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This dissertation, HANDLING THE PAST: USING A SPECIALIZED CURRICULUM TO FACILITATE NARRATION OF RACIAL IDENTITIES, by ANDREA DENISE KIEL, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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# HANDLING THE PAST: USING A SPECIALIZED CURRICULUM TO FACILITATE NARRATION OF RACIAL IDENTITIES

by

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Under the Direction of Rhina Fernandes Williams, Ph.D.

## **ABSTRACT**

Identity construction takes place where people spend significant amounts of time. For children, those areas include home and school. Evidence exists that Black children are not given opportunities in school to narrate and affirm their racial identities. Racial identity has been shown to affect school success (Carter, 2008; Lea, 2014; Murrell, 2007), political involvement (Diemer and Li, 2011), and psychological well-being (Seaton, Sellers, & Scottham, 2006). Scholars suggest using history, narration, and dialogue to address this problem; however, current research has yet to incorporate these suggestions. I used a critical action research methodology to explore the influence of a specialized curriculum, document student engagement in critical race discourse, and facilitate the racial identity narrations of fourteen Black fifth-grade students. Targeted digital materials containing affirming Black historical portraits were used as springboards to teacher-facilitated conversations about race and subsequent student written reflections. Qualitative analysis was applied to students' reflections after viewing and discussing the digital materials, students' answers to direct questions regarding their racial attitudes, researcher observations, and researcher reflections. The findings suggest that students (1) had a severely limited knowledge of Black history and desired to learn more, (2) further developed affirming Black racial identities despite the historical challenges of Black people and despite personal contemporary problems, (3) were nonjudgmental regarding actions that their Black

collective group exhibited regarding agency and subsistence, and (4) held exclusionary attitudes toward White people while suggesting the need for various races and cultures to spend time together. Implications for teachers, teacher educators, policy makers, book publishers, and curriculum developers are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Racial identity, Black consciousness, Emancipatory pedagogy, Black racial identity development, Curriculum, Action research, Insider consciousness

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my students, the 210 Kings and Queens, who shared their lives with me. To all the Kings and Queens who have gone before me, yet bequeathed their powers, thank you. To R.E.G. for coming to congratulate me when I was about to give up, thanks.

To my mother, Virgie Lee Greene. She made attending college for the third time possible.

Without her support, I would be in debt for a lifetime after completing this degree and would have starved in the attempt. She provided food for my soul.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origins, and culture is like a tree without roots.”

~ Marcus Garvey, azquotes.com

“The thought of the inferiority of the Negro is drilled into him in almost every class he enters and in almost every book he studies.”

~ Carter G. Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, 1933

Mark (pseudonym) entered room 210, arms full of books and supplies, and took a seat at the rectangular table adjacent to the door. His small, round, sun-kissed face shone like polished ebony. He was beaming even though he would not be spending the day with his third-grade classmates on a field trip to a nature center. He had forgotten to bring his permission slip. As the day progressed, he asked if the computers were available for use. They were.

I made my way over to see what he was doing and was fascinated by the game in which he was engaged. Mark's perfect score demonstrated mastery of civic understandings. He asked if I wanted to compete against him. Irresistible. He started the game over and paused to decide on his avatar. He selected one with blond hair and fair skin even though an avatar with dark hair and dark skin was available. When questioned as to whether the avatar was supposed to represent him, he affirmed. After I had noticed aloud that the avatar looked nothing like him, he changed it to one with darker features.

This encounter with Mark made me wonder what made Mark Eurocentrically self-represent rather than Afrocentrically. I wanted to know his thoughts and feelings concerning his Blackness and what I could do as an educator to provide a curriculum for exploring racial identity.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to provide a specialized curriculum to fifth-grade students that afforded them opportunities to affirm their racial identities. This study also sought to determine the impact of narration and conversation in the process of racial identity development.

**Research Questions**

The research questions that anchored this critical action research study considered curriculum, history, Black consciousness, and racial identity. They were: (1) Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students? (2) How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study? (3) How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race?

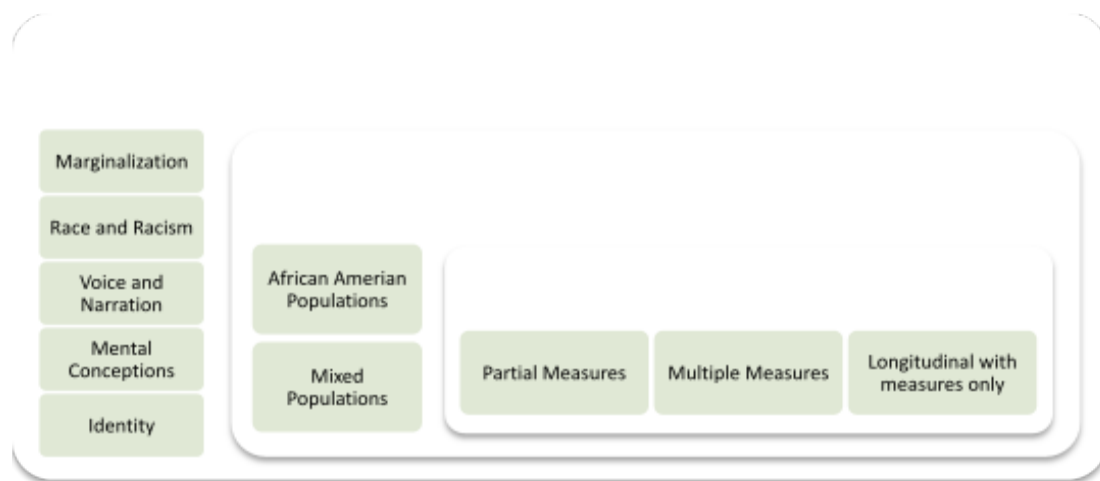
**Significance of the Study**

A study of racial identity in a classroom that serves Black children is important for several reasons. First, the development of racial identity is imperative because racial identity and academic identity are codependent (Cross, 1991; Harper, 2007). Second, decisions concerning creating and accepting identities are made from one moment to the next (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998), and teachers need to assist students in these decision-making efforts by providing a supportive atmosphere for racial affirmation (Murrell, 2009). Third, Black students are often seen as 'at risk' due to abuse, degradation, and marginalization (Stevenson, 2012) and are further marginalized by hegemonic structures. Therefore, adopting an empowering racial identity is necessary for mediation between social, environmental, and psychological effects. Moreover, according to Camangian (2015), it is important to focus on Black children because of

the perceived mismatch in the curriculum that dehumanizes Black students and, therefore, puts them in need of pedagogy that promotes self-love and empowerment. Thus, examining racial identities may offer Black children an empowering view of self as well as ways to dismantle oppressive systems.

### Theoretical Framework

Considering the need for voice and collaboration and the significance of mental conceptions in the formation of racial identity, the theoretical framework for this study was critical race theory (CRT). See Figure 1.1 for theoretical framework.



*Figure 1.1.* Theoretical Framework

Following is an overview of CRT, associated historical and epistemological underpinnings, and theoretical shifts that have taken place in the theory over time. CRT limitations are delineated followed by the utility of CRT in the study of Black racial identity. The section concludes with a discussion of the functionality of CRT in urban education and the utility of CRT in teaching.

**Critical Race Theory.** CRT acknowledges the importance of race and racism in the social and economic order (King, 2015). Voice, as understood from this theoretical framework, acknowledges the importance of the personal experiences of people of color and considers those experiences sources of knowledge (Dixson & Rousseau, 2014). The theory also considers narratives to demonstrate hearing the voice of persons of color. The theory does not suggest that there is one voice for all persons of color; however, it acknowledges that commonality of persons of color would be found because of the common experience of racism. This common experience adds to the narrative of people of color individually and collectively. This research may provide educators with a plausible avenue for increasing student learning, examining identity, and incorporating discourse through race centering. This research study also utilized narratives as a means of hearing the voice of the participants. CRT was not only an appropriate theoretical perspective because the participants were Black, but also because of the evident marginalization of Blacks in the United States (Howe & Covell, 2013; Meiners, 2007; King, 2015). Additionally, CRT supported the idea of action that produces change versus detailed situational descriptions (Crotty, 1998). To clarify, some researchers value the rich details provided in a research study, however, CRT advances the notion that details without a focus on change is of no consequence. Therefore, the researcher described the research setting, demonstrated value for the voice of the participants, and provided evidence of positive social change.

**Limitations of CRT.** One strong critique of CRT was that CRT was supported by groups of people offering analysis and neither action toward equity nor presentation of solution is evident in the analysis. Critical race theory was imagined with a core premise of action that would lead to the dismantling of racial discrimination (Matsuda, Lawrence, III, Delgado, &

Crenshaw, 1993). Matsuda and coauthors also argued that energies not directly related to that dismantling were frivolous. They argued that existing structures supported White supremacy and are ingrained in the conscious and unconscious minds of Americans. Finally, according to Delgado & Stefancic (2001), much of the discourse sector of CRT has been criticized for focusing on issues that did not directly work to eradicate race, racism, and classism as they existed in the United States. Moreover, critics of CRT have suggested that critiques of the status quo in the absence of workable solutions are impotent.

Farber and Sherry (2009) critiqued the use of narratives in CRT scholarship. They conceded the need for the view of others within the confines of the legal system, yet found no need for the use of stories outside of the stories told in courts of law. What Farber and Sherry refused to concede was the inability of a racist justice system to hear the marginalized voice, let alone act in support of that voice. In response to Farber and Sherry, Delgado (2009) surmised that Farber and Sherry's (2009) entire thought process, based on White supremacy, was inadequate for an objective evaluation of CRT.

**Utility of CRT in Racial Identity Studies.** Delgado and Stefancic (2001) defined two main groups of critical race theorists: idealist or discourse analysts and realists or materialists. The former group concentrates on ideas that structure the way society considers race, racism, issues of identity, and other matters that deal with naming and categories. The latter group focuses on race and material issues. The work of realists addresses conditions that sustain systematic poverty, injustice in the criminal justice system, issues surrounding biased immigration laws, the effects of oppression, and human rights in general. Succinctly,

idealists/discourse analysts can be said to focus on the conception of racism while realists/materialists focus on the physical and economic manifestations of racism.

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), the work of discourse analysts in identity was vital because much of the debilitating effects of marginalization lie in mental conceptions of identity. As a result, conscious and unconscious thoughts of self and others must be transformed into thoughts, actions, and voices that empower. The work of identity is therefore complemented by the work of CRT. CRT premises are also valuable in the development of affirming identities. By understanding race and racism, Black people are better able to navigate everyday experiences in a world of people who minimize the existence of racial issues (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013).

**Utility of CRT in Urban Elementary Education.** CRT has a valued place in urban education because education and legality are closely tied. Educating the masses and school desegregation were once legal matters (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Race and racism are inside urban elementary education and can easily be found lurking in classrooms and hallways through surveillance, placement, tracking, segregation, funding, assessment, curriculum, policy, and instruction (Lynn & Bridges, 2009). According to Solórzano and Yosso (2009), CRT's place in education was not only to eliminate racism, sexism, and poverty but also to empower marginalized groups. Ascribing to the tenets of CRT is needed in urban education to challenge conscious, unconscious, and dysconscious racism, to foster a commitment to social justice, to deconstruct dominant ways of thinking, and to empower the voice of those who are often marginalized.



**Convergence of CRT, Teaching Context, and Praxis.** Blending the tenets of CRT with the art and science of teaching is like serving two masters (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), namely oppression and liberation. Having a job as an educator in an urban public elementary school requires focus on a written curriculum. The standards within the written curriculum are so numerous that teachers often find it impossible to consider them with more than surface-level instruction. Moreover, they are packaged as universally important. Missing from the curriculum is the perspectives of and value for the experiences of marginalized people, consideration of variance in experience, and impact on identity.

### **Definition of Terms**

The study took place in an *urban* setting. The term *urban* suggests characteristics such as poverty, race, oppression, community factors, and family composition (Noguera, 2003). For this research, *urban* means located close to the city center and populated by mostly *poor* Black students. *Poor* means eligible for federal free and reduced priced meals.

*Agency* is a fundamental sense, on which well-being depends, that strategic action will lead to desired results (Johnston, 2000).

*Black* means a person of African descent (Tatum, 1997).

*Black consciousness* is an attitude of empowerment which elevates self-worth. It is a liberating state of mind that measures self against self rather than against another (Hirschmann, 1990).

*Black identity development* may involve components of “old” self, transformation from old elements of self to new features of self, and incorporation of new dimensions of self not connected to old or transformed traits (Cross, 1991).

*Critical consciousness* is the ability to evaluate situations critically and then take action against societal inequalities (Thomas et al., 2014).

*A historical documentary* for this dissertation means a TDM that uses images and the voices of respected commentators to discuss the historical contributions of Black people including eras before and after the institution of slavery in the United States.

*A narrative* is a written or spoken account that can be used to describe important life events and beliefs conceptualized as central to the sense of self (Adler, 2012). They are the stories that we tell about ourselves that “shape who we think we are” (Johnston, 2000, p. 30).

*Nigrescence* is a “resocialization experience that seeks to transform a preexisting identity (a non-Afrocentric identity) into one that is Afrocentric” (Cross, 1991). It encompasses a fluidity with which a person engages in thoughts and orientations of Blackness.

*Racial identity* is a fluid “racial category or categories that an individual uses to name him- or herself based on factors including racial ancestry, ethnicity, physical appearance, early socialization, recent or past experiences, and a sense of shared experience with members of a particular racial group” (Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012, p. 82).

In Chapter 1, I presented the purpose, research questions, significance, and the theoretical framework for this research study.

In Chapter 2, I discuss curricular inequalities evident when comparing groups of children who are racially diverse. I offer a summary of the consciousnesses to be considered when offering an equitable curriculum to Black children. I then propose ways to move toward ensuring Black children are afforded an equitable education.

In Chapter 3, I review literature that defines race, ethnicity, and identity. I then consider several racial identity development theories. I close the chapter with a discussion of racial identity and its significance to educational settings.

In Chapter 4, I detail the conceptual framework, methodological approach, and design of the research study. The specifics of the qualitative methodology used to address the research questions are delineated. I conclude the chapter with details of the data collection processes and analytical procedures incorporated into the study to ensure trustworthiness.

## 2 THE PROBLEM

The United States is known for its democratic ideals and is often referred to as The Land of Opportunity or Promised Land (Asante, 2009). Growing up in the South, I remember singing patriotic songs in elementary school of a land of “purple mountain majesties” and “amber waves of grain”, of a land “from California to the New York Islands” made for you and me. The books that I grew up reading overwhelmingly portrayed Eurocentric characters and had me wondering what it was like to be Jane; a White fictional character used in a basal reader. Dick (Jane’s brother) and Jane always seemed to be having so much fun watching Spot (their dog) run. The songs I sang and the books I read, centered on American and European values, and foretold of a country filled with promise and joy. I found myself juxtaposing my life with the images that told of Jane’s life.

The images presented to me during my elementary school years never looked like me. It seemed life existed in the books and I was merely a spectator from an alternate world. The exception to the focus on Eurocentric characters and songs came during February of every year. February was a time to celebrate and affirm Black history, my history. Other Black children and I, acted in plays, performed dance routines, and sang songs of long ago. The schoolhouse would be abuzz and children would be seen rehearsing lines and practicing dance moves during recess. When I was in the fourth grade, I was selected to recite “Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes. I recall sitting in a well-worn brown rocking chair on the left of the stage in the cafetorium, blue speckled rag covering my freshly pressed ponytails, a younger Black male student sat at my feet. In the words of Langston Hughes, I declared, “Well son, I’ll tell ya. Life for me ain’t been no

crystal stair.” Those words still resound like a drum in my heart, and I hold that scene in the recesses of my mind.

My performance of “Mother to Son” validated me as a reader, a speaker, a performer, and a valuable community member. Yet, the excitement and validation I felt following that performance was short-lived. Many of my schoolmates used my performance and oration as a new avenue for teasing me. Not only was I called Olive Oyl, an extremely thin cartoon character, I now evoked a nasal “Well son, I’ll tell ya” from hallway passersby. In an instant, my fame turned to shame. I was now a target for teasing. I was a Jester, someone for all to laugh at and I was a weakling for not striking back. Those identities, assumed and ascribed, made available in conjunction with my fourth-grade performance, are still with me. Today, I continue to be connected to my history through my fourth-grade teaching experiences and believe that Black children, disconnected from their past, are rootless trees (Marcus Garvey). Those fourth-grade experiences and subsequent experiences during February of each school year were the result of President Gerald Ford’s 1976 decree of February as Black History Month. The relegation of Black history to the month of February has helped to sustain a notion that Black history is separate from White history when in fact Black history, White history, and all histories are intimately connected and inseparable.

The interconnectedness of Black history to all history was rarely emphasized. The institution of Black History Month was often not accompanied with teacher education, and teachers were left to their own expertise to determine the extent of curricular integration (Lewis-McCoy, 2016). Limited teacher training in pedagogical expertise in Black history has contributed to damaging and unfulfilling Black history lessons (King & Brown, 2014). In

contrast, Eurocentric characters, real and fictional, are embedded in the curriculum throughout the entire school year. Anderson and Metzger (2011) analyzed the U.S. history standards of Michigan, New Jersey, South Carolina, and Virginia. They found the states' standards included Black Americans in trivial and superficial ways, cognitive demand absent, and analysis of hegemony non-existent. In fact, the fifth-grade curriculum at the research site, an elementary school in the eastern United States, included 32 notable figures. Of the personalities studied, eight were Black. A review of the K-5 curriculum of the research site revealed a focus on 63 White figures, two Native American figures, and 15 Black figures. That means that a total of seven Black figures were studied in the five years spanning grades K – 4. Succinctly, empowering Black identities are not readily available in the curriculum (Davies, 2000; Murrell, 2007) and the schooling experience for Black children delivers much less than promised. Educational disparity is not only evident in the elementary curriculum but also in other tangential areas such as school funding and teacher quality.

Some educational inequalities documented in the extant literature bring attention to disparities in academic achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Steele, 2010), racial tracking (Anyon, 2005; Meiners, 2007), quality of teaching (Kunjufu, 2006); school funding (Anyon, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kunjufu, 2006), and curriculum (Darling-Hammond, 2010; . Not only were inequalities delineated, but their root causes were also argued to be intertwined with the political and capitalistic structure of the U.S. economy (Anyon, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kunjufu, 2006; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Meiners, 2007; Noguera, 2003). The essence of the problem was summarized by Darling-Hammond (2010) as

she wrote: “it is our continuing comfort with profound inequality that is the Achilles heel of American education” (p. 8).

This atmosphere of acceptance of inequality has led to teacher burn-out and teacher flight (Noguera, 2003). For students of color, it has led to increased suspension, detention, and expulsion (Meiners, 2007). Darling-Hammond (2010) reported flat high-school graduation rates and disparities in achievement based on standardized tests. Both Darling-Hammond (2010) and Noguera (2003) cited variations in assessment and teacher quality as inequalities present in the educational experiences of Black children.

Of the inequalities mentioned above, curricular inequalities most closely align with the focus of this study. In the section that follows, a brief discussion of curricular inequalities will be presented and evaluated from a critical race theory (CRT) perspective along with currently used or proposed solutions to the problem of curricular inequalities.

### **Curricular Inequalities and Solutions**

Scholars such as Oliva (1997) and Glatthorn (2008) argued the existence of different types of curricula which offered avenues for inequality. Glatthorn listed eight types of curricula: (1) learned, (2) taught, (3) tested, (4) supported, (5) written, (6) recommended, (7) excluded, and (8) hidden. The ways that all eight of these curricula are enacted in school settings offer several avenues for inequality that are beyond the scope of this research study. The problem, as addressed in this study, pertains to differences between the written (mandated), supported (appearing in textbooks), and excluded (left out intentionally or unintentionally) curricula. The problem is then addressed via the taught curriculum, defined by Glatthorn as what teachers teach or deliver to students.

Incongruences involving the taught curriculum and relevance was posited to be a source of student and teacher hostility (Anyon, 2005; Meiners, 2007). Both authors agreed that falsely presenting education as the way to success rightly evoked strong emotions from marginalized groups of students. Consequently, candidness concerning systemic oppression was deemed necessary when educating poor students and students of color. This candidness was suggested to help validate feelings of hostility toward education. Other scholars have also considered the curriculum as a source of inequality (Kunjufu, 2006; Misco, 2010; Smith, 2008).

Several researchers specifically recommended an African-centered curriculum for Black children. According to Piert (2015), an African-centered education involves a “conscious engagement in the process of Afrikan-centered personal transformation” and “emphasizes a link between African identity and African cultural history”. Kunjufu (2006) championed knowledge of heritage, cultural values, and principles to increase academic performance and self-esteem while simultaneously decreasing fights and suspensions. Without empirical evidence to substantiate, this author argued that providing an African-centered curriculum for Black children had more impact on student achievement than having a credentialed teacher in the classroom. Asante (2009), stated the necessity of those who “participate unconsciously or consciously in the privileges or in the abuses” of systemic hegemony understand how the system evolved and is maintained. Also, Misco (2010) discussed adjusting the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse student populations in unique contexts. Misco suggested considering student background, teacher training, teachers’ philosophical views, the needs of the teacher, and students’ needs when implementing controversial curricula such as holocausts and racial issues. Wilson (2014)



suggested that an education that does not address a group's interests and solutions to collective problems leaves them "vulnerable for annihilation".

Taught curricula that address the needs of Black children develop the ability to view the world through the eyes of the students themselves rather than the eyes of others. This way of viewing self is referred to as double consciousness (Dubois, 1903). These curricula thoroughly address difficult racial issues such as the institution of slavery and Jim Crow. These curricula also focus on student needs, solutions, and skills needed to be successful in the United States as a Black person. Therefore, taught curricula that address the needs of Black children must consider a change in consciousness as well as an increase in practical and historical knowledge. In the following section I discuss varying degrees of consciousness. I explain unconsciousness, dysconsciousness, Black consciousness, and critical consciousness (see Table 2.1). Afterwards, I present how each consciousness plays a role in educational settings and explain the significance of consciousness to this study.

Table 2.1.

*Definition of Different States of Consciousness*

Term	Description
Unconsciousness	Unexplained feelings, emotions, fears, and anxieties that cause action (Westen, 1998).
Dysconsciousness	Awareness of hegemonic structures coupled with an inability to critically examine those structures because the examiner has a taken for granted advantage over another group of people (King, 2015).
Consciousness	Explainable feelings, emotions, fears, and anxieties (Westen, 1998).
Double Consciousness	Judging self-worth based on the value that another group places upon you. Valuing self-based on the traits of another (Du Bois, 1903).
Black Consciousness	Pride in being Black. An awareness by Black people that acknowledges systems of oppression and prompts action to disrupt those systems (Hirschmann, 1990).
Critical Consciousness	Ability to recognize and act against hegemonic structures which do not promote equality and justice (Lea, 2014).

## **Continuum of Consciousness**

**Unconsciousness.** Freud's theory of mind (Westen, 1998), posited that conscious and unconscious thought processing may affect student performance on standardized testing and school achievement in general. Westen explained that psychoanalysis had blossomed from a single theory into many related theories. The first mentioned, and the one most relevant to this research, proposed that much of mental life is unconscious. That is, feelings, emotions, anxieties, and fears often dictate how people act and these actions are sometimes unexplainable by the individual exhibiting the behavior. Westen was not alone in his belief in the power of unconscious thought. A concluding statement presented by Kihlstrom (1993) suggested that unconscious thought processes can and do influence conscious behaviors and thoughts. A more robust and educationally applicable conclusion was that "conscious processing is more than a matter of paying attention" (p. 349). This theory of unconscious thought supports the claims of Anyon (2005) and Meiners (2007) who supported the existence of unspoken hostility towards schooling.

Furthering the discussion on unconscious thought processing, Tauber (2013) credited Freud with the development of a theory of mind that was sufficient for an epistemological approach "for understanding the unconscious sources from which consciousness arises" (p. 232). Using Freudian insight, Tauber sought to review research that demonstrated the commonness of unconscious thought processes in various cognitive situations. As Tauber saw it, Freud rendered ways of thinking that are still useful. Tauber likened the conscious and unconscious to a jockey and horse, neither of which is in total control of the other and each of which having the will and power to plot his course. This relationship corresponds to Freud's (1923) revision of the ego as

separate from and in control of the id and the id encompassing some of the ego. Later, Freud theorized that the unconscious id is the actual reality. As Freud continued to revise the theory, he saw the mind as “a continuous unconscious mental stream that erupts in discontinuous foci of consciousness” (p. 234). The implications are significant. Children angered by the misalignment of curricula to realistic outcomes may not be able to fully attend to the taught curriculum. This inability to fully attend may be a catalyst for many of the educational inequalities mentioned earlier.

**Double Consciousness.** In *The Souls of Black Folks*, (Du Bois, 1903), the concept of double consciousness (DC) theorized that yet another form of knowledge was at work in the lives of Black people. Du Bois felt that Blacks were burdened with having to see themselves through the eyes of an oppressor. Having been ascribed a double identity, one American and one African/Black/Negro, further complicated identity development. The problem with this dual consciousness was that the view of African/Black/Negro in the eyes of an oppressor was less than human and less than worthy of equality. Yet, the identity as American so often offered in patriotic recitations and song, entitled one to be equal. This bilateral relationship was considered detrimental to the Black spirit. This same bilateral relationship is what Piert (2015) sought to avoid as she championed the need for an African centered education that would positively impact consciousness. Concisely, double consciousness is an assessment of self, based on the standards of an oppressive other.

**Dysconsciousness.** King (2015) defined dysconsciousness as an “uncritical habit of mind” and the inability to challenge hegemonic structures that afford one group of people an advantage over another (p. 113). According to King, hegemonic structures are systems that serve

to promote capitalism at the expense of the masses and detriment of persons of color. This failure to challenge hegemonic structures did not have ignorance as an excuse. Furthermore, failure to deconstruct systems that marginalize people was supported by a lack of desire on the part of the advantaged group to do away with the structures that afforded them privilege over others.

Dysconsciousness, therefore, was cognizance of hegemony and unwillingness to trade the benefits gained through systems of inequality for equality. When awareness of inequality and unwillingness to move toward equality coexist because of the advantages one group desires to maintain over another, it is dysconscious racism. Summarily, King (2015) would argue that dysconscious racism was a result of miseducation and a source of disconnection from identity.

Symptoms of dysconsciousness in educators can prohibit the provision of an emancipatory education to Black children because the educators may see deficits as the norm. Since White privilege is accepted as the norm, no children are afforded an emancipatory education. In an inequitable education system, all races of students are mentally imprisoned (Nobles, 2008). The Black child must fight to free him- or herself from the thought that oppression is normal, and so must other children. The job of the critical race theorist is then to make new and existing teachers aware of their dysconsciousness so that they can enter the profession, or continue therein, free of thoughts that inhibit a praxis of liberation. This heightened consciousness, which seeks equity, is referred to as critical consciousness. Black Consciousness (BC) however, is an awakening. To provide a basis and grounding for this paper, a historical perspective of BC will be provided. Additionally, understanding the roots of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the social conditions that spawned its birth will help to illustrate the significance of this dissertation. The connection between BC, unconsciousness,

DC, and dysconsciousness will also be made clear.

**Black Consciousness.** According to Hirschmann (1990) and Magaziner (2010), the beginning of BC was rooted in Blacks-only universities established by the African-apartheid government in 1959. Students saw their schooling as separate and unequal. Yet, the students found spiritual connection and comfort in unified political protests. The American Black Power movement was also influential in the early stages of the BCM as discussions of well-known American civil rights leaders became the topics of conversations among the African students (Hirschmann,1990; Magaziner, 2010).

Students attending Blacks-only universities in South Africa formed the South African Student Organization (SASO). The ideas of BC sprang from this organization under the leadership of Stephen Biko. According to Biko:

Black Consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the “normal” which is white. It is a manifestation of a new realisation that by seeking to run away from themselves and emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. Black Consciousness therefore takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God’s plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value system, their culture, their religion and their outlook on life. (Hirschmann, 1990, p. 3).

This realization can be considered an awakening from unconsciousness to consciousness,

acknowledging systems of injustice, and choosing to act to dismantle those systems.

According to Hirschmann's (1990) research, several principles were central to BC. First, a sense of self-awareness was necessary. Black people needed to define themselves by themselves and not by the standards of another. That is, DuBois's (1903) idea of double consciousness had to be addressed. Pride in being Black was also necessary. An oppressive mindset was considered the most detrimental weapon used by the oppressor. Therefore, the next necessary component was "conscientization", a process of changing the oppressive mindset to one of liberation. This conscientization is the same critical awareness that Freire (1970/1993) explained that oppressed people must have in order to free themselves from their oppressor. Finally, the movement was non-violent, relying on the heightened consciousness of Black people willing to exact change via peaceful confrontation.

Though Hirschmann (1990) focused on the principles behind the BCM, Macqueen (2014) delved into the necessary mindset of BC supporters. He declared Biko's definition of BC as an attitude of empowerment; which sought to free Africans from their debilitating view of self to one of empowerment of self and elevation of self-worth. Macqueen furthered that BC was more a state of mind than a state of color. Most notably, awareness of self was insufficient in and of itself and had to be paired with activism to affect change.

Given the history of the BCM and its principles, it is prudent to give a face to this composition. Williams (2012) focused on the man behind the movement. He noted that Stephen Biko was steadfast to "continuing and total involvement with the local community" (p. 55). Community involvement meant providing services to the marginalized. Biko facilitated the building of a community clinic to address prevention and cure of diseases, developed home

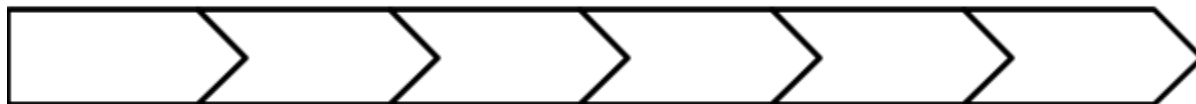
industries for employment creation, set up an education fund, and established a nursery. Williams maintained that the Black Consciousness movement was, “a way of creatively engaging with a hostile world” (p. 57).

Byrd and Chavous (2009) sought to determine how Black Consciousness had educative as well as social interactions. They interviewed and surveyed 564 Black eighth graders from varied socio-economic backgrounds. The researchers found students who were more race conscious valued school more than students who were less race conscious. Additionally, it was found that more race conscious students reportedly worked harder in school, were absent fewer times, and had overall higher achievement. Byrd and Chavous also found that strong race consciousness mediated the effects of a poor neighborhood and that the absence of other Blacks with whom to identify risked the development of Black consciousness.

Thus, Black Consciousness may be used to change the paradigm of what it means to be Black. Schools may choose to deemphasize Blackness due to negative images of what it means to be Black or schools can heighten the use of affirming images of Blackness to counter negative images. Furthermore, Black Consciousness can be an antidote for double consciousness. Put another way, Black people who are aware of their worth and value do not have to seek validation from others. Additionally, an affirming view of self may free up some mental processing space formerly used to hold feelings of inadequacy and hostility and thereby affect the learning outcomes of Black children.

To summarize this discussion of consciousness, Freud’s theory of mind (Westen (1998) has put forth that much of life is processed unconsciously, Du Bois (1903) argued that DC was at work in the unconscious, and the BCM posited that conscious effort must be made to fight

against systems of social and economic injustice. See Figure 2.1 for a perceived continuum of consciousnesses.



*Figure 2.1.* Continuum of Consciousnesses

**Critical Consciousness.** As dysconsciousness is the inability to critically examine hegemonic structures, critical consciousness is the ability to not only recognize hegemonic structures but also act to dismantle the structures. In effect, building or developing critical consciousness requires establishing systems of beliefs that include recognition of hegemonic structures and actions that perpetuate social justice and caring (Lea, 2014). Additionally, Lea defined hegemony as “the process by which people are persuaded that existing socio-economic and political inequities are inevitable, normal, natural, and common sense” (p. 173). Lea’s presentation of narratives and discourses emphasized the often subtle but always persecutory ways in which hegemony is present in daily interactions. Lea’s method of delivery seemed appropriate in that it yielded space to the often skewed and marginalized voices of oppressed persons. Woven into the discourses were ways of countering hegemony and fostering critical consciousness. This researcher’s work also charged education with the role of eliminating hegemonic practices and replacing them with practices that promote ethics, critical thinking, equity, and social justice. Therefore, critical consciousness is necessary for teacher and student alike.



Diemer and Li (2011) used the terminology critical consciousness and operationalized the term to mean how the oppressed see, reflect, and act to change their social condition. The question put forth by the researchers regarded the contextual antecedents of critical consciousness and its consequences on the voting behavior of marginalized youth. Marginalized was defined as poor, working class, colored, and having experienced domination in racial or socioeconomic forms. The researchers surveyed 1,674 Black, White, and Hispanic youth between the ages of 15 and 25. They found that parental and peer support predicted sociopolitical ideology and social action. Additionally, social action was predictive of voting behavior. The study also found that a greater consciousness of inequality corresponded to sociopolitical action. This study suggested the need for parental involvement in the development of critically conscious students. This solution is viable in situations where parents have the wherewithal to convey the existence of systematic structures of oppression. As schools are a place where students spend a lot of time, teachers could also help to develop the critical consciousness suggested by Diemer and Li.

Considering the previous discussion on the continuum of consciousness, acquisition of knowledge appears to be more complex than Americans have taken into consideration when addressing the educational needs of students that are constantly considered the reason for mediocre national education standings. Unconsciousness, dysconsciousness, Black consciousness, critical consciousness, and double consciousness are inseparable and operational in the educational settings of Black children in varying degrees. For example, a dysconscious teacher may have inequitable expectations for students in the class based on race. The teacher, therefore, offers the White child a privileged and advanced curriculum while offering the Black

child a biased and retarded curriculum. Students that are not critically conscious are unconsciously aware of the disparity, yet lack the skills to address or correct the situation. Without Black consciousness, the Black child perceives the inadequacy as a condition of skin tone and thus assumes the ascribed inferior role based on race. For the purposes of this research, even a teacher aware of hegemonic structures and the will to help students recognize and develop ways to dismantle them are hard-pressed to accomplish the goal given current curricula which supports White supremacy and hegemony. Using CRT as the theoretical framework for this study is appropriate because CRT addresses mental conceptions of race. Therefore, the various consciousnesses must be acknowledged in the formation of identity. Activities must be incorporated into the educational setting that reveal and address detrimental unconscious and conscious thought processes. Recommendations from the literature to address the work of education in eliminating disparity are presented next.

### **Toward Equity**

Freire (1970/1993) noted the importance of teachers and students working together towards an emancipatory practice rather than teachers merely attempting to “deposit” knowledge into students. A depository banking model of education refuses to acknowledge students as agents, that is; free, rational, autonomous, and of “moral authority” (Davies, 1990, p. 55). Banking models of education do not acknowledge student or teacher as conscious of the implications of this model. Because of the refusal to acknowledge the importance of agency in education, Freire insisted that education without consciousness was an act of violence. Freire further argued that a liberating education must begin with the history of the oppressed and strive for “the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (Freire, 1970/1993, p.

62). Education must transform the depository model of education to one that is dually dialogic. Teacher and student must be simultaneously teacher and student; both agents teaching and learning at the same time, both narrating. Succinctly, it is necessary to help students “appreciate their own value, intelligence, and potential as political actors” (Anyon, 2005, p. 178). Supporting the work of Freire (1970/1993), Howe and Covell (2013) examined children’s rights as put forth by the United Nations and examined a wide body of educational research. The researchers found that disadvantaged students were better able to learn when the environment provided opportunities to appropriate identities that include respect and self-worth. Their work also found that children were aware that current educational practices did not provide equitable opportunity or equitable treatment for all students. Howe and Covell strongly suggested listening to children and moving toward a unified system of education that considers foremost the needs and interests of children.

The work of Stratton (2016) supported the argument of race-based inequity in education. Using case studies from around the world, Stratton argued that the issue of education and U.S. citizenship were intertwined. To support the claim, he introduced the controversial Mexican American Studies program that prompted HB2281 to deny offering courses that promoted self-awareness and worth. The Arizona government saw ethnic studies as antithetical to citizenship and an avenue leading to hatred of others. Thus, the undercurrent of race and racism present in the United States is intimately tied to school as a system of indoctrination. The work of Carter (2012) emphasized the stubbornness of race and racism as constructs present in U.S. schools. In a comparative analysis of eight schools located in the United States and South Africa, the author argued the existence of and difficulty to exterminate years of systematic racially

discriminate policies. A strong suggestion was to be more culturally relevant when it comes to issues of equality in the U.S. education system.

### **Implications for Black Children**

Whether racism is overt as seen on the news with killings of unarmed men, women, and children of color or covert as with hegemonic systems that deny equality of access to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; the majority of children of color face racism as a part of their existence (Howe & Covell, 2013). In fact, racism has been said to be preserved and protected in educational settings (Asante, 2009). Black children deserve an education that enables the acceptance of an identity of power and agency. Black students must see themselves as agents in the system of schooling that endeavors to create citizens for democracy. According to the work of Davies (2000), students and teachers must work together and engage in practices that help shape identities. Davies contended that students must also feel a sense of power in the exchange of knowledge between teacher and student. Tendencies to view self, based on the standards of a White other, must be addressed. Conscious efforts must be made to address the formation of affirming racial identities. Education professionals that suffer from dysconsciousness must be identified and trained to provide an emancipatory education. Black children need to be aware of hegemony and work against it as they affirm their Blackness.

### 3 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As my commitment to develop a research project focused on Black Consciousness grew, I performed an informal Internet search from the GSU library home page using Black Consciousness as the parameter. After analyzing the return, I also used *assessing consciousness* as the search parameter and limited the search to scholarly peer reviewed academic journals dated 2004 to the present because I wanted to see what had been published in the last 12 years. This returned 132,204 results. When I narrowed the search to the United States, the list decreased from 132,204 to 3,548. Limiting studies to the subject of Blacks yielded 104 results. Of the 104 results, 60 were added to a research folder for further review because of their relevance to the research topic. After completing the research process in EBSCO with the same limiters, and using *assessing consciousness*, *consciousness*, *racial identity*, and *black consciousness*, my personal Zotero database had 147 articles that addressed my research focus and had the potential to increase my awareness of consciousness as a construct used in educational settings. After rereading abstracts, introductions, and conclusions, I eliminated some irrelevant articles. The decision on which articles to use was a matter of selecting articles that would give some historical background on the issue of BC and racial identity as well as articles that would widen my theoretical and empirical understanding of the subject matter. The list of articles chosen to review covered the history of Black Consciousness, measurement of Black Consciousness, interaction between Black Consciousness and other constructs, and interactions between Black Consciousness and education. As I read articles, other relevant articles were referenced and added to my collection. This action accounts for the use of articles older than the 2004 search parameter and inclusion of articles that may not be in a query return using the primary

parameters.

The following research questions were used to mediate interactions with participants of this study:

(1) Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students?

(2) How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study?

(3) How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race?

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I reviewed three theories of identity development and described what was already known about identity development. In the second section, I discussed racial identity and focused on ways identity, race, and ethnicity were defined in the literature. This section illuminated the theoretical shifts that have taken place in the contextual use of the terms race and ethnicity. I also briefly discussed the convergence of race and ethnicity and told how the terms were used in this dissertation. In the third section, I used the literature to describe the interconnectedness of racial identity and education and then demonstrated a need for this study by showing gaps that existed in the literature as it relates to the racial identity development of Black children. In the final section, I reviewed instruments used to measure racial identity.

## Identity Development Theories

**Erikson's Theory of Development.** Erikson (1964) contemplated the identity of Black children. One of his convictions stated, "The babies of our colored countrymen, I said, often receive sensual satisfaction which provide them with enough oral and sensory surplus for a lifetime, as clearly portrayed in the way they move, laugh, talk, sing" (p. 30). Though I cannot be certain, this statement seems to have some environmental and biological connotations. This statement, which supplies the reader with some ideas about race and how others are viewed based on race, substantiates the need for CRT in a study of identity development.

Erikson concluded his memorandum with a discussion on the power of society, the value of experience, the importance of seeing historical images and discussing history, the influence of the community, and the need for objective sources of strength concerning identity development. Erikson also argued that Black children needed a historical anchor, knowledge of hegemonic systems, and avenues of empowerment. These general statements were a result of Erikson's (1959/1963) earlier developmental work.

Beyond Erikson's (1964) contemplation of the identity of Black children, Erikson's summary of the eight stages of development provided a basis for understanding psychological, relational, social, and psychosocial stages of development (Erikson, 1963). By the end of elementary school, children were to have progressed through four stages: Stage 1 trust vs. mistrust, Stage 2 autonomy vs. shame, Stage 3 initiative vs. guilt, and Stage 4 industry vs. inferiority. This generality of advancement did not acknowledge life experiences that could advance or hinder progression from one stage to another. According to this theory: (a) society created the conditions suitable for human identity development, (b) the perceived achievement of

an identity status did not imply one finishes a stage and then progressed on to the next, and (c) development happened through critical decision-making.

Erikson's theory of development (Erikson, 1959) and thesis of the development of the Black child (Erikson, 1964) strongly suggested school as a place to support children as they deal with societal and academic demands. School is one place to provide historical contexts for systemic influences on identity, engage in discussions of societal structure, connect history to the present, develop a community of learners who are attached to the community in which they live, and provide active and tangible options from which to develop affirming personal identities. Another model of racial identity development was also pertinent to this study and is discussed next.

**Nigrescence Theory.** The Cross Nigrescence identity model (Vandiver, Peony E. Phagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, & Worrell, 2001) assumed that personal identity played a minor role in Black identity and that reference group orientation (RGO) may be different from personal identity. The four-staged model of Black racial identity included pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization as stages. The pre-encounter stage supported two identities: assimilation/anti-Black and pro-American RGO/self-hate. In the pre-encounter stage of Black Consciousness, a person sees Black people as inferior and in need of White leadership. In the encounter stage, a person shifts from seeing Black as inferior to seeing being Black as positive. The encounter stage did not have an identity because a person was thought to be determining their identity. In the immersion stage, a person is fully engaged in trying to understand Blackness and is pro-Black without being anti-White. The immersion-emersion stage had two identities: intense Black involvement and anti-White. The internalization stage had four



identities: (1) Black acceptance, (2) Black nationalist, (3) biculturalist, and (4) multiculturalist. In internalization, a person has achieved a sense of camaraderie with all marginalized people as well as an understanding of and sympathy for persons at lesser stages of consciousness. The final stage, internalization-commitment, defines a person as a community change agent (Worrell, Mendoza-Denton, Telesford, Simmons, & Martin, 2011). Vandiver et al. (2001) admitted that the layers of identity could be overlapping and intersectional. Ultimately, a recommendation was made that theory and research be used to “peel away layers” to advance the study of Black identity development (p. 199).

Duncan and McCoy (2007) analyzed a stage model of Black identity via a literature review. They sought to illustrate how certain racial identity models were “more or less models of respectability, which resulted in the marginalization of Black adolescents in schools” (p. 36). Duncan and McCoy also asserted that Black identity models undermined the capacity to inform policies and practices that fully affirmed Black humanity. They furthered, “There appears to be no affirming public place for [Black adolescents] within a world of fixed categories informed by notions of respectability” (p. 44). To continue, Duncan and McCoy suggested that negative media imaging was the culprit in the identity crisis of Black people. The authors suggested that media be moderated to bring about social justice. Though media may have its adverse effects on BC, attempting to censor the media is a task that cannot be used realistically to solve the issue of lack of BC for Black people. A more plausible consideration would be the teaching of media literacy or the use of media to offer positive imaging. This alternative suggestion places power in the hands of the marginalized rather than relying on the power structure to offer empowerment.

The nigrescence theory has tenets of CRT present in the form of naming and

categorizing. Identity development and CRT consider mental conceptions of self and therefore CRT is an appropriate theoretical frame for studies on racial identity. Yet, consideration of another theory of racial identity development solidifies not only the importance of CRT in identity development studies but also the importance of context in affirming racial identities.

**Situated-Mediated Identity Theory.** As explained by Murrell (2007), the situated-mediated identity theory has interdependent components. These components suggested a view of identity development that accounted for social, emotional, cultural, and symbolic factors. Murrell also considered the teacher vital to identity development in the context of schooling. As presented here, this theory of identity development supported the theoretical frame for this research project as well as the methodological approach for this study of racial identity development.

Murrell's (2007) situated-mediated theory built upon Erikson's (1963) child development theory in that it supposed that identity development was the work of all children. The two theorists also concurred that social interactions influenced identity and that identity impacted academic performance. Murrell considered the work of Ogbu and Simons (1998) and concluded that oppositional identities do not make sense when referring to school because the forming of identities implies interactions with people and schools are not people. Murrell (2007) argued similarly for the importance of school culture and teacher influence in that culture. The author went beyond teacher expectations toward teacher intentional actions within the school culture. Comparing Murrell (2007) with the Cross Nigrescence identity model (Vandiver et al., 2001) highlighted the importance of identity created within the school setting as one that may be different from other assumed identities.

Murrell's (2007) situated-mediated theory argued identity development critical to school success and achievement. The theory was based upon the following six assertions:

- Identity as socially constructed
- Identity as situated and fluid
- Identity may be assumed consciously or unconsciously
- Identities assumed at school affect achievement
- Shared situated identities form a local culture that affects achievement
- The local culture can be shaped to lead to success

Essentially the situated-mediated theory was situated in that identity was dependent on the situation, environment, and social interactions. The theory was mediated in that people in the environment also formed a culture through which the situated identity operated. One thing I found salient in the theory was the unconscious development of identity. That is, identity developed in school settings whether schools attended to identity development or not. This point supported the work of Nasir (2012). Additionally, the use of identity in the situated-mediated theory supported the definition of identity as a complex and compound construct as presented by Cokley (2005). Therefore, a research project on Black racial identity development in a schooling context must address the multiple aspects of identity development.

In this section, I reviewed three theories of identity development: situated-mediated theory, nigrescence theory, and Erikson's theory of development. The synergy of the theories was that identity development occurred because of environmental factors and happened whether implicitly or explicitly addressed. Additionally, each theory exhibited tenets of CRT in its conceptualization by acknowledging the power of naming, considering marginalization, and

calling for action. If it is accepted that schools should educate for liberation (Freire, 1970/1993), schools fail to liberate Black children because they fail to teach knowledge and understanding of the processes of domination, subordination, and enculturation which could emancipate the thoughts of students and thus promote social action (King, 2005b). Schools could address the disparity in education by connecting students to their identities as members of the global African family (King, 2005a). If we accept that education is the system that imparts the best of information to successive generations, that is the “competence, confidence, and consciousness to effectively contribute” to posterity (Nobles, 2008), then schools have a duty to offer students conditions in which they could affirm their racial identities. The following two sections discuss racial and ethnic identity, the use of the terms in the literature reviewed, and how the terms are used in this dissertation.

### **Racial and Ethnic Identity**

Allen and Bagozzi (2001), considered three terms key to their research. They separately defined Black self, ethnic identity, and Black identity based on their understanding of the literature. The duo considered Black self a relational construct wherein persons described themselves in ways that considered social and environmental forces. Black self was used interchangeably with African self-consciousness and was primarily defined as a collective identity with Black people. Ethnic identity was defined in terms of social group membership and Black identity was defined as feeling close to other Black people in ideas, feelings, and thoughts. In their study, 551 Black males and females from 18 to 91 years in age completed a forty-minute interview. The interview protocol was a compilation of 44 items taken from five different authors. The instrument was compiled to measure African self-consciousness, ethnic identity, Black

identity (Black consciousness), individualism, and collectivism. Allen and Bagozzi found that ethnic identity was a predictor of social outcomes. Black identity was considered a complex construct because it had many dimensions that affected degree of conservatism, race relations, health care, and crime prevention. They concluded that more research was needed to understand the concept of Black identity.

Helms (2007) argued racial groups as socially and politically designed to group people and suggested that the terms not be used in empirical studies. That is, race was considered a psychological and social construct. Helms furthered that people experience life differently because of social construction, not because of biological differences. Helms subsequently defined ethnic identity as a commitment to the customs, language, and values of a group of people as evidenced by participation. This researcher also argued that racial group identities are ascribed, internalized, and could be oppressive. The support for race as a social construction is not recent. This idea has been considered to be in operation since the founding of the United States (Fredrickson, 2003) and proposed by anthropologist as a biological difference before that time. Fredrickson argued that the Constitution of 1789 sanctioned exclusions to citizenship based on the slavery of people of African descent and removal of indigenous people from the lands. This researcher furthered that the law-making history of the United States makes evident the marginalization of people of color. This 20<sup>th</sup>-century citation, acknowledging marginalization and social conditions, gives merit to continued discussion of race, CRT, and their significance in conversations regarding hegemonic structures in the United States.

DeCuir-Gunby (2009) analyzed two historical definitions of race. One definition focused on the social aspect of race and one definition focused on the biological aspect of race.

DeCuir-Gunby furthered, “Although these definitions illustrate that race is defined in both biological and social terms, the social component most influences identity development” (p. 104). This author reviewed research on the use of instruments to measure the racial identity development of Black adolescents and suggested the need for schools to create a space that supported the racial identity development of Black children. DeCuir-Gunby furthered that future research was required in the context of schools because school is a place that acts out societies social, cultural, and political agendas.

Lea (2014), defined race as a false construct with no biological reality. Lea agreed with Helms (2007) concerning the social construction of race and furthered that race is constructed by people with power to perpetuate systems that advantage one racialized group as opposed to another. Also in support of Helms, Jensen (2005) argued that “race is a fiction we must never accept and a fact we must never forget” (p. 14). Succinctly, race is a construct designed to marginalize and should be discredited. However, because of the social implications of race and its systematic use, it can neither be ignored nor denied significance. The social construction of race is therefore supported by DeCuir-Gunby (2009), Fredrickson (2003), Helms (2007), Jensen (2005), and Lea (2014).

The suggestion to use ethnic and racial identity (ERI) as a meta-construct was recommended by Cokley (2005). This author argued the challenge of defining the terms racial identity and ethnic identity by way of the extant literature. Cokley surmised that racial identity and ethnic identity were too often used interchangeably in the literature as well as PsycINFO searches of that period. Cokley concluded that differentiation in the use of racial identity and ethnic identity was not clear and recommended a reduction in studies of identity that describe

and more studies that were theory driven. As an alternative, Wright (2011) shifted from the use of racial-ethnic identity as a single construct and defined healthy racial-ethnic identity as “pride in in-group identification, confidence in one’s academic abilities, competence in awareness of racism, and comfort with self-presentation of racial-ethnic identity” (HREI, p. 612).

Nasir (2011) further merged ethnic and racial identity into racialized identities as was suggested in Cokley (2005). Additionally, Nasir (2011) advanced a definition of identity in which people considered themselves according to their social and cultural interactions. Nasir posited that race and thus racial identity were not meaningful constructs in isolation. Identity development was also seen as fluid over time as opposed to age to stage theories of identity development. The author further argued race and racial identity meaningful because of social interaction, social positioning, and social discussions of ideas. Identities were posited to take shape because of interactions between social and cultural structures.

Umaña-Taylor et al. (2014) proclaimed themselves a 21st-century study group on ethnic and racial identity and recommended ethnic and racial identity (ERI) be considered a meta-construct. Using a meta-construct was deemed appropriate because there was no clear delineation of difference between the terms ethnicity and race in the extant literature and because the terms race and ethnicity were more often used interchangeably in the extant literature than as separate constructs. Umaña-Taylor and co-researchers went on to define ERI as a multidimensional, psychological construct that reflected the beliefs and attitudes that individuals have about their ethnic-racial group memberships, as well as the processes by which these beliefs and attitudes developed over time. The authors determined that salience and ethnic relevance was critical in identity development and that salience should be developed sooner than later. They did

not find age to stage progression of identity development in their review of the literature. The authors argued the difficulty of developing racial identity for students in racially homogenous settings and furthered that racial identity could only be developed because of interaction with another racial group.

After considering the proposed definitions of race and ethnicity, I believe the terms are inseparable when considering people of African descent living in the United States. Based on the literature I concluded that: (a) the social construction of race is and has long been a determining factor in the lives of Black people, (b) for many Black people, skin pigmentation makes race natural, yet the social construction of race is used to marginalize, and (c) the social construction of race and the ways race is used to marginalize or advantage groups of people must be addressed to develop affirming racial identities.

In the following section, I considered studies of identity development that impacted educational outcomes. The review covered twenty-five years of identity research involving Black people of different ages. The results of the research were as diverse as the approaches.

### **Identity and Education**

Irvine (1999) considered socioeconomics, socio-pathology, intelligence, and culture when considering reasons for the poor academic performance of students who were Black as compared to students who were White. Irvine debunked socioeconomic reasons for the disparity by pointing to differences in achievement that existed when the socioeconomic statuses of students were identical. A socio-pathological cause for the disparity was countered by giving examples of successful Black students that overcame adversity. Irvine suggested resiliency and determination as offsetting characteristics to known systems of oppression. Since intelligence is an ambiguous



term and its measurement is still debatable, genetics as a reason for disparity in academic achievement was unsupported. Haertel, Moss, Pullin, and Gee (2008) similarly argued that the achievement gap was not a result of differences in mental capacity. The authors furthered that the achievement gap was a result of denying all student equal access to a high-quality education based on socioeconomic status. This opportunity gap then manifests as a difference in achievement along race and class lines. Continuing the argument of Irvine (1999), cultural reasons for academic differences were not dismissed. The researcher emphasized the importance of culture as “a group’s history, language, values, norms, rituals, and symbols — important for any group’s survival in a particular environment” (p. 247). Irvine considered cultural incongruence the main reason for academic disparity, and posited that the negative effects of cultural incongruence could be countered. Five suggestions were given to teachers: believe in the academic potential of students, demand the best for and from students, exact fair forms of discipline, and see teaching as a calling.

Many of Irvine’s (1999) suggestions failed to include the student in efforts to improve educational outcomes. This exclusion goes against the emancipatory practices put forth by Freire (1970/1993) where teacher and student work together to abandon the banking model of education in which teachers are givers and students are receivers. In support of the inclusion of students, Pattillo-McCoy (2000) highlighted the agency of children in determining who they are and how they want to be perceived. Children were said to survive in an ecological environment where the creation and imitation of strong identities provided a bridge between what is realizable and what is improbable. Hence, the collaborative efforts of student, teacher, and community; the work of identity, is a viable solution to the inequalities that students of color face in schools and

society. As Irvine considered culture vital to educational outcomes, so did Ogbu and Simons (1998) and Whaley and Noël (2012).

**Cultural Ecological Theory.** Ogbu and Simons (1998) explained the educational achievement gap by relating it to identity development. Their study, which utilized the proletariat of various foreign countries, found differences in identity development based on three minority classifications: (1) autonomous (distinguishable from the majority group by culture and language), (2) voluntary (emigrated to the host country because of social, economic, or political reasons), and (3) involuntary (present in the host country because of slavery or imperialism). Ogbu and Simons furthered that interaction with those in positions of power, societal structures, and immigrant status affected the response of the marginalized to systems of education and thus to educational attainment. Even more, involuntary immigrants were said to have no hope that their efforts in school would ever outweigh discriminatory practices. To put it another way, involuntary minorities did not consider educational attainment an equalizer for hegemonic systems. This disillusionment with education was suggested by Ogbu and Simmons as a hopelessness that manifested as educational underachievement due to lack of effort. Lack of effort was presented as a coping mechanism to avoid feelings of failure. Similarly, Glatthorn (2008) listed the preference for avoiding failure as a student factor that contributed to the gap between the taught curriculum and the learned curriculum.

The cultural ecological theory of Ogbu and Simons (1998) offered practical avenues for approaching the teaching of involuntary minority groups and addressing purposeful failure. Ogbu and Simons suggested that teachers and practitioners explicitly address mistrust in the U.S. education system and respond directly to student lack of effort. Additionally, notions of success

based on completion of school alone should be deconstructed, and trusting relationships between students and teachers be established. Other recommendations presented by Ogbu and Simons included the incorporation of guided writing exercises that challenge students to think critically about the purpose of school, their behavior, their attitudes, and their teachers. Finally, the authors took care to note that the theory included the support of parents and the community.

Ogbu (2004) began his article with a disclaimer to those who may have misinterpreted and misrepresented Fordham and Ogbu (1986). In the previous article, Fordham and Ogbu presented an ethnographic study which found, “one major reason black students do poorly in school is that they experience inordinate ambivalence and affective dissonance with regard to academic effort and success” (p. 177). Ogbu (2004) declared that ignoring historical factors and solely relying on the interaction of the student with the school ignores a larger context. This context, according to Ogbu, included involuntary incorporation into society, instrumental discrimination, social subordination, and expressive mistreatment. He surmised that Black students faced a burden of acting White and had developed various adaptations to mediate this unnatural state. One tool of mediation was to not attempt to succeed. In not attempting, failure would not be truly considered failure. In a sense, this was a way for the student to maintain some sense of control in the educational setting.

Worrell (2014) critiqued Ogbu and Simons (1998) without addressing Ogbu (2004). Worrell (2014) noted a lack of research support for ideas that frame the achievement gap as an issue of differences in learning styles. Worrell suggested teachers’ thoughtful feedback essential in the learning process. Thoughtful feedback included reviewing high standards, giving assurance, and offering critique. Worrell contended that meaningful feedback was often a

missing component in instructional practices. King (2005b), however, argued that a larger problem existed when considering the education of Black children. This author's bulleted list delineated issues ranging from teacher quality to racial bias in special education. Atop the list of needs were contributions of Africa and Africans to history, culture, and society. Evaluation of King's (2005b) list indicated a need for change in the taught curriculum rather than a change in how the curriculum is taught or the feedback given on student work.

**Cultural Compatibility Theory.** Whaley and Noël (2012) reviewed the literature on the cultural compatibility theories to determine theoretical implications for the learned behavior of Black youth. One side of the cultural compatibility theory suggested that Blacks do poorly in school because of cultural identity (cultural incompatibility theory, CIT). The opposing view suggested that Blacks do well because of their cultural identity (cultural compatibility theory, CCT). Whaley and Noël found that much of the literature supported a cultural compatibility perspective rather than a cultural incompatibility perspective.

Whaley and Noël (2012) furthered that connectedness to the school environment was key for the development of an identity that positively correlated to school achievement. The authors argued that teachers' expectations and attitudes affected student achievement for Black students. According to Whaley and Noël, the Cognitive-Cultural Model of Black Identity used self, culture, and memory to create an identity.

The preceding review of the literature demonstrated the importance and intersectionality of Black racial identity. The intersectionality of racial identity, political involvement, empowerment, educational outcomes, and psychological well-being have caused researchers to contemplate ways to operationalize Black racial identity. The final section of the review of

literature covers how racial identity has been measured.

### **Measuring Racial Identity**

Researchers interested in the development of ethnic identity have not only used components of different measures, but have also examined identity using parts of a single measure. French, Seidman, Allen, and Aber (2006) considered the development of group esteem and exploration over a three-year period with students transitioning from elementary school to middle school (early adolescence) and with students moving from middle school to high school (middle adolescence). This study used seven items from the Multi-ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992; see Table 3.1 for a detailed comparison of identity constructs). Three items assessed group esteem and four items assessed exploration. The researchers found that group esteem increased for both populations while exploration only increased for the middle adolescent group. The difference in development was attributed to the homogeneity of the school environment for the early adolescent group as opposed to a more racially mixed school environment for the middle adolescent group. For their sample of 420 Blacks, Latin Americans, and European Americans, the researchers found that esteem for the two former groups was less than that of the latter group. French et al. (2006) concluded: (1) identity development took different trajectories depending on the age and environment of the participant, (2) identity development was not an age to stage model, and (3) school context played a role in the identity development of students. Additionally, the researchers suggested that school climate and culture were important factors in identity development. They furthered the need for a prejudicial encounter to encourage exploration and thus a more achieved and healthy ethnic identity. The

authors agreed that Blacks were necessarily the focus of much of the identity development literature because they were “devalued.”

Seaton, Sellers, and Scottham (2006) also used part of an identity measure to determine the existence of four stages of racial identity. The partial measure was also used to determine if persons in the achieved status were psychologically better than other status groups. The longitudinal study spanned three years and included 224 Black youth aged 11 to 17. The findings supported four identity achievement statuses as measured by the identity achievement subscale of the MEIM. In conjunction with the MEIM, the authors also used the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) to assess depressive symptoms and a short version of the Psychological Wellbeing Scale to assess overall well-being. Findings did not support an age to stage model of progression through the identity statuses. However, those in the achieved status of identity had higher psychological well-being.

Just as French et al. (2006) used parts of an established identity measure to focus on components of ethnic identity development, so did Yip (2014). Yip utilized the significance

Table 3.1

*Identity Measures and Subscales*

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Scoring</b>	<b>Dimension/Subscale (Items)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) (Vandiver et al., 2000)	Seven-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)	Assimilation (5) Miseducation (5) Self-Hatred (5)	Whether self is viewed as more American than African Acceptance of negative stereotypes of Blacks Feelings of unhappiness with being African American
Racial identity may not be developmental	The higher the score, the stronger the identity.	Anti-White (5) Afrocentricity (5) Multiculturalist (5)	Negative views of European Americans Connectedness to pro-Black views Pro-Black and accepting of other cultural groups
Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)	Four-point scale ranging from strongly	Affirmation and Belonging (5)	The subscales respectively assess whether a person feels as though they are a member of a group.

(Phinney, 1992)	disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4)	Ethnic Identity Achievement (7)	Feelings towards your group, how secure a person feels in a group
Measures how a person self-identifies with an ethnic group.	The higher the score, the stronger the identity.	Ethnic Behaviors (2)	Involvement in the activities associated with group membership.
Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI) (Sellers et al., 1997)	71 items rated on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7)	Centrality (10 items)	Extent to which being African American is central
Based on constructs within the MMRI	The higher the score, the stronger the identity.	Regard (11) Private (7) / Public (4)	Extent of possessing feelings toward African Americans
		Ideology (50) Assimilation (12) Humanist (12) Nationalist (13) Oppressed Minority (13)	The way African Americans view political, social, and cultural issues
Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI)	Theory that Black people have multiple identities of which only one of them is a racial identity. It focuses on the personal significance of race.	Salience	Relevance of race to personal identity
(Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998)		Centrality	Normalcy of using race to describe self
Conceptual Framework		Ideology	Ideas about how members of a race should act
Racial Identity Attitude Scale (RIAS)	Four subscales, ten items each, use a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5)	Regard	Judgment of your group's race
(Parham and Helms, 1996)		Pre-encounter (10)	Blacks are inferior to Whites
Developed to assess Cross's (1971) original nigrescence model	The higher the score, the stronger the identity.	Encounter (10)	External event causes a shift to Pro- Black
		Immersion-Emersion (10)	Need to understand and incorporate Black ideals
		Internalization (10)	Achievement of relationship with Blackness and sympathy towards others in less achieved states

portion of the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI, Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) and the centrality, salience, and regard scales of the Multi-ethnic Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI, Sellers et al., 1997).

Additionally, the exploration and commitment subscales of the MEIM (Phinney & Ong, 2007) were utilized. Even more, Yip (2014) used two items from the short version of the MIBI-S (Short) to assess situational-level private regard. Data gathered from 354 ninth-grade students representing Black, Asian, Latino, and White subpopulations supported four distinct identity achievement statuses. Most of the students had either moderate to high levels of commitment. Commitment was the extent to which the individual had come to terms with the role of ethnicity

in his/her life. Only 40 students had low levels of commitment. Additionally, most of the sample (N = 272) had above average to elevated levels of exploration. Exploration was defined as the extent to which an individual actively sought information about his/her ethnic group. Students who actively sought ethnic information reported more salience (how an ethnic identity developmental status related to daily personal experiences of ethnic identity) than students in the former group. Yip surmised that salience may be the contributing factor in the attainment of an achieved identity status.

Carter (2008) used the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1997) to determine attitudes about race, racism, achievement, and the usefulness of schooling. The study participants were high school students interested in becoming teachers in an urban setting. Carter (2008) found that positive feelings about race and connectedness could be a source of support for academic achievement. Additionally, the researcher speculated that critical race consciousness might relate to pursuing high academic achievement. The limitations of the study included the small homogeneous sample size and the fact that participants were in an after-school program that focused on social justice. It is possible that teaching for social justice interacted with the interview protocol and self-report of racial consciousness. If teaching social justice influenced self-report of racial consciousness, it follows that BC might be teachable via social justice issues.

### **Summary**

Variation exists in the way researchers have considered the constructs of identity, race, and ethnicity. Several researchers agree that the proliferation of racial identity in the research of, with, and on Blacks failed to yield a uniform definition of racial identity (Cokley, 2005; Sellers,



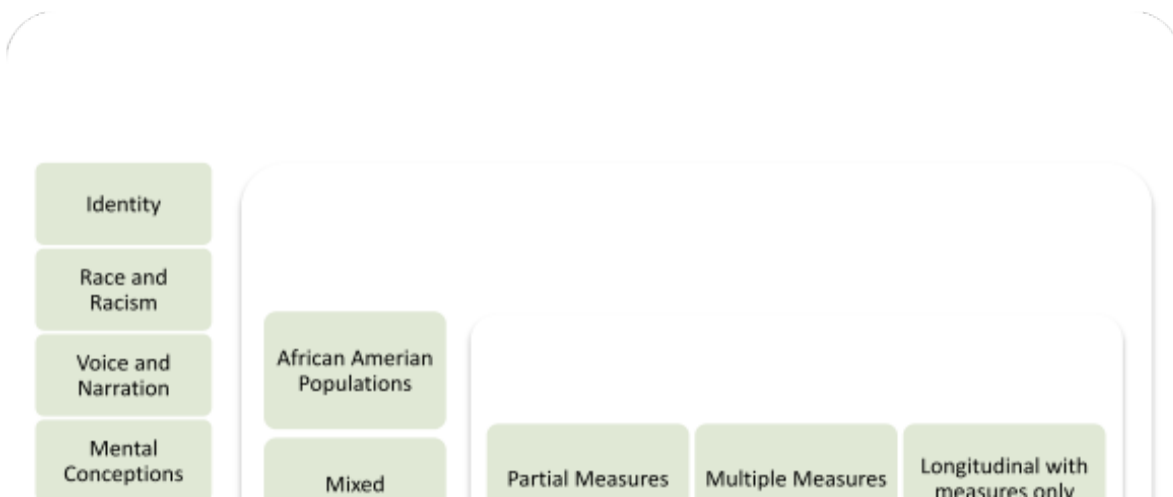
Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997; Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006).

The consistency in research regarding Black identity was its necessity for social and emotional health as well as academic achievement (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Nasir, 2011). Inconsistencies surrounded what identity development looked like and what identity stance or outlook a person should have. Two questions were posed in Worrell et al., (2011): Do racial identity profiles consistently relate to academic and psychological outcomes in significant ways?; Do the ways students see themselves affect the way they participate in society? The writings of Kozol (1981), Freire (1970/1993), and Phillips (2013) suggested that both questions would be answered affirmatively. Teachers who desire to positively influence the identity trajectory of students need historical knowledge of various cultures to ameliorate cultural incongruence. Additionally, students and teachers need to work together to address hegemonic structures by incorporating conversations and writings that help to reveal conscious and unconscious thoughts about school and educational disparities. Schools should aid in developing the identities of children (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001; DeCuir-Gunby, 2009; French et al., 2006; Lea, 2014; Nasir, 2011; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; and Whaley & Noël, 2012). According to Nasir (2011), schools are already involved in the identity construction of students, whether consciously attending to racial identity development or unconsciously attending to racial identity development. Nasir argued that schools identified children as successes, failures, gifted, special needs, high, low, and talented, among other identities. Additionally, schools measured students based on book sense and not sense of self. Given the curricula present in schools and the time spent in the confines thereof, school is one place that helps to shape identities and could indeed serve as a place for racial identity development.

There are several gaps in the literature (see Figure 3.1). First, the literature called for use of history to develop identities. My literature review did not find any studies that used history in the use of identity development. Second, the literature called for reflection. Again, though recommended, studies have not implemented this recommendation. Third, the literature called for teacher and student to work together in racial identity development. Still, working with students to develop identities is not dominate in the research literature. This paucity of research with youth entering adolescence is unfortunate because this is the time, developmentally, that children are exploring and developing identities.

I developed this study to answer three research questions: (1) Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students? (2) How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study? (3) How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race? I begin chapter 4 with a general background of the selected methodological approach and the conceptual framework used in this study. I continue by considering the research design and context. Then I define my roles and positionality as the researcher. I conclude chapter 4 with a description of data collection parameters and data analysis procedures.

*Figure 3.1. Gaps in the Literature*





## 4 METHODOLOGY

The present study used a qualitative critical action research methodology to answer the questions: (1) Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students? (2) How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study? (3) How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race?

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) provided a basic definition of qualitative research: that which seeks to understand “how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 15). The authors argued that this definition only begins to explain qualitative research and surmised that qualitative research could best be explained by focusing on the characteristics of the method. Merriam and Tisdell posited that qualitative research focus on meaning, use rich descriptions, consider the researcher as the main instrument for data collection and analysis, and help to build rather than test a hypothesis by creating themes and categories via an inductive process.

The characteristics of qualitative research presented here were appropriate for this study because I desired to understand the connection between Black consciousness and the identity development of children. I sought to investigate the narratives that were produced in a classroom context and provide a space for critical consideration of racial identities. Interactions with the world were also considered as students responded in teacher moderated discussions regarding history, race, and racism.

According to Herr and Anderson (2015), action research is concerned with teacher practice, interactions that improve praxis, and social change. An action research methodology

also (a) considers the voice of participants, (b) describes participant and researcher outcomes because of deep cyclical inquiry, and (c) stimulates improved praxis on the part of the teacher-researcher. Further, attention to issues of oppression is engagement in critical inquiry (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, this study is best described as critical action research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), action research not only seeks to understand the participants but also attempts to solve a problem. The problem presented in this dissertation considered Black racial identity and how the taught curriculum lacks sufficient historical contexts with which Black students can affirm their racial identities. Thus, I studied how fifth-grade students narrated racial identities when supplementing the written curriculum with Black history. The goal of this study was to use the taught curriculum to offer students an opportunity to narrate their racial identities.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was critical race theory (CRT). I used CRT to guide the study, answer the research questions, and interpret the data. CRT acknowledges the importance and prevalence of race and racism. The theory considers the social and economic impact of hegemonic structures on marginalized groups. The theory also values narratives as a way of hearing the voice of persons of color. I considered the main components of CRT (i.e. race and racism, marginalization and voice, and narration) when designing this study.

**Race and Racism.** The effects of race and racism are present in every context whether overt or covert (King, 2015). Therefore, I focused on the race of the participants and enhanced the written curriculum to include more images of Black people.

**Marginalization and Voice.** The population and age chosen for this study was subject to marginalization because of their race and economic status (Howe & Covell, 2013; Meiners, 2007; King, 2015). Additionally, the presence of hegemonic structures was considered to limit the voice of marginalized groups (Dixson & Rousseau, 2014). In this study, I used the voices of Black people to share the history of Black people and offer commentary on the status of Black people during various eras. Students were also given the opportunity to have their voices heard by taking part in conversations regarding the presented information.

**Narration.** Narration is one way for marginalized groups to have their collective voice acknowledged (Delgado, 2009). In this study, the participants were given the opportunity to narrate their racial identities. This means to openly and honestly verbally communicate their attitudes and feelings toward Black people, other racial groups, Black history, and themselves. Students also recorded responses to the enhanced written curriculum. Students were also given the opportunity to formulate responses to questions about race and racism.

### **Context**

The study took place in an urban setting. To understand the context of an urban school is to be conscious of the students that attend the school, the opportunities and challenges that confront the students, as well as the attitudes of the persons working at the school (Hollins, 2012).

Greene Elementary, pseudonym, is located just beyond the center of a large metropolitan city on the eastern coast of the United States. The neighborhood has natural lawns, frequent police activity, boarded dwellings, and littered pavements. The population of approximately 560 Pre-K through fifth-grade students is 99% Black and nearly all students live at or below the

poverty line based on qualification for free and reduced priced meals. Of the 45 teachers employed at the school, there are 36 Black females, six White females, two Black males, and one White male. The principal is a Black female and the assistant principal is a White female. For the protection of students and staff, all visitors must gain access to the school by pressing a button on the outside of the main front or rear entrance and then gain admittance with the permission of someone in the main office. Each visitor must then report to the main office and sign in electronically where they then receive a white badge that prints from a small desktop kiosk. As you enter the glass laden front foyer the bright yellow walls and two story ceiling welcomes you to the learning facility that does not mirror the surrounding community. The remaining walls are eggshell white and are often used to display the art work of the entire study body. The glossy white floors accented with blue tiles provides a marching guide along the perimeter that students use as they move from homerooms to art, music, physical education, and lunch. Models of street signs made of black foam board are displayed on various hallways and mark such paths as Innovation Way, Scholar Boulevard, and Excellence Avenue. The pentagonal shaped building has six halls of homerooms. The two-story front foyer and two-story cafeteria and gym make up the remaining halls. Latin is offered once a week to third, fourth, and fifth-grade students. A nurse and social worker, assigned to the school full-time, occupy office space in the support staff suite located off the main foyer. A full-time counselor, a behavior specialist, a psychologist, a math content specialist, a reading content specialist, and a community partner complete the list of personnel occupying the offices in the suite. Most classrooms are adequately heated and cooled throughout the school year. Each classroom has a teacher-decorated bulletin board just outside the door. Each classroom's front wall is adorned with an interactive board and accented with red

or blue paint to match the diamond of colored tiles in the middle of the room. The other walls are eggshell white, one of which is covered by a cloth bulletin board. Each classroom has a sink, at least one wall with six-foot width by ceiling high window bay, four computers for student use, and ample storage. All teachers have been certified to teach by the state's agency. Greene Elementary has two computer labs, one upstairs and one downstairs. There are science labs on each floor and a technology innovation room equipped with a 3-D printers and 3-D computer technology located on the second floor. This year, third, fourth and fifth grade students were loaned Chromebooks for school use. A few third, fourth, and fifth-grade students received extra support in reading from tutors who served them during the school day. Tutoring was also offered by homeroom teachers on Wednesdays from 2:30 until 4:00 from August through March.

The study took place in one fifth-grade classroom of 18 students. Overall, the class scored below the district average academically in all content areas, obtaining a 56% pass rate in English language arts, 57% in mathematics, 39% in science, and 41% in social studies as rising fifth graders based on the Spring 2016 administration of the state's end of grade assessment. Comparatively, pass rates were 60%, 68%, 57%, and 57% respectively for the district. The state reported pass rates of 69% in English language arts, 79% in math, 73% in science, and 73% in social studies for rising fifth-grade students.

### **Participants**

The study participants were part of a class of 18 Black fifth-grade students attending Greene Elementary School. Black students were chosen for participation for several reasons. Primarily, this population is seen as being positioned as at risk for judicial injustice and hopelessness (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Stevenson, 2012). Moreover, according to Camangian



(2015), it is important to focus on this demographic because of the perceived mismatch in the curriculum that dehumanizes the students and, therefore, puts them in need of pedagogy that promotes self-love and empowerment.

When using action research as a methodology, there is no number of recommended participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Herr and Anderson suggested determining the number of participants based on the researcher's careful consideration of the number of participants needed to address the research question(s). The researchers also suggested considering the amount of data collected as the number of participants increases. Therefore, this critical action research study consisted of one teacher and one classroom of students. The school secretary assigned 10 males and 8 females to my fifth-grade inclusion class at the start of the school year. The term inclusion means that at least a third of my homeroom students received special education services because of an educational intervention plan and were given daily instruction in one or more subjects in a smaller class setting. All homeroom students were either 10 or 11 years old at the beginning of the school year. Over the course of the semester, one male student was moved to another class for leveling purposes and two females and one male withdrew from the school. Three females and one male enrolled before the end of the semester, yet chose not to participate in the study. Therefore, the study included 14 students with parental permission to participate in the study: 8 males and 6 females.

### **Researcher Roles and Positionality**

Lea (2014) argued that schools and classrooms be characterized by the discussions and practices in which they engage. This characteristic is not something that can be scripted, but takes place through responding to participating students. Responsive and conscious teaching

changes the practice of teaching into a praxis. In essence, with this study and as a critical teacher researcher, I hoped to balance the potential to oppress and marginalize with the potential to emancipate and empower (Solórzano & Yosso, 2009). Specifically, I sought to offer a learning environment that aids in the development of Black consciousness. Not only did I serve as a teacher to the research participants, I was also a discussion facilitator and a moderator. I had the responsibility as a researcher to clearly explain the aim of the research to the students. I analyzed the data with a focus on meaning and took it as an obligation to concisely yet clearly report the findings of this action research project so that the participants and the research context were accurately presented.

Using Herr & Anderson (2015) as a guide, I positioned myself as an insider in collaboration with other insiders, the students. I took this position so that any benefits of the action research project would benefit both the participants and me. Additionally, Herr and Anderson explained that this positionality has the potential to affect the school culture while simultaneously addressing equity issues. A useful suggestion put forth by the authors was that an insider positionality has the potential to move the group from an individualistic stance to one of communal authority where each transformation affects the collective and simultaneously the collective affects the individual.

I answered the call to teach after ten years in a corporate environment and still view teaching as a calling. At one point in my career I thought that education was an equalizer: able to mediate the effects of poverty, racism, sexism, and classism. After reading and researching for this dissertation, I am not as certain. As a teacher committed to the urban community, I need to have some hope that what I do as a classroom teacher positively impacts the lives of the children

I serve. I am passionate about this work because I too am at risk for hopelessness. These nuances shaped this work.

As a mother of a Black son, I have dealt with the notion that my son would always be judged by the color of his skin before being judged by the content of his character. As a teacher of Black children, I often wondered if I was teaching them anything of value. I considered the effects of pushing them into a culture designed to oppress them without empowering them with knowledge of that oppression. I did not know the benefits of explicitly discussing race and the racism inherent in the United States; teaching the students how to stay alive in a world where police are killing Black boys, girls, women, and men without remorse or recourse, yet felt compelled to do so. I questioned how I could continue to support a curriculum, one that glorifies the White experience, while simultaneously marginalizing Black children, now believing that this type of education would never be *the great equalizer* (Anyon, 2005; Meiners, 2007). I wondered about the need for some conversations that debunk the myth that education is the only way out of poverty. I also wondered if students should be given access to the thought that poverty is tolerated and political and that avenues for justice flow through involvement in political processes (Anyon, 2005). These questions propelled a search for answers. This quest for answers started with me taking a close look at myself. Being Black, a mother, a teacher, and a long-time faculty member at the research site contributed to the research setting and research outcome.

### **Data Collection**

The research period started August 3, 2016 with distribution of parental permission forms and ended January 26, 2017 with a member check. During the research period, documents were generated that served as data. The design of the study included alternate weeks of data collection

and data analysis. Some data collection lag times were greater than one week to accommodate the dynamics of the school setting which included field trips, assemblies, testing, and semester breaks (see Table 4.1 for timeline of data collection).

**Procedures.** I read the parental permission form to my 18 homeroom students on August 5, 2017 and asked the students to take the form to their parents (see Appendix A for the parental permission form). After receiving signed parental permission forms, students were asked to give assent to use their work in the study (see Appendix B for student assents). Ten-year-olds were asked for verbal assent, and 11-year-olds gave written assent per Institutional Review Board protocol. Student participation in all activities and discussions was expected because the activities were in conjunction with the social studies and health curriculum. Even so, the use of

Table 4.1.

*Timeline of Data Collection*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Research Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
August 5, 2016	Distributed Parental Permission Forms	All students were given a parental permission form.
August 10-12, 2016	Administered Questionnaires	Students completed questionnaires.
August 17, 2016	Media Viewing 1	Students viewed the <i>Introduction</i> and <i>Africa</i> segments of Hidden Colors 1.
August 31, 2016	Media Viewing 2	Students viewed the <i>Pre-Columbian America</i> and <i>Early US</i> segments of Hidden Colors 1.
September 14, 2016	Media Viewing 3	Students viewed Hidden Colors 3: Rule 3: Keep the Contributions of Blacks Hidden
September 28, 2016	Media Viewing 4	Students viewed Hidden Colors 3: Rule 6: Minimize the Effects and Significance of Slavery and Jim Crow.
October 3, 2016	Member Check 2	Status of the research was presented to the class.
October 18, 2016	Media Viewing 5	Students viewed <i>The Age of Slavery</i> and <i>Into the Fire</i> segments of The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross.
October 26, 2016	Media Viewing 6	Students viewed the <i>Making a Way Out of No Way</i> and <i>Rise!</i> segments of The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross.
November 9, 2016	Media Viewing 7	Students viewed the <i>Legacy</i> segment of 500 Years Later.
December 9, 2016	Media Viewing 8	Students viewed the <i>Racism</i> and <i>Identity</i> segment of 500 Years Later.
December 12, 2016	Member Check 2	Students were asked to review collected data and clarify responses.

December 14 -16, 2016	Administered Questionnaires	Students completed questionnaires.
January 26, 2017	Member Check 3	Status of the research was presented to the student. Students had the opportunity to affirm or disaffirm findings.

individual responses was voluntary. Students who agreed to have their individual work used in the study did not receive an extra grade or other incentives for participation and students were not penalized for not consenting to have their specific responses used in the report. The identity of all students was concealed to every extent possible with the use of pseudonyms for the participants, the school, and the district. Students were, without penalty, able to withdraw their work from the study at any time. Any work produced by students who withdrew from the study was not used in the study. There were eight viewing sessions that spanned August 17, 2016 to December 7, 2016. Sessions were generally two weeks apart with time between used for data analysis. For each session, students recorded the targeted digital media (TDM) title and the segment title on a provided reflection page. Students watched a segment of a TDM that typically lasted about ten minutes. As students watched the segment, I sat in the front of the classroom close to TDM source. I always had full view of the students. My observation journal was updated during data collection or within two hours after the research session. After the TDM was stopped, students were given about three minutes to record thoughts and salient points. I then opened the session for discussion by asking volunteers to share their thoughts, read from their reflection page, or discuss what stood out for them in the segment. Some prompts and guiding questions included: How do you feel about what you just saw? What stood out to you? Who would like to speak first? Have you seen anything like this in your text books? Why is there a difference in this video and your books? After an initial volunteer, students often responded to

their peers or offered their most salient observations. Discussions lasted about 20 minutes. After discussion, students were asked to record their thoughts. Time consumed for final thoughts and collection of papers was about 5 minutes. Total session time, from set up to document collection, was about 45 minutes per viewing session.

**Materials.** I used recommendations from the literature to add specialized materials for use in this study. Authors including Erikson (1964), Freire (1970/1993), King (2005a), and Kunjufu (2006) recommended the use of history to form affirming racial identities. I considered using historical fiction, however not having the students during the reading block prohibited control of the reading selections. Considering the use of media, also mentioned in the literature review by Erikson (1964), Pattillo-McCoy (2000), and Whaley and Noel (2012), I decided to use a form of media in this study. I considered web based historical media such as Ted Talks and YouTube presentations. After further consideration of the instability and unreliability of the



internet connection at the research site, I decided that targeted digital materials (TDM) would be best suited for this research study and site. When deciding which TDMs to use, I employed three main criteria: voice, narration, and content. See Figure 4.1 for TDM selection process.

*Figure 4.1.* Targeted Digital Material Selection Process

***Voice and Narration.*** An important component of my theoretical framework and conceptual framework is voice and narration. I searched for TDMs that went beyond storytelling and into presentation of history in discussion form. I looked for TDMs that used Black people as presenters.

***Content.*** The content of the TDM had to align with the written curriculum. The curriculum for the research participants covers topics such as slavery, Jim Crow, sharecropping, World Wars 1 and 2, the Harlem Renaissance, inventions, and civil rights. Additionally, the presenters had to share the information in a way that was accessible to fifth-grade students. The language could not be harsh and the content could not be too graphic.

In addition to using TDM, I created a reflection page that students used to record their thoughts. The initial page had space for students to predict what the segment would be about. After the second viewing and considering my research questions, I decided that a prediction did not address the research question. After removal of the prediction section, students expressed concerns over the amount of space provided for the reflection section. I then modified the form to include numbered lines the students could use to record their salient observations while leaving the section used after the discussions as an open paragraph section (see Appendix D for sample reflection page).

***Data Sources.*** According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), there are two litmus tests to perform when considering which documents to collect during research. If the material has the potential to address the research questions and if the document is easily produced, then it was said to be worth generating. Additionally, Merriam and Tisdell argued that documents provide the same rich data that interviews provide and can be used to verify emerging hypotheses, track

changes in participants, justify new coding categories, demonstrate participant development, and offer descriptive information. For these reasons, documents served as primary sources of data. One document source was participant questionnaires. See Table 4.2 for documents generated and analyzed during the study.

***Student Reflections.*** I collected 107 reflections over the course of the study. I stored the documents in a 3-ring binder. The reflections for each session were grouped together. All reflections were typed and uploaded to Dedoose, an online data management system, for ease of analysis.

Table 4.2.

*Documents Generated and Analyzed During the Study*

<u>Student Reflections</u>	<u>Questionnaires</u>	Researcher <u>Observations</u>
107	64	8

***Researcher Observations and Reflections.*** The study also used detailed descriptions of the research setting. To capture this data, I maintained an observation journal and a reflection journal (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Herr & Anderson (2015), journaling is a way to notate all that is happening in the research setting and observations were also deemed a major data source (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Every attempt was made to ensure that rich descriptions were logged into a specific journal dedicated to recording observations of the research sessions. A total of eight observations were recorded and analyzed.

Not only was an observation journal kept, but a separate reflection journal was also maintained. This reflection journal was a space for me to record feelings, reactions, initial ideas



about themes, iterations of themes, mistakes made during a session, things to do during the next session, things to avoid during future sessions, and any confusion felt or experienced during the research period. The reflection journal was the place where the second half of the data collection recommendation provided by Merriam & Tisdell (2016) was performed. Therefore, the research journal and the reflection journal combined offered a rich description of the research setting, research sessions, researcher positionality, and developing themes. Prior to collection of data and data analysis, I decided that my reflection journal would be a spiral notebook and that my observation journal would be an organized binder (Glesne, 2016) that would house all research related documents. All researcher notes were typed and uploaded to Dedoose for ease of analysis.

***Questionnaires.*** Questionnaires were administered at the beginning and the end of the research period (see Table 4.3 for sample questions). Worrell, Vandiver, Cross, Jr., and Fhagen-Smith (2004) found the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS) to be internally consistent and structurally valid. Reliability was in the moderate to high range with a six-factor structure providing the most viability. The authors also found that the instrument may be used to draw theoretical conclusions regarding racial identity development. Due to the validity and reliability of the CRIS and its usefulness in drawing theoretical conclusions regarding racial identity development, I used this instrument to create a questionnaire that would help to answer my research questions. I developed the questionnaire by modifying statements found on the Cross Racial Identity Scale (CRIS; Vandiver, Cross, Worrell, & Fhagen-Smith, 2002). For example, if an indicator stated: I hate a particular group of people, I asked, How do you feel about a particular group of people? A statement that read: Black people emphasize having a good time

was changed to How do Black people spend their time? When I look in a mirror, I don't like what I see was changed to How would you describe yourself? The resulting instrument was modified until the readability was 4.3 as measured by the readability function of Microsoft Word 2016. I collected 64 questionnaires during the research period. Six questions were given as morning work on three consecutive days. Each morning work session lasted approximately 30 minutes as students entered at various times throughout the morning. All questionnaires were typed and uploaded to Dedoose for ease of analysis.

Table 4.3.

*Questions Adapted from the Cross Racial Identity Scale (B. J. Vandiver et al., 2000)*

<b>Stage of Development</b>
Pre-encounter Assimilation
How would you describe yourself? Tell me the most important thing about you? If you were to describe yourself to a stranger, what would you say?
Pre-encounter Miseducation
What do Black people do to make money? How do you think Black people spend most of their time? How do Black people solve their problems?
Pre-encounter Self Hatred
Tell me about a time you felt bad about yourself? If you could be someone else for a week, who would you be? If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
Immersion/Emersion Anti-White
How do you feel about White people? How do you think White people feel about Black people? If there was only one race, what should it be?
Internalization Afrocentricity
What concerns you in your daily life?

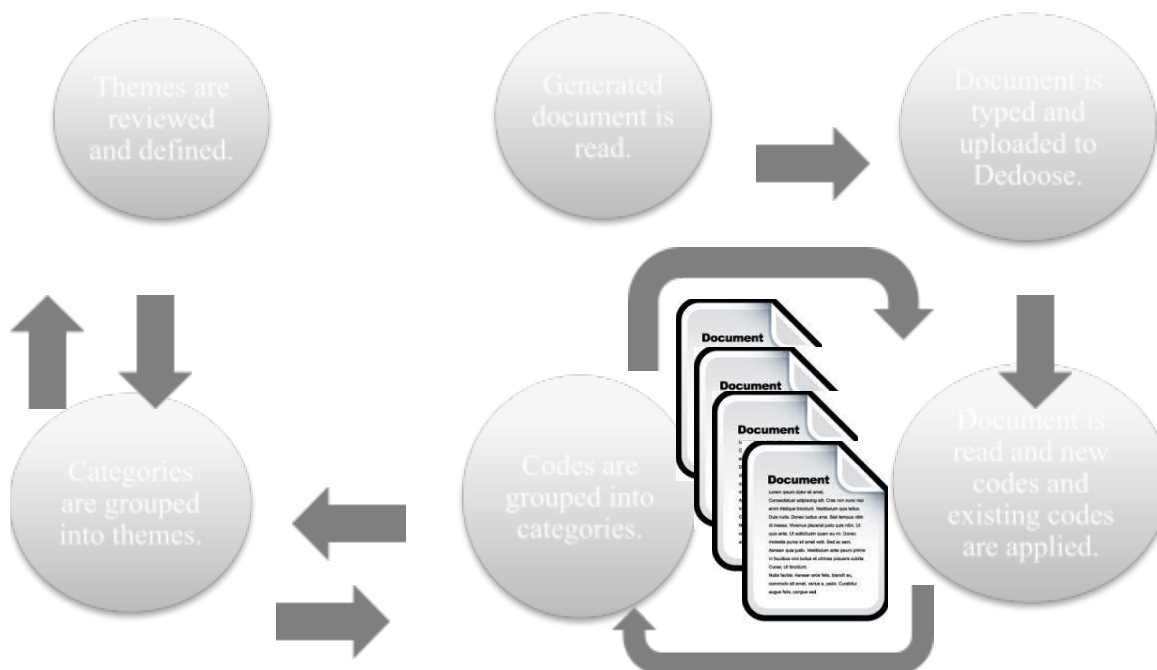
What types of things do you worry about?  
 Are there things that only Black people worry about?

#### Internalization Multiculturalism

What types of activities do you do with your family?  
 How does it feel to spend time with other cultures and/or races?  
 How do you feel about different cultures and/or races spending time together?

### Data Analysis

Inductive thematic analysis within a critical race theory framework was used to analyze reflections, questionnaires, observation, and reflections. This approach allowed me to focus on underlying and semantic meanings and to create a narrative that comprehensively represented the data. According to Riessman (2008), thematic analysis can be used on a range of written documents including personal stories, interview transcripts, and observation field notes. Additionally, Riessman acknowledged the suitability of thematic analysis for “creating possibilities for social identities, group belonging, and collective action” (p. 54). According to Lyons and Coyle (2016), thematic analysis is a recursive five-step process that leads to a narration of the findings. The process includes (1) data familiarization, (2) open coding, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, and (5) defining and naming themes. See figure 4.2 for data analysis process.



*Figure 4.2. Data Analysis Process*

Accordingly, my analytical process started at the point of data collection. For example, once collected, each student's reflection was read several times for semantics and familiarization. After all responses had been read several times, I then typed each document. Reading, rereading and subsequently typing participants' responses allowed for analytic engagement with the data. I then uploaded each typed document into Dedoose. Using Dedoose facilitated coding of the data such that codes were easily applied, modified, sorted, grouped, and regrouped throughout the research process. Once loaded into Dedoose, I read the reflections again with focused attention on the research questions and then abstracted words and phrases from a single reflection. I applied codes to the abstracted words or phrases that left the abstracted data 'open' for further analysis and cross referencing with other coded data abstracts. This systematic data reduction procedure allowed me to capture interpretations of the data. I repeated this process for each reflection. After coding all reflections, I had easy access to all codes applied on the main screen of the online storage system (see Appendix F for a screenshot of the database). Looking at the list of applied codes, I began the process of grouping codes in search of themes (see Appendix G for iterations of codes and themes). The process above was repeated each time data was collected. New codes would be added when necessary and existing codes would be applied when appropriate. After the final set of data was collected and coded, I went back to each piece of data to be sure that I had not missed coding relevant data and had not inadvertently coded extraneous data. I reviewed grouped codes and then created a simple definition for the grouped codes. Consideration of the simple definitions resulted in themes. The essential test was to see if the themes I created were a thorough yet abstract record of the data.

## **Validity**

The findings from this qualitative action research project are valid and reliable to the extent that a reader can ascertain the rigor used while conducting the study. Rigor is referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative research. Taken together, validity in qualitative research means using multiple strategies to ensure the accuracy of findings. Creswell (2014) recommended incorporating multiple strategies to improve the researcher's ability to ensure trustworthiness. This study incorporated five of eight recommended validity strategies: triangulation; member checking; use of rich, thick description; clarification of bias; and prolonged engagement.

**Triangulation.** According to Creswell (2014), triangulation can be used to add validity to a study. Using multiple sources of data is one type of triangulation. Different sources were analyzed to address the research questions. Student reflections, researcher observations and reflections, questionnaires, and member checks were used to confirm themes, draw conclusions, make inferences, and determine category use. This triangulation of data sources, along with the literature, were used to provide a full analysis of the research and a basis for transferability.

**Member checking.** According to Creswell (2014), member checking was a frequently used validity strategy. Therefore, as the study progressed, themes, categories, and generalizations were presented to the participants to check for accuracy and interpretation. Participants were encouraged to comment on findings, and some findings were amended based on participant input. The first member check was a whole class member check that showed the class profile and explained the codes applied. For the second member check, I spoke to the students individually to clarify questions that I had encountered during data analysis. The final member check was a

whole class session where I revealed the content of chapter 4 to the class. Students were encouraged to comment. Comments were used for clarification and presented as findings.

**Rich, thick description.** Creswell (2014) suggested the use of rich, thick descriptions to add to the validity of a study. He argued that the reports, when clearly and vividly written, could give the reader the feeling that they have experienced the setting. With this sense, readers can decide whether the study is replicable. Therefore, I used vivid descriptions in the researcher observation journal, researcher reflection journal, and findings. These realistic accounts add to the validity of the study.

**Clarification of bias.** According to Creswell (2014), the bias that the researcher brings to the study should be explained to create an “open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers” (p. 202). I described my biases under the heading researcher roles and positionality.

**Prolonged engagement and persistent observation.** The researcher as teacher dual role afforded me five months in the research setting with the study participants. Five months in the research setting amounted to approximately 90 days and 400 researcher contact hours with each participant. These hours do not include holidays, weekends, specials, lunch, or times that I did not spend with the students. According to Creswell (2014), extended time in the research setting enables development of a clear understanding of the research participants, the setting, and the phenomenon under study. Prolonged engagement also adds validity to the research.

**Ethics.** Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that ethical considerations relate to trustworthiness. They suggested that the trustworthiness of the study was contingent upon the values of the researcher. That is, the ability to trust the data lies in the capacity to believe that the researcher can carry out the work in an intellectually rigorous manner. To ensure that the work

was ethically sound, I conducted the research as approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia State University as well as the IRB of the study site.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The study examined Black fifth grade students in a large urban school system. This study's findings are therefore not generalizable. Although there are many identities available to study, this study focused on Black racial identity or Black consciousness. The use of my homeroom, which was assigned by the school secretary, also affected generalizability. I assumed that students honestly responded to questionnaires and reflections since I reiterated that there were no correct answers to questions and that the work would not be graded. I believed that students could adequately express their thoughts and feelings in written, verbal, or picture form. Additionally, I used a critical lens that highlighted the importance of race and focused on voice, liberation, and empowerment.

### **Summary**

I used an action research methodology to answer the research questions:

- (1) Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students?
- (2) How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study?
- (3) How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race?

Fourteen Black fifth-grade students were given access to targeted digital media that gave historical connections to Blacks and the founding of the United States. These documentaries, which added depth to the written curricula, served as springboards to conversation about race, racism, prejudice, and hegemonic structures. Conversations took place over the course of five months and were accompanied by written reflections. The reflections served as my primary data source. Students answered questions designed to understand how they felt about being Black and how they felt about other racial groups. I used classroom observations and questionnaire responses as additional data sources. I also had extensive contact with the student participants. Additionally, I maintained a reflection journal to record nuances of the research sessions and how I perceived what was happening during the study period. Finally, the participants were periodically provided updates on the status of the research and offered clarity. I used inductive thematic analysis to generate codes and themes based on students' responses to questions, student reflections, student comments, and my observation notes. This process addressed the problem presented in this dissertation by providing Black students with a specialized taught curriculum that offered access to racial images in an environment where they explored, narrated, and affirmed their racial identities.

This research filled the gaps noted in the review of the literature. Additionally, this study was novel in that the taught curriculum supported the written curriculum and simultaneously addressed the excluded curriculum by infusing more historical images of Black people. This increase in Black images was to afford students greater access to images to use in formation of affirming racial identities. Presenting the contributions of Africa and Africans to history (King, 2005b) and then offering opportunities for reflection and critical discussions of race and racism

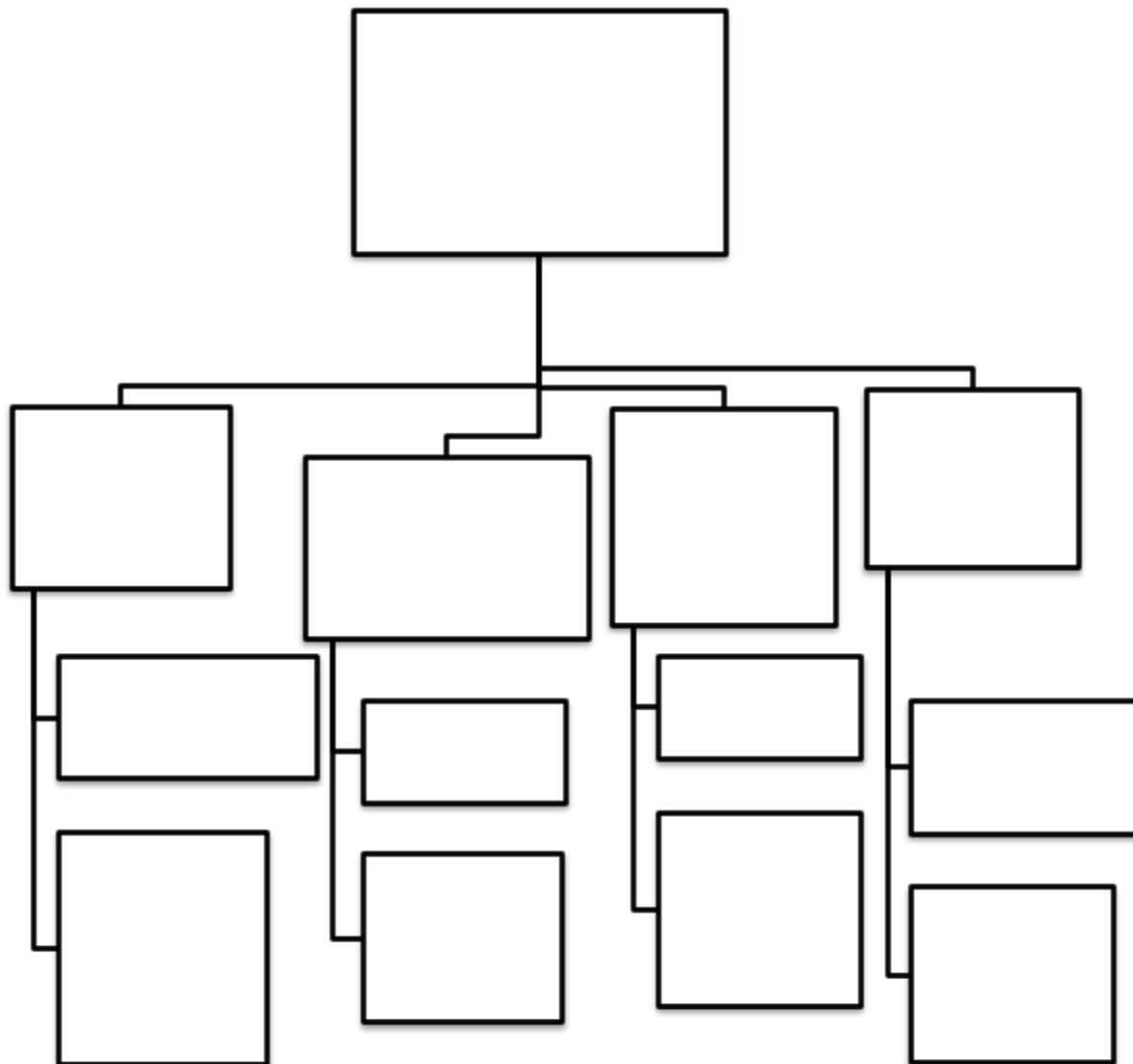


(Ogbu & Simons, 1998) also addressed suggestions presented in the review of the literature. This study also incorporated the use of an identity measure. Designing a study with these elements provided a safe space for children to discuss and reflect concerning their racial identities. The research methodology employed utilized an approach to instruction that considered the identities and agency of students. Teacher influence was also considered. The work of identity narration in this dissertation was also bounded by the written curriculum to thwart issues of hate bating as suggested by HB2281. This study was therefore an appropriate critical race study carried out in a school setting.

## 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through this study, I sought to answer the following research questions: (1) Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students? (2) How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study? (3) How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race?

In this chapter, I offer my findings and discussion of the racial identity narrations of a group of 14 Black fifth-grade students during a course of the study that lasted five months.



Codes assigned to data were grouped and regrouped to form categories. The categories were analyzed for relationship and ultimately labeled as themes. For example, excerpts from questionnaires, student reflections, and researcher observations were coded as anger, retaliation, retribution, desire to know, miseducated, questioning access to knowledge in school, and recognition of dissonance. The codes were then collapsed into the categories of strong emotion, inquisitive, and desire for historical knowledge. The categories were ultimately grouped into the theme Show Me Tell Me because students desired to learn more of their history even though learning evoked strong emotions. See Figure 5.1 for an overview of how analysis of data led to categories and themes. The four general concepts that emerged from this research related to (1) students' desire to know Black history, (2) love of self, (3) high regard for Black people, and (4) the challenges of racial interaction. See Table 5.1 for a description of themes. The following presentation of the findings provides a description of racial attitudes observed during the research period. The chapter begins with definition of themes mentioned above and is then divided into three sections based on the research questions. The descriptions that follow allow the reader to experience the nuances of what happened as students and teacher did the work of affirming racial identities.

*Figure 5.1. Categories, Themes, and Brief Descriptions*

Table 5.1.

*Description of Themes*

Show Me Tell Me	Students had a severely limited knowledge of Black history and though emotionally riveted by information presented during the study, students desired to learn more.
I Love Me	Students developed an affirming Black racial identity despite the historical challenges of Black people and despite personal contemporary problems.

Pro Black	Students were nonjudgmental regarding actions that their Black collective group exhibited regarding agency and subsistence.
Culturally Inclusive	Students held exclusionary attitudes toward White people while suggesting the need for various races and cultures to spend time together.

### **Theme 1: Show Me Tell Me**

From the first viewing session until the end of the research period, there was evidence across various data sources that students wanted to know the history of Black people. This desire was expressed through positioning during the research sessions, vibrant discussions, demonstration of knowledge acquisition, and posing of questions. To summarize the theme Show Me Tell Me, the students wanted to know and see more of the history of Black people even though the details caused strong emotional responses. The students also demonstrated their acquisition of knowledge and posed questions throughout the research period.

### **Theme 2: I Love Me**

All students articulated their positive attributes, gifts, and talents. They shared examples of their kindness and love for their family and humanity. Students also shared who they would emulate if given the opportunity and some things they would like to adjust about themselves. Concisely, students expressed loving themselves while also considering their social circumstances, their imperfections, and their idiosyncrasies.

### **Theme 3: Pro-Black**

This theme represents the attitudes students expressed about Black people as a collective group. Some views were affirming and some were not. All students narrated belief in their own agency and the belief that a single race should be comprised of Black people, if given only one choice. Even more, when questioned directly, 10 of 14 students simultaneously held views of Black people that could be considered disparaging.

#### **Theme 4: Culturally Inclusive**

Students narrated their attitudes towards other cultures and races. Students agreed that various races should interact and also held dichotomous views of White people. Each student had daily interaction at school with the assistant principal who is White. Three students interacted with White people as part of a mentoring program with employees of a major corporation that is located close to the city center. Beyond the school setting, two students communicated positive experiences with White people.

#### **Question 1: Specialized Curriculum**

The theme Show Me Tell Me addresses the first research question: Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students? A specialized curriculum implemented over the course of five months provided an opportunity for the students to gain the knowledge needed to form affirming racial identities and to examine attitudes about themselves and others.

Students demonstrated knowledge acquisition, strong emotion, and a desire for knowledge. The following observation was recorded during the first viewing session. The TDM and segments selected for viewing were *Hidden Colors 1: "Introduction"* and *Hidden Colors 1: "Africa"*. The TDM segments focused on the accomplishments of Black people in ancient Africa.

Students were excited about viewing a video as evidenced by their gathering together and upbeat chatter. I reiterated the purpose of the viewing was to discuss race and racism in the United States. I distributed the viewing/reflection document to the dismay of the students. From the rumbling, I perceived that the writing task was not going to be a favorite thing to do. I wrote the title of the TDM and segment title on the board for the students to record. During the prewrite students suggested aloud that it is going to be boring and they laughed at the images of Ancient Egypt frozen on the screen. I hold my breath and feel the butterflies in my stomach. This is not going over well. Then, petite and wiry framed 4' 2" D'Janae, hair braided into a bun, proclaimed that the TDM was not

boring and that she had already viewed Hidden Colors 1 and 2 with her mom and dad. I announced the start of the TDM while turning off the lights. The students, seemingly against their will, paid attention to the TDM. For me it was a bit long and I get restless after about ten minutes. I stopped the video and asked students to record their thoughts. They began to talk, and I asked again for students to write down their thoughts before we discuss. "Who would like to share?" Students began to discuss the accomplishments of Black people with awe. They were more so talking and sharing with each other than with me and I caught glimpses of conversations of students telling each other what they learned. Tre asked if the video information was true. I smiled, nodded, and paused for a moment. Until recently, this information was not part of my memory either. LaPortia, 5' 3" with amber colored skin and sandy colored hair styled in long braids, asked if they can watch it over and I feel myself breathe again.

(field notes from observation, August 17, 2016)

The excerpt presented above revealed some of the anxiety that I felt during the research period. As a teacher, I am always concerned with how lessons will be received. I wanted the students to like this lesson so much that I had the same nervous feeling that many teachers experience on the first day of school. My anxiety was overcome by LaPortia's request. Not only was I depending on the students for affirmation, the students were depending on me for information. Additionally, the students were exposed to information that many would consider basic knowledge. Perceiving this information as novel says much about the sufficiency of the curriculum to provide children of color a curriculum that values their heritage.

Not only were the students demonstrating their desire to learn about the history of Black people through their conversations with one another, but they also demonstrated their acquisition of knowledge throughout the research period as they narrated their thoughts during the research sessions. The following data supports the fact that students were increasing their knowledge of Black history. The range in knowledge acquired during the research period speaks to the diversity of the information presented and the variety in interests of the students. Some students were interested in specific details and others were adept at generalizing. Evidence of student

learning continued throughout the research period as indicated with sample comments from each research session.

**Tayshun:** It was so boring. We also learned Black people so good.

**Ronnie:** I didn't know Africa had multiple names. I learned that Africans made Egypt's pyramids.

**D'Janae:** It was about African legends. I learned that Black people built homes, places, and pyramids.

(student reflections, August 17, 2016)

**D'Janae:** The clock in London was named after Benjamin Banneker.

**Tayshun:** I think history was nice cause the better we learn the more we know.

**Marquez:** I learned that Abraham Lincoln did not want to free Africans.

(student reflections, August 31, 2016)

**Tre:** I learned that Black people invented a lot of stuff and the Whites took the stuff.

**JB:** A Black man owned a train system.

**D'Janae:** Black people founded cities and locations.

(student reflections, September 14, 2016)

**Diamond:** Olaudah Equino was treated badly.

**Marquez:** Everybody benefited from slavery.

**Shawn:** American slavery was worse than our slavery.

(student reflections, September 28, 2016)

**JB:** White people burned Black people house down.

**Summer:** Black people just can't go into people store like White people.

**Ronnie:** The Montgomery bus boycott worked because Whites weren't making money.

(student reflections, October 18, 2016)

**LaPortia:** Slaves tried to get away but mostly failed.

**Shawn:** MLK did not do the first sit in.

**Marquez:** Philadelphia was the largest city in the U.S.

(student reflections, October 26, 2016)

**Tre:** Black people made ships.

**JB:** To make a Black person a slave is to take their music, language, and their religion.

**Armanie:** OMG! Slavery need to be talked about.

(student reflections, November 9, 2016)

**Shawn:** I hate seeing the KKK do bad things to us.

**LaPortia:** They call us colored but Black is not a color.

**Ronnie:** African people made hair products.

(student reflections, December 9, 2016)

As the students gained knowledge of Black history, the TDMs also evoked strong emotions from the students. As evidence, the following observation was recorded during the third viewing session. The TDM and segment selected for viewing was *Hidden Colors 3*: “Rule 3: Keep the Contributions of Blacks Hidden”. This segment of the TDM focused on the inventions and contributions that Black people made to the arts and sciences yet were not given credit because of their disenfranchised and marginalized status.

Students were excited to begin the viewing session as evidenced by their asking for the TDM title and segment and preparing for viewing by getting close together. Most of the students repeat how White people stole the inventions of Black people. Armanie, however is intrigued by the institution of slavery, the existence of which seemed novel. “Slaves were sold! Slaves were sold as property!?” Students have questions about buying and selling people and I ponder the possibilities of growing up without knowledge of slavery. I ask Armanie, “What is slavery?” She removes her thumb and snappily replies, “People work for free.” Armanie is quick to respond when passionate and slow to respond when confused. She uses her thumb for comfort and is usually sporting shoes with a heel and form fitting pants. Her hair, braided into two sections, has three-foot rope like extensions on either side of her head. “That is a volunteer”, I reply. The thumb returns to its secure location. I furrow my brows and consider that there is much that needs to be discussed. Is it possible that the students as a collective group have not been exposed to the institution of slavery? Certainly. The headline news story of the Texas textbook that described slaves as workers flashed in my consciousness and I could see how an entire generation of children could grow up without knowledge of our nation’s ugly past. Television stations stopped showing *Alex Haley’s Roots* as a week-long event many years before this group was old enough to watch. I mentally brace myself for a bumpy ride. In response to my question, Ronnie chimes that he has seen the whole *Roots* story with his mom. D’Janae pipes in, “Uh huh, me too.” No one else had seen the feature film.

(field notes from observation, September 14, 2016).

As the research period reached its climax, the participants continued to express strong emotion. I presented another example which demonstrated how the students expressed themselves after learning more of the details behind the institution of slavery. The following excerpt also revealed



that students had limited knowledge of Black history. This lack of knowledge could be avoided if the curricula of schools and the pedagogical practices of teachers included more access to the history of Black people. The TDM and segment for the session was *Hidden Colors 3: Rules of Racism*: “Rule 6: Minimize the Effects and Significance of Slavery and Jim Crow”. In this TDM segment, the historians communicated how efforts were made to assuage the horrors of slavery and the Jim Crow era.

Armanie pushed her paper away and secured her thumb. “This is disgusting. I ain’t writing about this!” Tre exclaimed aloud how he would have shot somebody. Marquez declared that he would have fought back had he been captured as a slave. I asked the students how they felt about the treatment of Blacks during slavery and Jim Crow. Shawn responds first. He is 5’8” tall and has been retained once. His lanky frame and oversized glasses draw your attention to his high-top fade. “American slavery was worse than our slavery! I hate crackers because they killed us for no reason.” LaPortia added, “They woke up at dawn and worked in the fields into the night. We should be paid and apologized to.” Before I can respond, Armanie plops out her thumb and chimes, “I hate crackers. Stupid white people!” In goes the thumb. D’Janae piped in, “White people shouldn’t beat Black people. I hate White people because they killed, raped, and beat us.” I decided to let the students express their feeling until they were satisfied that they had been heard. There was more use of the word cracker and I tried not to show my objection.

(field notes from observation, September 28, 2017)

In addition to showing strong emotion and demonstrating acquisition of knowledge, students also questioned their thinking and their conceptions of race and racism. There was also evidence that students wanted to be more racially aware and would welcome a curriculum that allowed for immersion in the Black experience. Some questions and ponderings posed throughout the research period demonstrated this finding.

**JB:** I did not know that I never seen a movie like this.

**Ronnie:** I did not know that Africa had multiple names. All Blacks were not slaves and were not Christian. Why do White people call themselves white? What color is Jesus?

**Armanie:** Why do they [White people] want to keep racism going?

**LaPortia:** Is there anywhere that they show how slavery started? Where is the Blacks’ source of money? Can Blacks ever own stores or do Whites have all stores to own?

(student reflections, August – December 2016)

There was evidence that connections were made between the viewed content and other areas of the students' lives. Some excerpts expressed more than regurgitation of facts and manifested as a desire to know more about Black history. This exhibited not only critical thought but also thinking beyond the scope of the discussions. For example, after viewing and discussing the *Hidden Colors 3* segment which examined slavery and Jim Crow, Armanie wrote: 2016 -1864 =152 thousand dollars for my family. After I reviewed the session observation notes, the question put to the students was designed to include math in the form of determining how long it had been since the end of the Civil War. There was no talk of reparations. In another session, a student asked if skin bleaching was passed on as an inherited trait. This question connected the viewed content to the science curriculum; the students were studying inherited traits at the time. Connections were also being made in other classes. The social studies teacher disclosed that the class conversation about the three-fifths compromise had been richer because students included knowledge gained from their critical discussions. Students were said to have quizzed her on facts about history and law with did-you-know questions. Making connections part of social interaction supports the work of Nasir (2011) who posited that race and racial identity only hold meaning within the realm of social interactions, positions, and discussions. Exhibiting strong emotion during the viewing sessions also showed a connection to Black people. This connection with the global African community was noted as important by King (2005a).

## Question 2: Critical Race Discourse

Themes 2 and 3, I Love Me and Pro-Black, address the second research question: How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study? Students conveyed their affirming racial and non-racial attitudes of themselves and others.

**Armanie:** I would describe myself as beautiful, smart, talented, little girl. The most important thing about me is that I have 2 brothers and 1 sister and my best friend since 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. [If I could be someone for a week,] I would be my sister because she is smart and pretty. [If I could change one thing about myself,] I would change my hair into ponytails because I love ponytails.

(questionnaire, August 10-12, 2016)

**Shawn:** I would describe myself as tall and smart and fun. [The most important thing about me is] I am tall and can reach top shelves. [If I could be someone for a week, I would be] LeBron James because he is tall and he plays my favorite sport. [If I could change one thing about myself,] I would change my personality.

(questionnaire, August 10-12, 2016)

It is evident that identity is tied to academic success because 6 of 14 students expressed concern over school success when responding to direct questions about their worries and concerns.

**Shawn:** I worry about not passing fifth grade and getting all Fs.

**Armanie:** The type of things I worry about is am I going to get a question right.

Students also shared their thoughts of Black people as a race. Some of the views could be considered disparaging and some demonstrated belief in their agency and the agency of Black people as a collective group.

**Armanie:** Black people spend most of their time trying to stop slavery. Black people solve their problems by fighting or just coming together as a family and just talk about it. Black people get jobs to make their money.

**LaPortia:** [Black people spend most of their time] fighting, working, taking care of their children and eating. Sell drugs, get jobs, and sell food. Also sell their body. Black people worry about dying, family, and money.

**Ronnie:** Black people spend time taking care of their children and family and friends. Black people worry about being dead, family, and money. [Black people] sell drugs, sell houses.

(questionnaires, December 16, 2016)

The following excerpt is from session 5. The TDM and segment selected for viewing was *The African Americans*: “Making a Way Out of No Way” and “Rise!”. The segments showed the economic agency of Black people after slavery. The segment presented the economic effects of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The film showed how Black people were once prosperous in their own segregated neighborhoods with their own business until White people burned the houses and businesses down. It ended with Black people having to shop in stores owned by White people and be mistreated as they patronized the stores. In this session, the students declared their agency and future self-sufficiency.

As I announced the viewing session, I noted that the atmosphere seemed a bit strained. The students also seem a bit reluctant and I wonder if it is because they are bracing themselves for more images of Black people being treated contemptuously. When it was time to discuss, the mood was somber. The students pick up on the unfairness in economic policy. They want to know why capitalism works the way it does.

**Tre:** Why can't everything be free?

**Summer:** Yeah, why do we have to pay?

**LaPortia:** If everything is free then everybody would have what they need and nobody would be poor.

Students then began to proclaim their self-sufficiency and their prosperity.

**Shawn:** I am going to be a DJ. I am going to buy a house and a car.

**Tre:** I am going to be a football player.

**Summer:** I am going to be a teacher.

More students chime in and declare the businesses that they are going to open. From that, a discussion ensued about being followed around in stores in their community as though they are going to steal something. The conversation drifted to having to leave bags and previous purchases at the door. I suggested not shopping there and compared it to shopping at Macy's. “I never have to leave my bags when I shop at other malls. Those are things that I bought. If I had to leave them, then I wouldn't shop there, usually.” I tell of sharing their experience at a store in a nearby mall as I took a former student to buy uniforms. I let the students know that the practice of leaving bags with the security guard

or behind the counter is not in every community and not in every store. “Spend your money where people respect you.” LaPortia adds, “Most people don’t know how to respect us.”

(field notes from observation, October 18, 2016)

This session showed the somberness students felt entering the session and their resolve to have a better life despite mistreatment and marginalization. The content of the TDM allowed them to witness the power of Black economic unity with the building of Black Wall Street and the devastation that ensued from hate. Still, the students proclaimed themselves self-sufficient.

**JB:** I will be a football player and I am going to make 31,000 dollars. I am going to buy a car, a house, and furniture. I am going to buy me a few games like PS4, XBox 1, Xbox 360, and PS3.

(student reflection, October 18, 2016)

**Shawn:** [In the future] I will buy a car and a house[.]

(student reflection, October 18, 2016)

This segment also showed my own privilege in suggesting that students not shop in the mall and stores in their neighborhood. I should have made a point to use their economic power to create change in their community. I missed the opportunity. Students’ expressions of self-love included consideration of the challenges they faced in and out of school. For example, in August, Tre stated his desire to be like his brother because he could teach him “all the stuff”. During member check 2, I ascertained that Tre’s brother was a member of a gang and “the stuff” he was trying to learn was related to gang protocols. So, what seemed to be admirable to Tre, may not be considered so by others. What the narrations of Tre and the rest of the class demonstrated was what Kunjufu (2006) considered African centered consciousness, a capacity to judge self by self and not the standards of another. Additionally, the ability to view self in affirming ways was considered to mediate the effects of a poor neighborhood (Byrd and Chavous, 2009).

Furthermore, expressions of future attainment reflected a sense of hope. This is significant because this population was considered at risk for hopelessness (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Stevenson, 2012). Considering the challenges of poverty, oppression, and injustice, this group of Black children still loved themselves and hoped that their futures would be better than their collective past. Finally, assuming identities that help validate worth make learning easier (Howe and Covell, 2013).

To continue, the students freely used racial descriptors to align themselves with the Black race as evidenced by their reflections from viewing session eight held on December 9, 2016.

**LaPortia:** I'm a Black beauty and Black and proud to be Black.  
(student reflection, December 9, 2016)

**JB:** I like being Black and because Black people created so many things like football, soccer, and baseball.  
(student reflection, December 9, 2016)

Additionally, students made subtle transitions from using pronouns that suggested other to those that suggested self-inclusion when narrating about Black people; from 'them' to 'us' and from 'they' to 'we'.

**Shawn:** I like being Black because we made everything like the phone, music, and some different apps.  
(student reflection, December 9, 2016)

**Armanic:** I love being Black because Black is beautiful. And we invented a lot of cool things and I don't want to bleach my skin because White people make me mad!!  
(student reflection, December 9, 2016)

Though mostly narrating the agency of Black people, students' responses were mixed. Considering the narrations and what I know of the students, it is evident that students'

perceptions of the Black collective was based on their social reality. To this point, Marquez plays football and most of the time that he spends with his mother is at the football field.

**Marquez:** I am an athlete and I am fast. I am “fye” and I get friends easily. [The most important thing about me is] loving my family.

(questionnaire, August 10-12, 2016)

**Marquez:** I am talented and athletic and I am a good person and I am fast. The most important thing about me is that I play sports. I want to be Usain Bolt because he is the fastest man in the world. I worry about my cousin going to jail and getting into a fight and dying.

(questionnaire, December 14-16, 2016)

The students freely shared their beliefs about the agency of Black people in nonjudgmental and matter-of-fact narration. When Ronnie made a declaration aloud as he was writing, the following conversation ensued.

**Ronnie:** They [Black people] solve [their problems] by fighting or going to the bar.

**Armanie:** My family doesn't do that.

**Ronnie:** Yep, that's what they do. When my mom and dad have a problem, they go to a bar.

**DJanae:** Nuh uh. They go to counseling or get a divorce.

**LaPortia:** Sometimes people give their kids away.

**Armanie:** My mom would never do that.

**LaPortia:** My aunt sent my sister to a foster home. She was being disrespectful, so maybe she will learn a lesson.

(field notes from observation, December 16, 2016)

This line of thinking is supported by the work of Vandiver (2001). This researcher concluded that attitudes about self may not be the same as attitudes about the collective group with which a person identifies. This duality of views may also be explained by Vandiver, Peony E. Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, Jr., and Worrell (2001) who suggested that racial attitudes may overlap. In other words, it is possible to love self and feel that the group with which you most identify can be characterized with attributes that you neither attribute to yourself nor desire. The work of Whaley and Noël (2012) also held that the use of self, culture, and memory was

necessary to create identity. So, the students' use of their social reality, knowledge of what is true of their culture, and the memories they hold of self and interaction with others were used in racial identity formation.

Oral and written narrations offered an avenue for students to express thoughts, some of which may have been unconsciously held (Kihlstrom, 1993). If taken that much of life is unconscious with interruptions of consciousness (Westen, 1998) then more needs to be done to ensure all children are afforded a continuous stream of affirming self-images with which to form their racial identities. This research only begins to address this gap and the gap offered by Duncan and McCoy (2007) in that I used the school setting as an affirming place for children of color. Exposing students to the contributions of Africa and Africans (King, 2005b) played a large role in how students perceived themselves. They saw themselves as smart and beautiful in their Black skin.

### **Question 3: Racial Identity Narration**

The themes Culturally Inclusive and Pro Black address the third research question: How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race? The students' reality did not impede positive affirmations of self or membership in a group that exhibited characteristics that could be considered disaffirming. Additionally, though viewing TDMs caused the children to express disdain for White people, dislike of White people was not caused by viewings. Strong feelings for and against White people existed before the research period. When questioned about their attitudes toward White people at the inception of the study, comments were mixed.

**Armanie:** I think that White people don't like Black people because they want us to be slaves.

**Shawn:** Whites feel like we are trash.



**LaPortia:** I feel like they [White people] are sometimes racist.

**Marquez:** I think White people feel racist about Black people.

**JB:** White people were stupid and trash.

**D’Janae:** I think White people love Black people and White people love Black people as much as they like their self.

(questionnaires, August 11-12, 2016)

Evidence exists that students’ reality did not impede positive affirmations of self or membership in a group that exhibited characteristics that could be considered disaffirming.

Additionally, students often viewed Black people based on what was going on in their own lives.

**LaPortia:** I would describe myself as a fun, pretty, smart person. [If I could be someone for a week,] I would be my mom because I want to see what it would be like to work and be an adult. [If I could change something about myself,] it would be my nose because I think it is too big. I worry about dying.

(questionnaire, August 10-12, 2016)

**LaPortia:** I’m smart and beautiful. I am pretty, confident, and more! [If I could change one thing about myself I would change] nothing because I think I’m beautiful. [If I could be someone for a week,] I would be my aunt because she has a lot to deal with 10 kids and take care of all of them. I worry if someone tries to kill me in any way.

(questionnaire, December 14-16, 2016)

LaPortia and her two younger siblings May and Tre were removed from their mother’s care and placed with their aunt. LaPortia’s aunt then sent May to a foster home as retold by LaPortia with a half-smile half-wince as she addressed the class. This was the second time in two years that LaPortia and her siblings had gone through this transition. This change from wanted to be like her mother to wanting to be like her aunt showed that unconscious thought processing could be accessed by offering opportunities to narrate feelings of self and others. Addressing marginalization by using the recommended writing and discussion tenets of the cultural ecological theory (Ogbu and Simons, 1998) allowed students access to unconscious thoughts.

Relating their experiences through writings and verbal discussions allowed students to validate their own existence while holding disparaging views of Black people as a collective group.

**D’Janae:** Black people make money by working as hard as you can and being respectful. I think some Black people spend most time working, selling drugs, teach kids, sell cupcakes, have their own business. Black people solve their problems by fighting, listening to one another, getting help from people, or getting a divorce if they are married. Black people worry about getting cancer and going to jail.

(questionnaire, December 16, 2016)

**D’Janae:** I feel happy that I’m Black and myself because I’m special in my own way. I love Black skin color.

(field notes from observation, December 9, 2016)

Connecting their lives to the lives of Black people who were presented as strong, creative, and resilient allowed the students to hold seemingly disparaging views of Black people, yet relish the thought of being Black. Conflicting presentations of identity suggested the psychological processes that must take place for Black children to make sense of their beliefs and attitudes about race. That is to say, the definition of ethnic and racial identity as a psychological construct reflecting beliefs and attitudes (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014) applied to the participants of this study.

I offer that Anti-White attitudes were a result of exposure to stories highlighted on the news or other memories held by the participants. Erikson (1964) and Pattillo-McCoy (2000) recognized the power of sensory perceptions in identity development and discussed the influence of society in the formation of racial attitudes and behaviors. Students commented that ill feelings toward White people were because of the ill treatment of Blacks by White people.

**Armanie:** I hate c-word because they beat us and they hanged us and caged us. Stupid White people.

(student reflection, September 28, 2016)

**Shawn:** They [White people] should be in jail to treat us like we are trash. Everything we [Black people] make they [White people] put their name on it.

(student reflection, October 18, 2016)

In addition to daily news and viewing sessions, students studied segregation in their Social Studies class which exposed the participants to unfair treatment of Blacks by Whites via literature. This use of media and memory to form racial identity was addressed in the literature review and supported by Whaley and Noël (2012) who posited the use of self, culture, and memory vital to creating identities. In addition to having preconceived notions of White people as demonstrated earlier, the combination of visual evidence, studies in other classes, and personal interactions worked together to provide a basis for racial identity formation. The following observation from the seventh viewing session helps to explain some of the exclusive feelings that the students held for White people. The TDM and segment selected was 500 Years Later, “*Legacy*”. The TDM reviewed the institution of slavery and discussed the impact of slavery on the conscious and unconscious thought processes of Black people.

Before we began the viewing for the day, Ronnie asked to make an announcement. He informed the class that he had watched *13<sup>th</sup>* with his mom and that he saw “Whipped Peter”. “Was I right about the image?” “Yeah, it was pretty bad.” Ronnie told us what he remembered about the movie. He said that it told of how Black people were “locked up” for no reason. Ronnie let us know that his mom cried. When asked to rate the documentary on a scale of 0 to 10 he rated the documentary a 7 because he was upset by it and because it gave good information. When I asked how he felt while watching the documentary, he said that he experienced anger and sadness.

As students watch “*Legacy*”, Tayshun was talking. The words were unintelligible, yet I could hear the whirl of his voice. Seemingly in response to Tayshun, Shawn stated, “We need to know our history so we can stop this Black on Black crime.” Students were mostly silent and still as they viewed and recorded their thoughts. Conversations swirl after I ask the students what they thought of the information presented.

**Shawn:** God have to be within the mind. They make it look like it is not a big deal. And we had to forget slavery.

**Armanie:** They used the Bible against us. OMG! Slavery need to be talked about.

**Tre:** I think the White people did us wrong.

**Summer:** Some went to church to worship God and He was not White, He was Black.

**Shawn:** I think the master made God white in the slaves' mind.

**JB:** Black people never got freed.

(field note from observation, November 9, 2016)

The episode presented above showed how the students had come to understand the interconnectedness of race, racism, and conscious and unconscious thought processing. The students made connections to the institution of slavery and the current condition of Black people in the United States. Complex thinking must occur for children to make sense of race and racism and use that understanding to affirm their racial identities.

The findings also showed that students had isolated their feelings toward White people and did not include them when considering a multicultural group. This finding can be accounted for in the literature when considering the work of Vandiver, Peony E. Fhagen-Smith, Cokley, Cross, Jr., & Worrell (2001) whose work suggested the need for studies to “peel away layers” to explain the complexities involved in ascribing racial identities that may overlap. In this study, students showed evidence of being simultaneously multicultural and anti-White. This finding also supported the literature reviewed which argued identity development was not an age to stage progression (Nasir 2011; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; French et al., 2006) and was more situated than progressive (Murrell, 2007).

**La'Portia:** I feel like they [White people] are sometimes racist. I think they are mean to them [Black people].

**Tre:** White people feel racist about Black people.

**Armanie:** White people don't like Black people because they want us to be slaves.

**Shawn:** White people feel about Black people is bad because we are becoming rich and famous.

**Marquez:** I think they will feel scared because they think that Black people are really really dangerous.

(questionnaire, December 14-16, 2016)

**Tre:** I feel happy when I spend time with other cultures and or races.

**La'Portia:** I feel like [various races and cultures] need to spend time together because they need to know each other. [Spending time with other cultures] feel[s] good because you get to learn what happens in their cultures.

**JB:** It feel good to play with other people. I don't mind playing or interacting with other races.

**D'Janae:** I feel good about different cultures and races spending time together because it is good to learn how other people, cultures, and races are.

(questionnaire, December 14-16, 2016)

Students used their personal knowledge to form an inclusive racial identity. I suggest that LaPortia essentialized White people as “being nice” and “giving Black people stuff” because she participated in a school-business partnership where the business partner ended the year by giving their buddy a bag of gifts. D'Janae used the relationship that her parents have with White people and the relationship she shares with her sister's friend to form her opinion of White people and Diamond used the relationship she has with her friend to influence her attitude.

**D'Janae:** I feel good about White people because my mother's and father's friends are White and that don't affect me at all. I feel great because my sister friend is white and she is fun and she loves playing with us.

**Diamond:** I feel about White people is nice because I have a friend name Crystal she is White and was born on the same day as me.

(questionnaire, December 14-16, 2016)

The use of personal experience to develop racial identities supports the argument of Murrell (2007) who stated that social interaction influences identity. So, even though many students reported feeling good about different races spending time together, until White people are included, the students cannot be considered open to ethnic and racial diversity.

### **Insider Consciousness**

The duality of thought present in the responses of the participants is reminiscent of the double consciousness described by DuBois (1903) in which a Black person views themselves as

a Black person and simultaneously views self in a way that validates how others, mainly White others, view them. The ways in which the students narrated their identities reflected the ways that they saw themselves and the ways that their individual conditions allowed them to view themselves. I call this dual self-assessment insider consciousness. Insider consciousness is then a way of thinking about self that allows affirmation based on knowledge of ancestry and outweighs the consideration of disparaging social conditions. Insider consciousness appears as duality of thinking that is mutually exclusive, yet is necessary for affirming mental conceptions of self. To compensate for this duality, thoughts are compartmentalized to maximize affirmation of self. I suggest that holding dichotomous views of what it means to be Black and still expressing Pro-Black views is sustained by compartmentalizing pride, considering personal conditions as the norm, and acknowledging social realities. I suggest that students viewed their personal condition as the norm and compartmentalized their pride in being Black separate from their seemingly dichotomous views to preserve self-love.

In the next section, I provide implications for my personal praxis, teacher educators, teachers, and policy makers. Suggestions for curriculum designers and textbook publishers are also shared. This dissertation closes with suggestions for future research.

## **Implications**

**Personal Praxis.** My experiences with the students over the course of five months afforded me the opportunity to examine my praxis. As a teacher and critical race theorist, I realized that the students have the energy to create affirming racial identities. Missing is the knowledge and direction to channel those energies into the critical thinking needed to dismantle hegemonic practices (Lea, 2014) that threaten the formation of affirming racial identities. I will

make three major adjustments to my future pedagogy: reduce assumptions, expect an emotional response, and deliver the desired curriculum.

***Reduce Assumptions.*** Reduction of assumptions across curricular content will alter my pedagogy. Exposure to the institution of slavery by 2 of 14 students was evidence that curricula had already disconnected Black children from their history. Students not being aware of the atrocities of slavery supports the work of King (2005b) who argued the need for a change in curriculum and more specifically Kunjufu (2006) who suggested an African-centered education for Black children. Reliance on the written curriculum as a starting point is no longer valid. I must take steps to assess current knowledge before instruction begins. Gaps between what is known and what is expected must be filled to increase learning for all students.

***Expect Emotional Response.*** The children responded to aspects of history with intense feelings. Applying Freud's theory of unconscious thought (Westen, 1998) to the theory of existing hostility toward education (Anyon, 2005; Meiners, 2007), directed anger may have provided a cathartic experience whereby the students were able to release built up anger and hostility. Additionally, the use of narration was a way to draw out fears, emotions, and anxieties. Consequently, this release of emotion may have freed mental processing space and facilitated future learning. My presence in the setting, recommended by Misco (2010), offered a tempered voice in the presence of a controversial curriculum. My presence, without judgment, provided a space for the children to act upon a stimulus (Erikson, 1964) in ways that affirmed their racial identities. My praxis must always allow for emotion in a setting where identities are assumed and ascribed.

***Deliver Desired Curriculum.*** The students expressed willingness to continue learning history even though the information was a contrast to previous viewings which showed Black people as artisans and scientists. Students showed evidence of connecting to their past by using ‘us’ and ‘our’ in their narrations and written reflections. Delivering history through narrations orated by Black people provided the students an affirming place (Duncan & McCoy, 2007). According to Howe and Covell (2013), students are better able to learn when identity has self-respect and worth. My pedagogical practices must extend beyond the written curriculum into the hidden curriculum for students, particularly Black student and students of color, to appropriate racial identities that are affirming.

**Teacher Educators.** Institutions that prepare teachers must prepare them for diverse student populations. Today, much of the teacher work force consists of White females and the public-school population is increasingly Black and Brown. Teacher educators that want to responsibly educate the next generation of teachers must prepare them to be culturally responsive. To be culturally responsive and equipped to foster environments that offer affirming spaces for identity formation, one must first be knowledgeable of various cultures and histories. Teacher preparation programs must do more to ensure that the content knowledge of future teachers empowers them to sustain conversations of justice and equity in their classrooms. This work is difficult, necessary, and requires the support of all professors and lecturers that interact with teacher candidates. Democratic ideals do not flow from biased sources and teachers ill-equipped to discuss race, racism, and hegemony do little to contribute to democracy.

**Teachers.** Findings from this study may encourage educators to engage in discussions of race, racism, and White privilege in their elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.



Though engaging in discussions of race and racism may evoke strong emotions and feelings of discomfort, the rewards outweigh temporary discomfort. Providing all students with a richer context and hearing views from all persons present in a historical moment provided opportunities for more robust conversations regarding the historical paths of nations and offered coherent linkages when attempting to make connections between history and current systems of privilege and oppression worldwide. Creating a safe space for examining feelings of disdain, discomfort, or allegiance for and to persons of different races may allow students to examine themselves and others more objectively while processing feelings of hate, rage, fear, and sadness. Including parents in this emotional process will strengthen the relationship between school and home. Additionally, parents should be considered a source of knowledge and invited to participate in viewing sessions and contribute to critical discussions of race and racism. Educators are responsible for supplying students with enough information to form objective opinions about the society in which they live and must navigate to fully participate in the democracy afforded all citizens.

Providing students opportunities to discuss issues that are controversial or uncomfortable, such as race, racism, terrorism, and politics in a setting with an informed mediator is a challenge that responsive teachers must undertake. All persons have ideas of self and others based on personal experience, information gathered from contact with others, and sophisticated media interactions. With the advances in technology, younger students have access to information that was previously withheld until parents or teachers released that information. Now, young children have access to more sophisticated information, some graphic. Depending on naivety in the elementary classroom is no longer valid.

Therefore, it is the charge of a teacher to prepare students for life outside of the classroom. It is impossible to accomplish this task without talking about bold issues and current events, knowing that current events have historical connections. Children knowing their own history, which is intertwined with the history of all men, is vital to understanding why the world works in particular ways. The opening quote from Marcus Garvey rings true, “A people without knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.”

**Policy Makers.** There was much disturbance in Arizona regarding the ethnic studies taken on by Mexican Americans. Policy makers thought that knowledge of Mexican-American’s robust and sometimes traumatic history would incite hate. There was no evidence to support the claim, yet again the law, HB2281, was used to deprive others of knowledge. Using this study as a guide may calm the fear that people will become terrorists. This study provided evidence that children already have strong feelings toward people they feel are oppressive. Not discussing them may allow the hate to fester and become something ugly and unreasonable. Historical knowledge, good and bad, along with critical discussions allow students to process the information in spaces that regard their anger and frustration as acceptable and malleable. Anger is a natural emotion and often the first to be experienced before resolve and calmness are achieved. People of color have been unfairly demonized for showing the emotion of anger where others have been free to express their anger. If there is a place to have a heated conversation, why not in the company of educated people charged with providing a full education to all. Hereto, life has become more and more uncensored. Shows on television were once banned from having married couples in the same bed. That is no longer the case. People were not allowed to use profanity on television or radio. That is no longer the case. *The Grapes of Wrath, To Kill a*

*Mockingbird, Of Mice and Men, and The Catcher in the Rye*, all on my bookshelf, are still often questioned or censored. Access to Black history, complete history, is censored. That it is still the case and is detrimental to the racial identity formation of all children and particularly children of color.

**Curriculum Developers.** Curriculum designers may use the findings of this study to justify development of curricula that recognizes the experiences of every human. Also, when developing a longitudinal curriculum, it is important to examine the emphasis placed on the accomplishments of various cultures. A list of characters studied over the course of the elementary, middle, and high school curriculum should be racially and equitably balanced. Curricula should be designed that demonstrate the interconnectedness of peoples around the world to aid in fostering more inclusive racial attitudes.

**Book Publishers.** It is not acceptable to publish books for educational settings intended to expose children to the disciplines of math, science, social studies, and language that include representations of characters inconsistent with world populations. Though some may consider our world to be flatter because of technology, our text books are becoming prismatic, presenting one side with little to no consideration of the other sides. This study supports the idea that loving self does not preclude love of others. The charge for book publishers is to raise the standard of textbook offerings to those that offer each student reader access to information with which they may affirm their racial identities. As in the case of the World Geography textbook published by McGraw Hill in 2016 that diluted the experience of African slaves to mere workers, attempting to temper history does not demonstrate value and causes apprehension and distrust by the public, teachers, and students. Presenting multiple perspectives shows value and respect for all. As

LaPortia so eloquently pondered after session 7, *500 Years Later*, “Legacy”, “If history was that bad, why we didn’t know about it?” Textbook publishers have a duty to tell the good, the bad, and the horrid without teachers having to fill in the missing pieces. To add, with the technological age, book size constraints are alleviated and access to information is optimal. Future curricula that use books as the primary source of distribution may find that offering an electronic book with embedded links to historical documents, documentaries, and even Ted Talks would provide a curriculum that is balanced and affords every user to develop their own views through a wide range of virtual experiences and more comprehensive exposure to the attitudes and opinions of others.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Those driven to study racial identity development may obtain robust findings from a longitudinal study design. Since there is evidence that children as young as six have shown racial awareness, following a group of children from kindergarten through adolescence may add to the literature on how racial identity forms over time. Since identities are socially constructed, future researchers may incorporate the racial identity of the teachers, school administrators, and family members of participants to see if the racial identity of people intimate with the participant affects the participant over time, if the reverse is true, or if racial identities develop independent of the racial identities of significant others. In addition to adjusting the curriculum to include more racially diverse characters, a revised study could include how study participants select and design avatars over time as well as how participants select novels, movies, and video games. More can be done to determine whether the racial identities of people are an issue or whether the miseducation of people is the larger issue.

## Summary

The problem addressed in this study was the alignment of the written, supported, and excluded curriculums. This misalignment presented a deficit of opportunities for Black students to narrate or affirm their racial identities. The goal of this study was to use a specialized curriculum to offer students opportunities to narrate their racial identities. The research questions used to guide this study were: (1) Does use of specific historical documentaries to enhance the curriculum, over the course of five months, facilitate the racial identity narrations of Black fifth-grade students? (2) How do students engage in critical race discourse within the context of a research study? (3) How do students narrate their racial identities during teacher guided conversations about race? I used an action research methodology to answer the research questions. Students, along with me as teacher researcher, viewed targeted digital media, penned reflections, engaged in critical discussions of the content, and wrote concluding thoughts. Students were offered eight viewing sessions, which took place over the course of five months. To begin and end the research engagement, students answered questions related to racial identity development. Qualitative analysis was used to abstract information from students' reflections. Data was also obtained from students' answers to questionnaires, member checks, and observations. The findings of this research study were:

- (1) Students had severely limited knowledge of Black history and even though emotionally riveted they desired to learn more.
- (2) Students developed positive Black racial identities despite the historical challenges of Black people and their contemporary problems.

(3) Students were also observed to be nonjudgmental regarding actions that their Black collective group exhibited regarding agency and subsistence.

(4) Students held exclusionary attitudes toward White people while suggesting the need for various races and cultures to spend time together.

Engagement in this action research project has afforded me the opportunity to know myself and my students in ways that would not have been possible otherwise. I have also come to recognize the privilege that I bring to the classroom. I know enough to know that the students need to know their history. The commonalities between the students and me include severe ignorance of Black history, a desire to know more Black history, love of self as a Black person despite challenges, and love of Black people as a collective group. The duty I owe to the students and to myself is to continue to provide opportunities to explore the interconnectedness of Black history, which has been legally separated from history and seen as isolatable, to the curricula present in school and the social conditions we navigate as Black people. I hear the inquiry of LaPortia resounding in my heart and mind: Why do we not know? The question demands a response from me to provide space for inquiry, research, and discussion and to then support students as they make sense of their findings. The research period is over and my work in Black racial identity development is just beginning. As racial injustices are systemic and have impacted the learning achievement of Black children, I must be systematic and methodological in the development of Black racial identities to counter the impact of hegemonic structures. Taking time to discuss the interconnectedness of history, race, and racism proved that there is an air of hope among those that are considered at risk for hopelessness. My hope is that I will live to see

the day that the thought of the inferiority of Black children ceases to be drilled into them in almost every class they enter and in almost every book they study.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A Parental Permission Form

Georgia State University

College of Education and Human Development

Parental Permission Form

Title: Using Media to Generate Identity Narratives

Principal Investigator: Rhina Fernandes Williams, Ph.D.

Student Principal Investigator: Andrea Denise Kiel, M.Ed.

#### I. Purpose:

Your child is invited to participate in a research study. The goal of the study is to come up with a theory of identity. The researcher also wants to be a better teacher. The purpose of the research is to offer a good education to Black students. A total of 15 - 22 students will be asked to join the study. Five students will be selected. The study will take 10 to 12 hours of your child's time. The study will last six months. The study will begin around August 11, 2016. The study will end by January 31, 2017.

#### II. Procedures:

Your child will interact with the classroom teacher and other students assigned to the class. All research will be done during the course of the school day. The activities align with the social studies and health curriculum. Your child will answer six questions about themselves and how they feel about others. Your child will watch short video segments and write a reflection on a page provided by the teacher. The videos show how various races of people shaped the world.

The videos show how race and racism affect people. The videos show how laws have helped and hurt people. The videos show life in the world before and after the Civil War. The class will write and talk about the video segments. A total of nine (9) sessions have been planned. The study will end with your child answering six questions. These activities will take place once a week in the classroom. Each session will last about an hour. If you agree, your child's responses to the questions and their reflections will be used as research data.

### III. Risks:

In this study, your child will not have any more risks than would happen in a normal day of life.

### IV. Benefits:

Participation in this study may not benefit your child personally. Overall, we hope to gain information about how media helps children form healthy identities.

### V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Each student will answer the questions and complete reflections to the media as part of normal classwork. Your child's responses to the questions and their reflections to the media do not have to be used in this study. If you decide that your child's work will be in the study and change your mind, you can request that the teacher not use your child's work in the study. Your child has the right to request that their work not be used at any time during the study. Your child will not lose any grade points if you decide not to allow your child's work to be used in study. Your child will not earn extra grade points for being in the study.

### VI. Confidentiality:

We will keep your child's records private to the extent allowed by law. Dr. Rhina Fernandes Williams and Andrea Kiel will have access to the information your child provides. Information

may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board, the Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)). We will use a study number rather than your child's name on study records. The information your child provides will be stored in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher has a key. The key code sheet used to identify your child will be kept in a separate locked cabinet. This will protect your child's privacy. Only the researcher has a key to this cabinet. The key code sheet will be destroyed at the time of publication. The reflections will be returned to your child. Since the research will take place in the classroom, we ask that your child not reveal what is discussed by other children in the group. This will help keep the confidentiality of others. The researcher does not have complete control of the research data because much of the research data is in the form of discussions that take place as a class. Your child's name and other facts that might point to your child will not appear when we present this study or publish its results. The findings will be summarized and reported in group form. Your child will not be identified personally.

VII. Contact Persons:

Contact Rhina Fernandes Williams at 404-413-8255 or [rwilliams@gsu.edu](mailto:rwilliams@gsu.edu) or Andrea Kiel at 404-802-3900 or [adkiel@hotmail.com](mailto:adkiel@hotmail.com) if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this study. You can also call if you think you have been harmed by the study. Call Susan Vogtner in the Georgia State University Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu) if you want to talk to someone who is not part of the study team. You can talk about questions, concerns, offer input, obtain information, or suggestions about the study. You can also call Susan Vogtner if you have questions or concerns about your rights in this study.

VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Participant:

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing for your child's work to be used in this research, please sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Child's Name Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Investigator or Researcher Obtaining Consent Date

**Appendix B Student Assents****Verbal Assent Script**

Your parent has said that it is okay for you to work on a project with me. The project is about identity. You will answer some questions about how you feel. You will watch some videos. You will write what you think and how you feel. Your work will be used in a report. You do not have to let me use your work. Your grade will not change if use your work. Your grade will not change if I do not use your work. Is it okay for me to use your work?

**Student Assent Form**

My mom or dad said it is okay for me to work on a project with you. The project is about identity. I will answer some questions about how I feel. I will watch some videos. I will write what I think and how I feel. My work will be used in a report. I know that my grade will not go up if I do participate. My grade will not go down if I do not participate. I can say no even if my mom or dad said yes. It is okay to use my work in the study.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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



## Appendix C Outline of Data Collection

<p><b>Outline of Data Collection</b></p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> To determine the effect of media viewing. After viewing a TDM segment, students will be asked to reflect. Students will be asked to do this without talking. After reflection, the video clip will be discussed. Students may voluntarily read their reflections or respond to others. The reflection pages and discussion will be analyzed and the results will be presented in the findings.</p> <p><b>Method:</b> Media Viewing / Journaling / Discussion</p> <p><b>Standards Addressed:</b> ELAGSE5RI7, ELAGSE5RL7, ELAGSE5SL2, ELAGSE5W1, ELAGSE5W2, ELAGSE5W10, ELAGSE5SL2, ELAGSE5SL3, S5CS1, S5CS6, HE5.2, HE5.4, HE5.5</p> <p><b>Time frame:</b> Each session will last one class period which is 45 minutes to an hour.</p> <p><b>TDM Title:</b> Hidden Colors 1 – The Untold Story of Aboriginal Moor &amp; African Descent  <b>Segments:</b> Introduction/Africa/Pre-Columbian America/Early US  <b>Additional Standards Addressed:</b>  S5CS6, S5L2, SS5H2, SS5H4, SS5H5, SS5H9</p> <p><b>TDM Title:</b> Hidden Colors 3 – The Rules of Racism  <b>Segments:</b> Contributions of Blacks/Slavery and Jim Crow/Economics  <b>Additional Standards Addressed:</b>  S5CS6, SS5H2, SS5H4, SS5H5, SS5H9, SS5G2, SS5CG1, SS5E1</p> <p><b>TDM Title:</b> The Blacks: Many Rivers to Cross  <b>Segments:</b>  Episode Two: The Age of Slavery (1800 – 1860)  Episode Three: Into the Fire (1861 – 1896)  Episode Four: Making a Way Out of No Way (1897-1940)  Episode Five: Rise! (1940 – 1968)</p> <p><b>Additional Standards Addressed:</b> SS5H1, SS5H2, SS5H3, SS5H4, SS5H5</p> <p><b>TDM Title:</b> 500 Years Later  <b>Segments:</b> Legacy, Racism, Identity</p>
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**Appendix D Reflection Page**

Student TDM Reflection Page

Student Code: \_\_\_\_\_

TDM TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

SEGMENT TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

DIRECTIONS: After recording the TDM title and segment topic, record your thoughts below “My thinking before the TDM” to best reflect your own thinking about the topic. There are no wrong answers. After viewing the TDM segment, record your thoughts under “My thinking after the TDM”. After the classroom discussion, analyze your thoughts. Tell what you think after the discussion.

**My thinking after the TDM**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**My thinking after the discussion**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E Screenshot of Database

The screenshot displays the dedoose database interface for a project named "Media Use". The interface includes a navigation bar with icons for Home, Codes, Media, Excerpts, and Descriptors. The main content area is divided into several panels:

**Project: Media Use**

- Users: 1
- Media: 185
- Descriptors: 19
- Excerpts: 360
- Codes: 36
- Code Applications: 313

Buttons for **Import Data** (Spreadsheets, Documents, Audio, Video, Projects, etc.) and **Export Data** (Excerpts, Media, Codes, Descriptors, Project, etc.) are available.

**Media**

Type	Title	Added
7 5L QH		12/03/2016
2 PC US DC		12/03/2016
2 PC US DT		12/03/2016
7 5L RA		12/03/2016
4 SJC DC		12/03/2016
4 SJC CS		12/03/2016
4 SJC DT		12/03/2016
4 SJC MM		12/03/2016
4 SJC AC		12/03/2016

**Codes**

- RACIAL VIEWS**
  - Black
  - Multicultural
  - White
- SELF IMAGE**
  - Affirming
  - Concerns
  - Disaffirming

**Excerpts: 360**

- Resource **8 RI RJL** Added **12/09/2016** # Codes **1**  
I am proud to be black because we made a lot of stuff
- Resource **8 RI QH** Added **12/09/2016** # Codes **2**  
I love being black because black is beautiful. And we invented a lot of cool thing, and I don't want to bleach my skin because Whit people make Me Mad!!
- Resource **8 RI MM** Added **12/09/2016** # Codes **1**  
I'm a black beauty and black and proud to be black.

