyin’**, implicates the necessity of critical race perspectives in teacher thinking that promotes African American educational excellence. Together, these themes offer insights into the culture-specific ethics of a group of effective Black educators, which can help teacher educators develop learning experiences that explicitly draw on these features in their articulation of successful teaching of African American children. Making these features and their connections to good teaching explicit in educator preparation can help beginning African American
American student achievement beyond that of a role model (Irvine, 1989). More importantly, it can help novice African American teachers learn how to use the cultural knowledge they may already possess in powerful pedagogical ways.

Ethic of Service

Historically, many Black educators saw it as their duty to teach the masses of illiterate Blacks within the community as a form of collective survival, resistance, and liberation (Franklin, 1984; Perry, 2003). Many believed as noted by Black educator Mary Church Terrell that, “Those of us fortunate enough to have an education must share it...we must go into our communities and improve it”. The educators expressed similar commitments, which helped them make sense of their purpose and mission as teachers. They shared,

Antionette: The work we’re doing is part of giving back to the community, and it’s not about the paycheck...
Jalonda: It’s about that passion to give back... It’s about working with our youth and just trying to make a
difference and make an impact in the community.
Harriett: My reason for coming into teaching was I saw what needed to be done and I wanted to help …
Monica: So you said you saw what needed to be done---what did you see?
Harriett: Our children…they were not competitive… and I’m thinking, it shouldn’t matter what side of town you come from. What matters is the kind of support you’re getting…..
Jalonda: I think we serve a better purpose when we’re with these kids [African American] cause these kids need someone who is going to advocate for them [Session 5].

This service-oriented perspective contributed to the educators’ expansive view of teaching because it demanded their active participation in building a new, more just social order. The following comment from Geneva is reflective of the action, or praxis component inherent in their ethic of service. She recounted:

Geneva: All I gotta say is those other folks [other teachers at her school] are fightin’ it but we’re fightin’ it too. [referencing the school carnival] They wanna have the school carnival during school hours. But this carnival is a community thing. Girl you know I showed up and showed out! [laughter] [I said to my colleagues] “I know y’all don’t think they work, but some parents do work and also want to spend the time with their children”
Monica: So you’re working with the PTO?
Geneva: Yeah, we haven’t had a PTO in I don’t know how long… and when I got to the school I was like, “No, we need to do this, we need to do something” [Session 2]

Geneva’s commitment to community improvement drove her to challenge the pervasive disregard for African Americans families, which possibly changed an inequitable practice at her school. Her actions demonstrate agency, or her belief that she possessed the power to challenge and change unfair practices. Thus this abiding ethic of service functioned catalytically and helped the educators convert their social justice perspectives into educational praxis. This suggests that designing course work and field experiences that explicitly connect this ethic of service to frameworks of effective pedagogy may help aspiring African American teachers move from theory to practice in ways consistent with their culture-specific perspectives.

Designing course work and field experiences that explicitly connect this ethic of service to frameworks of effective pedagogy may help aspiring African American teachers move from theory to practice in ways consistent with their culture-specific perspectives.
Ethic of Adaptive Expertise

The educators’ self-described teaching approach reflected an emphasis on creating the psychological conditions necessary to bolster African American student achievement. Indeed, these educators were warm demanders, and revealed that warm demanding takes direction from an African American sense of self-determination. The educators’ sense of self-determination was most profoundly expressed in their willingness to adapt to students in order to meet their needs. The conversation below is illustrative.

Jalonda: If teachers are trying to say that they can’t teach African American children because it isn’t how they were raised, then they probably should get another job. Because you have to understand that Black children are not the same as you or how you were raised. They need something different...

Geneva: Right! And not because they aren’t good enough or smart enough. But because we all learn best when learning is tailored to us, the way we are.

Jalonda: The bottom line is we [good Black educators] allow ourselves to adapt to our children and the situation... That’s what its about.

Antionette: So that means I can go into any school and teach...

Harriett: And it doesn’t matter white, Black, Hispanic—it doesn’t not matter because I am a person who is always reflecting on what do I need to do differently, what do I need to do different—so I know how to adapt to the situation I’m in and I allow myself to. If I have to change the way I do something to help my students, then that’s what I’m gonna do.

Jalonda: Teachers have to be willing to get out of their comfort zone. They can’t be the same person as they were. They have to be the person the kids need at that moment...

Antionette: And of course that will change from day to day.

Jalonda: So if teachers are saying they can’t teach our kids [Black children] it’s because they are not allowing themselves to change.

As the findings demonstrated, the educators theorized that adaptive expertise, or the ability to modify their perspectives and practices in ways that promote student success, was a critical part of the work of good teachers. Notice how they resolved that all teachers were capable of teaching African American children well if they were determined to enact a flexible, student-centered pedagogy. This may indicate a need to restructure teacher education curriculum in ways that recognize the value of adaptive teaching expertise and experiences that help African American student teachers translate this ethic into instructional practices.

Ethic of Critical Studyin’

The idea the educators expressed is that obtaining an education has culturally specific meanings for African American people. This perspective is representative of the group’s ethic of critical studyin’ on the cultural politics inherent in
For the group, an ethic of critical studyin’ began with racial realism, or a critical race conception of the status of race relations as explicated by those who live these racialized experiences on a daily basis.

highlighted its importance on their ability teach African American children well.

Monica: If you don’t believe racism and inequality still exists, how can you teach our kids and encourage our kids to do better? Jalonda: When you have no understanding of racism, how can you reach our kids on that level? If you don’t think there is a problem—how can you be a part of fixing the problem? Harriett: Exactly! The only people who don’t think racism stills exists are people who don’t live it everyday, and they are the ones that do the most damage because they perpetuate racism and don’t even know it. Geneva: Right! Cause it’s not in their world. They think everything is great; everything’s okay when there is still inequality and struggle out there. You can’t teach Black kids and be that unrealistic [Session 1].

The findings above suggest that rather than attempt to depoliticize education by ignoring the political aspect of effective pedagogy, teacher educators should embrace the political implications of teaching and learning on ethical grounds as a way to
Discussion

The findings from this study provide a scaffold to support our thinking on how to best meet the professional development needs of novice African American teachers. Through five partially structured research meetings with a group of community-nominated exemplary Black educators, this study contributes to the literature on the role of Black educators in African American student achievement by expanding our knowledge on the cultural insights documented as a value that Black educators bring to the classroom (Irvine, 2003). That is, many scholars agree that Black educators have perceptual giftedness that enables them to interact and instruct African American children well (Dixson, 2003; Foster, 1993; Howard, 2001; Irvine, 2003; King, 1991; Milner, 2006; Morris, 2004; Siddle-Walker, 2000; Stanford, 1997; Ware, 2002). The present study supports this argument and offers descriptions related to the nature of good Black educators’ cultural perspectives that can move the conversation about recruitment and retention of African American teachers to a more pointed discussion of the value African American teachers add to the profession (Villegas & Irvine; 2010). This study also adds to the limited discussion on how best to support the professional needs of new African American teachers. Researchers have documented that while some teacher education programs are approaching issues of diversity and equity in progressive ways, most of these efforts cater to young, White females at the expense of teachers of color (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cook, 2013; Sleeter, 2008). To be sure, the rapidly changing demographics of American public schools, in which most urban schools teachers are White females while students are African American, Hispanic, or Asian Pacific Islander, creates a need to ensure that young White women in teacher education are prepared to teach for excellence. However, as Cook (2013) argues, the tendency to situate Whiteness at the center of teaching implies that Black teachers intrinsically know how to teach Black students, which ignores their pedagogical needs as education professionals. As an example close to home, my experience as a mentor teacher is relevant to the present discussion because it reveals some of the potential consequences of the “overwhelming presence of Whiteness in teacher education” (Sleeter, 2000). As a mentor teacher to predominantly young, White women I was unable to clearly articulate my perspectives and rationalize my practice in ways that were productive for them and accurate for me. We all needed to be able to connect pedagogy to larger cultural, social, and political tenets in order for me to fully explicate my driving theories and in order for them to understand the scope of the critical elements needed to successfully teach African American students. I needed a framework to explain and rationalize what I now can articulate as features of pedagogical excellence. Yet, my own studies in education did not prepare me to understand and interpret the very practice I was recognized for. My own experience highlights some significant pedagogical needs of African American teachers that might be nurtured through their exposure and understanding of the work of exemplary African American educators. First, as my experience highlights, African American teachers need a language of excellence in pedagogy that positively accounts for the ways they may be thinking and teaching.
the ways they may be thinking and teaching. Second, African American teachers, prospective and practicing, need ways to make sense of how some of their own perspectives and experiences with education, which often contradict Western theories based on psychological models (Gordon, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2007), may be connected to exemplary models of excellent teaching. Or rather, they need ways to help them associate, rather than disassociate, their culturally influenced views of education with good teaching. Third, African American teachers need ways to help them enact pedagogical strategies that build on their views.

Through this qualitative exploration with a group of exemplary Black educators, teacher educators can begin to reconstruct their pedagogy in ways that emphasize Black educator ethics as essential elements of effective teaching. Presenting a framework of effective pedagogy from the purview of Black educator ethics can support new African American teachers in making sense of their own educational insights and philosophies while matriculating through their degree programs in ways that are non-alienating and non-exploitative (Knight, 2002). In essence, prospective African American teachers may no longer be in a psychological bind as they reconcile the contradictions between their own culture-specific ethics and the values that dictate teaching today (Meacham, 2000). Such learning experiences carry a plethora of benefits. Most notable among them are the reengagement of prospective African American teachers to their leaning environment and the production of African American teachers poised to enact culturally relevant pedagogy in theory and practice.

Implications

The African American educators involved in this research project constantly connected their knowledge and values, which were situated in the larger political, economic, and social milieu, to descriptions and rationales of instructional decision-making. It seemed that without making an explicit connection to an emancipatory framework, the educators perceived that their characterizations of good teaching would be superficially understood at best and misinterpreted or denigrated at worst. Therefore, it is possible that African American epistemology as an educational theory may offer a context for the kind of pedagogical interpretation necessary to help prospective African American teachers identify consistencies between some of their own values and perspectives and those endemic to teaching Black students well. Moreover, studying the professional lives of exemplary Black educators within the scope of African American epistemology can be liberating for prospective African American teachers because it could eliminate the psychological turmoil, or cultural limbo experienced as African American teachers try to develop as professionals with two competing ideologies in their heads. Inside the teacher education classroom this culture-centered approach may help African American teachers better describe and explain their perspectives about teaching and learning in ways that do not situate them as class outcasts and help them maintain their sense of professionalism and sovereignty. Additionally, this can be an empowering experience for African American teachers because they might begin to view themselves as competent educators on their own terms. Thus, as with the exceptional educators in the present study, future African American teachers may
social activist pedagogy. Both results can have a positive impact on the development and retention of African American teachers. To be sure, I am not suggesting that African American teacher candidates need a separate preparation curriculum; because the work of good Black educators and African American educational theory can be a promising approach for all prospective and practicing teachers. What I am attempting to address is a critical need to attend to the pedagogical needs of African American educators given that research continues to document their significant impact on the achievement of African American learners.

References


The Analysis of Pre-Service Teachers’ Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of English Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms

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University of Memphis

There has been much debate over the ability of our educational system to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The number of children entering public schools with limited or no experience with English language is rising dramatically. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, during the 2008-2009 school year, more than five million English language learners (ELLs) attended elementary and secondary public schools in the United States. As a result of recent and ongoing population changes, America’s schools are serving a new cultural and linguistic mix (Hadaway, 1993). Although the majority of ELLs speak Spanish (Zehler et al., 2003), 56% of schools have students from fifty (50) different language backgrounds, with 48% of schools having fewer than 30 ELLs. Thus, teacher education must address the scope of diversity that teachers will face among their students (Darling-Hammond, Wise & Klein, 1997). One of the main goals of teacher education programs is to prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of the diverse society reflected in K-12 schools (Genessee & Cloud, 1998). By taking a more in-depth look at pre-service teachers’ perceptions and what influences their beliefs, teacher education programs will be better informed of their audience and their needs.

Increasingly, English as second language (ESL) teachers are not the only ones who have the responsibility of teaching ELLs. According to Jones (2002), there is a large possibility of mainstream teachers having ELLs in their classrooms. This increased number of ELLs in classrooms is mainly due to limited state and federal funds that are inadequate for hiring sufficient numbers of ESL teachers and governmental moves away from bilingual education programs (Jones, 2002; Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

Some studies have investigated teachers’ beliefs about diversity (Brown, 2004; McAllister, 2000; Pohan & Aguilar, 2001), in particular the beliefs of pre-service and in-service ESL teachers (Angelova, 2002; Peacock, 2001; Savihnon, 1976). However, the increased language diversity...
in student population has been largely ignored. This neglected topic demands further research regarding what pre-service teachers believe about English language learning and the relationship between pre-service teachers’ knowledge and perceptions. This study will serve as a tool for enabling teacher educators to be better equipped as they instruct education classes with insight into potential pre-service teacher beliefs.

**Rationale**

The theoretical prospective of the sociocultural theory of learning establishes the central nature of the social relationship between teachers and their students. A sociocultural viewpoint with cultural reciprocity requires an understanding of what is normal with a cultural bias for interpretation of the child’s world (Harry et al., 1999). Teachers’ relationships with their students identify literacy and establish the kinds of activities that take place in the classrooms of our K-12 schools. Hence, pre-service teachers’ perceptions about English language learning are very important.

A strong background in linguistics and cultural diversity in teacher education is requisite for the most optimum classroom communication (Moll, 1998). Inextricably connected to communication and learning, research into language perceptions of pre-service teachers may address many of the current concerns of K-12 education. Communication is a fundamental vehicle for realizing the full potential of humankind (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1995). Thus, pre-service teachers’ attitudes in these areas could shed light on curricular decisions and departmental planning for teacher education.

This study endeavors to determine pre-service teachers’ perceptions toward ELLs and characteristics that contribute to the differences in language perceptions. Investigating pre-service teachers’ perceptions concerning ELL students could identify challenges, opportunities, and limitations of preparing future teachers to address student literacy development, language studies, and development of cultural understanding. Teachers play a critical role assisting students in realizing a potentially powerful use of language, which is to engage the mind with texts (Vacca & Vacca, 1993). Thus, a greater understanding of language attitudes has potential to enlighten teacher education programs. Pre-service teachers across the disciplines and through all grade levels could be targeted for learning experiences that would enhance their capacity to teach diverse student populations.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to look beyond previously explored paths of ELLs, bilingual, multicultural, and foreign language education to uncover pre-service teachers’ beliefs about ELLs. By doing this, teacher preparation programs will be better informed and equipped as they instruct education classes with insight into potential pre-service teacher beliefs regarding language diversity. It is essential that teacher education programs be informed about language attitudes of pre-service teachers in order to strengthen the linkage between perceptions and teacher education curriculum planning and practice. In addition, curricular decisions and pre-service teacher experiences could be guided by knowledge of the current pre-service teachers’ perceptions about teacher population.
The research questions of the study include:

1.) What are pre-service teachers’ beliefs about whose responsibility it is to teach English to English Language Learners?

2.) What preconceptions do pre-service teachers have of English Language Learners in a general education setting?

3.) What are pre-service teachers’ overall perceptions toward their professional training?

Review of Literature

Just as the field of education is interdisciplinary in nature (Schulman, 1998), so too is the study of language attitudes and their relationship to sociocultural expressions and ethnic identifications (Fishman, 1998). An example of this is how language attitudes have been the focus of studies in the disciplines of history, political science, and psychology. Thus, perceptions towards ELLs will be examined from three constructs of beliefs. These constructs include: pre-service teachers’ preconceptions of ELLs, locus of responsibility regarding ELLs, and professional preparation. In addition, the role of language attitudes of pre-service teachers and their importance to teacher education will also be explored.

Many of today's public schools are comprised of a linguistically diverse ELL population. There is a new “norm” in public school classrooms today where language, culture, and socio-economic diversity have replaced the traditional norm of English-speaking, White, and middle class (Commins & Miramontes, 2006). Demographic transformation has led to drastic increases of ELLs in public schools over the last decade, thereby changing the face of mainstream classrooms and creating a need for all teachers to be equipped to teach ELLs (Gersten, 1996; Nieto, 2002).

ELLs include a sizeable and very diverse range of students (Lacelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994). In addition, they are the fastest growing population in our public schools today (Harper & deJong, 2004). ELLs are non-native English speaking students with limited proficiency in English. Some of them are native-born while others are foreign-born (Waggoner, 1993). ELLs often differ from mainstream students as well as other ELLs in both language and background. They speak languages other than English at home and possess a different cultural heritage than mainstream students, and often other ELLs (LaCelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994). Many ELLs may be involved in ESL or bilingual education, though with the elimination of many opportunities, they are often mainstreamed (Waxman & Padron, 2002).

While ELLs may learn enough English to communicate in a short amount of time, it can take many years to gain a command of English that is normal for their grade level (Collier, 1989). Even after these students learn enough English to test out of these programs, the time it takes to develop academic abilities comparable to native speakers is much longer (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Subsequently, once these students are mainstreamed into regular

“While ELLs may learn enough English to communicate in a short amount of time, it can take many years to gain a command of English that is normal for their grade level (Collier, 1989)
development assistance in which they must receive from mainstream teachers. Because many ELLs spend the majority of their instructional day in a regular classroom, it is vital that mainstream teachers be prepared to meet the needs and face the augmented demands of teaching diverse students. Mainstream teachers actually make up a critical part of ESL and bilingual education (Evans, Arnot-Hopffer & Jurich, 2005).

There is a divided movement in educational demographics in the United States today. The number of ELLs is increasing (NCELA, 2004), yet the number of educators prepared to teach them is not (Menken & Antunez, 2001). Additionally, there is an increasing gap between students and teachers in terms of socio-economic status, race, and language background (Terrill & Mark, 2000). These differences influence teachers' beliefs about ELLs in mainstream classrooms as well as their role in teaching these ELLs.

Many public school teachers in the United States are White, female, middle class and monolingual. Their beliefs about learning and teaching are greatly influenced by their personal experiences as students in White, middle class environments. Those experiences very well may have never challenged their beliefs about ELLs or prepared them for working with ELLs. However, about 56% currently teach at least one ELL (Waxman, Tellez, & Walberg, 2006). English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual teachers are not the only teachers who are teaching ELLs. According to Waxman et al. (2006), less than 20% of teachers working with ELLs are certified in either area. A considerable number of educators are not qualified, either by certification or in-service training, to meet the needs of ELLs in their classrooms (Menken & Antunez, 2001). In fact, 70% of those teaching ELLs have not had training to do so (Menken & Holmes, 2000).

Beyond beginning bilingual education in the late 1960s, preparing teachers for ELLs was not even considered until 1980 (Tellez & Waxman, 2006). In 1990, Garcia (1990) drew attention to the poor teacher preparedness for ELLs. Along with other factors, including increasing numbers of ELLs, his report ushered in a number of new policies and programs in the 1990s that provided preparation of ELL instructors. Increasingly, coursework and field experiences are available in teacher education programs to prepare teachers for ELLs, but there is a long way to go.

Unfortunately, those teaching ELLs still feel ill-equipped to meet their needs (Mercado, 2001). Waxman et al. (2006) indicated in their study that teachers feel this way mainly because almost half of teachers with ELLs in their classes have had no education in methods for ELL instruction. Teacher education programs are going to have to change in order to meet the needs of this increasingly diverse demographic (Osterling & Fox, 2004). In order to address this issue, it is imperative that regular classroom teachers as well as ESL teachers be better equipped to address these changing trends. It must not be just pre-service ESL and bilingual teachers who receive high quality teacher preparation to work with ELLs (Jones, 2002).

A crucial element of the preparation of pre-service teachers is to recognize and reflect on their beliefs about linguistic differences. Mainstream teachers’ beliefs can impede integration of ELLs in mainstream classrooms, both socially as well as academically (Penfield, 1987). Hence, it is vital that these beliefs be addressed before pre-service teachers begin their careers as educators. This indicates strong implications for teacher preparation programs.
The significance of teacher education programs to today's diverse classroom depends on teacher educators who will create environments beneficial to exploring, challenging, and developing beliefs. It is vital for teacher educators to become familiar with incoming student beliefs in order to effectively inform them about ELLs in mainstream classrooms. Increased relevance also requires the cooperation of the larger teacher education program working in unity to examine their program and make changes in the program as well as individual courses to intentionally better prepare pre-service teachers for teaching ELLs (Costa, McPhail, Smith, & Brisk, 2005).

Field experiences and student teaching experiences in diverse contexts is another step for teacher education programs to increase relevance (Waxman & Padron, 2002). In a study conducted by Osterling and Fox (2004), an effort was made to update a multilingual/multicultural education in order to increase its relevance to the increasing linguistic diversity pre-service teachers will face in their teaching careers.

Teacher preparation is valuable in that it improves quality of teachers for ELLs (Tellez & Waxman, 2006). Inadequate teacher preparation is one of the primary reasons for ELL underperformance in educational contexts (Padron et al., 2002). Research conducted by Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly and Driscoll (2005) indicated that teachers who received greater preparation for working with ELLs had more confidence that they were able to work successfully with ELLs. However, many of these teachers had minimal or no teacher education for working with ELLs over the five years previous to the study.

In addition to improving the quality of teachers for ELLs, teacher preparation for diversity is also imperative for program accreditation. The National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) has emphasized the importance of pre-service teacher preparation for linguistic and cultural diversity by including a Standard for Diversity as one of its six standards required of teacher education programs (2001). In order to meet this requirement, many universities have offered a multicultural education course. However, some teacher education preparation programs are specifically addressing issues of linguistic diversity (Jones, 2002).

With the rapid increase of diversity in classrooms today, changes are needed on the part of teacher educators and educators. Teacher educators can help pre-service ESL and bilingual teachers learn the value and necessity of collaborating together to serve ELLs more effectively (Sakash & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995). This same collaboration has also been encouraged by Meskill and Chen (2002) and Clair (1993) and others. Mainstream teachers could benefit greatly from the resource of ESL and bilingual teachers. Yet without appropriate preparation, illusions of division of responsibility will continue to interfere with such collaboration (Evans et al., 2005).

One of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards requirements for teacher education programs is diversity. Imbedded this standard is the goal that teacher candidates be equipped to help all children learn (NCATE, 2008). One of NCATE’s recommendations for equipping these pre-service teachers calls for field experiences that will allow them to work with diverse populations. Both
In 1993, Hadaway concluded that the location of the teacher preparation program in which she taught limited the opportunities her students had for diversity in their field experiences. As a result, she developed a letter exchange experience for her students. Included in Hadaway’s study were 30 pre-service teachers in the fall semester and 35 in the spring semester.

The survey administered by Hadaway to pre-service teachers before the experiment began revealed that they had limited experiences with linguistic diversity as it relates working with non-native English speakers, speaking other languages, or traveling or living out of the state or internationally. In her study, pre-service teachers were randomly matched with ELL pen pals with whom they communicated with throughout a semester. At the conclusion of the semester, Hadaway administered a post-survey and allowed teachers to reflect on their learning experience. The results of the two surveys demonstrated an increased understanding of diverse populations as well as a positive change in teachers’ attitudes toward working with ELLs.

Marx (2000) also emphasizes field experience in a teacher preparation methods course. In Marx’s study, pre-service teachers tutored ESL students over the course of a semester. Fourteen teachers in the course interviewed with Marx in order to discuss their experience. It was concluded that pre-service teachers who were White had considerably lower expectations than did Hispanic pre-service teachers for their tutees. White tutors were not able to relate to Hispanic tutees’ academic, social, and language backgrounds and therefore ruled the Hispanic culture as a discrepancy to learning. In contrast to Hadaway’s study, Marx takes it a step further by asserting that field experience must be connected with interaction of a teacher educator who will challenge pre-service teacher beliefs and offer opportunities for discussion and reflection.

Another important study of pre-service teachers’ beliefs of ELLs was a study in which Jones (2002) used a mixed methods study of 91 pre-service teachers in an Educational Foundations course. Teachers were given a Likert scale survey that addressed their beliefs on language acquisition. The qualitative component of this study examined pre-service teachers’ previous experiences with ELLs. Jones used the qualitative portion in order to examine teachers’ reported beliefs in light of their reported experiences. Based on Jones’ findings, participants indicated previous experiences in working with ELLs and were familiar with research regarding ESL education concepts. In addition, a pattern specified in this study revealed that those with experiences with working with ELLs had stronger opinions and greater alignment of their beliefs with research than those without such experience. The more one-on-one experiences pre-service teachers had with ELLs, the greater the alignment with other research studies.

Jones’ findings imply that fieldwork with ELLs is important and helpful for pre-service teachers. Both Jones and Marx bring attention to the significance of offering pre-service teachers guidance and opportunities for reflection during their field experiences in order to capitalize learning and belief and development. Jones identified these pre-service teachers’ beliefs to be foundational to meeting their teacher preparation needs regarding ELLs.

Methodology

Respondents

All attendees of a public comprehensive
Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Licensure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Years or Fewer</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 22 Years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents.

this study included 74 pre-service teachers who were enrolled in undergraduate classes in Education, and who had complete responses to the instrument concerning teaching and language diversity described below. As shown in Table 1, these 74 participants were predominantly female (89.2%) and White (62.2%) but somewhat more equally distributed in terms of their ages, categorized as “22 or fewer years” (55.4%) or “more than 22 years” (44.6%). A majority of the participants were seeking elementary licensure (56.8%) and most were classified academically as being either juniors (41.9%) or seniors (43.2%).

**Instrument**

While the Savignon (1976) Foreign Language Attitude Survey (FLAS) and the CCCC/NCTE Language Survey proved to be valuable resources in instrument development, the 16 items constituting the questionnaire were derived from a general review of the relevant literature. Aimed at a major theme that emerged from that review, each of the items was associated with one of three broad groups: the first group consisting of five items and centered on responsibilities for teaching ELL students, the second group consisting of seven items and dealing with preconceptions of ELLs in a general education setting, and the third group consisting of four items and concerning pre-service teachers’ perceptions of their professional training. With respect to each of the items within each group, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a four-point, Likert-type scale, where a value of “1” meant “strong disagreement,” a value of “2” meant “dis-agreement,” a value of “3” meant agreement and a value of ”4” meant “strong agreement”.

**Data Collection**

Along with five questions concerning the respondents’ demographic characteristics, the items were mounted in the online survey program Survey Monkey and a link to the questionnaire was shared with instructors in a social studies methods course, a diversity course, and an English language learning course during the spring 2012 semester. The instructors of these courses in turn issued the link to their students in order for them to complete the survey online. Students were given three weeks to respond to the instrument and were issued one reminder to increase the participation level.
Results

Provided in Tables 2, 3, and 4 are the overall results for the sample by the three item clusters based on emergent themes in the literature: specifically, responsibility for teaching ELL students, preconceptions about ELL students, and professional training for teaching ELL students. With respect to the first theme, most participants indicated that the responsibility for teaching ELLs was to a significant extent theirs. As shown in Table 2, with respect to items 1, 2, and 9, respectively, over 80% of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statements that “Teaching ELL is the job of the ESL teacher, not the general education teacher” (83.3%), “It is not my responsibility to teach English to students who come to the U.S. and do not speak English” (93.1%), and “It is unreasonable to expect a regular classroom teacher to teach a student who does not speak English” (80.2%).

With respect to preconceptions concerning ELL students, a significant majority of the participants seemed not to be negatively biased. When asked whether having ELL students in class would be detrimental to others’ learning, more than 62% of the respondents disagreed and about 25% strongly disagreed. Similarly, when confronted with a statement suggesting that ELL were simply not motivated to learn English, about 58% of the respondents disagreed and about one-third strongly disagreed (33.0%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teaching ELL is the job of the ESL teacher, not the general education teacher.</td>
<td>20 27.8</td>
<td>38 52.8</td>
<td>10 13.9</td>
<td>4 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is not my responsibility to teach English to students who come to the U.S. and do not speak English.</td>
<td>10 14.1</td>
<td>40 56.3</td>
<td>20 28.2</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is important for general education teachers to learn how to teach ELL.</td>
<td>24 33.3</td>
<td>42 58.3</td>
<td>6 8.3</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents of non- or limited-English proficient students should be counseled to speak English with their children.</td>
<td>18 25.0</td>
<td>45 62.5</td>
<td>8 11.1</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Students should be proficient in English before being integrated into general education classrooms.</td>
<td>10 13.9</td>
<td>45 62.5</td>
<td>16 22.2</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of responses to items concerning responsibilities for teaching ELLs: All respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. To be considered American, one should speak English.</td>
<td>20 27.8</td>
<td>38 52.8</td>
<td>10 13.9</td>
<td>4 5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The learning of English should be a priority for non-English proficient and limited-English students, even if it means losing the ability to speak their native language.</td>
<td>10 14.1</td>
<td>40 56.3</td>
<td>20 28.2</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Most non- and limited-English proficient students are not motivated to learn English.</td>
<td>24 33.3</td>
<td>42 58.3</td>
<td>6 8.3</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. At school, the learning of the English language by non- or limited-English proficient children should take precedence over learning other language.</td>
<td>18 25.0</td>
<td>45 62.5</td>
<td>8 11.1</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Non- and limited-English proficient students often use questionable claims of discrimination as an excuse for not doing well in school.</td>
<td>10 13.9</td>
<td>45 62.5</td>
<td>16 22.2</td>
<td>1 1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of responses to items concerning preconceptions of ELLs in a general education setting: All respondents.
Finally, as regards to their perceptions of how prepared they were to meet the challenges of teaching ELL students, the participants in this study seemed generally to be confident. As indicated in Table 4, over 80% of the participants indicated that they were “prepared to tailor instructional and other services to the needs of ELL students” (83.3%) and over 70% of participants seemed confident about their knowledge of “teaching practices that are culturally supportive and relevant for ELL students” (73.6%) and their knowledge of “teaching practices that are attuned to students’ language levels and cognitive levels” (73.6%). At the same time, somewhat fewer students expressed confidence about helping ELL students to learn, as only 67.6% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they were sufficiently knowledgeable about “teaching strategies and instructional practices for ELL students that are developmentally appropriate.”

To determine whether the ethnicity and age of the participants was linked to their tendency either broadly to agree or disagree with questionnaire statements, cross-tabulations involving four cells were created for each item within each of the three clusters addressed by the instrument. With respect to ethnicity, participants were grouped as being “White” (62.2%) or “non-White” (37.8%), while by age, students were grouped as being “22 or fewer years old” (55.4%) or “more than 22 years old” (44.6%). For both sets of demographic characteristics, phi coefficients (\(\phi\)) were computed across all items and subsequently tested for statistical significance.

As shown in Tables 5 through 7, participants’ responses to the questionnaire items did not seem to be significantly related to the participants’ race/ethnicity, although some items evidenced \(\phi\) coefficients that were somewhat robust: namely, item 6 “The learning of English should be a priority for non-English proficient and limited-English students, even if...
language” \((f = -0.17, \text{less disagreement among Whites})\); item 7 “Most non- and limited- English proficient students are not motivated to learn English” \((f = 0.18, \text{less disagreement among non-Whites})\); and item 11 “Non- and limited- English proficient students often use questionable claims of discrimination as an excuse for not doing well in school” \((f = -0.17, \text{less disagreement among Whites})\).

On the other hand, statistically significant relationships between the participants’ background characteristics and some items were indicated when the respondent’s age was the characteristic examined and the items were focused on preconceptions about ELL students (see Tables 8 through 10). While younger participants (12.5%) tended less often than older ones (28.1%) to agree with the statement that “To be considered American, one should speak English” \((f = 0.20)\), older participants (90.6%) tended more often
than younger participants (62.5%) to disagree with the statement that “Non- and limited-English proficient students often use questionable claims of discrimination as an excuse for not doing well in school” ($f = -0.32$).

**Discussion**

This research examined pre-service teachers’ perceptions of working with ELLs in mainstream classrooms. It involved both the analysis and investigation of pre-service teachers’ overall preconceptions of ELLs, responsibilities, and professional training. An analysis of data gathered suggested that pre-service teachers readily accepted the responsibility of teaching ELLs. Thus, many felt that it was a part of their responsibility of being a mainstream teacher. With respect to preconceptions, many participants held positive viewpoints toward working with ELLs in mainstream classrooms. An overwhelming number of participants believed that ELLs were motivated to learn, thus positive attitudes held among pre-service teachers will yield higher academic performance among ELLs. Furthermore, although the majority of participants felt confident in their professional preparation to work with ELLs, only a small percentage of students felt assured in their ability to actually implement teaching and instructional strategies. It was also found that there was no significant relationship between participants’ ethnicity and their responses. However, if the demographics of the survey had yielded more minorities, the results of the survey would have generated results that suggest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>&lt;= 22 Years</th>
<th>&gt; 22 Years</th>
<th>f, p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. To be considered American, one should speak English.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The learning of English should be a priority for non-English proficient and limited-English students, even if it means their losing the ability to speak their native language.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Most non- and limited-English proficient students are not motivated to learn English.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. At school, the learning of the English language by non- or limited-English proficient children should take precedence over learning subject matter.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Having non- or limited-English proficient students in the classroom is detrimental to the learning of other students.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Non- and limited-English proficient students often use questionable claims of discrimination as an excuse for not doing well in school.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Students should be proficient in English before being integrated into general education classrooms.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Level of agreement and disagreement to items concerning preconceptions of ELLs in a general education setting by age category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>&lt;= 22 Years</th>
<th>&gt; 22 Years</th>
<th>f, p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I am prepared to tailor instructional and other services to the needs of ELL students.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I am knowledgeable about teaching strategies and instructional practices for ELL students that are developmentally appropriate.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am knowledgeable about teaching practices that are culturally supportive and relevant for ELL students.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I am knowledgeable about teaching practices that are attuned to students’ language levels and cognitive levels.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. Level of agreement and disagreement to items concerning perceptions of professional training for teaching ELLs by age category.
statistically significant relationship between participants' age and their preconceptions. Older participants tended to hold to their patriot views as it relates to their preconceptions toward ELLs. Younger participants, on the other hand, were more liberal as it relates to their views of ELLs.

Conclusion

In general, this study provided an overall view of pre-service teachers’ beliefs toward ELLs. Although the majority of participants expressed a relatively positive interest in serving ELLs in a mainstream classroom, their responses indicated a lack of confidence in teaching and instructional practices. Thus, there is a need for additional training to equip them with content knowledge and instructional practices to enhance their level of confidence. By incorporating additional cultural awareness and second language theory classes into teacher education programs, a reinforcement of teachers’ positive disposition toward ELLs is made as well as an increase of teachers’ content and instructional knowledge.

References


It is imperative to study Black girls in various social and academic contexts to fully understand the complexity of the axis of oppression, class, race and gender, they experience.

...I was encouraged to write myself, my struggle, my meaning into existence" (Taliaferro-Baszile, 2006a, p. 89).

am human. I am an only child. I am a New Yorker. I am a daddy’s girl. I am a teacher. I am educated. I am independent. I am strong. I am misrepresented. I am unapologetic. I am invisible. I am hyper visible. I am emotionally unstable. I am conflicted. I am angry. I am numb. And I am exhausted with to having to define who I am. I am a Black woman. I am not Black first and then a woman. I am inextricably and undeniably so, a Black woman. And I, like Denise am encouraged to write myself, my struggle, and my meaning into existence.

Throughout my life there has been a stereotype, better yet a prescribed consciousness, that at times I have uncomfortably accepted as I have screamed with rage within my mind, while at other times I have chosen to resist this consciousness that is not mine and to “talk back” (hooks, 1989). “Black women who do not fit a stereotype do not make sense” (Boylorn, 2008, p. 418); so, needless to say, I do not make sense. My progression into Black womanhood by no means occurred easily and not until I entered the academy and discovered how to write myself out of my pain and anger did I realize it is okay that I do not make sense.

As a Black female I belong to a group - a culture - that has been socially defined. This social definition is expansive just as Collins (1986) reminds us, “Thus, there is no monolithic Black women’s culture - rather, there are socially-constructed Black women’s cultures that collectively form Black women’s culture” (p. 22). I am aware that as a Black female from Queens, N.Y. that my experiences cannot be essentialized to the lived experiences of all Black women nor can my mother’s experiences growing up in the South during
difference amongst Black women and through Collins’ words, I can now say I have every right to rearticulate this prescribed consciousness that exists about Black women (Collins, 1989) and about me. Through what Collins (1986) calls self-definition and self-valuation I am able to begin rearticulating the consciousness held about me.

As I have progressed into Black womanhood I have found varying modes of resistance to the oppressive and stereotypical constructions defined by dominant society. I have found the voices of the “Black women across generations” who, Guillory (2010) explains, “have built a language to defend or name in public, challenging the underlying power structures of naming by talking back to and against the dominant discourses that have tried to define who we are” (p. 211). Through the course of my life as an athlete and now as an academician I have used a range storytelling modalities, movement and words to push back against dominant discourse and to define myself accordingly. In this way my-ness, my Blackness, my Femaleness, and my Classness can only be defined and redefined by me. I have struggled with attempting to “define” my-ness in order to fit in two worlds - the Black community and the pervasive White supremacist society. I do not use the term White supremacist to cause shock to my readers but rather I use the term to define the politically and historically situated world that my Black female body has been surviving in for 28 years. My struggle is a result of wanting to be enough in two worlds but yet resisting wanting to be accepted in either world.

**Defining the Methodology**

This narrative exists as a form of interpretive biography. Denzin (1989) posits that interpretive biographies whether written in biographical or autobiographical form exist with an “other” in mind. The “other” is studied and explored through “life documents or documents of life” (p. 7). In this autobiographical writing - a performative text - I explore Taliaferro’s (1998) question, “What is it that we learn about our ‘selves’ as we exist in the imaginations of others” (p. 94)? I position my 13-year-old self and 28-year-old self in a conversation in which they discuss the moves made to resist the “inner eye” of the dominant world. I use the imaginations of others as the sites for where I learned and continue to learn to resist and “talk back” against the “inner eye” of the dominant White society.

In the first conversation I explore my parents’ parenting as the “starting block” for my resistance. The conversation begins with an expression of the tension felt by my 13-year-old self and a response from my 28-year-old self. As the conversation transitions between my ‘selves’, I provide an analysis in order to contextualize the tension felt by my 13 and 28-year-old selves. The conversation in the first section concludes with my two selves working concurrently in conversation to understand the mode of resistance they had been taught. In the second section of the paper, I provide another synchronous conversation about an interview I had with a headmaster of an Upper East Side, N.Y private school. This conversation is an expression of my acceptance and resistance to the prescribed consciousness. Within this section I use Helfenbein’s (2010) notions of place and space to explore and analyze the binaries that functioned within this school that I accepted and attempted to resist. The final section of this paper I present how I have come to use curriculum theory to create a space for me to “fit” in a place where I am a mis-fit. I have come to this
performance through the power and refuge provided by Black feminist thought and curriculum theory. I use this performance to add to the scholarship about the modes of resistance used by Black female scholars.

Developing My Resistance to the Dominant World

13-year-old Valin: She thinks I can’t see it. She thinks I can’t see the way my teachers look at me. Like I’m this exotic extraterrestrial being. She thinks I can’t see the way they glare at me with amazement and disgust at the same time. She thinks I’m walking around with blinders on. Like I don’t know what the world sees when they see me. She thinks I can’t hear the things my teachers and everyone else says about me behind my back. She thinks I’m not listening. She thinks I have no idea. And sometimes I think she’s trying to protect me from it. Because without a doubt she is a pit bull. And other times I think she wants me and needs me to handle it alone. But she’s afraid because she thinks they will swallow me alive. She thinks I’ll crumble so she holds tight, she’s shielded me to the best of her ability. She instills and forces the voices and words of Richard Wright, Barbara Jordan, Malcolm X, Shirley Chisholm, Maya Angelou, my great-grandmother, and grandmother down my throat. She thinks I haven’t been listening to her. But, my words to her and everybody else are impregnated with the pain, struggle, and blood of those who came before me. She thinks I haven’t been listening to her. But, my words to her and everybody else are impregnated with the pain, struggle, and blood of those who came before me. But I just choose to respond to the world differently. I’m a fighter and always have been. I back down from no one. Silence? I don’t know silence! Passive? Passive I am not! She and everyone else taught me to speak my truth. So I speak. Even when they don’t like it. So I know how they look at me - the “they” in my community look at me like the light complexion black girl who thinks she’s “all that”. I know how they – the “they” I sometimes see myself through looks at me. I can see how they look at me amazed and disgusted that at 13 I’ve read Shakespeare, Alcott, Poe, Frost, Hughes, and I can recite Ain’t I a Woman like I wrote it. That I know more about my history than they will ever know. But, she doesn’t believe that. What she sees is not herself. What she sees is that I’ve rejected reading lots by Black authors. What she sees is that I don’t care if my friends aren’t Black. What she doesn’t see is that I can see the amazement and disgust in her eyes too. And what she doesn’t see is that I fear her more than the rest of the world. That I will never be black enough, womanly enough, or know the struggle and work it took for her and my father to give me the life I live. She thinks I don’t know.

The tension I felt as a 13-year-old was based on reading the world around me. I was aware of the “inner eyes” of the rest of the world that I was attempting to renounce, including that of my mother. My 13-year-old self was attempting to prove that I could read what was and was not present in the reality that I functioned. At the same time I was expressing a definition of myself by not maintaining silence and choosing to ascribe to multiple worldviews as a way of defining my position in society. My inclination at 13
others refer to as “multiple consciousness”. I was not rejecting reading Black authors or having Black friends rather I was attempting to develop a consciousness of two worlds. In doing so I began developing my “outsider within” status (Collins, 1986).

As an “outsider within” I am positioned as the other but I have an awareness of white male dominant thought. I allow my consciousness as a Black female to influence how I think about and use dominant thought. Lorde (1984) posits that oppressed individuals develop a consciousness of this kind in order to survive, “they become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection” (p. 114). Using Lorde’s words, my choice to read more than Black authors and make friends outside of the Black community was my attempt at facilitating my survival process.

28-year-old Valin (speaking to the 13-year-old): She still thinks you have no idea. She still fears that they will eat you alive. She’s even more worried about you now that you’ve entered the academy, the ivory towers, higher education, whatever they call this place. She knows that it’s lonely for you. And now more than ever in a place that used to be known as “Chocolate City” she fears losing you to a world that didn’t want you in the first place. She’s scared that because you don’t have the unlucky good fortune that she does to be high yellow and freckled that you will be rejected. She fears that you will never procreate a family because you’ll allow yourself to sink in the psychologically violent and unfriendly place they call the academy. She fears that now she did it all wrong. She told you not to be silent and not to be passive and you refuse to be either but now it seems to make sense to just be quiet. Valin you’ve lost your voice. Or have you? And your voice and her voice are in your written works. See right now you’re a dancer and long jumper. Your voice is in your athletic movements. You speak and are visible through your movements. You have figured out how to deal with not belonging in two worlds by moving. He told you leave it all on the runway and leave it all on the stage. He told you to be quiet and know the strength of your movements.

The tension my 28-year-old self feels is the opposite of my 13-year-old self. I have yet to determine how best to be visible in this new place - the academy. I have come to form my cultural contracts (Jackson, 2002 as cited in Harris, 2007). Harris writes,

Racialized individuals are continually placed in contexts where a cultural contract is warranted. The cultural context process is an implicit agreement of one interactant to ascribe to the typology that most appropriately addresses how that person chooses to negotiate his or her racial identity in the company of racially different others.

The paradox that exists for me, then, is attempting to maintain my Blackness in a place where my Blackness is often rejected. Implicitly agreeing to silence my Blackness in the presence of the racially identified other causes me to refract my Self when in the presence of the other, ultimately, not being able to define my association in two-worlds because of the constant refracting of the Self. Crocco and Waite
women brings them respect but at the same creates “a sense of isolation and marginality, even within their own community” (p. 74). As, a Black female in the academy I am attempting to negotiate my cultural contract via the notion of silence.

13-year-old Valin: *I know what he told me. He told me to be an athlete. He told me to hang upside down from a pull up bar like I was Rocky or somebody. He told me to stop being such a girl. He told me to toughen up. He wants me to be tougher. But she fears that because of him that I’ll lose my femininity. She fears that my father is doing it all wrong.*

28-year-old Valin: *He didn’t do it all wrong, neither of them did. He’s preparing you to be physically and mentally strong to withstand this place. He’s making sure that if he walks away you can handle it all. He’s not scared. He’s not afraid something will happen to you because as far as he’s concerned he did it right. He made you the athlete you are. He made you ready to handle whatever comes your way. He knows he did it right.*

This newest place for my academic success is defined by my father’s assertion to know the strength of my silence and the loudness of my movements. The performances of my movements at 13 years old were used to expressively define myself as an athlete and as an individual. I was using creative expression as a dancer and athlete to shape my self-definitions and self-valuations (Collins, 1986). Collins argues for “the role of creative expression in shaping and sustaining Black women’s self-definitions and self-valuations” (p. 23). Defining and valuing my consciousness as a Black female allows me the space to challenge dominant ideologies held about me; I’m able to push back on the political and historical stereotypical images formed about Black females. The silence that my father insisted I channel into my movements as an athlete was my display of creative expression; an expression that allowed me the space to resist objectification and assert my subjectivity as a Black woman. The translation of my athletic movements or creative expression represents the transgressive nature by which I perform or move as a Black female in the academy. Through the teachings of both my parents I have come to know what it is to resist and talk back.

> “Through the teachings of both my parents I have come to know what it is to resist and talk back.”

**Acceptance and Resistance Flood my Consciousness**

The conversation to follow presents an experience that I had with a headmaster of an Upper East Side private school in New York City. It was my first obvious experience highlighting that I did not belong or was not wanted in a particular place. Helfenbein (2010) writes, “For geographers, place is the localized community - filled with meaning for those that spend time there. Quite simply, it has significance” (p. 306). From this I understand place to be the physical area/location that one exists in that has meaning “for those that spend time there” (p. 306). Helfenbein (2010) argues that “Space constructed through discursive, interpretive, lived, and
imagined practices becomes place” (p. 306). Space, then is created from the subjectivity or the meaning making practices that enter a place in order to develop and shape that place; I understand those to be the “Forces of economic, social, and cultural practices [that] work on both the inhabitants of the place and work to form the place itself” (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 306).

The school where I was interviewed for middle school admission is geographically located on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, in the wealthiest congressional district in America. This place was/is shaped by the subjectivities of those that inhabit (investment bankers, lawyers, doctors, CEOs) this place as well as the luxuriously expensive sky-scraping homes of Park and Madison Avenues that hug the perimeter of the school. This single gendered predominately White school had a particular identity that allowed it to sustain as a place that functioned with binaries: self/other, us/them, oppressor/oppressed, and White/Black. The binaries that were established in this place were clear boundaries. They were boundaries that did not allow for complete border crossing, as that border crossing would have impacted, complicated, and disrupted the identity of this place. The conversation between the headmaster and me shows the oppressive and colonizing theories that have created us/them or White/Black binaries or boundaries.

We can understand the binaries that constitute place through post-colonial theory. Asher (2010) writes “How, then, do we decolonize curriculum so that it enables us to deconstruct such binaries as self and other, margins and center so that the self unlearns the internalization of the oppressor?” (p. 397). Hendry (2010, 2011) reminds us that these binaries are what allow curriculum to continue to function in colonizing terms and must be unlearned through historical contexts; in other words, the binaries or the boundaries need to be complicated and disrupted. In the conversation that proceeds I express how I recognized the binaries that existed which were going to keep me from entering this school.

13 year old Valin: So now what? Because this is difficult. I have no idea what they want from me. I’m about to start high school at this posh place. I should have picked somewhere else to go. A public high school. But, I’m about to spend more time in a private parochial school. I know how they look at me and what they say about me behind my back “she thinks she’s better than everyone because she’s been in private school her entire life”. What they don’t know is that I don’t fit in the “private” school world. That interview at East Side Park Academy* still upsets me. Why in the world would they want to send me there? My body wouldn’t have fit there. My knowledge wouldn’t have fit there. I live in Queens I don’t belong amongst the chichi types of Madison and Park avenues. But, that was for 7th grade. Now I made the choice to go to this chichi place in Queens. I’m not going to belong there either!

28 year old Valin: That interview at East Side Park Academy will never leave you. You were 11 trying to figure out the right answers to give to this 6 o’clock figured woman sitting in a black suit with gold oval shaped buttons on her jacket. Her black rimmed glasses were on a red and gold linked croaky and she pulled them down to sit right across her nostrils and stared through you with her light brown eyes and said “You’re a good writer, what do your parents do?” And
I panicked. Because circling through my brain was don’t tell her your father is a commercial roofer. He isn’t her type of people and I’m not going to be good enough to be here if I tell her that. So I said very quietly with my heart in my throat, my mother is a director of special market sales. And I looked at her nervous and she looked at me quizzically and asked, “Do you know what that means?” I said no. She then followed it with, “Do you know how much your mother makes annually?” I could have made up a number because I had an idea, but I said no. And I started screaming in my head thinking, my mother wants me to go here but I was uncomfortable in that space because how dare she ask me that. I thought I could get away with the humiliation by only claiming my class because of my mother’s occupation. But, in one smooth free flowing question she asked, “What does your father do and how often do you see him?” My heart sank. This woman had me pegged as a “typical” kid from Queens. I didn’t know what to say next; do I say he owns the commercial roofing company. Should I lie? Instead I chose to tell her the exact truth. Because my truth is all I know and my truth is what defines me. So I said proudly and confidently, “My father, who lives with us and is married to my mother, is a commercial roofer in New Jersey”. I was hoping the interview ended after that and I could be put out of the shame this woman wanted me to feel. But, the bashing kept going. That woman didn’t care what I knew and that I was good writer. She wanted to know why my light complexioned Black body thought it deserved to be there, better yet, why I thought I belonged there. She wanted to know how cultured I was. She wanted to know the last time I had been to a Broadway show. I lied and told her I had never been. She asked me if I knew where my mother’s office was located. She asked me if I had ever been to her office. She asked me if I could name landmarks around my mother’s office. Like lady really?! Name landmarks near her office? She had me pegged for the media image of a kid from Queens. I knew what she thought. She looked at me amazed and disgusted too. So I indignantly said, “F.A.O. Shwartz, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Central Park, the Italian shoe maker guy on the corner that I’ve been getting my shoes from since I was able to walk, Prada, oh and my favorite store Niketown.” I didn’t know whether to cry or laugh in that moment, because this woman had completely racialized me and I let her. But, it was amusing watching this thin white woman squirm and become uncomfortable by the places I had indicated as “landmarks.” She asked me if I had any extracurricular activities. I lied and told her no. I started dancing at the age of 4; I had competed the summer before that interview at the Junior Olympics, I played the saxophone, I volunteered and spent time with my grandfather and his 369th military buddies; but I let her have that one too. I let her believe I didn’t belong there and I allowed it to happen because I didn’t want to be there and at 11 I didn’t know how to tell her white self that she was wrong about the kid from Queens. I walked out of that interview confused. That was the first time it was obvious how “they” saw me.
around her eyes and she asked me with anticipation “How did it go?” I just glared at her and the 6 o’clock shaped woman said “I’ll be in touch”. I didn’t say a word when we walked out and caught a cab. She just kept asking, “Valin what happened? What did she ask you?” And all I could manage to say low and despondently “She asked what your jobs were. I don’t want to go here or any other school in the city.” And again she said “What happened, do we need to go back?!?” I just wanted to go home. I didn’t talk much the rest of that day or the days following. Later that week I took the test for all the private schools in NYC. I walked in that room- the only Black body in the room, and thought I don’t know why I’m doing this. The essay on the test was to choose an animal that characterizes you and why? And without hesitation I wrote I am a gazelle. In this very moment I am a gazelle. The beautiful and graceful moving animal that spans the deserts of Africa that are known to have quick speed and since the danger that lurks nearby. I am a gazelle. Every moment of my life I have learned to be a gazelle, to love the few stripes that I do have that cover my tanned skin. I know that even when I am the want of my predators who don’t want to see me survive I stand strong and beautiful. I am a gazelle. I wrote seven sentences and closed the book and handed it back to the proctor. I walked out the room and there was my mom and her friend and simultaneously they asked “So how was it?” I gave the normal kid answer “fine”. But my mother wanted to know more, so I told her I had to pick an animal that describes me. She asked what I chose. I said a gazelle. So then she asked, “Well what did you write?” I lied and said, “I don’t remember.” I knew what I wrote. I still remember what I wrote. But, I couldn’t tell her what I wrote, because even though she wanted to heighten my Blackness and thought I didn’t know my Blackness, if I had told her what I wrote she would have been upset because in that moment I was to pull back from my Blackness and try to fit. But I don’t…

Every moment of my life I have learned to be a gazelle, to love the few stripes that I do have that cover my tanned skin.

My experience with applying for academic and social acceptance at this school showcases the prescribed consciousness that exists about me as a Black female. At 11 years old I was unclear as to how to rearticulate this consciousness that pervaded my existence. I accepted that I did not belong there but my responses during the interview and the essay for the private schools of New York City (just Manhattan) proved that I was attempting to resist being part of a world that handed me a prescribed consciousness about myself. My subtle comments to the headmaster about my father and the places I indicated as landmarks during the interview showed that I was “talking back” and would not allow her to define me as a Black child who she believed was fatherless and unaware of city she lives in. My inclination to resist entering a place that had created binaries within its space was clear in the essay I wrote for the private school entrance exam. I had visualized myself as a gazelle that has been standing strong to her predators - dominant White society and the prescribed consciousness constantly being handed to her, I had created my own curricular construction of
myself (Taliaferro-Baszile, 2010). The experience I had applying for social and academic acceptance into the private school world of New York City is only part of the answer to Asher’s question; in order for us to decolonize curriculum and for the self to unlearn the internalization of the oppressor, the self has to be willing to resist, “talk back”, and rearticulate the consciousness given by the oppressor, “…this rearticulated consciousness gives African American women another tool of resistance to all forms of their subordination” (Collins, 1989, p. 750).

The Present Moment

I do not fit. It was obvious when I began my first seminar class; I am the only Black female in my cohort. It was obvious when I began reading in the academy; the Black voices that contributed to the development of American education were silenced. It was obvious when I began stating my research interest; my cohort was skeptical of providing me with feedback. It was obvious when I began teaching a diversity course as an adjunct professor; my White female students were visibly and verbally amazed by “how much I know” and extremely uncomfortable by the critical stance I asked them to take to discussing the course topics. It was obvious when one of the graduate school’s academic affairs directors said, “From what I’ve heard about you, I expected you to look different. I was looking for someone much bigger and darker than you”. I do not fit. I engage in spaces in this place where I feel the need to tread lightly. If I say too much about my interest in race, racism, and practices of Whiteness in elementary school classrooms, I may not “make it” to my dissertation. If I say too much in the diversity course that pushes the White female pre-service teachers out of their comfort zone, I may be asked to never teach the course again. My mis-fit in this place has pushed me “to work consciously and critically to make myself subject in this place where I don’t quite belong” (Taliaferro-Baszile, 2006b, p. 205).

I have learned to work consciously and critically to cross a border. I have brought my identity and sense of place as a Black woman from Queens into the academy which has spaces that “speak[s], leak[s], and [have] possibility” (Helfenbein, 2010, p. 310). The academy often does not speak to subjectivity or my subjectivity as a racial subject. Yet, my subjectivity and lived experiences are able to leak in to create how one comes to make sense of this place and have a space of possibility “to understand the racial self as a curricular construction” (Taliaferro-Baszile, 2010, p. 485). The preceding performance adds to Taliaferro-Baszile’s (2010) notion that “multiple and varied voices can intervene” (p. 484) into the dialogical nature of curriculum theory; that is, to examine racial subjects as objects of study but also to use those racial subjects as the lens to how we shape curriculum theory.

Collins (1989) argues that Black women academicians need to be ready for potentially being rejected for not having a valid knowledge base. So here I am…a Black woman in the academy. I have retreated to this place because of the spaces (theory) created to assist me with writing myself into existence and allowing my existence - my subjectivities, to leak into particular spaces to add to the dialogical nature
In this space of possibility I am able to use my subjectivity as a Black female to think about what needs to be done to decolonize curriculum. “Black women have got to resist, imagine, and insist upon a different world” (Green, 2012, p. 149). I am using my “outsider within” status to influence how I resist, imagine, and insist upon a different definition of curriculum - a definition that subverts the constraining and oppressive structures. Collins (1986) maintains that those with “outsider within” positions are able to “learn to trust their own personal and cultural biographies as significant sources of knowledge” (p. 29). My experiences as I have grown into Black womanhood add to the proliferation of the curriculum field. I understand that my autobiography has meaning to reshaping how Black females are seen in society.

I began this piece with Taliaferro-Baszile’s question “What do we learn about our ‘selves’ as we exist in the imagination of others”? I learned how I exist in the imagination of others. And, I learned how to create forms of resistance to pull myself out of the imagination of others. Knowing how I exist in the imagination of the racial other is what pushed me to write this paper. Knowing how I exist in the imagination of the racial other allowed me the room to have this emotional purging and to rearticulate the prescribed consciousness held about me. I came to this paper with the idea to tell my story and to write myself into existence as an individual Black female, not realizing that writing myself into existence with theory would allow me the space to speak, to leak into the proliferation of the field, and to have the possibility for decolonizing a curriculum that allows the self to resist, talk back, and unlearn the internalizations of the oppressor.

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The 21st Century Color Line: Assessing the Economic and Social Impact of Urbanization and School Discipline

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In 1899, W.E.B. DuBois researched the social conditions of African Americans in *The Philadelphia Negro* (DuBois, 1899). This in-depth sociological study pioneered urban sociology and education simultaneously. Later in 1903, he found that the damages of racism and unequal opportunities irreversibly stunted the plight of African Americans in the 20th century. He coined this term “the color line,” which indicates the damages of racism and discrimination to African Americans post-emancipation (DuBois, 1903). However, even in 21st century contexts, the color line is still an eminent problem that disrupts social, economic, and educational opportunities for African Americans. Within education, race is a contributing factor to student mistreatment, school inequity, and community underdevelopment. Although DuBois asserted his beliefs over a century ago, the color line still exists in the 21st century.

This paper will analyze the 21st century color line, and specifically examine its implications for urban North Carolina schools. In order to examine the implications of this issue, it is important to examine the historical, social, and economic conditions, which undergird societal inequality and unequal school access. The purpose of this study is to deconstruct the economic and social impact of urbanization on African American students. This study asserts that factory-style education, zero tolerance policies, school desegregation, and neoliberal education policies over the last century have greatly influenced African American students in the areas of: student isolation, underachievement, and school “push out.” Using Charlotte-Mecklenburg and North Carolina secondary census data, this study comparatively examines national and state level population trends to gain a better understanding of the economic impacts of urbanization. The remainder of this paper will include: (a) historical overview documenting the impact of school desegregation on African American
students, (b) literature review of school and classroom pedagogical practices that impact African American students with a focus on school discipline, (c) theoretical framework, (d) data analysis, and (e) discussion of research. In all, this study ultimately aims to provide a historical and contemporary analysis of educational practices that impact African American students, and provide recommendations that will help eradicate today’s color line.

Historical Background

20th Century Education, Industrialization, and Unequal Opportunities

The period of industrialization shifted the role of education in the United States. During the 19th and 20th centuries, common schools taught citizenry, life skills, and job training (Rury, 2013). Many of these schools resembled the surrounding factories found in urban cities. Instead of one-room schoolhouses for years prior, 20th century schools began servicing hundreds of students. The introduction of the common school model began to prepare students for the workplace, and education witnessed a shift in the area of curriculum and instruction (deMarrais, & LeCompte, 1998). Horace Mann, known as the father of the common schools, believed that the nation’s stability was tied to universal education of its citizens (Rury, 2013). However, educational opportunities were not universal. Twentieth century common schools in the Southern states started years after Northern states. Furthermore, many states in the South unevenly distributed funding to Black schools (Anderson, 1988). Often African Americans in the South paid double taxation in order to fund schools, however building inequalities and material resources were consistently despairing (Anderson, 1988).

The contributions of Northern philanthropies, such as the Rosenwald Foundation, helped to finance the building of 4,977 Black common schools in the rural South by 1932 (Anderson, 1988; Douglas, 1995). Many of these Northern philanthropy donations were acts of false benevolence, but many freed Blacks received a quality education within their own communities. These Black schools enabled African American citizens to obtain literacy skills needed for citizenship tests, voting registration, and political office (Anderson, 1988). In addition, these schools helped the plight of African Americans towards their own formalized system of education. In most cases, Black teachers taught Black students, and the “village” concept of education included all community members in the fight for educational advancement. Many believe these intergenerational community efforts were one of the greatest losses experienced through upcoming desegregation efforts of the 1950’s.

North Carolina: School Integration and Culturally Mismatched Classrooms

As demonstrated, the South’s racial climate in the 19th and 20th centuries yielded unfair conditions for African Americans. Specifically in North Carolina, school inequality cemented the political climate indefinitely. In 1875 North Carolina became one of the first states to require segregated schools. The 1896 Supreme Court case Plessy v. Ferguson stated that separate but equal facilities were constitutional. This court ruling made it hard for Blacks to receive funding and resources for their schools. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began ligation against unfair practices that
prevented and limited Blacks’ educational opportunities (Douglas, 1995). In the state of North Carolina, there were only 14 Black lawyers in 1890, because the state failed to provide Black students a school to study law. The 1938 Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada decision stated that states must provide a facility for a Black student to study law or admit students into an all-White program (Douglas, 1995). It was not until the opening of Shaw University and North Carolina Central University that Blacks in North Carolina had a law school (Douglas, 1995). Litigation for educational opportunities was the way in which Black people were able to enforce their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment.

Undoubtedly, the case that changed the educational system in the United States was the 1954 Supreme Court case Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, which ruled that separate schools were unconstitutional. This law overturned the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision, and was considered as a progressive step towards racial equality. Yet, the Brown v. Board of Education decision was slowly received in the South. Public school integration in the Southern United States was not widely enforced in many Southern states. In fact, some states closed their public schools instead of integrating Black and White students (Douglas, 1995).

School desegregation was not the utopian ideal that many had hoped. In fact, many Southern states – like North Carolina – stalled the desegregation process (Douglas, 1995). In North Carolina, school integration did not happen immediately. Although North Carolina eventually desegregated their public schools, the decision was made due to influences of the federal government. Charlotte, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem were among the first cites in the South to desegregate their schools. In 1957, twelve students were granted transfers to White schools (Douglas, 1995). In Charlotte, Dorothy Counts was among the first four Black students to attend an integrated school. She was admitted to Harding High School; however, during Counts’ first few days of school, protestors met and harassed her until she eventually withdrew from the school and relocated out of the state (Douglas, 1995). This once again reinforces the dangers of school desegregation in the South, especially during an unsettled time in racial history.

**Impact of School Desegregation Today**

The integration process of the 1960’s caused many unforeseen, long-lasting problems. In North Carolina, specifically, many school districts fired Black teachers when schools desegregated (Douglas, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). For White teachers, many were forced to teach Black students whom they knew nothing about. Black students, who once thrived academically in their all Black schools, faced challenges in their new school environments. This caused a “mismatch” in the educational experience for Black students (Kunjufu, 2000; Lenski, Crawford, Crumpler & Stallworth, 2005). Culturally mismatched classrooms are environments of cultural strain between teachers and diverse student populations. The effects of desegregation efforts are still evident today, as 84% of the American teaching force is White (U.S Department of Education, 2012).

Teachers who are unfamiliar with different cultures often have biases and limited knowledge about groups outside of their culture or socio-economic status (SES), which impacts the quality of education provided to their students (King, 1993;
curricular content, and classroom behaviors reflect certain cultural norms and ethos, many of which fail to include diverse student populations. Often, students who share teachers’ middle class values are favored over their counterparts (Kunjufu, 2000). Thus, the compounding effects of cultural and socioeconomic mismatch have had severe impacts on students in public schools. One of the most noticeable areas of mismatch is in the area of school discipline.

**Literature Review**

When considering the compounding effects of school desegregation, it is no surprise that a *color line* still exists in the 21st century. Not surprising, schools are institutional examples of inequality and unfair treatment. Not only does cultural mismatch impact classroom instruction and teacher perceptions, it also directly impacts discipline. In 1975, the Children’s Defense Fund first examined racial disproportionately associated with school suspensions in the nation. Today the discipline gap, or tendency for African American students to be sanctioned more frequently and severely than their peers, is present in almost every school system throughout the United States (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). These racial and socioeconomic inequalities have been extensively documented in existing research, specifically in the areas of discipline disproportionality, the school-to-prison pipeline, academic achievement, and school resource inequities in urban schools (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010; Kozol, 2005; Lewis, Butler, Bonner, & Joubert, 2010). However, a more extensive examination of the economic and social impacts of urbanization is needed to better understand school discipline.

This study aims to provide contextualization for the following research question: *How is cultural mismatch evident in 21st century urban educational contexts and within school discipline?* To further explore this question, it is important to understand discipline mismatch, cultural synchronization, and student-teacher interaction.

**Discipline Mismatch**

Disciplinary sanctions are imposed in effort to maintain safety, by removing students who are disruptive to the learning environment. Yet, research demonstrates that most Black students receive suspensions or expulsions for non-threatening behavior (Skiba, 2009). Racial bias in the practice of school discipline is part of a broader discourse concerning the undeniable presence of institutional racism or structural inequity in education (Nieto, 2000). Townsend (2000) reported that African American males are suspended at a rate three times their White counterparts. Discipline policy violations often also differed between racial groups. Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) found that White students tended to be suspended for “serious” violations (e.g., weapons and drugs), while African American students were more likely to be suspended for nebulous infractions such as “disrespect” or “appearing threatening” (Lewis et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2012). As a result, many minority students perceive bias in the disciplinary practices of their teachers and administrators (Sheets, 2002). In a study citing the perceptions of students in an urban high school in the Pacific Northwest, individuals of all socioeconomic statuses (SES) detected bias in disciplinary practices aimed at students of low socioeconomic status, specifically (Skiba et al, 2002).
Much of the national data agrees that there is a disparity in the discipline practices in many schools, especially towards Black males. Many Black male students have been tracked into special education and disciplined at disproportion number, as a result of teacher biases and cultural mismatch (Kunjufu, 2000; Townsend, 2000). Currently, Black males are overrepresented in special education programs for emotional disturbance (ED), emotional/behavior disorder (EBD), learning disabilities (LD) and mental retardation (MR) compared to their counterparts (Schott Foundation, 2012). Special education referrals and testing usually derive from subjective interpretations of student behavior, which is another component of cultural mismatch (Skiba et al., 2008). Low-income students in urban schools are more likely to be referred to special education due to unequal educational opportunities and lower expectations from teachers (Irvine, 1990). As a result of discipline disproportionality and alarming suspension rates, many schools fail to meet the needs of African American students.

Cultural Synchronization

As a remedy for cultural mismatch, scholars have proposed cultural synchronization as a needed area of further research. Irvine (1990) defined cultural synchronization as the alignment and parallel between school and home environment of students. Irvine (1990) and others have presented compelling arguments regarding detrimental effects that result from a lack of cultural synchronization between teachers and students. Examples include the development of deficit views among teachers, the deterioration of interpersonal respect between teachers and students, increased attention to controlling student behavior, and poor use of instructional time (Irvine, 1990). However, few scholars have studied that the presence of cultural synchronization and the effects on classroom discipline.

Irvine (1990) emphasizes that if a teacher is familiar with students' cultural backgrounds, this enables teachers to draw on shared knowledge that honors students' heritage and preexisting knowledge. Irvine and Fraser (1998) termed African American teachers as warm demanders. They argued that many Black teachers often employ a firm, authoritative orientation that serves as the foundation of their interactions with students. Warm demanders often use stern voice tones, word choices, and demeanors that clearly model to the students what is expected from them in terms of how to behave (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). Some people may think that warm demanders have a harsh method of discipline, while members of the Black community interpret this as showing concern and care (Delpit, 2006; Gordon, 1998). An implication of the shift to culturally responsive discipline may be that teachers learn to adopt disciplinary strategies that address inappropriate behavior in meaningful ways and often avoid office referrals by addressing the minor infractions in class. Gilmore (1985) and others have demonstrated how a lack of cultural synchronization between teachers and students contributes to
among boys. As Irvine (1990) mentions, “the language, style of walking, glances, and dress of Black children, particularly males, has engendered fear, apprehension, and overreaction among many teachers and school administrators” (p. 27). Gordon’s (1998) study of inner-city African American educators suggests that teachers often use voice tones, facial expressions, and word choices that convey a strong and intense style.

**Student-Teacher Interaction and Discipline**

Wilson and Corbett (2001) and Delpit (2006) note that today’s classroom environments should be places in which expectations are clearly stated and inappropriate behaviors are dealt with immediately. Attempting to meet the needs of students requires that teachers and service providers develop an awareness of and explicitly respond to students’ ethnic, cultural, social, emotional, and cognitive characteristics (Brown, 2003). Delpit (2006) indicates that many children expect many more direct verbal commands than perhaps teachers may expect to give or provide. If students interpret commands as questions, teachers and administrators may perceive them as uncooperative and insubordinate, without understanding their failure to comprehend what is expected and why they choose not to comply (Delpit, 2006). Gaining students’ cooperation in today’s classrooms involves establishing a classroom atmosphere in which teachers are aware of, and address, students’ cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional, and cognitive needs (Brown, 2004). The physical features, emotional tone, and quality of interactions among students and between students and teachers have a tremendous impact on classroom learning. Classroom climates that are hostile, uninviting, and negative are not conducive to the learning environment for any students, and students with behavioral concerns tend to perform better in inviting, caring, and supportive classroom climates (Howard, 2006). As Howard discovered, students prefer “teachers who displayed caring bonds and attitudes towards them, and teachers who establish community-and family-type classroom environments” (p. 131).

Student misbehavior varies across different classrooms. It is important for teachers to be reflective and assess how their actions influence student behavior (Delpit, 2006). Student misbehavior can be attributed to effective classroom management and the ability of the teacher to create a rapport with the students in an effort to create a welcoming environment that is conducive to learning. Within the right environment, students can begin to feel engaged and productive. As engagement increases, misbehavior tends to decrease (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Educators who effectively master classroom management can reduce the need for exclusionary discipline sanctions and can keep students in the learning environment (Tuck, 2012).

**Theoretical Framework**

Central to the social and economic color line created by urbanization and school discipline is the cultural misunderstanding between students and teachers. Resistance theory, which captures the indignation expressed among students, will serve as the center of analysis. As urban isolation and discipline systems are developed through the structural legitimation of dominant norms, values, and roles, resistance theories help to explain a social and
Together, the structural practices that often respond to *cool pose* and *strain* are suspensions, which explain the disproportional representation of Black youth in school discipline.

Resistance to the norms of dominant society is captured in the theoretical understanding of the *cool pose*. Richard Majors (1986) describes cool pose as “a unique response to social, political, and economic conditions” in which Black males, in particular, display a disposition of control, toughness, and detachment (p. 6). The cool pose, as a collective response to social order, is perceived as a threat to stability. Within school systems, the words, postures, clothing, or expressive demeanor that ascribes the cool pose invokes strategies of exclusionary discipline over instructional practices on the part of teachers and administrators (Majors & Billson, 1993; Pane & Rocco, 2014). Those individuals who become frustrated from the division of labor are captured in Robert Merton’s *strain theory*. Merton frames strain theory as the frustration that develops from the “inaccessibility of effective institutional means for attaining economic or any other type of highly valued success” (Merton, 1938, p. 678). Where economic deprivation is highest, Merton posits that the individual is forced through one of five possible adaptations: (a) conformity; (b) innovation; (c) ritualism; (d) retreatism; and (e) rebellion (Merton, 1938). Retreatism, the “rejection of the goals and means” of education, and rebellion represents the “emancipation from reigning standards” of the system and responds to strain within school structures (Merton, 1938, p. 677-678). Together, the structural practices that often respond to *cool pose* and *strain* are suspensions, which explain the disproportional representation of Black youth in school discipline.

Data

In order to see manifestations of cultural mismatch, the following map displayed in Figure 1 presents zip code zoning data for Charlotte-Mecklenburg County. Charlotte-Mecklenburg County was selected because of its large size and urban population. An analysis of zip codes by education and race indicates segregated and isolated areas, as displayed below (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 2012). For sake of point, the following information is used as a reference for this section:

- **State-level**: North Carolina state-level data demonstrates that the student population is 26% Black and 52% White (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2014). The North Carolina teacher composition is 14% Black and 82% White.
- **Local-level**: In Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, North Carolina’s largest urban school district, the student population is 42% Black and 32% White. The teacher composition in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools is 24% Black and 70% White.

Because schools zones and zip codes are synonymous with school placements, figure 1 provides a visible representation of the color line in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Despite the high populations of Black students in urban districts like Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, there is still the probability that students will still enter a classroom with a culturally mismatched teacher.
As displayed in Figure 1, the city of Charlotte is segregated by race and zip code. Specific areas, such as zip codes 28206 and 28036, demonstrate a staggering difference between racial demographics. Considering the urban educational contexts and the likelihood of cultural mismatch, schools within these districts operate in extreme isolation by race and education. Druid Hills Academy’s population (zip code 28206) is 86.8% Black and 0% White, and has a free and reduced lunch population of 96.1%. Davidson Elementary (zip code 28036) has a 5.6% Black and 83.9% White population, with a free and reduced lunch population of 11.5% (Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, 2014). Both of these schools operate within the same public school district. Here, schools with varying student demographics exist in isolation of each other, which suggests that school desegregation is still prominent within 21st century contexts.

When considering the literature, the map above is discouraging and indicative of school resources and educational quality. In the state of North Carolina, 58% of all short-term suspensions during the 2012-2013 school years were Black students, compared to 26.3% for White students (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2014). The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2014) also notes that in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, Black students accounted for 77.4% of all short-term suspensions, compared to 8% for White students during the 2012-2013 school year. As Figure 1 displays, Charlotte-Mecklenburg County is still physically segregated. As a result, many students in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are also isolated based on race or socioeconomic status. Many districts, such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, reproduce the color line in urban settings.

### Discussion

Recent economic policies have crystalized the educational color line. A specified focus on the economic impacts of urbanization and schooling is an appropriate discussion for the research listed above. Using the theoretical frameworks of resistance theory, along with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg data provided in Figure 1, the following discussion aims to synthesize how the 21st century color line influences today’s urban schools.
Ultimately schools are becoming factories for social reproduction. Recent changes, such as the privatization of educational resources, now positions businesses and for-profit entities as stakeholders in children’s educational futures. These modes of privatization, known as neoliberal economic policies, reinforce social order, competition, and class. Every aspect of education, including curriculum textbooks, high-stakes testing, discipline policies, and the formation of charter schools, directly result from privatized, neoliberal economic policies (Rury, 2013). Neoliberalism, or the focus on privatization and decentralization, is highly lucrative for large businesses. These businesses often outsource products and services in order to privately manage what was once public domain. Lipman (2004) asserts that neoliberal economic policies “shift responsibility for inequalities produced by the state onto parents, students, schools, communities, teachers, and teacher education programs” (p. 171). Neoliberal education policies promote private ownership, and corporate sponsorship of schools, as well as curriculum standards that align with the economy and teacher compensation suppression (Wiggan, 2009).

High-stakes testing, for example, is a result of neoliberal policies that outsource student test scores to private testing companies. As a result, schools are being subjected to increased levels of accountability and high-stakes standardized testing (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Because of the lucrative benefits of high student performance, many schools opt to remove low performing students – through suspensions and expulsions – in order to salvage school test scores. Low performance is directly connected to teacher quality. As mentioned, teacher quality cannot be guaranteed without first addressing cultural mismatch and the looming color line.

The introduction of high-stakes testing and accountability policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (RTTT), Common Core State Standards and Mayoral Control are connected to the economic market (Tuck, 2012). These economic educational policies are harmful to groups from low socioeconomic areas, which have fewer opportunities of academic success in public schools (Ayon, 1995; Lipman, 2004; Tuck, 2012). This form of legitimized domination is dependent of various zip codes to stratify opportunities based on social class. Looking at Figure 1, those students living in zip codes with the highest percentages of African American and Latino/a citizens also have the lowest percentage of college degrees (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 2012). Thus, remediation and supplemental learning opportunities in these neighborhoods are not equal. Across the various zip codes in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, there are pockets of students who have unequal access to adults with college degrees (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 2012). When examining the neoliberal high-stakes accountability testing, it is unfair to assume all students have equal access to resources to aid their performance on standardized testing.

Furthermore, when students in certain segregated zip codes are suspended from school, their surrounding environment is often conducive to crime and poverty. However, repeated suspensions and exclusionary practices that occur in urban schools add to the negative feelings these students attribute to school and bolster their suspicions of
systemic mainstream rejection (Townsend, 2000). Strain theory, or the dissatisfaction with the division of labor, manifests through student suspensions and expulsions. Additionally, these exclusionary practices further alienate students, both physically and psychologically, from the school environment and decrease learning opportunities (Sheets, 2002; Townsend, 2000). When students are removed from the learning environment, through suspensions or expulsions, instructional time is missed. In addition, the likelihood of suspended students to academically fail, drop out, or become incarcerated compounds with each suspension (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziendenberg, 1999; Kunjufu, 2000; National Association of School Psychologists, 2008). Once suspended, students are more likely to be suspended again and this “high rate of repeat suspensions that may indicate that suspension is ineffective in changing behavior for challenging students” (National Association of School Psychologists, 2008, p. 2). Being out of school also puts students at greater risk of becoming involved with the justice system.

As a safeguard for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability standards, many states provide alternative education settings for students. Many of these schools are General Equivalency Diploma (GED) programs that provide non-traditional educational opportunities for suspended and expelled students (Tuck, 2012). However as Tuck (2012) mentions, even the GED is now privatized to a large testing company, which is another aspect of neoliberalism. Although the GED is a viable option for many students, many students drop out without obtaining a high school completion certificate. This is known as the dropout crisis. This crisis is tied to economic factors that help to shape a community, and reinforce the zip code divisions as displayed in Figure 1. Students who do not finish high school are four times more likely than college graduates to be unemployed (Olson, 2006). They are far likely to end up in prison or on welfare, and they die on average, at a younger age. For students living in the 28206 and 28208 zip codes listed in Figure 1, the need for effective education is paramount. Olson (2006) asserts that high school dropouts impact society in lost tax revenue, health care, corrections, and government assistance (i.e., food stamps, subsidized housing, and public assistance). Anything that increases the high school dropout rate is a deterrent to economic development (Olson, 2006).

In all, Wilson (1987) argues that the societal changes found in the social transformation of the inner city can best be explained through concepts he calls concentration effect and buffer effects. Wilson (1987) explains that, while the former “refers to the constraints and opportunities associated with living in a neighborhood in which the population is overwhelmingly socially disadvantaged,” the latter “refers to the presence of a sufficient number of working and middle-class professional families to absorb the shock or cushion the effect of uneven economic growth and periodic recessions on inner-city neighborhoods” (p. 144). It is important to note that structural systems in place are designed to legitimate domination of certain demographic groups. When analyzing Figure 1, racially segregated areas displayed in the zip code mapping, proves how systemic racialization is. The topic of disproportionate discipline reduces educational opportunities and consequently, economic development, in communities such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg. With zip codes already surpassing 80% Black and Latino/a (as demonstrated in Figure 1), the need to ensure that schools implement fair discipline policies is paramount.
Recommendations and Implications for Future Research

The color line still exists in the 21st century. With cultural mismatch in many classrooms, inadequate teacher preparation, and the overrepresentation of African Americans in school discipline, many students find themselves in segregated schools, many of which are just as isolated as those prior to the 1954 Board of Education decision. In order to proactively address these areas of school urbanization, the following list provides practitioner recommendations and implications for further research:

Encourage cultural synchronization at multiple levels. The discipline gap appears to be the result of a lack of cultural synchronization in the classroom. Eliminating the discipline gap requires a multi-pronged solution that needs to be applied on both a structural level and a personal level. Educators can address the disparities in discipline, while facilitating change in their classrooms and at the school level. Teachers can employ culturally responsive classroom management and discipline efforts, develop cultural synchronization, and develop a relationship with their individual students, which are discussed more in depth in the next section, as well as the next few pages of the paper.

Equalize local funding and eradicate school property tax laws. Public school funding is still a major contributing factor to public education in urban areas (Tuck, 2012). In the United States public schools receive money at local, state, and federal levels; however, the largest portion of their funding is from local property taxes. In more affluent neighborhoods, home prices are higher than in poorer neighborhoods, thus the surrounding neighborhood schools are able to allocate more money per child (Kozol, 1991). Darling-Hammond (2010) and Lareau (2011) argue that economics inequalities cause opportunity gaps between students of parents who are financially well off and those of low socioeconomic status. In addition to school fiscal inequality, students from middle and upper class backgrounds often have access to early education resources and remediation materials, while many urban students in poorer neighborhoods have limited access (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kozol, 1991). The importance of readdressing school property tax laws is imperative for equalizing school access and educational opportunities for both sides of the color line.

Provide effective teacher preparation programs that teach African American student needs. Teacher education programs can effectively impact teacher perceptions and teacher performance (Brown, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The most misunderstood demographic group are African American students. Bireda (2002) acknowledges “beliefs, assumptions, and practices that result in racial disparities in discipline ultimately deny children the right and access to a quality education” (p. 6). Bireda (2002) attributes the increases in disciplinary infractions against African American students to the “lack of knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity to the culture of African American students” as well as, “assumptions and negative expectations for the academic performance and social behavior of African American students” (p. 9).

Reconsider suspensions and expulsions for urban students. In the United States, schools most frequently punish the students who have the greatest academic, social, economic, and emotional needs (Johnson, Boyden, & Pittz, 2001; Noguera, 2008; Townsend, 2000). Schools punitively rely heavily on
strategy (Arcia, 2006), and this practice often has a disproportionate impact on students of color. However, as mentioned in the introduction, many African American students live in low socioeconomic homes. When suspending students, it is important to consider the social effects of suspension on students from low-income urban areas. The use of school exclusion as a discipline practice may contribute to many social problems found in low-income areas, such as dropouts, unemployment, and incarceration.

**Remove “achievement gap” from educational discourse.** The existence of the achievement gap between African American students and White students and its possible causes and remedies has gained considerable attention in both the public mind and in academia (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). However, inquiries into disparities in achievement often neglect to consider patterns in disciplinary referrals, which remove African American students from learning environments. Thus, insufficient discussions have taken place with regard to discipline and the difference in achievement between students (Skiba et al., 2002). While many factors have been explored as contributors to the discipline gap, teacher beliefs and practices, biases, and cultural misunderstandings as it relates to discipline has received little attention. Without the consideration of both factors, the popularized “achievement gap” in today’s educational discourse is false.

**Redefine “cool pose” for urban youth.** A key prescription for addressing the color line can be found in the power of researchers and community leaders to deconstruct the destructive discourse that views “cool pose” as polarizing and threatening to social institutions such as education. Questioning and rethinking the cool pose permits community leaders, parents, students, educators, and future teachers, the opportunity to employ agency in their own narrative. The decentering of the structural narrative of urban, poor Blacks will enable change agents within the community, schools, and other social institutions to see the value in investing the resources needed to erase policies that deepen the color line.

**Conclusion**

The plight of African Americans in the quest for educational freedom has endured racial segregation, desegregation, and new manifest forms of segregation. The 21st century color line is just as despairing as the one previously mentioned by W.E.B. DuBois over a century ago. Many of today’s urban neighborhoods are homogeneously populated and underserved. Demographics in many urban areas include high poverty, low median ages, high unemployment, and low salaries. With these impeding factors influencing urban neighborhoods, education is vitally important today. However, today’s urban schools are often just as segregated as they were prior to the 1954 *Brown* decision. Even within schools, cultural mismatch is an influencing phenomenon that plagues the learning environment in many urban classrooms. Regardless of race, teachers have the sole responsibility of maintaining effective student and teacher relationships in order to improve student-learning conditions and minimize excessive school discipline. By focusing on proactive measures, education can provide the necessary tools to eradicate the damages of the 21st century color line.
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Rethinking Parental Involvement: A Critical Review of the Literature

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In the current educational atmosphere distinguished by an immense emphasis on accountability as promulgated by the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), our nation has been occupied with refining and defining its educational goals to prepare its citizens to participate in a global economy (Anfara & Mertens, 2008). Within this context, family and parent involvement in school has remained one of the top priorities. Two examples illuminate this argument. First, in 1994, Congress established the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which indicated in Goal Eight that, “every school will promote parental involvement in the social, economic and academic growth of children” (Anfara & Mertens, 2008, p. 58). Second, the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) includes a specific section that focuses on parental involvement. Section 1118 of the Act requires all schools and districts that receive Title 1 funds to create a written parental involvement policy and effectively implement these policies. However, collectively, it has been more than three decades since the Goal 2000 reform and No Child Left Behind passed, and they have made slight impact on overall school improvement, especially in the context of parental involvement in urban school settings (Lewis, James, Hancock & Hill-Jackson, 2008; Yosso, 2002). Boutte and Johnson (2013) argue rural, suburban, and urban schools alike theoretically support the notion of parental involvement as an essential component to the educational success of students. However, exploring parental involvement in an urban school setting often differs from suburban and rural settings because of different social challenges (e.g. housing disparities, federal policy, poverty, public education in cities, and education policies) that prevent parents from being invited into schools (Anyon, 2005).

There are major disparities that impinge on the educational success for students in urban school settings. Scholars...
contend that the allocation of funds, the quality of teachers, and how schools are funded all contribute to the ills of urban settings. Yet, the devastating reality is that many researchers, teachers, policymakers, principals, and politicians view parents of urban school children through deficit lenses (Yosso, 2002). Deficit thinking blames the oppressed for their own oppression while ignoring systemic inequities that contribute to such oppression. It also builds upon distorted stories and stereotypes that are constantly replayed in the American backdrop (Kozol, 2007).

After reviewing and analyzing the extant literature pertaining to parental involvement, I found most scholars, researchers, and schools rely on traditional Western European values and ideologies to view urban parents, which prevent them from learning about, with, and from families and communities from urban backgrounds (Reynolds, 2008). This critical review of literature seeks to offer readers a comprehensive examination of the paradigms through which researchers and schools typically tend to view parents. Given the intent of this article, I address three different normal strings to help educators rethink parental involvement. First, I provide a definition of parental involvement and a rationale for exploring parental involvement in urban schools. Second, I illustrate parental involvement through a positivistic lens. Third, I focus on parental involvement and how it is viewed through an ecological lens. Fourth, I illustrate parental involvement through a critical lens to help educators rethink parental involvement in urban schools. Lastly, I provide a discussion section and recommendations for educational research and practice relative to parental involvement.

**Defining Parental Involvement**

The historical definitions of parental involvement are still present in current academic scholarship, research, educational policies, and school discourses. According to Epstein (1987, 1991), parental involvement focuses on how schools assist all families by helping them create home environments that will allow them to support children as students. For example, this support includes school and classroom volunteer programs, workshops for families on how to parent, nurture, and support their children, reading nights, and school board councils. Furthermore, Goals 2000: Educate America Act and NCLB define parental involvement as,

the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including: assisting their child’s learning; being actively involved in their child’s education at school; serving as full partners in their child’s education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child (No Child Left Behind, 2002, Section 1118).
Rationale for Exploring Parental Involvement in Urban Schools

Reflecting on historical and contemporary notions concerning the barriers and difficulties faced in urban schools and borrowing from W. E. B. Du Bois’s perennial question, I address the following question: “How does it feel to be a problem?” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 2). Honoring Du Bois’ call, I turn a critical eye of analysis to critical parental involvement in urban spaces in regard to the ways parents of color are positioned within schools as “the problem.” Since the voices and lived experiences of parents of color are rarely illuminated in the research, leaving the impression that parents from urban environments are disengaged and detached from their children’s education, I identify the challenges and barriers parents of color in urban contexts face. Furthermore, I attempt to disrupt the persistent storylines (Boutte, 2012), which position urban schools, students, and parents as problematic by offering counter-perspectives, discourses, and frameworks.

Guided by critical race theoretical framework, this particular section and article build on the belief that race is pervasive and worldwide in society, and sadly, in education. As Boutte (2012, 2013) continuously points out, the marginalization and disenfranchisement of students of color in urban settings will persist due to the massive numbers of black and brown children who are enrolled in the schools. In contrast, this does not mean educators should become unconcerned and complacent in the process of working against the disenfranchisement of students from urban environments. Rather, recognizing the depravity of racism, its deep entrenchment in society, and its role in education can possibly help make clear that racism will not go anywhere. However, if we all make a collaborative effort and continue to disrupt racism, the disparities faced in urban contexts can be immensely reduced (Ayon, 2005; Boutte, 2012; Greene, 2013; Milner, 2012).

The past and current literature on urban environments abound with assumptions of urban students and schools as dangerous, unruly, rundown facilities, gang related activities, high attrition rates of teachers, poor test scores, high poverty levels, truancy, and lack of motivation along with a host of other negative images and depictions (Ayon, 2005; Boutte, 2012; Boutte, 2013; Milner, 2012; Morrell, 2004; Tyack, 1974). Deficit perspectives about urban schools are ranked as problematic. These issues continue to shroud how students and parents from urban environments and communities are negatively perceived. Examples of such deficit description have been widely illustrated in media, public press, including box office films like Dangerous Minds (1999). Movies, such as Dangerous Minds make it difficult to view urban environments otherwise. Dangerous Minds is one of the many uplifting stories in which the dedicated and committed teacher takes on a group of students who are often labeled at-risk, disadvantage, or rebellious, in particular Black and Latina/o students. To perpetuate the ideas of disorder
and unruliness, a scene from this movie opens with LouAnne Johnson, an ex-Marine, who applied for a teaching job being hired almost instantaneously to teach in an urban high school. She is told this school’s student body comprises of “special kids,” “rejects from hell,” “kids with no interest in education,” and “challenging kids.” In regards to the movie’s shortcomings, *Dangerous Minds* speaks to the familiar narrative of urban students as “uneducable.” Most importantly, this movie will continue to be pertinent for many years because we still see how little has been done to improve the landscape of urban education (Boutte, 2012; Howard, 2014). Based upon the deficit comments and dialogic interactions I have experienced from in-service and pre-service teachers, there have been dissenters to the view that students from urban environments “are not working diligently to achieve academically” and parents from urban communities “do not want the best for their children”. Given the problems cited in the academic literature pertaining to the plight of urban schools, researchers (Boutte, 2012; Howard, 2014; Milner, 2012) have found parents and students of color equally dissatisfied. For example students in urban schools face an array of issues such as (a) low academic performance, (b) disproportionate placement into special education, (c) discipline disparities, (d) literacy achievement gap, (e) highly qualified teachers, (f) disempowering curriculum, (g) low teacher expectations, (h) unorganized parent involvement, and (i) traditional curriculum where students’ historical and contemporary experiences and traditions are stifled.

Greene (2013) introduced a critical framework that focuses on the ways families’ roles, lived experiences, and histories of education and schooling are limited by policies and the amount of resources they receive. Within the context of race and a changing economy, researchers of parental involvement have to situate the roles of parents within these two contexts. The change in the political economy has left families of color from low-socioeconomic backgrounds on the margins as a means to continue its economic supremacy in a global economy (Lipman, 2011). As an illustration, Greene (2013) conducted an empirical study that explored parental involvement in urban communities through the integration of family literacy practices. In addition, this study helped bridge the gap between families and schools by incorporating the voices of families and children, which served as counter-narratives to dominant discourses of privilege and marginalization. In the study, Greene provided the stories of 17 parents who participated in a parent involvement workshop for two years in an economically dispirited city in the Mid-West. The goal of the workshop was to provide a space for parents, students, administrators, and teachers to engage in dialogue with each other, build partnerships, and share stories. Furthermore, Greene (2013) contended there are major discussions, debates, and policies concerning educational reform and the allocation of resources that are still needed. Moreover, the distribution of resources has been stifled by what Greene (2013) calls “private interests,” nonetheless private interests silence parents’ voices. Furthermore, when it comes to resource distribution and decision-making policies, parents are marginalized. As quoted in Greene (2013), “these private interests are what Fine (1993) referred to nearly 20 years ago as a ‘privatized public sphere’ in which powerful corporate interests determine educational policy” (p. 13). Indeed, as others (Greene, 2013; Howard & Flennaugh, 2011; Ladson-
Billings, 1995; Lipman, 2011) have argued, families need access to resources. Moreover, the lack of opportunity for families of color exacerbates inequity. In fact, schools need to build on the value and support of families—not try to assimilate parents into a certain culture but provide them the space to present who they are. To clarify parental involvement is not an individual responsibility, but it is a collaborative effect. Parental involvement is a partnership between institutions and families to ensure the highest level of learning for each child (Boutte & Johnson, 2013; Greene, 2013; Howard & Reynolds, 2008).

**Positivistic and Ecological Parental Involvement Paradigms**

Current research appears to validate the view of the traditional way of defining parental involvement and these include positivistic and ecological paradigms. Chen and Gregory (2010), Driessen, Smit, and Sleegers (2005), and Domina (2005) define parental involvement as the influence the home and the school have on the development of students; and, most importantly, parental involvement equates to better school attendance, fewer discipline problems, and higher grades as opposed to their peers whose parents are less involved. As a result of positivistic and ecological models, urban parents have oftentimes been marginalized because they may not fit into these traditional frameworks. In the U.S., there is a pressing and vital need to study the historical, institutional, and cultural factors that impede the academic achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003). Furthermore, positivistic and ecological parental involvement models exacerbate the parental-school involvement gap between families and schools. More specifically, the positivistic and ecological assumptions of parental involvement do not welcome the voices and lived experiences of children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse settings.

Furthermore, the positivistic and ecological definitions of parental involvement tend to disregard the methods, cultures, and techniques of how some parents situate themselves in their children’s education (Moore & Lewis, 2012). Bowers and Griffin (2011) explained:

> the traditional definition of parental involvement includes activities in the school and at home. Parental involvement can take many forms, such as volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers, assisting with homework, and attending school events such as performances or parent-teacher conferences...However, viewed through this lens, African American and Latino families demonstrate low rates of parental involvement...
> Traditional definitions of parent involvement require investments of
time and money from parents, and those who may not be able to provide these resources are deemed uninvolved (p. 78).

Despite the number of studies, practices, and policies, urban education parental involvement still remains static and guided by assumptions listed above (Boutte & Johnson, 2014; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Moore & Lewis, 2012; Landsman & Lewis, 2011). Parental involvement is an essential tool that should work in conjunction with other efforts to improve urban education. Ideally, there must be collaboration with families, community members, and educators (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009). Hence, educators must begin to re-create robust work of utilizing families and community members within urban educational settings while moving away from the current dominant narrative and ideologies to one of, “collaboration, promise, and hope” (Boutte & Johnson, 2013, p. 167).

In their review of traditional parent involvement literature for urban contexts, Boutte and Johnson (2014) used three paradigmatic lenses: (1) positivistic; (2) ecological; and (3) critical. Before delving into an in-depth analysis of parental involvement through each particular lens, I have provided a brief overview of each lens as summarized by Boutte and Johnson (2013). The positivistic lens views knowledge as objective. Positivistic approach usually relies heavily on quantitative studies. Deductive logic, hypothesis testing, and the like guide researchers; furthermore, this approach often seeks to find universal or generalizable patterns of behavior (Cannella, 1997). There are few, if any, efforts made to understand and acknowledge the voices and experiences of families and community members (Yosso, 2002). Ecological paradigms capture human development over time and the role of environment in shaping individual growth. The ecological theories explain the issues pertaining to parent involvement and student achievement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Boutte & Johnson, 2013). This paradigm usually omits issues of race and class—two critical factors that play a crucial role in students’ schooling experiences. Critical approaches acknowledge the fact that researchers come to certain studies with certain ideologies, beliefs, and deficit-based assumptions (Milner, 2007). This paradigm critiques and challenges structures and institutions that are put in place to oppress different groups of people, while working to emancipate those who are marginalized.

**Positivistic Literature on Parental Involvement**

Many studies that explore parental involvement through a positivistic lens typically depend on quantitative data to unearth a particular phenomena (Cannella, 1997; Chen & Gregory 2010; Domina, 2005; Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2005)---there are few, if any, attempts made to understand and acknowledge the voices and experiences of families and communities. Positivistic models of parental involvement do not attempt to learn about families in a substantive or authentic way (Yosso, 2002). There is a rapidly growing body of literature on parental involvement through a positivistic lens, which indicates positivistic parental involvement models (1) rely on Western European ideologies and beliefs, (2) make minimal attempts to learn about the community and culture of the families, (3) follow fixed policies and practices that are already in place with little or no input from families, (4) utilize stagnant and monocultural definitions of parent involvement in terms of
(i.e. communication styles, nurturance, care, and family beliefs about schooling), (5) do not attempt to learn about families in a substantive or authentic way, (6) adheres to one-size fits all model (this particular model does not acknowledge the fact that students bring prior knowledge and experiences to the classroom), and (7) home and community visits are usually static and grounded in deficit assumptions and beliefs.

Yan (2000) contended there is extensive evidence that social capital leads to better student academic achievement regardless of other social and economic factors a family may possess. Yan referred to social capital as social networks and social interactions that help to bring about educational attainment. Data for this study were drawn from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88). The NELS:88 sample was composed of eighth graders first interviewed in 1988 and follow-up surveys were conducted in 1990, 1992, and 1994. The author’s data comprised data from all four waves of NELS:88 data including student and parent data; resulting in a total sample of 6,459 students, which provided subsamples of 707 successful African American students, 5,293 successful White students, and 459 other (non-successful) African American students. Yan studied three groups: the target group, which comprised of successful African American students and two comparison groups, one which consisted of successful White students and the other non-successful African American students (2000). Yan explained how SES, ethnicity, and family makeup all contribute to the theory of social capital. Thus, the author provided four variables that highlight the social interactions and relationships in the family involvement process: (1) parent-teen interactions, (2) parent-school interactions, (3) interactions with other parents, and (4) family norms. In the study, the author found there were significant differences between Black and White families in relation to parental education, family income, and family structure. Yan (2000) contended African American students were more likely to come from economically disadvantaged households than Western European American students. Additionally, African American households had lower incomes, parents with lower levels of formal education, and higher percentages of single parents. In short, the author concluded that higher levels of family income were aligned with a higher level of social capital. The assumption was that family social capital is influenced by both family socioeconomic status and family makeup.

**Ecological Literature on Parental Involvement**

While useful in their own right, positivistic and ecological paradigms overlook how race and racism operate within society and within educational arenas. Positivistic and ecological studies fail to critique and analyze the various fixed and natural structures that impact parents, students, and communities and how the omission of race and racism perpetuate oppressive ideologies and epistemologies (Milner, 2007). Many teachers, administrators, researchers,
and policy makers have adopted the positivistic and ecological practices and policies that are valued as successful and effective practices for working with parents. However, research about parental involvement in urban spaces should focus on bi-directional and culturally responsive approaches, programs, and models (Reynolds, 2008). Thus, there is a need to illustrate what effective parental involvement should look like in urban schools.

Greene (2013) noted many studies and parental involvement models fail to acknowledge how families define parental involvement, the roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers, the resources parents possess, or how schools view certain families through a deficit lens. For example, the work of Joyce Epstein has been widely used in parent involvement efforts. In 1995, Epstein created a framework to assist schools in building partnerships. Her research focused on examining school programs, school climate, and community partnerships as modes to create strong partnerships to aid all children excel in school and in life. Epstein summarized the theory, framework, and parameters that have assisted the schools in her research on constructing partnerships. She suggested her framework and model could be used in elementary, middle, or high schools that were interested in improving and increasing parent involvement. In this conceptual article, Epstein (1995) outlined six types of involvement and caring: (1) parenting (assist every family with establishing home environments to support children as students), (2) communicating (design successful forms of communication between home and school in regards to school programs and children's progress), (3) volunteering (create and recruit parent help and support), (4) learning at home (provide material and concepts about how to help students at home with school work and other curricular decisions), (5) decision making (incorporate parents in school decisions and creating parent leaders and representatives), and (6) collaborating with community (identify and incorporating resources and services from the community to increase school programs, family practices, and student learning and growth).

Epstein (1995) explained the importance of a caring educational environment and how this particular environment can improve academic excellence, good communications, and productive interactions. The author presumed if children feel cared for and challenged to work hard, they would be more likely to become better students who would try their best to learn to read, write, and learn other essential skills to remain in school. This conceptual work falls under an ecological paradigm. Within this conceptual model, race is absent, and the model focuses on how parents need to work with the schools. Further, it does not focus on the roles and responsibilities the school has to the students’ families. Greene (2013) argues Epstein’s model surmises the educational field to be an equal playing field between families and schools. It does not acknowledge the roles that ideology and hegemony play in decision-making and policies.

Critical Literature on Parental Involvement

Because positivistic and ecological frameworks studying parent involvement have disregarded race and racism, these studies have excluded the voices of culturally and linguistically diverse people (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Due to the various oppressive structures, African American parents are often viewed and blamed as the problem even...
There is a void in the literature that does not illuminate the resistance parents may encounter from teachers and school officials because of their (parents) race and socioeconomic status (SES).

school but within the school as well. There is a void in the literature that does not illuminate the resistance parents may encounter from teachers and school officials because of their (parents) race and socioeconomic status (SES). Race and SES are two variables that have stifled and disenfranchised students and parents’ relationships with schools (Anderson, 2007; Anyon, 2005). Indeed, racial disparities permeate institutions and various social structures in this country. Race demarcates access to housing, jobs, knowledge, education, resources, social mobility, and other opportunities (Anyon, 2005; Kozol, 2005; Milner, 2007). Kozol (2005) highlighted the complex intersection of race and SES. Research shows many impoverished areas are separated by race: “Racial isolation and the concentrated poverty of children in public school go hand in hand, moreover, as the Harvard project notes” (p. 288). The voices and the experiences of African American parents from low SESs are particularly absent in the academic literature (Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Lareau, 2000). Much of the existing literature suggests that regardless of the socioeconomic status, students and parents of color still encounter micro and macro aggressions of racism (Kozol, 2005; Lareau, 2000). Many educational institutions overlook parents of color who are middle-class (Lareau, 2000).

There is an increase of African American people who are moving into more affluent neighborhoods; however, in these more affluent schools, the academic performance of middle-class students of color still falls short compared to their White counterparts (Anderson, 1988; Anyon, 2005; Jackson & Boutte, 2009; King, 2005; Lareau, 2000). Evaluating parental involvement through a critical lens moves beyond deficit perspectives of parents in urban settings by uplifting the voices and experiences of parents and students of color.

Because middle-class African American parents and students are overlooked in the academic literature concerning underachievement and parent involvement, Howard and Reynolds (2008) examined the school experiences of middle-class African American parents and students. Howard and Reynolds (2008) draw upon the intersection of race and class to be used in their analysis. In addition, critical race theory enabled the authors to incorporate counter-storytelling as a methodological tool, which allowed them to capture the voices of the parents in this study. Howard and Reynolds (2008) contended issues of race and racism remain possible reasons in understanding this phenomenon. The authors illustrated how most literature centered on parent involvement fails to problematize the roles of race and class in parenting practices with schools. Therefore, when race and class are part of the analysis, there is a paucity of scholarship that focuses on upper-class families of color. Further, the data were collected from a number of individual and focus group interviews with African American parents whose children attended predominately White, suburban schools.

The authors’ findings highlighted that most of the parents believed in the importance of their
involvement in their child’s education. But, the parents seemed to have different perspectives about how involvement should be implemented. The parents in the study stressed the importance of being informed about the happenings of school life. Several participants in the study revealed the lack of engagement between the home and the school. The data analysis revealed that parents want to be allowed to question, critique, and challenge the school and the schooling experiences of their children. For the parents who are engaged with the school, they find themselves in positions where the decisions, rules, and expectations are already negotiated without their voices. The lack of a collective voice has made it easier for schools to ignore parents as one vital resource for educational change. Howard and Reynolds (2008) elaborated on the interplay of race and class when it comes to parent involvement. Many parents expressed how they still encountered racism as they work to advocate on behalf of their children despite their socioeconomic status. The authors of this study explained the plethora of scholarship on the lack of parental involvement from African American families from low-income environments and recommended that scholars begin to capture the voices and the experiences of more affluent African American families and their children’s education, which may illustrate the fact that race does not disappear as people move up the socioeconomic ladder.

Discussion

This literature review on critical parental involvement was conducted through three paradigmatic lenses and proved the relationship between schools and families warrants scholarly attention using critical race theory as a tool of analysis and examination. Schools’ positioning of Black parents in the discourse of parental involvement is consistent with macro perceptions of Black people. Accounting for these broader societal notions of Black parents, Reynolds (2010) asserts,

> Educators often assume that Black parents’ culture, values and norms do not support or complement the culture of education; thus, many educators, along with policy-makers, have come to accept the idea that Black parents are more of a deficit to their children’s educational development than an asset (p. 148).

Like the broader societal discourse, Black parents are positioned as deficient (both in their presence and in their capabilities) in educational spaces and discourses. This pervasive negative stereotype must be interrupted and disrupted. Moreover, the stories and experiences of parents of color in relation to schools give rise to the important questions about the roles educators play in interrupting school practices and policies that continuously oppress parents and students of color. Thus, a critical race theoretical framework was employed for this review of literature.

Over a decade ago, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced critical race theory (CRT) to the field of education. It served to advance theory and research where race was concerned (Milner, 2007). Furthermore, critical race theorists emphasize that racism is and has been a primary component of U.S. culture, life, and law; thus, any efforts to eliminate racial inequities must be situated in the socio-historical legacy of racism (Delgado & Stefancic,
Utilizing CRT as a theoretical lens for examining the literature on parental involvement is imperative because race has been and remains untheorized in the field of education (Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2009). It is through this lens of race and all of its ramifications CRT confronts racial inequities and subjugation in institutional, legal, and educational spaces. Although there are studies that explore race, the field is lacking the conceptual and analytic tools to push the field of education forward.

Critical race theory in education is an evolving conceptual, theoretical, and methodological construct that works to disrupt and to examine race and racism found in the educational system (Milner, 2007). Further, the theory can enable an interrogation of how Black parents feel race and racism have influenced how schools position them as well as the schooling experiences and educational results for their children (Reynolds, 2010). CRT also serves as a theoretical framework to disrupt and to dismantle notions of meritocracy, neutrality, colorblindness, and fairness in the education of people of color (Yosso, 2002). Critical race scholars explore race along with other forms of subordination and the intersections of racism, classism, gender, and other forms of oppression. Reynolds (2010) and Yosso (2002) illustrate how these ideas are particularly important as it relates to African American parental involvement in schools as we see transparently the likelihood of this particular group encountering oppression and marginalization pertaining to issues of race, class, and gender.

The beauty of CRT is that it blurs the boundaries of theory and methodology (Cook, 2013). It insists on the acknowledgement of experiential knowledge of people of color and their communities (Bell, 1992). Counter-storytelling is a methodological tool that gives rise to the voices that are unheard and silenced throughout U.S. schools by countering the status quo, dominant ideologies and beliefs (Prendergast, 2003). CRT has several tenets. Counter-narrative is a tenet of CRT that can help illustrate a rare depiction of parents and communities’ relationships and barriers with schools. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) exerts that counter-narratives challenge and counter dominant narratives while uplifting and elevating the voices of oppressed groups. Reynolds (2010) contends, “as Black parents attempt to understand and contend with racial micro-aggressions that may be evidenced in school policies and practices, researchers can assume a critical role by providing them voice, a space to express their experiences” (p. 157).

Including CRT in future research to evaluate parental involvement enables educators to capture the experiences of people of color. Critical race theory critiques and challenges racial micro-aggression in schools as it relates to families and communities of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). African American families can reposition themselves in a space that allows them to examine their experiences; they can become powerful rather than powerless. In addition, this space allows parents of color to reposition their stories against dominant narratives and paradigms. Schools and educators need to recognize the role they play in the

"Including CRT in future research to evaluate parental involvement enables educators to capture the experiences of people of color."
manifestation of these micro/macro racial aggressions (Ford, 2013). In conjunction, professional development addressing issues on cultural incongruence between families/communities and schools are needed. In addition, educators cannot disregard issues of race and racism. Often race and racism are portrayed as awkward and taboo topics (Au, 2009); however, educators cannot deny the existence of these two socially constructed variables that transpire in the relationship with schools and parents and students of color. A critical gaze of parental involvement adds to the body of literature while shedding light on the specious claims that are infused throughout the educational arena pertaining to parents of color.

**Recommendation for K-12 Practices and Educators**

Educators often deplore the lack of visibility of African American parents’ presence in schools and participation in school activities. Often times they question whether African American parents care about the educational success of their children and if they promote the importance of learning outside of school contexts (Fields-Smith, 2005; Noguera, 2001; Yan, 2000). The issue to understand and to recognize parents of color lack of visibility in schools is clouded by deficit views from which schools view parents of color without considering the structural and systemic inequities that are described as fixed or natural practices. As I conclude this section, I would like to suggest the intent is not to belittle schools, educators, or researchers since all have a reciprocal goal of improving parent involvement. However, in actuality, both educators and families have different roles in some ways. By this I mean parents can assist schools with helping teachers incorporate their students’ culture, language, prior experiences, struggles, and knowledge into the classroom. Therefore, schools and families should work together to ensure cultural and academic excellence from all children (King, 2005).

Critically responsive parental involvement practices welcome parents’ stories and experiences in relation to schools. More specifically, critically responsive parental involvement practices give rise to the important questions about the roles educators play in promoting school practices and policies that continuously oppress parents and students of color. Capturing the parents’ voices and lived realities illustrate a rare depiction of parents and communities’ relationships and barriers with schools. Moreover, critically responsive parental involvement practices can provide healthy, corroborating, supportive, and emancipatory ways to engage and to connect families and communities to schools. Further research necessitates extensive and long-term efforts to examine how critical parental involvement is culturally responsive to families and communities whose culture is often devalued in schools (e.g., minoritized groups). Hence, educators must be advised on how to carefully investigate daily routines that children engage in (Boutte & Johnson, 2013; Lee, 2008).

Further, scholarship that deepens our understanding of critically responsive parental involvement practices in K-12 schools which have demonstrated success with working with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may offer models for programs, schools, and colleges dedicated to building two-way relationships with parents (e.g., parents take on leadership roles and
contribute to curricular decisions). Therefore, schools need to create robust relationships and partnerships with parents and community members. These relationships can serve as potential avenues for discussing pressing and difficult issues such as race.

On the basis of the evidence currently available, it seems fair to suggest that schools create dynamic and fluid definitions of parent involvement. Similarly, dynamic definitions of parent involvement are based on immersion within the culture and community as an approach to learn through and about families and communities. Parents are invited to voice their opinions and give their input on school policies. Furthermore, critical responsive parental involvement practices view students’ culture as strength rather than a weakness. These strength-based norms and practices are interactive and grounded in building on students’ assets and prior experiences.

This review of literature was written from the viewpoint of what educators need to do in urban contexts and how we may reorganize our efforts to engage and reengage families and communities from urban backgrounds. From the countless scholarship, task forces, articles, reports and efforts such as parent workshops to educate parents, rhetoric abounds. Furthermore, parental involvement should include robust, validating, cooperative, and liberating practices that engage and unite families and communities to schools across lines of race and class.

References


I. Research/Policy Briefs
   b. Briefs should be in Word format, on 8.5 x 11” paper, having 1 inch margins on all sides, and all pages should be numbered.
   c. Briefs should be 3-5 pages, including references. All graphs and tables should be included within the body of the paper.

II. Book Reviews
   a. Choose a recent book in the field of Urban Education then write a review giving a detailed analysis of the book’s content.
   b. Book review should be in Word format, on 8.5 x 11” paper, having 1 inch margins on all sides, and all pages should be numbered.
   c. Book review should be 5-7 pages, including references. In all cases, reviews will be considered for publication on the basis of the quality of the evaluation and description of the book, relevance and importance of the book to the field.

III. Research Article
   a. The journal article submission should demonstrate clear thoughts and analyses of the author by choosing words composed in direct, responsible and active syntax.
   b. A brief abstract stating the principal points, overview of findings and recommendations should be included in your submission. The abstract should be no longer than 150 words.
   c. Illustrations/graphics must be properly referenced in the text of the article, and numbered chronologically.
   d. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and typewritten with one-inch margins on all sides of an 8 ½ x 11 inch paper.
   e. References should be alphabetically listed and cited properly throughout the document. Sources should be properly referenced, indicating the author/s’ name, initials, the title of the source article, journal or book, volume, initial page number and the year of source publication.
   f. Footnotes should be AVOIDED.
   g. Journal submissions for review and publication should be submitted online. Submission of a manuscript is a representation that the paper has not been previously submitted in any publication elsewhere or published in any open literature. It also represents that the author/s have not assigned or transferred copyright for the material.

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The Urban Education Research & Policy Annuals (UERPA) is a graduate student journal that is published annually by the Urban Education Collaborative at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. This double-blind peer reviewed journal will consist of empirical and theoretical research written by masters and doctoral-level students in the areas related to urban education. The UERPA includes original articles, brief reports, and book reviews in the areas of educational reform, educational equity for underrepresented groups, racially diverse perspectives, multiculturalism, teacher education models, student achievement, urban school populations, and academic and social needs for urban students. Articles on other topics will be accepted if they have a clear relationship to research, policy, or practice in urban education.

Graduate students in education and public policy programs in the United States and abroad are invited to submit articles for review to the UERPA. Submissions will be reviewed by doctoral students under the guidance of full-time faculty in the Urban Education Program at the College of Education at University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Consistent with the policies of most journals in the field, articles submitted will either be “accepted,” “recommended for revision and resubmission,” or “not accepted.”

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