C.A.R.E: CALLING ALL RESPONSIBLE EDUCATORS

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Teacher-student relationships lie at the heart of the learning process. The culture of care created by positive teacher-student rapport has been associated with student outcomes, suggesting that putting relationship and responsibility before content and curriculum and over politics and prejudice is critical to student success. Over the last decade, considerable research has highlighted the essentiality of caring to maximize the potential for academic and personal growth and development of students of color, in particular. The surge of research in this area comes as America's student population grows increasingly diverse, yet the teacher pool remains more than eighty-percent White. The broad consensus within the literature is that given the demographics of the majority teacher in juxtaposition to the diversity of students, pre-service and veteran teachers alike, must learn to be culturally sensitive and develop the skills and behaviors that help them connect to their students, regardless of the cultural mismatch between the two.

Researched in the tradition of narrative inquiry, my three-article dissertation examines the impact of a culture of care, or lack thereof, in the context of teaching and learning; especially as it relates to the academic and personal growth and development of Black and Brown students in U.S. public schools. The inquiries aid in unpacking, storying, and restorying the school related lived experiences of the study participants and of the researcher. The narrative exemplars that are illuminated reinforce the personal, relational, and professional significance of creating a school and classroom culture of care. Finally, the "truths" revealed may offer the majority teacher new knowledge that helps in developing behaviors and practices that lead to safe, productive, culturally solicitous learning environments.

DEDICATION

To my study participants, including my 7-year-old self, for allowing me to share your stories.

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I give honor to God to whom all praise is due.

I thank Him sincerely for seeing me through.

To my husband for encouragement to follow my dreams;

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The parallel stories in Chapter IV include contributions by Macey Mulcahy, a recent graduate from the Department of Teacher, Learning and Culture's undergraduate Interdisciplinary Studies degree program.

All other work conducted for the dissertation was completed by the student independently.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Care in education is a complex phenomenon for several reasons: (1) some do not see teaching as a caring profession because the teachers' goal must be adequate academic achievement and the cultivation of global competence among students (Narinasamy & Mamat, 2013; Noddings, 2007a; Wilde, 2013), making care an accessory to the real work of teaching (Wilde, 2013); (2) there is no clear, collective construction of what it means to care and how teachers can create and maintain caring relationships with students (Alder, 2002); (3) teachers and students have differing perceptions of what care looks like, and that difference is affected by several factors, including age, ethnicity, gender, the cultural mismatch of the teacher and student(s) (Hayes, Ryan, & Zseller, 1994); and (4) the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* cultural mismatch between the teacher pool and student population makes authentic caring relationships between teacher and student challenging (Davis, 2003; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Sabol & Pianta, 2012) . Nevertheless, caring is essential to teaching, and is often a prereqisite for student learning; after all, children and adolescents often find it difficult to learn from teachers with whom they have a negative relationship. Thus, "caring is a fundamental basic in education" (Hayes et al., 1994, p. 3), but it has been fundamentally neglected over the past several decades of public schooling.

Most relevant to the overarching theme of this dissertation is the importance of authentic care between the majority teacher and culturally, linguistically, ethnically, economically diverse students (CLEED) (Ibrhim, et al., 2010). Research suggests positive, caring

teacher-student relationships are especially essential in urban school settings where students face additional challenges associated with high-poverty environments (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). Studies have also found that affirming, authentic teacher-student relationships promote academic resilience and greater academic achievement, as well as socioemotional, behavioral, and overall personal growth and development among marginalized students (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006; Kearns & Hart, 2017; Krstic, 2015). Evidence of the significant influence a culture of care can have on CLEED student success demands that stakeholders problematize care as a critical, yet often missing component of teacher preparation and practice. Ultimately, defining care and helping teachers develop authentic care practices and behaviors is a difficult task, but one that is imperative, especially for historically marginalized students.

Justification of the Study

For students, teacher is often the metonymy for school. Teachers represent the primary connection between the student and school and, therefore, how a student feels about his or her teachers can have tremendous influence on how the student feels about school in general. Sadly, the cultural mismatch between America's teachers and students, encumbered by a lack of teacher preparation to meet the needs of this growing student population, has resulted in distrust and estrangement between these two interdependent groups. For the student, this disconnect results in lower achievement and feelings of isolation (Davis, 2003). Research suggests that detachment is most prevalent between White teachers and African American students, who are noted to have poorer quality realtionships with teachers (Murray, Kosty, & Hauser-McLean, 2016); and teachers often report higher levels of negativity in their relationship with students of color, in general (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Interestingly, these are the very students who are consistently identified as lower achieving, misbehaving, "at-risk" youth. Yet, they are

not experiencing a culture of care which, according to research (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006; Murray & Malmgren, 2005), may be the very thing these students need to raise their academic achievement, minimize displinary issues, and be set for the success of reaching their academic goals rather than at risk of failure.

Demographic studies indicate a continued and growing gap between the lack of diversity among U.S. teachers and the growing diversity among U.S. students (Boser, 2014). To avoid a paralleled growth of the relational divide between teachers and students, we must realize productive ways to help the majority teacher develop cultural sensitivity, build authentic relationships with students of color, and recognize the critical nature of care in the context of teaching and learning. Accordingly, the research puzzles addressed throughout this three-study dissertation include the following: (1) How do teachers create a culture of care that leads to increased opportunity for the academic and personal success of historically marginalized students? (2) Whate teacher practices demonstrate caring relationships and interactions with their students, especially with their students of color?

My Positionality

Positionality considers factors, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, gender, and other social diversities (Moore, 2008) at the intersection of a particular belief or practice. It is narrative that unravels and reveals life experiences that significantly influence one's perspective on a certain topic. Positionality, however, is fluid. We are constantly having experiences and interactions that, if we are not so arrogant to believe we have arrived at a refined version of self, cause us to reconsider, reimagine, and readjust. But, while I hope to never stop evolving, there are clear, defining situations and circumstances that have brought me to the topics addressed in this dissertation research. Most will be shared through my autobiographical

narrative (chapter III of this manuscript), but here I provide a snapshot of root.

I attended two elementary schools as a child. My father was in the military until I entered second grade. When he was in a place where we could not accompany him, my mother desired to be close to her parents in a small town in the Midwest. So, during these times, we lived in a small house my parents owned in a lower middle-class, culturally diverse neighborhood, right next door to my grandparents. In this neighborhood was an elementary school with a predominantly White teaching staff. I was a child who loved school! I had many friends who looked like me, I earned excellent marks, and I do not recall any negative vibes or feelings about my teachers. When my dad came home for good, we moved to a wealthier side of town. In my new school there were very few children who looked like me; I did not understand anything they were doing in class; and I went to the restroom to cry every day. I went from being smart, pretty and happy, to being simple, teased about my pony tails, and miserable. The greatest influences on this sudden degeneration of my developing intellect and identity were the divergent levels of academic rigor between the two schools and the absence of concern for or investment in my academic or personal success. Every teacher I encountered in that school either ignored me or treated me with disdain, like I was a tarnished, out of tune instrument, messing up their harmonious symphony. Had just one of them attempted to establish and authentic, caring relationship with me, she would have seen that I was not "less than." I simply had educational gaps that needed to be filled. Because of that first year in my new school, because of the teachers I encountered there, I spent the rest of my academic career, even through my undergraduate college years, questioning my intelligence, and struggling to succeed.

Part of my desire to become a teacher was so I could give children what I did not receive as a student: kindness and encouragement. I will forever be affected by the systemic

racism that exists in America's school system and created for me a low bar that rendered artificial success, followed by a false utopia that betrayed the trust my parents put in it to prepare me for a bright and hopeful future.

My early experiences in the two aforementioned schools set the foundation for my current positionality regarding education, a culture of care in schools, teacher-student relationships, and race and racism within America's school system. These experiences represent the prologue to my school narrative.

Methodology

When two people stand on opposite sides of the same elephant, they may be looking at one animal, but their description of the animal may be very different. The scars, wrinkles, color variations, and splotches of dirt paint a different picture for each observer. The right side may even have parasitic ride-alongs that cause that side's observer to shrink away, while the other may see an intricate pattern on the left tusk, that compels a touch. Narrative inquiry allows us to see the elephant from the perspective of both observers; to glimpse their experiential knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which is the knowledge shaped by the particularities of their individual and subjective points of view. Using narrative inquiry as methodology allows me to explore the rich and unique educational experiences of those whose experiences are customarily disregarded. Through this method of discovery, I hope to "[unravel] the maelstrom of personal, social and institutional histories" (Craig, 2003) that tell the story of teacher-student relationship building in the colorful context of the urban environment.

Urban education is about equitable education opportunities, student-teacher relationships, the weight of poverty on marginalized student populations, critical race theory, culturally responsive teaching practices, social justice, and a host of other challenges and opportunities,

peaks and valleys, horror stories and stories of resilience, devastation and hope. There is no way to address the needs of urban education without delving deeply into the personal narratives of those who make up the urban community. DePoy and Gitlin (2016) state, "narrative inquiry is frequently used to illuminate the voices and experiences of marginalized or excluded populations and individuals" (p. 166). Furthermore, Craig (1997) notes that the highlight of narrative inquiry is the way that participants' voices are valued. Narrative inquiry esteems the spoken or written words of individuals, and focuses on their lives as lived and told, re-lived and re-told through their own stories, without requiring their experiences to conform to a dominant frame in order to be valid. Therefore, because previously unheard voices are raised, the knowledge revealed is likely to contain subtle and not-so-subtle nuances that may separate it from the dominant discourse. Hence, narrative inquiry, as a specific qualitative method, has the strength of generating new ways of seeing, interpreting and re-interpreting existing storied data.

By exploring perspectives and experiences of individuals, narrative inquirers can examine new and unexpected phenomena and track unique or unexpected turn-of-events and experiences, instead of being limited to a firm assumption or carved-in-stone answer. This leads to a discovery of the why and how, not just the what of any given situation (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Huyn, 2015). Byrne (2017) comments that the experiences of participants help to extend our own knowledge, and "serve to give the participants' voices equality in that process of knowledge making" (p. 49). Kridel (2010) articulates this point in the following way:

> Researchers engaged in this form of inquiry join one another to critically reflect on experiences, move beyond boundaries, raise challenging questions, transgress orthodoxy and dogma, and work with underrepresented or disfranchised individuals and groups to

build a long-term and heartfelt participatory movement to promote a more balanced and equitable human condition in an increasingly diversified world. (p. 707)

In this sense, the narrative inquirer is able to "take the role of midwife to mediate stories into being" (Kim, 2016, p. 119). In order to successfully play this role, the researcher must be able to deftly use the interpretative tools of narrative inquiry: broadening, burrowing, storying and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I will employ each of these tools as I engage in this form of inquiry.

I will use broadening to situate my research historically and socially. As some of my research relates past educational practices to present practices and the hope of future practice, I will need to employ broadening to help connect aspects of my research, including participant's stories, to themes found in the literature and other accounts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Craig, 2013). Discussions of cultural differences and race relations often stir emotions people find difficult to name, address, and share. Since much of my research delves into these topics, I imagine that there will be tensions and reactions (my own and those of others) that warrant further discussion. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) say the following about burrowing: "We focus on the event's emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities; we then ask why the event is associated with these feelings and what their origins might be" (p.11). Burrowing will help me and my participants dig deeper, potentially uncovering hidden treasures in the recesses of our minds. Finally, I will use storying and restorying to help capture the personal and social changes (Craig, 2013) that may occur as participants revisit, remember, reexamine, and reflect upon past and present experiences.

Ultimately, narrative inquiry can provide unique insight into the complexity of the relationship between various aspects of education and issues of cultural differences. It is a powerful tool in the sharing of embodied knowledge.

A Brief Literature Review of Care in Education

The word *care* has a denotative meaning that is clearly printed in standard dictionaries, yet care is one of those abstract words that also carries connotative meaning subject to the experiences and emotional reaction of the definer. A study of the word *care* leads one to would-be synonyms like sympathy, affection, compassion, and empathy on one hand and responsibility, burden, load, and worry on the other. Additionally, members of different caring professions have also applied varying definitions to the word care. For example, hospital nurses in a study conducted by Bassett (2002) suggested that caring is what nurses do—taking time with patients (appearing unhurried), attending to the needs of the physical body, and providing emotional support; and what nurses are—considerate, honest, sensitive. *A Dictionary of Social Work and Social Care* (Harris & White, 2013) reads that, in general, care in social work "usually refers to the act or process of looking after people by undertaking tasks that they are unable to do for themselves" (p. 193). Another caring profession that is not always identified as such is teaching.

Is Teaching a Caring Profession?

When one googles the term *caring profession*, the Google Answer Box displays the following information: *noun—a job that involves taking care of other people, such as nursing, teaching, or social work*. However, teaching has become so focused on rigid curriculum and high-stakes testing that the endless list of things to do overshadows the practice of care (Cooper, 2004; Narinasamy & Mamat, 2013; Wilde, 2013). Teachers express concern about the pressure to produce students who can generate high test scores on standardized tests (Noddings, 2007b;

Wilde, 2013). Hayes et al. (1994) make the following observation of practices that further complicate the notion of teaching as a caring profession: "Teachers are generally limited in their contacts with students to prescribed and pressured communications determined by achievement tests and curriculum demands. Large class sizes, many short periods, and isolation of teachers also contribute to the emotional vacancy of schools…" (p. 2). These more recent moves to value impressive statistics to share with the public over impressive human beings who can positively contribute to society are contrary to the historical concepts of teaching that situate the vocation as a caring profession.

Historically, learning was based on personal relationship between the student and the teacher. In fact, Noddings and Shore (as cited in Hayes et al., 1994) note that as far back as the Middle Ages, teachers and their students lived together and developed extensive personal relationships, caring for not only the intellectual growth to be gained, but also the personal growth and development. Noddings (2007a) claims that, "caring for students is fundamental in teaching and that developing people with a strong capacity for care is a major objective of responsible education" (p. 4). Wong and Wong (2004) comment that teachers are "in the helping and caring profession, a service profession to help people enhance the quality of their lives" (p. 21). Hence, the teacher's work must be focused on two outcomes: teaching about the subject and caring about the child as an individual human being (Bergmark & Alerby, 2006). Consequently, if a caring profession is one that involves taking care of other people, research would indicate that teaching is such a profession (Cooper, 2004; Narinasamy & Mamat, 2013; Wilde, 2013). Yet, while personnel in other caring professions receive training on how to care for their consumers, learning how to care for students has not been well articulated in most teacher

education programs (Knight, 2004), making it difficult for teachers, especially pre-service teachers, to develop their capacity to authentically and appropriately care for their students.

What Demonstrates Care in the Classroom?

A quality teacher is one whose pedagogy is rooted in beliefs and values that lead to caring and positive student-teacher relationships (Boon, 2011). While there are many such caring, quality teachers in schools all around the world, they often come about due to their general nature, modeling by quality veteran teachers, or through trial and error (Scott & Dinham, 2008) as opposed to pre-service teacher preparation. Furthermore, research suggests that while caring is commonly seen as an essential part of teaching, what demonstrates caring in the classroom is understood in a variety of ways (Drudy, 2008). Therefore, at the very minimum, there is a need to restructure teacher preparation programs to include experiences that promote a commitment and capacity to care for all learners (Knight, 2004). Accordingly, then, the question must be asked: what does it mean for a teacher to care for his or her students and how is that care demonstrated and expressed in terms of the stories by which they live? These questions are best answered through the literature that assigns certain attributes to what is care in the classroom. For example, Noddings (as cited in Alder, 2002) proposed four components of care that teachers should apply in the classroom: modeling, confirmation, dialogue, and practice. Others equate care with empathy, cultural sensitivity, or social justice (Cammarota & Augustine, 2006; Cooper, 2004; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Knight, 2004). Hence, teacher training that focuses on how to model caring relationships and demonstrate ethics of care in the classroom represent a sustainable way to encourage a professional practice of caring and enhance teacher quality (Boon, 2011). Unfortunately, however, as Boon (2011) found in her study there is a “lack of explicit ethics instruction during the Bachelor of Education degree” (p. 87). Research suggests

that structured study abroad experiences, a study of culturally diverse theories of caring, focused ethics of care instruction for pre-service teachers, and much critical reflection (Boon, 2011; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Pilonieta, Medina, & Hathaway, 2017), could help fill the gap and cultivate quality, caring teachers.

Regardless, of the attributes of care or training received, what researchers agree on is that caring is not accomplished without explicit action (Cooper, 2004; Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Pang, 2006). Teachers and their students, however, often perceive the act of caring very differently.

What Counts as Caring to Teachers vs. Students?

Because the U.S. teacher workforce remains overwhelmingly White and the student population is becoming more and more diverse (Pilonieta et al., 2017), much of the research regarding what counts as caring to teachers as opposed to students sets in opposition the caring perceptions of White teachers and students of color. For example, Valenzuela (1999) points out that types of caring exhibited by White teachers often do not match Mexican students' idea of what care from a teacher looks like. This may be an indication of how culture and context can shape our personal practice and social interactions (Craig et al., 2018b), creating cultural communication idiosyncrasies that influence how specific acts intended as care may not be perceived as caring at all by the supposedly cared for.

Additionally, Hayes et al. (1994) found that African American students in their study thought teachers demonstrated care when they helped students with their academic work, offered students words of affirmation, and responded to each student as an individual; while White students perceived a caring teacher as one who provided good subject content and was fun and humorous. Clearly, there are cultural differences in the way individuals perceive and demonstrate

acts of care. These differences suggest narrative incoherence between the stories each person lives and tells.

Another example is how some teachers feel they demonstrate care by being "color-blind" and treating all students the same (Knight, 2004; Matias & Zembylas, 2014), while students believe this type of "care" fails to value their differences (Valenzuela, 1999). Alder (2002) makes the following observation:

> The importance of understanding the perceptions of the meaning of caring relationships from the perceptions of the carer and the cared for was underscored in a study by Webb, Wilson, Corbett, and Mordecai (1993), which sought perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Findings indicated that each group thought it cared about the other groups, but no group ever consulted the other. The result of the absence of dialogue was that caring acts were not being interpreted as such by the cared for. (p. 244)

The separate groups of students, teachers, administrators, and parents represent what Craig (1995) calls knowledge communities, which are safe, storytelling places that "take shape around commonplaces of experience" (Olson & Craig, 2001, p. 670). The challenge is for the individual knowledge communities to enter into conversation with one another to develop a way of demonstrating care that is meaningful across communities.

What is a Culture of Care in the Context of Teaching and Learning?

Generally, the three articles of this dissertation examine the culture of care in the context of teaching and learning; therefore, it is essential to define "culture of care" as it relates to the school environment and as it will be understood throughout this dissertation research.

Several scholars agree that a culture of care in the school setting must be grounded in principles and values that lead to affirming, thoughtful, and authentic teacher-student

relationships (Gay, 2010; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2005). Cavanagh (2010) goes further to define culture of care as a theory that encourages one-on-one relationships and places the value and importance of those relationships over concerns about curriculum. Furthermore, Cavanagh, MacFarlane, Glynn, and MacFarlane (2012) explicitly suggest that creating a culture of care requires schools and teachers to create an environment that is “safe for all students to engage, to contribute, to belong and to feel confident in their own cultural identities” (p. 443).
If the school and classroom values do not create such an environment, teachers and leaders must be willing to make personal and collective changes in the stories they are living and telling.

Much like the care of the nurse and social worker, teachers must be considerate and honest. They must look after their students and attend to students’ needs, especially those needs that affect students’ ability to learn. Teachers must provide students with the support, encouragement, and tools to “do better,” understanding the complexities that contribute to students’ lived experiences as well as the meaning they draw from those experiences.

Considering this succinct review of care in education, for the purpose of this research I submit that for teachers to create and exhibit a culture of care they must connect and build authentic relationships with their students by demonstrating interest in and respect for the variety of cultural, social, spiritual, and socioeconomic variances represented in our pluralistic society, especially those variances that are present within the teacher’s classroom. Using this delineation permits a clear discussion of the ways in which this practice may be visible or absent in teachers’ behaviors and practices.

Preface to the Three-Articles

A cultural divide can be defined as the virtual barrier caused by cultural differences that hinder interactions and peaceful exchange between people of different cultures. Rapidly

changing demographics of U.S. public school students, along with the stagnant demographics of America's teacher pool continue to widen the gap between these two interdependent groups. Cultural mismatch between teachers and students does not necessarily preclude academic and personal growth for students of color; however, it can create barriers to authentic relationships which, according to research (Davis, 2003; Murray et al., 2016; Murray & Malmgren, 2005), does hinder student growth and development, especially for students of color. The establishment of caring relationships between teachers and students can help bridge the cultural divide while also "provid[ing] the foundation for successful pedagogical activity" (Noddings, 2010, p. 4). Thus, as Black and Brown students navigate their academic journey across a path mined with challenges like the achievement gap, disparities in disciplinary practices, standardized testing, cultural dissonance, and general systemic inequities in education, an undergirding culture of care (See **Figure** 1) can help them avoid falling through the cracks.

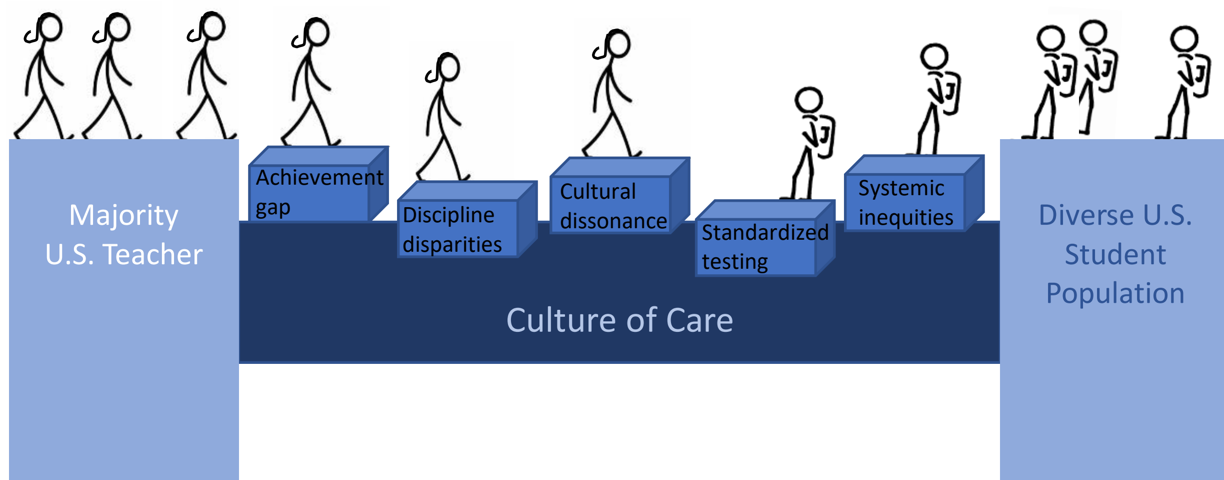

Figure 1 Visual representation of culture of care as the undergirding bridge supporting and connecting U.S. teachers and students.

The stories that the majority U.S. teacher lives by are stories of the young, White, middle-class female who is influenced by all the rights and privileges (whether subtle or overt, accepted or rejected, imagined or unimagined) that accompany those characteristics. Their identities inform their teaching, just as students' identities inform their learning. The knowledge individual teachers and students construct is predicated on their lived experiences that are greatly influenced by each one's identity and position within specific social contexts. Historically, value has been given to the experiences and knowledge of the dominant culture, passively ignoring or actively silencing the narrative of the "other." By exploring the stories of several individuals who have experienced care or an absence of care within the confines of divergent academic environments, this narrative inquiry research aims to highlight those hushed voices, effectively contributing to enhancing and, potentially redefining the ways in which teachers conceptualize and create a culture of care in their classrooms and school buildings.

In my three-article dissertation, I first employ biographical narrative inquiry to illuminate the practices of successful, caring and responsible African American teachers in pre-*Brown vs. Board of Education* segregated schools. For this manuscript (Chapter II), I will submit to the *Journal of Teacher Education* (*JTE*), a peer-reviewed academic journal that publishes papers in the field of education and has an impact factor of 3.18, with an acceptance rate of five-percent. *JTE* provides a platform for discussing practice, policy, and research in teacher education. The journal focuses on issues of teacher education, including "preparing teachers to effectively address the needs of marginalized youth, their families and communities" (Journal of Teacher Education, 2018). Through the first manuscript, I hope to provide an exemplar of behaviors and practices that help the majority U.S. teacher create a culture of care that leads to

increased opportunity for the academic and personal growth and development of historically marginalized students.

I next use autobiographical narrative inquiry to explore my developmental journey as an African American marginalized student struggling to succeed academically, a teacher grappling with my professional identity, and an empowered doctoral student hoping to help pre-service teachers prepare to be culturally informed leaders and role models for their future students. The *International Journal of Multicultural Education* (*IJME*) is the potential home for this manuscript (Chapter III). IJME is an open access journal "committed to promoting educational equity, cross- cultural understanding, and global awareness in all levels of education" (ijme-journal.org). In 2017, *IJME* produced a special issue themed *critical autoethnography in pursuit of educational equity*. Kim (2006) lists autoethnography as a genre of autobiographical narrative inquiry that empowers researchers to analyze their own related experiences embedded in a larger social and cultural context. With a history of embracing the richness of this form of research, *IJME* is an ideal journal for my autobiographical narrative. *IJME* has an impact factor of 0.38, and an acceptance rate of 13%.

Finally, I borrow the narrative form of parallel stories, in conjunction with interactive interviewing, to explore the topic of school disciplinary practices at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and a classroom culture of care in the k-12 U.S. classroom I will submit this manuscript (Chapter IV) to *Urban Education* (*UEX*), a peer-reviewed journal that is well-respected by urban education scholars, has a 2.1 impact factor and 85% difficulty of acceptance. *UEX* is a journal organized around eight main interdisciplinary areas. The "teacher education" component of *UEX* welcomes manuscripts that address preparation of pre-service teachers for urban education contexts, which is the crux of my third study. *UEX* focuses on critical concerns

facing urban schools and the students, teachers, and families that comprise the urban school communities.

This dissertation concludes with a synthesis of findings gleaned from the three manuscripts, regarding the significance of a school/classroom culture of care and the practices and behaviors that can lead to caring and responsible teacher-student relationships. Ultimately, through these three narrative inquiries, I hope to fill a gap in the literature by providing exemplars of behaviors that lead to a culture of care which, regardless of race and law, is achievable and essential to maximize students personal and academic achievement.

CHAPTER II

CARING AND UNCARING TEACHER PRACTICES: COMPELLING MEMORIES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS WHO ATTENDED BOTH SEGREGATED AND NEWLY INTEGRATED SCHOOLS DURING THE 1950s-1970s

Synopsis

This article employs narrative inquiry as a research method to illuminate how teachers' embodied culture of care, or lack thereof, affects students of color. Before integration, African American students were educated in "Black" schools, within Black communities, by educated, respected African American teachers who were invested in students' success. After integration, Black children entered classrooms with White teachers who seemingly held a deficit view of their new students and did not know how to, or did not want to connect with them. Today, students of color represent nearly half of all public-school students, but the teacher workforce remains more than 80% White. Many of these teachers, much like the White teachers in early integrated schools (mid 1950s-early 1970s), struggle to counter the cultural mismatch and connect with their diverse student population. This study hopes to provide an exemplar of behaviors that lead to a culture of care which, regardless of race and laws, is achievable and foundational for student success.

Apologia

The Black-White Dichotomy

American education has been shaped through a racialized history whose core is rooted in slavery and White racism against Blacks. I can visualize the eye-rolling that some readers executed upon reading that sentence. The comments that follow the eye-roll are likely to include, "Slavery ended long ago; can't we move on?" "My family doesn't own slaves," and "It's not just about Blacks and Whites; there are many other races." In a discussion of teaching from a social justice perspective, Harkins, Ray, and Davis (2010) comment that often the consequence of exposing the historical practices which formed the foundation for current unequal social dynamics is met with resistance, especially by the privileged. The authors note that this resistance "takes many forms including: denying or challenging information, interrupting/disrupting the conversation, passive participation, changing the subject or claiming reverse discrimination" (p. 139). Nevertheless, most education issues, like the "achievement gap," disparities in disciplinary practices, and other prevalent inequalities are measured by the distance between White and Black students.

This article aims to examine the culture of care in the lived experiences of African American students in legally segregated and early post *Brown v. Board* segregated Black schools during the 1950s-1970s, versus the culture of care said students experienced in integrated schools during the same time period. While there were obviously other races dealing with some degree of segregation and suffering from dehumanization and exploitation for the benefit of the White power structure, it has been the Black-White struggle that has provided the stepping stones for other ethnic minority groups' push for equality. While I am concerned about creating equity in education so that the potential for personal and academic success is maximized for *all* students, I,

my spouse, my children, and my grandchild are African American, so I am especially connected to the Black experience and am personally familiar with the challenges plaguing African American students in the U.S. school system.

For these reasons, this article primarily focuses on the culture of care as it relates to Black teachers and Black students, and White teachers and Black students.

Interchangeable use of Black and African American

Race was created by White Americans and Europeans in the 17th century in order to justify their oppression of Native Americans and African Americans (Feagin, 2015). Naming any group is a politically and economically charged exercise, yet it is something humans continue to do, always to the detriment of the "other" or "lesser" group. In America, people who look like I look were initially labeled as "colored," then Negro, followed by Black, and most recently, African American. It is painful to perpetuate this covert, mundane form of racism, but almost impossible to enter a dialogue about the human condition and systemic inequities without using the labels that are universally recognizable. Personally, I find "colored" offensive and Negro too close to the derogatory racial slur that stems from it. Black, while not the color of my skin nor indicative of any geographic location from which my ancestors originated, evokes in me the spirit of slogans and mantras, like Black Power, Black is Beautiful, Black lives matter, and James Brown's lyrics, "Say it loud! I'm Black and I'm proud!" I like that. I also like the cultural integrity associated with the term African American; as Jackson stated, "It puts us in our proper historical context" (Associated Press, 1988). Thus, in this article, I use Black and African American interchangeably, with equal distinction.

Overview

That Was Then

The court ordered desegregation of schools began with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Before this time and for some time after, African American students were educated in "Black" schools, within the Black community, by educated and respected African American teachers. However, because separate was far from equal, the Black schools did not have the money, materials, or means that were common to "White" schools. Consequently, the general, widely accepted historical purpose of school integration was to afford all students equal access to a quality education. However, nice, well-endowed schools cannot replace nurturing, wholly invested teachers. As DuBois (1935) states, "The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge on the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but the surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group…" (DuBois, 1935, p. 328). Yet, during this time, we must remember that race relations between Blacks and Whites were tumultuous to say the least. Jim Crow laws kept the races separate and reinforced White America's view of Blacks as less-than-human. Hence, Black children were placed in classrooms with White teachers who appeared to hold a deficit view of their new students and either did not know how to, or did not want to connect with them. Stories like that of Ruby Bridges—a 6-year-old African American girl who endured a crowd of White racist adults, shouting and throwing things at her as she was escorted into an all-White, recently integrated school in 1960 New Orleans—provide a plotline of the hate and vicious treatment many Black students had to suffer through in their new, integrated schools where they were admitted by law but not welcomed as human beings with equal rights as American citizens.

So, while it is true that segregated Black schools often had ramshackle facilities, inadequate materials, and unequal funding; they also had dedicated, caring teachers and administrators who felt a sense of responsibility not only for their students' academic development, but also for their social and moral development. Walker (1996) makes the following observation:

> The memory of inequality is thus not inaccurate. However, to remember segregated schools largely by recalling only their poor resources presents an historically incomplete picture. Although black schools were indeed commonly lacking in facilities and funding, some evidence suggests that the environment of the segregated school had affective traits, institutional policies, and community support that helped black children learn in spite of the neglect their schools received from white school boards. (p. 3)

Many Black schools during this turbulent time provided their students with quality, nurturing educational environments, despite the obstacles they faced. Walker tells the story of one such school in rural North Carolina where "the principal and teachers cared enough about students to be concerned with their broader social needs as well as their personal and academic needs" (p. 202). Thus, while desegregation had material benefits for African American students, the values practiced and displayed by the African American teachers in the Black schools—community involvement, moral behavior, high expectations, authentic care for students—were not often extended to African American students in White schools post-integration. This historical breakdown of the teacher-student connection due to the cultural mismatch between the teacher and student has never been fully rectified. Today it manifests itself in the form of racial disparities in school disciplinary practices, inequitable drop-out rates, and the so-called achievement gap.

This Is Now

Students of color account for nearly half of all students in public schools, yet the teacher workforce is still more than 80 percent White (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Many of these teachers, much like the White teachers in early integrated schools, are struggling to counter the cultural mismatch and connect with their diverse student population. Various school reform efforts have further exacerbated these issues (Alexander, 2012; Heitzeg, 2009; Lipman, 2011), and many, education policy makers to classroom teachers, find themselves desperately grasping at straws. Some scholars, however, believe that a responsive approach to address this phenomenon may be to establish a school culture of care in which teachers authentically take care of and take responsibility for the academic and personal growth and development of their students (Noddings, 2003b; Cavanagh, 2012), which is accomplished by providing social and academic support, maintaining high expectations, and demonstrating genuine interest in students' success. Unfortunately, however, the cultural divide between teacher and students that exists in a growing number of classrooms encourages a distrust and separation that leaves students feeling relationally disconnected from their teachers (Davis, 2003). This disconnect results in lower achievement and feelings of isolation. African American students, in particular, are described as having poorer qualtiy realtionships with teachers (Murray et al., 2016); and teachers report higher levels of negativity in their relationship with students of color, in general (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Thus, "[e]ffectively educating African American students remains one of the most pressing tasks facing educators at all levels" (Milner & Howard, 2004, p. 287). While the explanations for this phenomena run the gamut, the solution could begin with the educator authentically caring about the academic and personal growth and development of

African American students, and then taking responsibility for his or her role in that maturation process.

With the past, present, and our future in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine the culture of care experienced by or withheld from African American students who attended both segregated and newly integrated schools during the 1950s-1970s, with the hope of providing exemplars of behaviors that lead to an authentic classroom culture of care. I, ultimately, seek to propose that regardless of race and laws, a culture of care is possible when educators genuinely engage in the act of caring for and taking responsibility for the overall growth and development of their students.

Theoretical Framework

In order to effectively discuss the ways in which a culture of care was experienced by or withheld from certain African American students, it is essential to define "culture of care" as it relates to the school environment. Based on the writings of Gilligan (1982), Noddings (2005), and Gay (2010), a culture of care in the school setting is predicated on pedagogy that is rooted in beliefs and values that lead to positive, caring teacher-student relationships. Culture of care has also been defined as a theory that says schools and workplaces must be more concerned with relationships than curriculum when shaping their institutional purpose (Cavanagh, 2010). Cavanagh et al., (2012) outline culture of care as follows:

> Creating a culture of care requires schools and teachers to be cognizant of how the school and classroom values, beliefs and practices make it safe for all students to engage, to contribute, to belong and to feel confident in their own cultural identities (p. 443)

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, culture of care is loosely defined as the practice of privileging relationship and responsibility over politics and prejudice. This designation of culture

of care provides a hopefully productive lens to support my thinking and analysis of the storied data appearing in this chapter. Additionally, to examine the culture of care experienced by or withheld from African American students who attended both segregated and newly integrated schools, a critical lens is required. To focus this lens, I employ relevant tools of critical race theory (CRT), a theoretical framework developed in the 1970s by legal scholars such as Derrick Bell (1973), Richard Delgado (1989), and Kimberle Crenshaw (2002).

Originally developed to address racial inequities through the legal system (Tate, 1997; Crenshaw, 2011), CRT was applied to education by scholars who wanted to confront and transform racial oppression within the education system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano, 1998). Although some scholars emphasize the "importance of always coupling contemporary work with CRT's founding legal tenets" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 206), this study leans lightly on the tenet referring to interest convergence, which suggests that "any gains toward racial equality have only happened and can only happen when Whites also benefit" (Capper, 2015, p. 813); and heavily on the tenet that stresses the need for counter-narratives that challenge the realities propagandized by the dominant culture.

Review of the Literature

Four essential elements in this study form a vivid tapestry for educators to consider: critical race theory, culture of care, the treatment of African American students in segregated versus integrated schools, and narrative inquiry. Critical race theory is the loom used to hold the warp threads—culture of care—under tension to facilitate the interweaving of the weft threads—the counternarratives (Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Pollack & Zirkel, 2013) of African Americans' experiences in segregated and integrated schools. As each element is vital, the

literature review will address all three areas. Narrative inquiry (as methodology), then, becomes the rod used to display the tapestry and share it with others (See **Figure** 2).

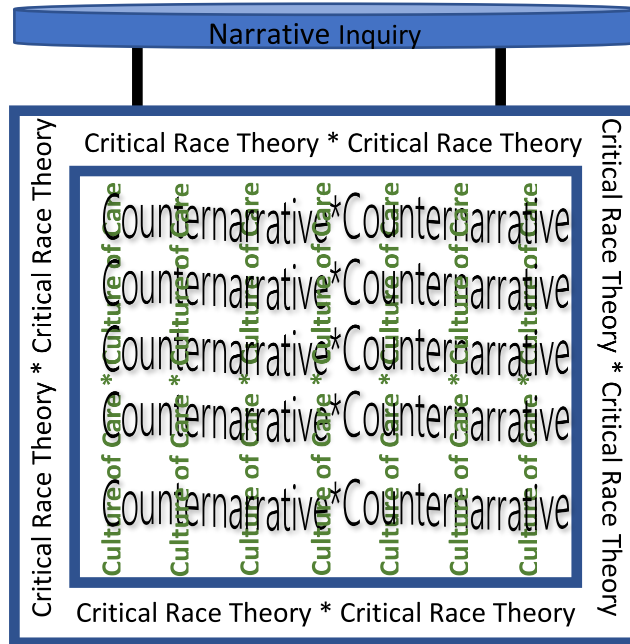

Figure 2. Visual representation of essential elements of the study.

Critical Race Theory

An oppositional form of anti-oppressive theory (Chapman, Dixson, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2013), CRT, in the field of education, is used as a tool to help researchers examine the role of race and racism in education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Subsequently, CRT also declares to provide the framework necessary to not only examine inequities in education but also guide the practices necessary to eliminate racial inequities and produce socially just schools (Capper, 2015; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Although this may seem like an insurmountable task, the bumpy road ahead must not deter advocates of educational equity from navigating the course.

The tenets of CRT provide sensors that aid in guiding our movement toward equity in education. Beginning with its function in law and culminating with its application in education, there are thirteen tenets consistently applied in CRT scholarship: racism as normal, interest convergence, social construction, differential racialization, intersectionality, unique voices of color, permanence of racism, Whiteness as property, intercentricity of race and racism, challenge to dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, centrality of experiential knowledge, and interdisciplinary perspective (Cabrera, 2018). The most useful tenets of CRT for this study are interest convergence and unique voices of color (counterstorytelling in narrative terms). The former allows me to further contextualize participants' stories, and the latter permits me to present their stories to readers for reflection, synthesis and analysis.

Interest convergence. Interest convergence purports that White people will only support racial justice when they believe there is something in it for them. In fact, many discriminatory social, political, and educational policies have been addressed not due to altruistic tendencies of the power structure, but because those powers found "strategies for addressing racial inequities that specifically serve and maintain dominant White interests" (Brown, 2014, p. 339). As a result, change that occurs for those oppressed is often short-lived (Pollack & Zirkel, 2013), or the practice is very different from the theory. For example, Oremus (2012), in a commentary on Bell and other civil rights activists, notes that during the Civil Rights Movement many of the "advances" for Blacks were just as beneficial for Whites, and "[c]lassical liberal ideals such as meritocracy, equal opportunity, and colorblind justice, they said, actually served the white elite by cloaking and reinforcing society's deep structural inequalities" (n.p.). Furthermore, some CRT scholars list *Brown v. Board of Education* as a prime example of interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lopez, 2003), suggesting that

the Supreme Court only ended the policy of "separate but equal" because it improved the image of the U.S. during the Cold War, and suppressed another potential African American uprising (Capper, 2015). Considering *Brown* is relevant to this study, as exploring the experiences of African American students who experienced both segregated and integrated schools inevitably leads to a discussion of this legal decision; therefore, we must consider how this landmark case may not have been authentically concerned with the progress of African American education, and thus did not take measures to fully ensure that these students would have the academic and social support they needed to be successful in their new teaching and learning environment.

Today, interest convergence still plays a role in school policies and reforms that often have negative effects on the very populations they are supposed to help. For example, Khalifa, Dunbar, and Douglas (2013) describe how neoliberal reforms and high stakes testing claim to improve achievement for students of color, yet these practices benefit Whites and businesses much more by putting money in the pockets of for-profit industries that produce testing systems, data management, professional development programs, and textbooks. Lipman (2011) also suggests neoliberalism is a primary instigating factor in a "deeply racialized" educational system that uses high stakes testing, low performance school closures, dismantling of teacher unions, school choice expansion, and the privatization of education to marginalize the educational needs of urban African American, Latino, and other communities of color. She submits that state politicians are partnering with big corporate foundations to disinvest and privatize urban school districts. New charter schools and magnet schools are erected in place of schools that are closed for low performance or low enrollment, and oftentimes children in those neighborhoods are unable to attend these new privatized schools. Discernibly, just as early CRT scholars believed that the law played a specific role in substantializing racial subordination and inequity (Dixson,

2018), history reveals that formal U.S. education has and continues to do the same. Some of the stories shared by participants in this research illustrate this point.

Counter-storytelling. At the core of CRT is the need to essentialize the voices of those whose lived experiences represent a counter-narrative to institutionalized discourses and challenge the monolithic truth of the majoritarian narrative (Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Pollack & Zirkel, 2013). Counter-narrative, then, refers to the stories that emerge from the point of view of the historically marginalized. In a discussion of intercultural dialogue, Mora (2014) offers a clear and insightful explanation of counter-narrative:

> The idea of "counter-" itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination. A counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins. Instead, these must come *from the margins*, from the perspectives and voices of those individuals…. The effect of a counter-narrative is to empower and give agency to those communities. By choosing their own words and telling their own stories, members of marginalized communities provide alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives truly presenting their realities. (1)

Additionally, Delgado (1993) suggests that the dominant culture's stories are touted as facts and irrefutable truths that have been so long accepted that they are rarely ever questioned. "White people tend to view these narratives not as reflecting a particular perspective (theirs), but rather as uncontestable reality—simply the 'way things are'" (Pollack & Zirkel, 2013, pp. 298-299). In fact, Ladson-Billings (2013) comments, "[W]hen one group describes its worldview or story as 'real history,' 'truth,' or 'objective science' and others' worldviews as myth, legend, and lore, we validate one narrative while simultaneously invalidating the other" (p. 42). Thus, the counter-

narrative, as employed by critical race theorists (Crits), aims to "subvert the majoritarian reality," as well as "give voice and agency to those historically dispossessed of power" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 217). To accomplish this task, counter-storytelling must be built on critical foundations (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015); i.e., it is not enough to simply give voice to counter-narratives without linking the stories to broader histories, interactions, principles and issues regarding race and social justice (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Understanding the call to do more than just tell the wrongly relegated story, this study hopes to provide current educators with an exemplar of caring teachers in order to bring about a social change or paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962/1970) in teacher-student relationships, especially as they relate to the majority young, white female teacher and the growing diverse student population.

Still, given the ease of storytelling, counter-narratives is one of the most frequently cited, defined, and relied upon CRT tenets (Capper, 2015). Ladson-Billings (2013) warns that too many "would-be critical race theorists in education" use the narrative or counter-story in ways that discredit counter-storytelling as a research method as it most definitely is in narrative inquiry research investigations. She further comments that the counter-narrative is not to be used as "an exhibitionist regarding one's own racial struggle" (p. 42). Thus, it is important not to attenuate the counter-narrative by shifting it from "an analysis of systemic racism to being venues to 'vent or rant'" (Cabrera, 2018, p. 225). Essentially, this tenet, especially, must not be used frivolously. It is a powerful tool that is weakened when its employment is debased. Ultimately, "[c]ritical race theorists understand that narratives are not neutral, but rather political expressions of power relationships" (Chapman et al., 2013, p. 1021). Therefore, from the Crits point of view, counter-narratives are only effective when told with purpose and presented with

the underlying agenda of promoting social justice. I do not outright claim to be a Crit, but merely to recognize the value of this theory and its critical presence in this study.

Culture of Care

Nel Noddings (1992) wrote the book on care in schools, literally. However, many fields and disciplines address a "culture of care," and many of the components and practices they outline within their findings would make good practice in school and classroom settings. For example, an article about marketing lists focusing on personal relationships, and listening, connecting, and sharing stories as ways to create an employee-client culture of caring (Fridman, 2016). The author comments that a culture of care matters because it impacts engagement, absenteeism, retention, productivity, customer happiness, and the overall bottom line. Education scholars recognize that positive, authentic teacher-student relationships have a great impact on student attendance, behavior, productivity, and general happiness in school (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; McCormick, O'Connor, Cappella, & McClowry, 2013; Murray & Malmgren, 2005), helping students successfully navigate their way through their education journey. Furthermore, the student's feelings toward the teacher, as well as the way the student thinks the teacher views him or her, influence the student's overall feelings about school; this can affect everything from attendance to motivation which in turn affects academic achievement (Davis, 2003; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). The Catch-22 is that students at academic risk, out of frustration tend to exhibit behaviors that teachers find displeasing; subsequently, the teacher essentially rejects those students, initiating a culture of discomposure that exacerbates the student's struggles with academic demands and results in underachievement (Davis, 2003; McCormick et al., 2013). Thus, enhancing teacher-student relationships is fundamental to successful student achievement and attainment. A second example comes from Leininger's cultural care theory (1995) which is

rooted in the nursing profession. One aspect of Leininger's theory that could be adopted into the realm of education is its call to provide care that preserves, maintains, assists, and supports patients to retain or preserve their cultural beliefs and values (Schub & Caple, 2018). This concept is especially important as America's classrooms continue to increase in cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and economic diversity (CLEED) (Ibrhim, et al., 2010). Research suggests that students feel cared for and valued when their sociocultural backgrounds are acknowledged and respected (Alder, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999). Consequently, creating a culture of care must include cultural competence.

Noddings propelled the ethic of caring into mainstream education discourse by suggesting that teachers must realize "the student is infinitely more important than the subject matter" (Noddings, 2003a, p. 176), and teachers need to develop a relation of care and trust to help students maximize their potential. However, care in education is complex for several reasons, including some teachers' belief that their role is not to care, but to impart information (Narinasamy & Mamat, 2013; Noddings, 2007b; Wilde, 2013); and the cultural mismatch between teacher and student(s) that can create differing perspectives of what counts as care in the classroom (Hays et al., 1994; Valenzuela, 1999). Nevertheless, acknowledging teaching as a caring profession, and developing and practicing cultural sensitivity and culturally relevant pedagogy are prerequisite acts to creating a culture of care.

The tension between white teachers of the immediate post-*Brown* age and their new African American students left many of the students feeling very much uncared-for. Cavanagh et al. (2012) comment that a school culture of care is one whereby "schools and teachers take ownership and responsibility for students' holistic well-being…for building trusting and respectful relationships and for repairing those relationships that have been harmed through

wrongdoing" (p. 443). We cannot repair the past, but we can look to it to discover ways to mend the present and create hope for the future.

African American Students in Segregated vs Integrated Schools

Opinions regarding the success or failure of school desegregation and eventual integration run the gamut. Much of the debate focuses on the effect this milestone had and continues to have on African American students. Theoretically, integration was supposed to make access to quality education better for all students, especially for students of color; yet, these students, African American students in particular, have not been doing well in America's public schools since the *Brown* decision (Milner & Howard, 2004). Before *Brown*, Dubois posed the question, "Does the Negro need separate schools?" (1935). Dubois responds to his own question by stating "[t]he proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil" (p. 328); but the attitude of White America toward Black America was one that would surely challenge such a relationship between White teachers and Black students. Dubois understood the deep seated racism embedded in American culture that kept the races apart even when they were together. Thus, almost seven decades later, and 50 years after *Brown,* Ladson-Billings (2004) suggests that proponents of *Brown* could not have anticipated the "depth of White fear and resentment toward the decision and the limitations such a decision would have in a racist context" (p. 5). Within school classrooms, this fear and resentment was manifest in the often contemptuous and discriminatory treatment of African American students. After all, many of the White teachers were personally opposed to desegregation and having to teach Black children whose very presence they found loathsome. Clearly, new practices mandated by law had minimal power to prevent private behaviors that maintained separate and unequal treatment. Due to decades of "powerful social conditioning that cultivat[ed] actual negative attitudes towards

Black students" (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008, p. 49), instead of being met by caring and responsible teachers, most African American students were met by "the evil of racism powered by ignorance, beliefs in prejudice, and a passionate longing for the status quo" (Landsman & Lewis, 2006, p. 95). This callous treatment was far from what African American students were used to.

Research (Caruthers & Poos, 2015; Fairclough, 2004; Irvine & Irvine, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Milner, 2006; Preston-Grimes, 2014) indicates that the culture of care that was central to segregated Black schools was peripheral at best for African American students attending predominantly White schools post integration. The primary cause of this collapse of care can be attributed to the post- *Brown* loss of African American teachers (Douglas et al., 2008; McCullough-Garrett, 1993; Milner & Howard, 2004). Black teachers were a significant part of the "village" charged with raising the children in the Black community. Consequently, these teachers were passionate about their role as teacher, and they had a personal investment in the success of their students. This passion and personal investment was evidenced through intentional and authentic caring in the segregated school community.

Walker and Tompkins (2004) and Preston-Grimes (2014) note that African American teachers in segregated schools demonstrated caring through their accepted additional roles as counselor, benefactor, encourager, and race cheerleader for their students. They listened to students' interests, issues, and concerns and developed meaningful relationships that seemed to reach beyond the school walls (Milner & Howard, 2004; Preston-Grimes, 2014). These teachers were often a financial blessing to students and their families, intervening when finances made it difficult for students to purchase school supplies or participate in extracurricular activities (Preston-Grimes, 2014; Roberts, 2010; Walker, 2000). Additionally, because African American

teachers and students had a "shared understanding of a common subaltern status" (Roberts, 2010, p. 454), teachers could advise students of the pitfalls they might face as African Americans. Teachers used "color talk" (Roberts, 2010), implicit curriculum (Milner & Howard, 2004), and their culturally informed connection to their students (Milner, 2006) to model a critical view of knowledge and provide students with the intellectual power to combat societal injustice (Coats, 2010), ultimately modelling stories to live by in a hostile environment. Furthermore, with so much negativity propagated about the Black race, Black teachers felt it their duty to go above and beyond the curriculum to infuse students with pride in their race, heritage, and history (Preston-Grimes, 2014). Finally, African American teachers held their students in high regard. They believed in students' ability to succeed despite the obstacles of racial injustice and educational inequities. They set high standards and goals for their students' academic and personal growth and achievement and were committed to providing students with the tools to exceed those expectations (Roberts, 2010; Preston-Grimes, 2014). Black teachers in the pre-*Brown* segregated school system shrouded their students in a culture of care; one their White post-*Brown* counterparts most often neglected to preserve.

To be clear, this article is not a suggestion to return to segregated schools. As DuBois (1935) remarked, "I know that this article will forthwith be interpreted by certain illiterate 'nitwits' as a plea for segregated Negro schools and colleges. It is not" (p. 335). This article is, however, an imploration for school leaders, pre-service teachers, and veteran teachers to realize the essentiality of a culture of care in the classroom, especially as it relates to the needs of students of color; to appreciate the relationship that existed between African American teachers in segregated schools and the students placed in their care; to recognize the patterns of behavior that made pre-integration African American teachers caring, responsible teachers. Most

important, it is a supplication for stakeholders to explore whether-or-not these patterns can be replicated by teachers in today's schools in order to build the types of teacher-student relationships that help create equity in education and maximize the potential for academic success and personal growth and development for the growing number of African American, and other students of color, in America's schools.

Methodology

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is firmly rooted in the belief that people come to understand and give meaning to their lives through story (Andrews, Squire & Tambokou, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000;). Cain, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) argue, however, that narrative inquiry is not simply telling good stories or reporting research findings through compelling narratives, but it is about "exploring and understanding lived experience" (p. 580). More specifically, biographical narrative inquiry is a narrative inquiry genre which "explores lived experiences and perspectives that people have of their daily lives, including their past, present, and future, focusing on how they make sense of the meanings they give to the stories they tell" (Kim, 2016, p. 125). This method of research allows scholars to place participants and their humanity at the core of research in order to understand how participants construct and interpret meaning in their life experiences (Kim, 2016). The resulting story, situated in the context of present or historical meaning and significance (Xu & Connelly, 2010), serves as a gateway through which the individual enters the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). At each entrance, there runs the risk of traversing into someone else's story, and that intrusion can result in a destructive collision or a beautiful dance.

Subsequently, narrative inquiry is "not only concerned with life as it is experienced in the here and now but also with life as it is experienced on a continuum" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19); thus, the collection or sequence of episodes are viewed both as significant, distinct occurrences and as chapters embedded within a "longer-term historical narrative" (p. 19). As such, it is important to consider the contextualized historical narrative of this study and how it may affect the individual storied experiences. With this in mind, it is appropriate to look at narrative inquiry from other epistemological viewpoints. For example, Nadar (2014) makes the following comment from an African feminist point of view: "…what Black feminist scholarship has done through facilitating knowledge by means of narrative inquiry, is that it has called into question the purported 'scientific' methods of data collection which claim to be value-free, emotion-less and objective" (p. 21). Such scientific methods of data collection tend to be void of the human element, thereby ignoring the human knowledge contributions that stories gleaned through narrative inquiry can provide. Historically, the African American voice, female and male, has been left out of the scientific discourse, unless the goal was to highlight supposed deficiencies. Narrative inquiry is an effective conduit to convey these missing voices and experiences (DePoy & Gitlin, 2016). Furthermore, as people of color, when research informs us of the struggle, persistence, and resilience of other people of color, we not only gain knowledge but also strength, resolve, and a sense of identity (Milner, 2007). Hence, this method of research is essential not only as a way to illuminate marginalized voices but also encourage others with similar cultural experiences.

Although, narrative inquiry provides an amplifier for the hushed, some scholars believe that as a research tool narrative inquiry has yet to take up an explicit focus on racial justice (Cook, 2018; Edwards, 2018; Ohito & Nyachae, 2018; Ozias, 2018; Pope, 2018), and that this

method could be more purposely utilized as a scholarly interpolation in racial justice dialogue. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) make the following observation about the role of narrative inquiry in promoting societal equity:

> The development of a narrative inquiry research community that can avoid simply reproducing narratives that support macrosocial systems of oppression, and can instead contribute to the amelioration of oppressive conditions, will depend on (1) educating narrative inquirers for whom the promotion of social justice is a central commitment, (2) the increased inclusion of voices examining experiences of oppresion in the narrative inquiry literature, and (3) regular dialogue with scholars in other disciplines who can provide constructive political critique of narrative inquriy practices and texts. (p. 51)

The concept of narrative inquiry as a tool to foster justice is especially important to those who assert that teaching is inherently a political act (Freire, 1970/2000; Giroux, 2016; Hooks, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Kincheloe, 2010). Narrative inquiry can be used to empower and advocate for students who are sidelined by the systemic inequities in America's education system.

Ultimately, as Delpit (2006) observes, "[p]eople of color are, in general, skeptical of research as a determiner of our fates. Academic research has, after all, found us genetically inferior, culturally deprived, and verbally deficient" (p. 31). Narrative inquiry relies on "stories as a way of knowing," and these "[s]tories emerge as data are collected and then are framed and rendered through an analytical process that is artistic as well as rigorous" (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 577). Thus, people of color do not have to rely on the restorying of their narratives by those who would bastardize the report. Narrative inquiry allows each to tell his or her own story in his/her own vernacular, based on his/her personal experiences in context over time.

Using narrative inquiry in this study allowed me to explore the rich and unique educational experiences of participants, and also discover common threads between their individual stories.

This narrative inquiry consisted of purposive sampling to invite study participants who are African American, attended a segregated elementary and/or secondary school between 1950 and 1979, and attended an integrated elementary and/or secondary school between 1950 and 1979; and historical data collected from recorded conversations with two individuals who attended segregated schools in the 1930s and 1940s.

Participants

The participants in this study are divided into two sets. The first participants (S1) include Sanford, an 82-year-old man, and Olivia, a 94-year-old woman, both African American. Sanford attended schools in Mississippi and California, and Olivia attended school in Texas. The second set (S2) of participants include six (6) African Americans who attended at least one segregated and one integrated school during the 1950s to late 1970s. Four men—Anthony, Carl, and Eddie attended schools in North Carolina, and Fred attended schools in Indiana; and two women—Bernice who attended schools in North Carolina, and Deborah attended schools in South Carolina. (All names are pseudonyms.)

Storied Data Collection

Storied data from S1 participants were collected prior to the initiation of this study and relies heavily on oral history, which is designed to collect memories and personal commentaries of historical significance. I have a close, personal relationship with Sanford. We have enjoyed many conversations during which he imparts wisdom and tells stories of his childhood and family life. Over the years, I realized what a treasure it was to be privy to these bits of narrative gems of a life very different from my own. On a couple of occasions, as we began to talk, I asked

if I could record our conversation for keepsake. More recently, I requested and was given permission to transcribe and include some of the conversations in this dissertation study.

While working on an article with a colleague, I interviewed Olivia regarding her connection to one of the first Black schools in Dallas, Texas. After completing the task at hand, I spoke with Olivia about her experiences attending segregated schools in juxtaposition to her later experiences teaching in integrated schools. With her permission, our interaction was recorded audibly and visually.

Semi-structured personal interviews, organized around a set of predetermined, open-ended questions (See **Appendix** A), were conducted with each S2 participant. Labeling the interview as "semi-structured" allowed me, in some instances, to follow the path of the participant's responses and request clarification or a deeper look into some responses. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, as well as via telephone or Skype, depending on the participants' location. All interviews were audio recorded with participant permission, and lasted no longer than 60 minutes. In addition, notes were taken. A second interview with each S2 participant allowed for fact-checking and discussion of themes that emerged during the transcribing and thematic analysis process of S2 interviews. Themes were discovered through careful reading and re-reading of interview transcripts. During this careful reading, I used steps common to the systematic text condensation approach (Malterud, 2012): 1. establish a general impression of the collective data, 2. identify and code comments relevant to each study question, 3. discover the meaning within the code groups, 4. synthesize the contents of the condensates, in order to provide "credible stories that can make a difference by elucidating the study question[s]" (Malterud, 2012, p. 800). This technique helped me discover, analyze, and restory six (6) critical themes that emerged during my rigorous analysis of the interviews and conversations.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the data collected during interviews and candid conversations, six themes emerged that characterized the experiences of the participants in this study: Black teachers' active, strong presence in the community versus White teachers' absence in that environment; Black teachers' connection with students' parents versus White teachers' avoidance of parents; high expectations to which Black teachers held their students versus minimal expectations White teachers had of Black students; and care Black teachers demonstrated through relationship building and investing time versus White teachers dismissal of the Black student. The remaining two interesting themes that emerged seemed to have a particularly significant impact on several participants: discrimination in extracurricular activities at integrated schools, and participants' active defiance against their White teachers' deficit view of them as Black students.

(1) Black teachers' active, strong presence in the community versus White teachers' absence in that environment

"… my teachers from first through 5th grade were all African American. Uhm, it was a, uhm, more of a family relationship if you will. They lived in the community and they were involved in the community.
…They [White teachers in integrated schools] didn't go to my churches, they, you know (chuckles), we didn't see them in our community. They didn't live in our community." Anthony

One hundred percent of participants mentioned seeing their Black teachers in their communities as evidence of the teachers' genuine care for and connection to the students and their families. This community presence worked in two ways for the teachers: it made them an active, accessible member of the community family, and it also gave the teachers an extra level of respect and authority as students dared not misbehave in school for fear the teacher would see the parents in the community and report on the students' misdeeds. Furthermore, scholars suggest that because many teachers lived in the same communities as their students, the teachers'

out-of-school interactions furthered their understanding and appreciation for community norms, made them available to offer academic support outside typical school hours, and helped them bring a "level of knowledge into the classroom that showed up through the implicit curriculum" (Milner & Howard, 2004, p. 294) (Caruthers & Poos, 2015; Roberts, 2010). Below are some participant comments that support this notion:

> The respect for the teacher came not only from them being a teacher, but they knew you. They knew your family. They knew your people. *Fred*

> A good majority of the teachers were part of the neighborhood, and so they were walking through the neighborhood, you know. You could sit on your porch and the teacher might walk by. They might stop and talk to you. Stop and talk to your parents and tell—you know—tell them how you were doing in school and so on. They were a huge respected icon in the Black community. And because of that, they kind of treated you as if you were their child. *Deborah*

> They not only knew you, but they knew your family. So if you was misbehaving or did good, uh, they was able to reach out to them much easier. They were eager to reach out to them, because everybody was—you know—involved. *Eddie*

There is much to be said about the trust and fellowship created when teachers live and/or participate in the school's surrounding community. Study participants reminisced about regularly seeing their African American teachers at church, in the local grocery store, and at social events, like community cook-outs. To be fair, this was a time when many African Americans had little option to live or mingle outside of Black communities, and race relations were so tense that venturing into "the other part of town" could be dangerous for either race. Today, segregated communities still play a role in the disconnect between teachers and students.

One of the major challenges of urban education is urban schools are frequently located within segregated impoverished communities (Anyon, 2014; Kahlanberg, 2017; Rothstein, 2004; Tatum, 2017). The teachers employed in these schools rarely live in those communities or patronize the businesses there; however "to be in touch with the community, one has to enter into

the physical places where the students live, and work to be invited into the emotion-laden spaces the youth inhabit" (Emdin, 2016, p. 21). Although Emdin warns teachers non-indigenous to the school's surrounding community to embark upon inserting oneself slowly and cautiously, once established, the connection can create powerful opportunities for deeper bonds.

(2) Black teachers' connection with students' parents versus White teachers' avoidance of parents

"Our parents were friends with the teachers. We felt they were more than just teacher. That they were part of our unit, being close to our parents." Olivia

Being involved in the community offers a bonus of being connected with students' parents and families. This theme emerged in conjunction with that of community involvement. Most participants felt the African American teachers had a connection with students' parents that created the proverbial village it takes to raise a child. Eddie even commented that teachers, parents, and churches made up a kind of bubble that kept students informed about the issues within the world around them but protected from some of the effects. Other participants recalled that their parents and teachers had personal relationships and regular communication. On the other hand, participants' memories of the relationship between their parents and the White teachers in integrated schools was much different. Deborah went so far as to say, "When I got to schools with—you know—with White teachers, they could care less about meeting my parents." Additionally, when I asked Eddie if the white teachers were as active in communicating with his parents as were his Black teachers, he offered the following response:

> Absolutely not. Absolutely that went away. That went away. The only time that took effect was during like a PTA meeting. You know, we use to have those. And that was the only communication your parents had with that teacher.

Participants reported their beliefs that this lack of connection between Black parents and White teachers was potentially due to teachers feeling intimidated by parents, and parents feeling

dismissed and devalued by teachers. Unfortunately, today there is still a disconnect between the majority teacher and the parents of students of color. A lack of understanding of the dynamics of families of color encourages White teachers to see the parents as obstacles to the teachers work and the student's success (Brown & Beckett, 2007; Fuentes, 2011). But Fields-Smith (2005) makes the following observation:

> By being mindful of a cultural heritage that includes sacrificial pursuit of education and by acknowledging parents as a child's first teacher, contemporary educators must consider ways to develop trusting relationships with African American parents and parents of other races and ethnicities as well. (p. 134)

Ultimately, a positive relationship with parents can set the stage for a quality relationship with their student.

(3) High expectations to which Black teachers held their students versus minimal expectations White teachers had of Black students

"It was like the Black man was pushing you to do good, but then when we integrated, it felt like didn't nobody care. Either you did it or you didn't." Bernice

The divergent experiences regarding the expectations of Black versus White teachers were the most starkly contrasted differences noted by participants. There were several instances in which participants recalled their Black teachers not allowing them to do less than their best:

> I remember there was a case where there was a test that I took—some test that I took and I didn't do well, and she got the grade and she looked at me and she said, 'Why didn't you do…what's wrong?" And I said, "Aww, I just didn't feel like doing it." (Laughs) She made me do it again. She did not accept the fact that I didn't put my best effort forward. She was like, "No, you take it again, right now." So, I had to retake the test. They all expected us to do well and do our best. You definitely felt that. *Fred*

> We were doing a spelling bee, and I was actually a pretty good speller. The kids who got out [misspelled words] early got to go out and play, and the kids who continued to stay in it got to stay inside; and if they won it, they got to compete against other classes. I had won it several times, but this time I wanted to go out and play. So, I was given a very

> simple word that I missed intentionally so that I could go out and play. Uh, my teachers knew what my capabilities were, and they refused to let me go out; and they made me stay in the spelling bee, which I ended up winning. *Anthony*

> They promoted, I thought, why it was important to have a good education. They'd share their own challenges on how they got their education. They had their own homes and we didn't, so they were modeling for us a way to get out and purchase our own home and have nicer things through education. They wouldn't settle for us not doing what we needed to do, including class and homework. *Carl*

> In Mississippi, I had one teacher all the time. She was Black and she was good. In those days, I mean, you know, the teachers really got on the kids to make them learn so they'd be something and make something out of themselves and out of life. So, uh, you didn't mess around when you was in class…. The Black teachers really took an interest in the kids because they knew what they were going to be up against. *Sanford*

Unfortunately, participants remembered their White teachers as not being so concerned about Black students' success:

> Some of them didn't even care, because if a Black person was behind or you didn't understand, a lot of them didn't, well, not all of them, but some of them didn't care. Some of them treated us like we were dirty. If you needed help, you didn't get it because they felt like you should have got it when everybody else did. *Bernice*

> A friend I played ball with was encouraged by the principal, who, uh, just so happened to be a White man, to seek a job of head janitor; and he told him he'd probably do well in that. He, my friend, ended up going to John C. Smith and now owns his own business. Nothing wrong with being a janitor, but I don't believe that would have been a suggestion in the segregated school. We were encouraged to reach higher. *Carl*

> …they didn't expect anything – they didn't say "Oh you're going to be successful… I want you to go to college." No, there was none of that. Those kids were just—it was really a bad system. *Olivia*

> I don't think they pushed us to a higher level like our African American—Black teachers and stuff. So, no they didn't. They just was there to do a job. *Eddie*

Today, the majority teacher still seems to have low expectations of students of color. Furthermore, "it has been suggested that minority group students are more susceptible to teachers' low expectations than are white students and that this may serve to further widen the achievement gap" (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006, p. 431). Teachers must respect

students' intellectual capacities (Hooks & Miskovic, 2011). They can do this by setting high expectations and demonstrating compassion and care for their emotional well-being. Such expectations, compassion, and care can make the difference between positive and negative student outcomes.

(4) Care Black teachers demonstrated through relationship building and investing time versus White teachers' dismissal of the Black student

"And if you can bring a story to them, there are several things they get from that. They feel like you care enough about them to tell them your story, and it makes the subject matter much more." Olivia

In line with the overall premise of this study, the dominant theme present throughout participants' narratives was that of the caring or uncaring teacher. Most of the comments about Black teachers in segregated schools illuminated caring teachers who were interested in building authentic relationships with students and investing in students' success. In the base of an entryway umbrella holder and storage bench in her childhood home, Olivia's mother kept an antique autograph book Olivia used to capture memories of her classmates and teachers as she graduated from sixth grade. Olivia, now 90+ years old, shared some of the contents from her book. Her following narrative, in particular, stood out as a moving example of how African American teachers cared for and invested in the African American student:

> I found this autograph book from 1937, the year I graduated. And, uh, it's worn, but it has all of the teachers listed and the grades they taught. My teachers—the comments that they made…. "Dear [Olivia], may success and happiness always attend you wherever you may go and in all you do. Ms. [Evans], your teacher and friend." They insisted that they were our friends. Another teacher was [Vera Thompson], and she lived on [Rice] Street, that's in south Dallas, and she wrote, "[Olivia], darling, always remember that I am as interested in your success as your parents are, so always be very careful. Your friend." These teachers were absolutely exceptional.

There were many more participant stories of teachers acting as the counselor, benefactor, encourager, and race cheerleader that Walker and Tompkins (2004) and Preston-Grimes (2014)

discuss in their studies about Black women teachers. However, when asked about their relationship with White teachers, participants' comments highlighted a lack of relationship, with most commenting that those relationships were unmemorable, one recalling an atmosphere of mutual fear, and another stating simply, "it wasn't the same."

(5) Discrimination in extracurricular activities at integrated schools

"…they wouldn't play the best players. They would, uhm, play the White players." Eddie

Without prompting, some participants shared memories of discrimination in extracurricular activities and upper level academic courses in the integrated schools. These experiences seemed to be quite impactful and the telling of these stories were often punctuated by long silences. Following are some of their memories:

> Freshman year I played on the freshmen football team and the freshmen basketball team. Our team had things called challenges where you could challenge for a position. We had different strings and first string played all the time, and you could challenge if you were on a lower string. But that was the issue. We had guys that challenged first string guys. Like a Black guy on 3rd string challenging a guy on first string, and demonstrated in front of every one that he's better at that position but not getting played. *Fred*

> I wanted to be drum major and, uhm, you have to try out for that, and so I tried out and the bands decide. They watch all of the things you have to do, uhm, and then they vote. And so after the vote the band directors called me in and they told me, you did a good job and in fact we feel we can be honest with you, you actually won, but we can't let you be. We rely too much on donations from the community and this community is not ready, and so we can't let you be. …[T]hey were so logical in their thought, saying "we can only do this by donations." And them even saying we don't get a lot of donations from the Black community. It's the White community and they're just not ready. *Deborah*

One participant who tested into advanced classes at her integrated school recalled that some of the White teachers made it clear "they weren't pleased that [I] was in there," stating that the teachers would give abrupt responses to her questions and often not call on her when her hand was raised. In a study conducted by Carter (2007), a young African American student remarked that White teachers ignored him when he shared comments or raised his hand in class, and the

disregard demonstrated to him his lack of value in class. Whether in class, sports, or other extracurricular activities, when teachers discount students, those students learn that they do not matter.

(6) Participants' active defiance against their White teachers' deficit view of them as Black students

Resistance can be used to "dismantle the multiple and intertwined forms of oppression operative in contemporary schooling" (Buntin, 2002, p. 14), thus, it was gratifying to see that participants met the challenges experienced in integrated schools with strength and resolve.

> I knew a lot of times the expectation was that I couldn't do things. I wouldn't be able to do things. I was keenly aware of that, and my whole thing was to prove them wrong. *Fred*

> I—for some reason, I don't remember being intimidated by them, and oddly enough, I wanted to impress them as much as I impressed my African American teachers. I think there was kind of a double pride there. I wanted to show them I could do anything and I also wanted to show them that my teachers [Black teachers] were pretty good teachers and they taught me. *Anthony*

> Our parents drilled in us that we were just as good, and so my attitude was one of "let me show you." *Carl*

> A lot of time, you know, Black children, we did our homework and stuff together, trying to help each other to get ahead. Because we knew that we won't [sic] gonna get help anymore. After we integrated— everybody—we tried to help each other. *Bernice*

Apparently, students not only worked to prove their worth in their new environment, but also they attempted to help one another succeed, collectively. Thus, while the peer-effect idea that a student created normative climate promotes achievement (Coleman et al., 1966) was "the main intellectual justification for school desegregation" (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 509), it may have been the peer-effect of African American students on African American students that helped struggling students survive in their changed environment with hostile tendencies.

It would be remiss, unethical, unfair, and counterproductive to the goal of this research if I failed to point out the few instances in which participants recalled feeling cared for and supported by a White teacher in integrated schools. While I hope this research will offer the majority teacher behaviors and practices to emulate that will help them surmount their cultural mismatch with students through purposeful interactions, it must be acknowledged that there are already many White teachers effectively, care-fully, and responsibly teaching children of color. Such teachers are present now, and they were present then. Following is evidence of their presence and impact:

> One [White teacher] in particular… called me in a couple times…. My mom and dad had gotten a divorce which is why we moved, and my mom just really kind of fell apart. And so, if we wanted to eat, if we wanted to pay bills, there needed to be money. So, I went to work. So, I was exhausted all the time. And she recognized it. *Deborah*

> Mrs. M. was my language arts teachers, so I stayed in her class the majority of the day. I remember having a great relationship with her initially, and even when it deteriorated, it was to no fault of hers. It was me being a little ignorant boy, I think, at that time. *Anthony*

> I was fortunate, I think, obviously, there was some uneasiness—uncertainty is a better word. My first experience [with White teachers] was very good. I had really good teachers. I didn't readily know discrimination. You know? There were opportunities to raise your hand and give the answer. At no time, Diana, did I feel like I was overlooked. *Carl*

When I asked Carl what made his teachers "really good teachers," he commented that they treated the Black students with kindness and gave them the same opportunities and assistance that they gave the White students. Clearly, these teachers chose to put relationship and responsibility over politics and prejudice. Perhaps they believed as did Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967):

> In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you

> can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be…This is the inter-related structure of reality. (n.p.)

King's statement illuminates the ultimate interest convergence amongst all humanity. Perhaps acknowledgment of the veracity of his words is the precursor to authentic caring.

Recommendations

African American teachers cared about their students—they had a connection with them. They knew what the students were up against, because they had fought those battles themselves. They cared about their students because they were part of the community—part of their families. They believed in their students and encouraged them to do their best. Most (but surely not all) White teachers, on the other hand, either did not know how to, or simply did not want to connect with their new students. But as Milner (2006) comments, "much can be learned from the success of Black teachers with Black students" (p. 101). He goes on to ask, what are some characteristics, beliefs, and practices of Black teachers that other teachers can use to improve their experiences and impact with Black students. Based on the reflections of my participants and the research conducted to pen this article, Table 1 highlights some of those characteristics, beliefs, and practices that create a culture of care, and offer a few recommendations for majority teachers who want to be caring, responsible, effective, culturally sensitive educators.

Table 1. Examples of pre-*Brown* African American teachers' practices and behaviors that created a culture of care, and recommended practices and behaviors for teachers of other races and ethnicities, especially the majority U.S. teacher, to maximize academic and personal development of African American students.

Behaviors & practices of pre-*Brown* African American teachers, that demonstrate a culture of care	**Behaviors & practices today's teachers can demonstrate to promote a culture of care.**
Strong community presence	Visit churches in your school's surrounding community. Attend student's non-school games, events, and performances. Research and patronize specialty or locally owned shops/stores and restaurants. Search for opportunities to engage!
Collaborative, amicable relationship with parents	Talk to your students' parents! Offer your expertise regarding academics, and ask parents to share their expertise regarding interaction with their child. Don't make assumptions about parent involvement or lack thereof—ask what you don't know! Sit with parents when you attend student events. Call them very early in the year before there is anything negative to report! You must be the one to reach out—repeatedly.
High expectations	Do not lower expectations, thinking it is being kind and giving students a break. This is not authentic caring, and may give students an excuse and permission to fail (Ladson-Billings, 2002). If students are behind, take time to discover why, and invest the time to bring them up to speed. Do not recommend students for remedial coursework if you are not properly trained to make such diagnosis, or if you have not first engaged in self-reflection to examine your attitude and practices that may foster low expectations that affect student performance.
Culturally informed connections	No matter your personal trials, discrimination based on race or ethnicity can only be fully understood by others of that race or ethnicity who have had similar experiences. So, while you cannot have the culturally informed relationships Milner (2006) talks about, you can become culturally informed. Learn about your students' cultures, norms, and practices by conducting research, asking questions, and getting involved in the community. These efforts will allow you to develop the authentic relationships that lead to your professional fulfillment and your students' success.
Concern for students' future	The African American teachers of the *Brown v. Board* expressed and addressed concerns for their students' futures (Roberts, 2010), understanding their shared "subaltern status" (p. 454). You must acknowledge that there are systemic societal issues that negatively affect and limit opportunities for people of certain cultural backgrounds. Use your cultural capital as part of the dominant culture to help students gain the knowledge they need to navigate the roadblocks they will encounter beyond your classroom.
Care	If you want to be a quality teacher, the type of teacher whose pedagogy is rooted in beliefs and values that lead to positive, caring, responsible teacher-student relationships, then you must engage in critical self-reflection to determine if you truly have the heart for this caring profession that you find yourself in and if you are willing to exercise your capacity to care for all students. If you find that you do not and cannot, then be humane enough to choose a different profession.

Conclusion

The cultural mismatch that exists between America's majority teacher and it is growing diverse student population is not expected to reverse or slow down. As many researchers, in part, attribute major education issues like disparities in school disciplinary practices and the purported achievement gap to a lack of affirming relationships between these two divergent groups (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Cavanagh, 2010; Noddings, 2003b), it is essential to provide teachers with the education and encouragement they need to establish and maintain caring, responsible relationships with their students. Gay (2010) comments that "conventional wisdom, personal experience, theoretical assertions, research findings, and best practices…suggest that the heart of the educational process is the interactions that occur between teachers and students" (p. 48). Unfortunately, however, the ability to care is often assumed instead of cultivated or taught (Owens & Ennis, 2005), leaving teachers struggling to make authentic connections with their students whose backgrounds differ from the teacher's own.

African American teachers of the *Brown v. Board of Education* era created a culture of care by exhibiting behaviors and practices, and holding values and beliefs that lead to authentic relationships with their students. The ability to demonstrate classroom care is a conscious habit of choice (Preston-Grimes, 2014), and much can be learned from the ways in which African American teachers have engaged, empowered, and cared for African American students (Milner, 2006). Additionally, while this narrative inquiry focuses on U.S. teachers and students, Ladson-Billings' (2004) words help connect it to a global context:

> Another reason for considering *Brown* is the degree to which school desegregation has become an international issue. Schools in South Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle

> East, Russia, and China are dealing with the dismantling of separate and unequal school systems to better integrate subordinate populations into the mainstream" (p. 3).

Although U.S. school desegregation initiatives began over sixty years ago, we as a nation are still dealing with the dismantling of separate and unequal education, both outside and within the classroom. This research shares some gems that, hopefully, today's teacher, in American and abroad, will be able to excavate and find useful in their quest to be great teachers for all students.

CHAPTER III

UP FROM CARELESSNESS: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE OF BEING BLACK IN SCHOOL

Synopsis

In one year, I moved from a diverse school where I was pretty and smart to a “White” school, where I was instantly ugly and dumb. In this work, I employ autobiographical narrative inquiry to examine how a little African American girl’s transfer from an urban to a suburban school resulted in a paradigm shift that has profound consequences on her identity development and subsequent choices and practices as a marginalized student struggling to succeed academically, a teacher grappling with professional identity, and a doctoral student hoping to help pre-service teachers prepare to meet the needs of diverse students.

Overview

Research, whether qualitative or quantitative, demands that we locate our personal inquiries within the context of existing literature. Although I approximate that rooting my narrative in such demands may enhance its validity, I appreciate that narrative inquiry—my chosen research method—esteems the spoken or written words of individuals and focuses on their lives as told through their own stories, without requiring their experiences to fit in a dominant theoretical framework in order to be valid or validated. Nevertheless, as I employ the autobiographical narrative genre of narrative inquiry to analyze my own related experiences embedded in the larger social and cultural context of a culture of care in the milieu of the school environment, I will also attempt to consistently attempt to make connections between my experiences and similar phenomena about which other scholars have studied and written. Additionally, I will include elements of traditional research, specifically a brief section on methodology and theoretical frame, to explicitly align my personal experiences with relevant theory and a recognized methodology and to offer my scholarly contribution to discourse regarding the importance of care in education, which is an important piece of knowledge nationally and internationally.

Methodology

The use of autobiographical narrative inquiry as a qualitative method of research is still emerging, yet there is much literature that supports it as a valuable practice of research (Denshire, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The advantage is that as a reflexive mode of inquiry I, myself, am the unit of analysis and can, therefore, examine my own experiences and share the *truth* of my reality. Bignold and Su (2013) state, “truth is not static but is co-constructed by each individual, participant and researcher, through his/her personal

experiences" (p. 402). Thus, it is important to realize that in relation to narrative inquiry, truths are dialogic, collaborative, and emotional truths rather than literal truths (Kim, 2016). Hence, the personal truths that emerge in narratives are just that—personal truths. Abrahão (2012) notes that in this mode of research "the researcher does not want to know what or how facts 'really' happened, but how the narrator thought about it at the time and how he or she remembers it in the present" (p. 30). So, as narrative inquiry looks to convey the truth as individuals tell it, truthlikeness, or a sense of what is true right now (Craig, 2018a), it is essential that I ensure validity and reliability to the best of my ability. Therefore, I support my truth claims by employing methodological triangulation, which involves more than one method to gather data. I rely not only on my memory of personal experiences but also I engage my family in dialogue to compare their memories to my own. I also examine school documents from my youth, journal entries from various points in my life, notes from past students, and reflections from current undergraduate students as data that may offer further insight and meaning. Furthermore, I attempt to support my truth claims by inviting readers to make connections between my experience and their own. Providing sufficient detail of the context "for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar" (Shenton, 2004, p. 63) may create transferability and allow readers to find some degree of parallelism in our collective stories.

Additionally, a narrative inquirer can employ the analytical tools of broadening, burrowing, storying and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) to "analyze and seam together" her narrative material (Kim, 2016, p. 207). Figure 3 illustrates how I will use internal (memory) and external (documents and dialogue) data as I utilize these analytical tools. I use broadening to situate my story within the history of public education for the African American student,

especially in the diverging environments of urban and suburban schools. I burrow as I focus on the "emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities" of my experiences and ask myself why certain events are connected to particular feelings and what their origins may be (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11). Finally, I use storying and restorying to help me capture the personal and social changes (Craig, 2013) that occur as I revisit, remember, reexamine, and reflect upon my past and present experiences.

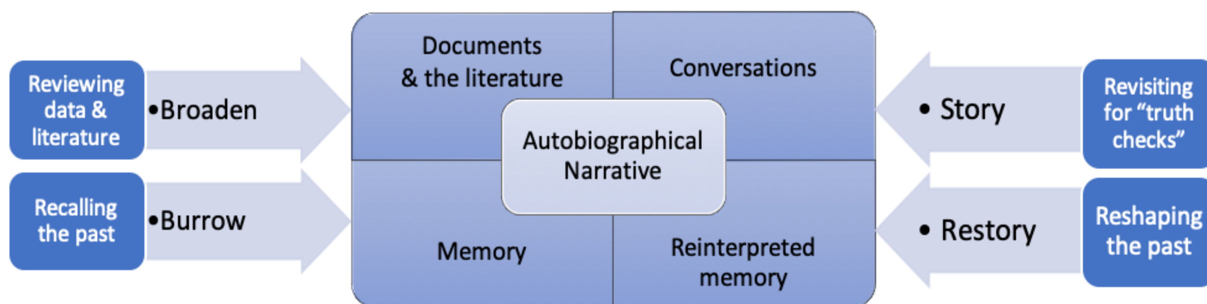

Figure 3. Diagram of how the core narrative inquiry analytical tools are connected in this study.

Ultimately, via autobiographical narrative, I explore my erratic developmental journey as an African American marginalized student struggling to succeed academically; a teacher grappling with my professional identity; a doctoral student trying to navigate the politics of higher education; and an instructor hoping to help pre-service teachers prepare to be great leaders and role models for their future students. Offering an account of my academic journey, at the intersection of my race, class, and gender emerges as an image of social, cultural, and educational challenges and possibilities, barriers and breakthroughs, some with which I am still struggling or working through. What is more is that the complexity of my journey permeates all aspects of my narrative, even spilling into the more technical aspects of writing this autobiographical narrative—like my (in)ability to isolate the theory that drives my thinking in

relation to this writing. Initially, this conundrum stumped me; but once I began "letting experience in the front door and bringing theory through the back" (Iftody, 2013, p. 382), the shadow at my back door began to materialize.

Theoretical Framework

It is challenging to choose one theoretical framework to inform this autobiographical narrative. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) might help me share how my horrible math skills and feelings of insecurity inside while feigning complete confidence outwardly are a result of my self-protecting response to an insensitive educational environment that may have otherwise destroyed me. Relational theory (Miller, 1976) could help explain why the lack of authentic, mutual relationships with my early teachers created an ongoing disconnect between me, school and teachers. Critical race theory (Bell, 1976) may guide the overall discussion of why I first experienced academic difficulties when I enrolled in a predominantly White school (PWI). Resilience theory (Nettles & Pleck, 1994) would provide the blueprint for revealing how I coped with negative school experiences and ended up in a doctoral program at Texas A&M University. However, I believe that relational/cultural theory (RCT) (Miller, 1976) will most adequately support my thinking and provide me with the parameters needed to share my story with clarity and purpose.

"RCT posits that people grow through and toward relationships throughout the lifespan, and that culture powerfully impacts relationship" (Jean Baker Miller Training Institute, n.d.); it also proposes that "successful relational connections—interactions that are mutually empathic and mutually empowering—are vital to individual and shared learning" (Rector-Aranda, 2018, p. 4). One of the core tenets of RCT is the Central Relational Paradox (CRP), which postulates that every individual has a natural inclination toward relationships and in these relationships, we

yearn for acceptance. However, external forces, experiences, and interactions lead to internal angst and the belief that there are things about us that are unacceptable and unlovable. To avoid rejection, we hide these “flaws” and we keep them out of our relationships. Ultimately, the relationships we build with others are not as satisfying and validating as they otherwise might have been. RCT also recognizes the significance of cultural context to human development, relationship building, and daily life. Originating in the field of human psychology, this theory is also pertinent in education and germane to the narrative of my dysfunctional relationship with academia.

My Soul Looks Back in Wonder: Memories of Elementary and Secondary Education

One significant difference between suburban and urban communities is the schools, with the advantage being given to those in suburbia. These suburban schools, most often consisting of a predominantly White student body, typically have better resources, superior facilities, more highly qualified teachers, and higher academic expectations. These advantages, however, do not always translate positively for students of color. Over the course of one school year, I moved from a “Black” school, where I was pretty and smart, to a “White” school, where I instantly became ugly and dumb in the eyes of my beholders. The greatest influences on the sudden degeneration of my developing self-identity were the divergent levels of academic expectations between the two schools; the absence of concern for, or investment in my academic or personal success at the White school; and the intolerance of cultural differences as exhibited by some of my classmates. Ultimately, being Black in a predominantly White school meant dealing with the “mundane, extreme environment in which the many forms of racism and oppression are an ever-present part of daily living rather than occasional hazards” (Tatum, 1999, p. 9). This school

transfer created for me a paradigm shift that had profound consequences on my identity development and forever affecting my academic and personal choices.

The early years of my life were great. I was raised in a two-parent home (my parents were married for 42 years when my mother died in her sleep of heart disease) with parents who loved me and my three older siblings and took very good care of us. Our family's socioeconomic status was never below middle-class. In fact, most of my friends in our small Kansas town thought we were rich. We had everything we needed and most of what we wanted. I do not recall any unhappy memories at all until I transferred schools in second grade. My father was in the military until I entered second grade, and when he was in a place where we could not accompany him, my mother desired to be close to her parents in Kansas. So, during these times, we lived in a small house my parents owned in a lower middle-class, racially diverse neighborhood, right next door to my grandparents.

I am the youngest of my siblings, so I reached out to them to check my perception of our old neighborhood. It is in this act of reinterpretation of the facts of the past into the present that we "'weave the threads' of the narrative as a shared memory'' (Costa, 2001, p. 82). My sisters and I grappled with our respective recollections via a group text conversation (**see Appendix** B). While our memories of this community vary, in this unmistakably diverse neighborhood was an elementary school with a predominantly White teaching staff. I attended this school in kindergarten, first, and half of second grade. In this environment, I excelled tremendously and was one of the smartest girls in the class (as my teachers often told my mother). Then my father retired from the army, we moved to the "better" side of town, and I instantly became a simpleton. I went from a school with an extremely diverse student population to a school where I was one of only a handful of children of color on the entire campus. The

academics were more advanced, students were further ahead in their studies, facilities were nicer. I was lost in my new school. I would regularly go into the bathroom and cry, especially during math time. And, as if the academics were not difficult enough, being one of few Black children in the school did not help my social life.

You know how people say that a person knows he or she is homosexual at a very early age? A recent *Parenting* magazine article stated, “children usually start to figure out whom they are attracted to between the ages of 9 and 12” (Dolgoff, 2017). Well, I have never heard anyone talk about when a person realizes he or she is Black, but I came to this full realization when I was 7. Sure, I knew other people whose skin was lighter or darker than mine, so I knew that different shades of skin color was a thing. I even knew that I liked the darker skin tones best. In my young mind, darker skin was prettier because it did not show the veins and discolorations like paler skin exposed. I remember being a little scared of two older ladies—our fair complexioned Hispanic neighbor in New Jersey, Ms. Anciana; and an elderly White neighbor in Kansas, Jack Boyd’s mom (that is what I called her)—because I could see the varicose veins in their legs (which I thought were worms) and the age spots on their hands and arms. Even though I knew that my skin was different from theirs, I had not yet grasped the concept of being Black. My new schoolmates helped me remedy this delayed recognition.

“Horns! Horns! You have horns on your head!” This was my welcome on the first day at my new school. At my old school, there were a lot of girls who wore their hair in pig-tails like mine. At my old school, everybody thought my thick hair was pretty. In this new school, there was only one girl in my class who looked like me, and she was the only one who was nice to me. When I told my mom about the kids at school, she said they were just jealous. So, sometime later when one of those mean girls called me “horns,” I told her she was just jealous because her hair

could not look like mine. She promptly informed me that she could not be jealous of me because I was a “Black girl with horns,” insinuating that because she was not Black and did not have “horns,” she was better. That was a defining moment for me. I remember it clearly. I looked her over, head to toe, and I noticed that she had big ears and a funny nose. I called her elephant ears, and then I ran off to play. I pretended like it did not bother me, but somewhere deep inside, it did. For the first time, I began to wonder if there was something wrong with the way I looked.

Interestingly, however, while my schoolmate’s taunts stung, it was the trauma inflicted by my new teachers that created the most significant damage. Jordan (2004) suggests that trauma caused by other people impedes movement in relationships and creates a “complete disruption of self-other-world meaning systems” (p. 37). The author paraphrases Epstein (1985), suggesting that a deeply distressing experience may create for the traumatized a “world that is no longer seen as benign but malevolent, lacking in meaning, and unjust; others are seen as a source of threat, and the self is felt to be unworthy” (p. 37). One may think the word *trauma* is too strong in this instance, but “racism in school has serious consequences—from fueling the school-to-prison pipeline to traumatizing children of color” (Nittle, 2019); and as trauma is defined as a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, I am sure that the experiences in my new school traumatized me; and I am sure that those experiences were fueled by issues of race. I can recall being the only one to get in trouble for childish misdeeds that were being performed by me *and* White classmates, and I remember being singled out for not paying attention, while the White boy who was creating the distraction was not addressed for his disruptive behavior. Most often, these inequities occurred at the hands of my White teachers, as did most of my negative experiences I had at this school. However, at this juncture, I must mention Mrs. Oriyin.

Mrs. Oriyin. She was my second grade teacher at the White school. She was beautiful and Black. Yes, that is right, the first teacher at my new school was Black like me, and she failed me. Now, it was not until recently that I accepted this fact. I wanted to idealistically remember Mrs. Oriyin as the Black teacher who took me under her wing and helped me find my way in my new environment. Over the years, I have even told people that she was my favorite teacher. In fact, I found an old paper I wrote for a class in my masters program, and these were my words:

> Mrs. Oriyin was a beautiful Black woman who took an interest in my success. At first, Mrs. Oriyin just thought that I was a lazy Black child who did not want to try. When she realized that this was not the case, she took me under her wing and kept me from plummeting to the depths of despair where I thought my little seven-year-old self was headed. I was too far behind those children to truly catch up that year, but she helped me to believe that it was possible and that I would not always be behind. One day when I came out of the bathroom with tears in my eyes, she held me in her arms and whispered, "Fight with knowledge, baby, not tears. You can do this. We'll do it together." I think I knew then that I wanted to be like her—a teacher. (Wandix, 2000)

Lies! The only truth in that scenario was me coming out of the bathroom crying, and Mrs. Oriyin treating me like I was just some lazy, dumb child. I believe she was embarrassed by my failure and wanted to distance herself from me because I represented the negative stereotypes of intellectual inferiority many held about Black children and Black people in general. Pyke (2010) called this type of internalized racism "defensive othering." I remember a specific incident that even now conjures up the feeling of sadness and isolation I felt all those years ago. After Mrs. Oriyin taught a math lesson, we would be assigned problems to demonstrate our understanding. If we needed help, or as we completed the work, we had to stand in line at her desk for help

and/or to have our work checked. I stood in line for what seemed to me like eternity; and I really had to use the restroom. If we got out of line, however, we had to go to the back of the line. There were three kids ahead of me and I just could not "hold it" anymore. I jumped out of line and ran into the bathroom (there was a single toilet bathroom and sink within the classroom). Unfortunately, I could not get my pants unzipped quickly enough, and I urinated on myself. I stayed in the bathroom and cried for quite some time. I decided to splash water all over my pants and the floor and say that the faucet squirted out all over the place. I went back to the line with red eyes and wet pants. When it was my turn at Mrs. Oriyin's desk, she looked at me with such disgust that at this moment, my own face scowls in imitation as I so clearly remember her expression. She loudly asked, "Did you pee on yourself?" I remember trying to explain about the water as she physically scooted away from me as if repulsed by my presence.

Connelly and Clandinin (1995) comment that if one remembers something with passion, then it is meaningful; and "if something affected one profoundly, it was of educational importance" (p. 74). The authors further suggest that it is important to identify these significant memories and movements in our lives and create stories of them to help us better understand ourselves. As I reflect on my experience with Mrs. Oriyin, I realize that there is one other piece of my story about her that is true: my first inclinations to be a teacher were because of her. She was very pretty; she was my complexion; she had the most beautiful white teeth, and when she smiled at the other kids, she looked happy, and so did they. I longed for that type of connection in this new milieu. RCT suggests a central human need is the establishment of authentic and mutual connection in relationships, and a lack of such relationships can set the stage for social and psychological difficulties. I propose that in the school setting, a lack of such relationships can also lead to difficulties in socioemotional, cognitive, behavioral, and overall academic

growth and development of the student. This idea is supported by many scholars who point out the importance of a secure teacher-student relationship or attachment to the student's academic achievement, behavioral adjustment, and general happiness (Al-Yagon & Mikulincer, 2006; Kearns & Hart, 2017; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). Imagine an elementary aged child who spends seven to nine hours of his or her day in a classroom with a teacher who neither encourages, promotes, nor desires to have an authentic relationship with that child. What does that mean for that child's social, emotional, intellectual, and psychological well-being in that setting? What does it mean for the child's ultimate academic and personal success?

None of the teachers in my new school took an interest in me. This is not an exaggeration. Just as I recall the look of disgust on Mrs. Oriyin's face, some of the clearest memories of my teachers in this school are simply their faces, distorted and angry; their fingers pointed in my face; and their harsh tones of reprimand. Had just one of them attempted to establish an authentic, caring relationship with me, they would have seen that I was not "less than." I simply had educational gaps that needed to be filled. I recently found an old report card from my first year at my new school. The scale of "checks" in the various categories could range from *rapid progress* at best to *needs to improve* at worst. I had no *rapid progress* checks, but I did have several *needs to improve*. Apparently, I sometimes had trouble in the areas of "completes work carefully," "works well independently," and "shows courteous, pleasant attitude." Hammond (2015) notes that if a student senses a threat or some form of social, emotional, or physical harm within a classroom environment, his or her brain is flooded with stress hormones initiating a fight-or-flight response (p. 40). I do not recall being discourteous or attitudinal (that would not have been tolerated by my parents), but perhaps I exhibited questionable behavior as a fighting response—an early counter-story—to the environment.

To be fair, there were plenty of times that my teachers—Mrs. Oriyin and my White teacher—performed kindnesses, gave me positive attention, or demonstrated caring behavior toward me. Nevertheless, the negative experiences outweighed the positive, and that one year of elementary school has been the impetus causing me to constantly question my intelligence and competence. Even now. I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in communication studies, a Master of Education in reading education; I am certified by the state of Texas as an English Language Arts and Reading Classroom Teacher, Grades 8-12, a Principal, Grades EC-12, and I am also English as a Second Language certified. I am a Merit Fellow at a Tier 1 university, where I am pursuing a PhD. I do a pretty good job of feigning self-confidence, but I still hang out with that little second grader on a regular basis. She continues to whisper in my ear and to remain in my subconscious thoughts. But, that was second grade. What happened in grades 3-12? Did I not recover? No. Here is why: With only a few middle schools in the city, the school I had to attend placed me right back in the environment in which I excelled during kindergarten, first, and half of second grade—a highly diverse school that created for me a low bar that rendered artificial success. I had just spent five years in a school where the vast majority of my classmates were White, and now I did not have the "cool" of my racial peers with whom I desperately wanted to connect. The last thing on my mind was academia. The only reason I even did enough to get by is because I did not want to get in trouble at home. I hid that unacceptable part of me that was an academic failure by pretending I did not know when assignments were due, thus getting extra time and begrudged additional help to complete them. The high school I attended was predominantly White, but the rest of us made up about twenty-five to thirty percent of the student body (I think). I was an athlete, a cheerleader, a homecoming queen candidate…my social life was too busy to fuss with the school work I did not understand anyway. Again, I did

just enough to stay out of trouble at home. I loathed elementary and middle school; but high school was tolerable, thanks to the extracurricular activities and social aspects at which I excelled. I hated school; but now I cannot stay out of one, whether I am teaching or learning. So, one may ask, what provoked my shift in perspective?

Ultimately, I became a teacher because I felt a strong need to rectify my own education experience. I wanted to become a teacher who would make sure all my students, no matter where they lived or what they looked like, would have their teacher as a cheerleader and fan and would be expected to do their best and given the tools to do so. Unfortunately, however, this proved to be not as easy as I imagined, as "…we cannot separate the personal from the professional self, mostly in a profession that is impregnated with values and ideals and that is very demanding from the standpoint of commitment to human relations" (Novoa, 2005, p.7). I was profoundly affected by my school experiences and it significantly affected my subsequent professional identity development as a teacher.

Rough Side of the Mountain: Memories of Teaching Before and After Becoming a Teacher

In 1993, Beverly Daniel Tatum spoke at the Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies at Wellesley College. The title of her presentation was "Racial Identity Development and Relational Theory: The Case of Black Women in White Communities" (Tatum, 1993). I recently read a transcript of Tatum's presentation, and her explanation of Cross's (1971) five-stage model of Black identity development stood out to me. I found it to be an accurate representation of my professional identity development as a teacher, at the intersection of my racial identity development.

During Preencounter, stage one, the African American experiences an internalization of negative Black stereotypes. I believe I subconsciously "absorbed many of the beliefs and values

of the dominant White culture, including ‘White is right’ and ‘Black is wrong” (Tatum, 1993, p. 2) simply by being constantly submerged in a White community. In addition to witnessing and experiencing teachers’ differing treatment of Black and White students, I remember watching shows like *Good Times*, *All in the Family*, and *The Jeffersons* that, while I believe their purpose was to challenge dominant narratives, often highlighted the stereotypic differences between the races. *Good Times* was my favorite and I remember they often talked about how poorly J.J. performed in school. He was a horrible student in everything except art. Michael, on the other hand, was brilliant; but in one episode, Michael was suspended from school. His mother asked him why he was suspended, and he said, “Because I’m Black.” Michael had challenged the teacher’s representation of George Washington as a great man and was expelled for his “disrespect” of one of America’s forefathers. Even Michael’s parents chastised him for denigrating the late President and disrespecting the teacher. Thus, even though Washington owned slaves, as Michael pointed out, the teacher was right, Washington was great, and Michael—the Black Power enthusiast—was wrong. I carried these notions with me into my first teaching job. I was the only African American teacher on campus, teaching middle school reading and language arts to a very diverse student body.

As a teacher, I kept the negative Black stereotypes that had invaded my psyche to myself. I was appalled and ashamed that I had developed such biases against my own people. It was that piece of me that I found unacceptable and unlovable. I hid this flaw, creating an inauthentic self whose relationships with students and co-workers were disingenuous and unfulfilling. I assumed my students of color to be less capable and was surprised when they proved to be otherwise. If these students did struggle, however, I would cover it up by working extra with them before school and allowing them to re-submit low or missing grades. I realize,

though, that I was not helping them for the sake of helping them. I was helping them to avoid my embarrassment about their failure. I am ashamed to admit that I did not offer this additional help to my White students, believing they were getting more than their share of attention from all other teachers. Furthermore, as the only teacher of color on staff, I wrestled with trying to be the "cool" Black teacher and colleague who demonstrated her Blackness through her tough demeanor and "real talk" with the students, or being the consummate professional, assimilated and accepted by my White co-workers.

In the next school at which I taught, a private Christian k-12 school, I was not only the sole teacher of color, but there were also very few students of color. My experience in this particular school, however, neither helped nor hindered my developing professional or racial identity; yet I continued to struggle with what it meant to be the only African American teacher in a school—being seen as the sole representative of all people of color, feeling isolated in teacher meetings and events, and lacking peers from my own racial background to help me navigate colorless spaces.

I left my first school due to the commuting distance after purchasing a new home. I left my second school after stumbling upon a very unique high school that offered much more flexibility, which I needed for my growing family. I was only in my new job for two weeks when I experienced stage two, the Encounter phase. The Encounter phase, "is typically precipitated by an event or series of events that force the individual to acknowledge the impact of racism in one's life" (Tatum, 1993, p. 3). Clearly, I already recognized the impact of racism in my life, but not necessarily in my professional identity development. Thus far, the racism I experienced as a teacher was my own internal prejudice that acquiesced the propagandized inferiority of Blacks and rejected wholeheartedly the commonly unquestioned wholesomeness of Whites. As a result,

I coddled my students of color and became frustrated and embarrassed if they were not successful; and I watched my White students and colleagues with an eye of suspicion and anxiety, waiting for them to call me out as an imposter. The specific encounter, however, that forced me to focus on my professional identity as a member of a "group targeted by racism" (Tatum, 1993, p. 3) involved a racist joke sent via email to all teachers and staff. Of course, it was 20 years ago, so I do not remember the entire content of the joke, but the punch line labeled a man a *coon* or *coon-ass*. I was shocked that this colleague, an elderly White woman who had been teaching at this school for over a decade, would so boldly disseminate this racist joke. Since I was the only teacher of color on staff, I could only assume that this was the norm for them, and I wondered what I had gotten myself into. I called some friends and forwarded the email to some family members to check my understanding, and they were all equally appalled. I eloquently voiced my outrage in a "reply all" response (I remember spending a considerable amount of time wording and rewording my message before sending). The offending teacher ultimately attributed the issue to a misunderstanding of terms. Where I am from, *coon* is a racial epithet akin to the *n*-word; *coon-ass* is a racial slur against individuals of Cajun descent. According to my colleague, however, the term is not a racial slur at all, but simply pokes fun at East Texans living a simplistic lifestyle. Whether it was the teacher's innocent ignorance of the cultural connotations of her words, her lack of cultural sensitivity, or a knowing act of racism, the incident awakened me to my double consciousness (DuBois, 1903)—an African American teacher assimilating to appear safe and non-confrontational, and a Black female teacher attempting to challenge dominant ideology and reveal a counternarrative in order not to be a passive contributor to the status quo (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Pollack & Zirkel, 2013); which is the inadverdent effect of remaining silent, and the deliberate effect of being silenced.

I labored in the Encounter phase for quite some time, and since I do not believe these phases to begin and end with definition and a sounding gong, I am occasionally brought back to this stage by some occurrence or series of events that remind me of the systemic racism that exists within America's schools; nevertheless, it was Ralph Ellison who ushered me into the next stage, Immersion/Emersion. I was searching for supplemental reading material for my junior English—American Literature students. I wanted something from an African American author that would challenge my class of all-White students to consider themes of racism, identity development, and varying versions of truth—themes we did not typically explore. I planned to assign the text in the fall so, naturally, I had to read it myself over the summer (sadly, I had not read it before). I was captivated by this work of art. It awakened in me a feeling that "everything of value in life must be Black or relevant to Blackness" (Parham, 1989, p. 190). I began assigning literature by African and African American authors like Alice Walker, Alex Haley, Abioseh Nicol, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, and Lorraine Hansberry. I began welcoming—instead of deflecting or becoming defensive—my White students' questions regarding my hair, whether-or-not I get sunburned, and how it is possible that I am not a fan of all rap music. I thought of my students of color as misunderstood, brilliant, and resilient. I became very disengaged from my co-workers, finding hints of racism in everything they said or did. Without peers from my own racial group, I failed to have corrective relational experiences which serve as validation and contribute to the "positive redefinition of racial identity that is occurring at the Immersion stage" (Tatum, 1993, p. 5). Instead, a true internal battle ensued as I tried to reconcile my "White-focused anger" (p. 3) with my responsibility and personal commitment to be a caring teacher to all students, my desire to be a "good" co-worker and "team player," and, most importantly, my Christian faith that tells me to "get rid of all bitterness, rage

and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Ephesians 4:31, NIV). I sincerely believe my inner moral compass helped to keep my internal vexations from external manifestation. I am hopeful that my students saw me as a caring teacher, one who offered social and academic support, set high expectations, and showed genuine interest in their lives—even though I was often just going through the motions of what I thought a good teacher was supposed to do. My professional identity development was getting all knotted up within these new kinks in my still developing racial identity. I toiled in this stage for many years. In fact, it was not until I began working toward my PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, with an emphasis in urban education, that I began to emerge from this stage and realize a sense of "security in a newly defined and affirmed sense of self" (Tatum, 1993, p. 3). This emerging self understands, respects, and has pride in her race and her own Blackness and appreciates that this self-assurance does not require dismissal of the virtues of any other race.

Break Every Chain: Memories of Higher Education

As an African American female, I experienced many of the challenges and obstacles that are not uncommon to students of color. Yet, just as my socioemotional and intellectual development was hampered by the structure of oppression within the education system (Freire, 2000), it is this same social institution that provided me with the stimulus, information, and tools I needed to move beyond the trauma and galvanize my arrested development. Thus, while my elementary and secondary education hindered my identity development, higher education, by means fair and foul, propelled me forward, anchoring me in a positive sense of racial identity (Tatum, 1993), challenging me to acknowledge and address my own hypocrisy, inspiring me to redefine my teacher identity, and emboldening me to share my narrative. This awakening, however, occurred in phases, as my post-secondary education spanned many years of my

teaching experience. Even now, my doctoral studies are preparing me to be a better guide for my future students. Each step is preparation for the next. Every experience leads to other enlightened or enriched experience.

When I was a freshman in college, working on my undergraduate degree at a predominantly White institution (PWI) in the Midwest, I met a group of young men and women who belonged to the religious group Nation of Islam, an African American political and religious movement. The Nation's goal is to improve the mental, spiritual, social, and economic condition of African Americans in the U.S. As a Christian, I was not interested in joining their religious cause, but I fully supported their efforts to work toward the betterment of Blacks in our community. I became friends with many in the group and spent a considerable amount of time in their company. I remember several incidents when, in response to something I would say, eat, or do, one of my new friends would tell me that I was "not in the true knowledge of myself." They believed that if I knew the royalty and superiority of my ancestors, I would think and behave differently. If being called "horns" was my introduction to being Black, then being challenged about my Blackness by my racial peers was the impetus to find out exactly what being Black meant. I became interested in studying African American history, and since I only knew the slave history of African Americans, learning the rich history of Africans did, in fact, give me an added sense of pride. It was this newly found pride mingled with years of dealing with the "mundane, extreme environment in which the many forms of racism and oppression are an ever-present part of daily living rather than occasional hazards" (Tatum, 1999, p. 9) that spurred me to action when during a class lecture one of my White instructors referred to Martin Luther King, Jr. as Martin Luther Coon (she definitely knew the cultural connotations to her conscious racial slur). I think this was the first time I overtly spoke out against racism. It may also have been the

first time I consciously realized the power teachers have to either perpetuate or terminate the reproduction of racist ideas that permeate our society. Moreover, while “White teacher racism can be overt,” (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevarez, 2017, p. 192) as was that of my college professor, “it is often upheld through colorblind or racism-neutral approaches to their daily work with students of color” (p. 192). Powerful, indeed!

Nearly a decade after completing my undergraduate degree and five years into my teaching career, I returned to school to earn my masters of education. This time I attended an historically Black university (HBU) in the South. It was in this setting that I felt most supported, embraced, and encouraged. My advising professor was the epitome of a caring and responsible educator. She set high expectations for her students and made sure we had the tools and developed the skills we needed to reach the bar. She shared personal aspects of her life with us and invited us to reciprocate. My professors at this university were highly educated African American men and women who sought to prepare students for ultimate personal and academic success because, as I distinctly recall my advising professor stating, “when you leave these doors, you are not only representing this historically Black university but you are representing me, and I intend to be represented well.” We shared a laugh at this comment, but I now realize its significance. To be represented well is what I want from my students. What I desire *for* my students is confidence, capability, happiness, and success. But there is also a selfish aspect to my teacher identity. Part of the reason why I want my students to be successful is that their success or likewise, their setback, is a reflection on me; and occasionally, I have trouble letting go of the need to prove myself worthy of a seat at the table. Fortunately, however, being in an HBU environment diminished that need tremendously.

The HBU milieu helped me develop the characteristics associated with Cross's Internalization stage. It was here that I gained a "peacefulness and security in which one is comfortable with his/her cultural/racial identity" (Watt, 2006, p. 320). I also saw many examples of caring and responsible teacher behaviors that I wanted to emulate; most of which were simple demonstrations of kindness and respect that led to authentic teacher-student relationships.

Thirteen years later, and with twenty years of teaching experience, I received a merit fellowship to attend a tier 1 research university in the southern part of the U.S. Although a PWI, my focus on urban education surrounded with me with a somewhat diverse group of professors and graduate students, and required me to take courses that fast-tracked my slow crawl toward maturity in my racial and professional identity development. One of the first things my recruiting professor told me was to never question my value as a teacher and a scholar and never allow others to make me feel I do not belong in academic spaces. Under the tutelage of this African American woman with decades of scholarship, teaching experience, and service, I began to consciously consider my teacher identity, realizing its fluidity based on time and experience; as well as recognizing how intrinsically connected it is to my racial identity. I also learned two important things about relationships: my relationships cannot be genuine if I am not genuine, and the most supportive relationships can come from those with whom I am not culturally matched.

Working alongside other emerging scholars and established academics, seeing their insecurities and fallibility, I was able to accept my own imperfection and seek opportunities to grow and improve rather than attempt to hide my flaws, creating barriers to authentic relationships. In some cases, however, a connection with individuals from whom I thought authentic relationship, guidance, and support should come failed to materialize. I felt that I was back in second grade, in Mrs. Oriyin's class, facing rejection from where I believed my most

natural source of support should come. Still muddling through Internalization, while maintaining connections with leaders and peers of color with whom I did have supportive, reciprocal relationships, I began to also develop meaningful relationships with White professors and colleagues. I recognized the need to "develop critical relational consciousness and question social norms that devalue and undermine relational value" (Jordan, 2004, p. 21); and in doing so, I freed myself to engage in transformative relationships with my students, peers, and professional superiors.

Everything's Gonna Be Alright: Visions of the Future

Over the years, the relationships cultivated and experienced—as well as those denied—within the context of my academic journey significantly affected both my racial and professional identity development. My school related interactions as student and as teacher have ignited my passion for creating a school and classroom culture of care in which "teachers are cognizant of how the school and classroom values, beliefs and practices make it safe for all students to engage, to contribute, to belong and to feel confident in their own cultural identities" (Cavanagh, MacFarlane, Glynn, & MacFarlane, 2012, p. 443). My education experiences, both learning and teaching, have equally affected and been effected by my racial and professional identity development. The use of autobiographical narrative as a research method has allowed me to critically self-reflect in order to honestly and judiciously explore not only my racial and professional identity development but also my relational and cultural progression. I use the words development and progression as they denote an ongoing process, not an activity to be completed or an evolution that reaches its end. Yet, through my experiences I have transformed and moved "beyond stress or suffering into a new and more comprehensive personal and relational integration" (Jordan, Toward competence and connection, 2004, p. 42); which allows

me to build the authentic relationships and make the genuine connections I need to be a caring, responsible teacher. Endeavoring to understand my own progression and transformation, I stumbled upon Cross's (1971) Black identity development model which aptly described my teacher identity development and, therefore, may be an overlooked tool to help describe professional identity development for people of color.

According to Cross's final stage, Internalization-Commitment, the individual finds ways to "translate their personal sense of Blackness into a plan of action or a general sense of commitment to the concerns of Blacks as a group, which is sustained over time" (Tatum, 1993, p. 3). As I step into the outer fringes of this stage and continue to interweave this model of racial identity development with my own teacher identity development, I commit to adding to the discourse that supports creating equity in education so that the potential for academic success is maximized for all students. More importantly, I commit to using what I have learned to help pre-service and novice teachers prepare to be the best, culturally sensitive, caring and responsible teachers they can be for their future students.

Ultimately, although this is my story, I hope it demonstrates how stories of personal experience are embedded in "broader contexts of inequality that shape life trajectories and the stories told about them" (Reed-Danahay, 2017, p. 152). I hope it makes a difference for someone, somewhere. I hope.

CHAPTER IV

CARE, CONTROL, AND COLOR: CONVERSATION ABOUT DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

Synopsis

The disciplinary practices that teachers use in their classrooms frequently result in life-altering consequences for students who are already marginalized, isolated, and struggling to succeed. Research suggests teachers often lack the skill needed to connect with their students, manage their classrooms, and administer corrective action that is equitable, reasonable, and effective without being excessive, inhumane, and detrimental to the student's future. This disconnection and lack of judgment is frequently attributed to the cultural mismatch that exists between the majority U.S. teacher who is a young, White female, and the growing diverse population of students; as well as pre-service teacher training that fails to equip future teachers with the culturally relevant pedagogical skills needed to meet the needs of today's students. Employing the qualitative research methods of interactive interviewing and parallel stories, an African American, veteran teacher and a young, White pre-service teacher ask questions and share reflections as a way to explore the topic of disciplinary practices at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and a classroom culture of care in the k-12 U.S. classroom.

Overview

Every time America thinks the color divide is fading, someone turns on a UV light and all the nasty stains, residue, and hidden welts reappear. Unfortunately, many of the lingering wounds are festering in the U.S. education system. This is particularly evident in the disparities present in school disciplinary practices. Students of color are often more likely to be "differentially *selected* for discipline consequences" (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010, p. 62), and African American and Latino students, especially, are subject to extreme punishment for less than extreme behavior. In the U.S., African American students are consistently suspended and expelled at rates two to three times greater than other students (Dupper, 2010; Mitchell, 2014; Porter, 2015; Skiba, 2014; Wilson, 2013), and "school administrators are three and a half times more likely to suspend African American students than White students, even for the same non-violent offenses" (Porter, 2015, p. 59). Many scholars have researched this issue (Alexander, 2012; Boccanfusco & Khufeld, 2011; Dupper, 2010; Gonzalez, 2012; Herbert, 2015; Mitchell, 2014; Skiba, 2014), providing evidence that this condition is unfeigned. Most often, right or wrong, the classroom teacher bears the blame for this injustice, as they are usually who initiates student disciplinary action. Additionally, since the disparities are based on race and ethnicity, it is often suggested that the problem is somehow related to the cultural mismatch that exist between the majority U.S. teacher, who is White and female, and the growing diverse student population (Davis, 2003; Herbert, 2015; Mitchell, 2014). If these discriminatory disciplinary practices are assumed to be the result of cultural misunderstandings and poor classroom management training rather than a conscious act of racism, then there is an opportunity to change the trajectory of this phenomenon through dialogue, critical reflection, and proper preparation.

During a short-term study abroad trip to Guanajuato, Mexico, such a conversation took place between an African American, veteran teacher with more than 20 years of secondary level teaching experience (DWW), and a young, White pre-service teacher in her senior year of an undergraduate degree in education (MM). While the interaction began as a simple conversation on a bus ride in Mexico, it developed into parallel stories gleaned from an interactive interview, during which both participants ask questions, share narratives, and engage in dialogue with one another as a way to explore the topic of disciplinary practices at the intersection of race and ethnicity in the k-12 U.S. classroom.

Context and Relevancy

Context

The provocation for the conversation occurred during a meeting between a University sponsored study abroad group and several rural Mexico school leaders. Following are the abbreviated field notes from the encounter:

> *[June 2017] On this morning, all eighteen student members of the University study abroad group, and the two overseeing faculty members, went to [a local school] to meet with rural principals and school leaders. We arrived at the school, which was surrounded by a metal fence. There was an open courtyard in the middle, one small and two mid-sized buildings, and situated on one end of the courtyard, a few picnic tables under full, green trees. We were greeted by our hosts, entered the middle building, and were seated in child-size chairs lined along the walls. After we all introduced ourselves to one another, some in Spanish, others in English—both translated by our hosts, we were split into groups to talk about education in several different contexts. My group included Macey Mulcahy, [one other University student], one of our hosts, and two male*

principals from two Mexican primary schools. At the end of our conversation, one of the gentlemen asked how we deal with disciplining students in the U.S. Macey and [the other University student] responded by telling them if the teachers deem a student's behavior as a discipline problem, the student is often sent out of class to the administrative offices. They stated that once there, there is generally a discipline process the student goes through before being able to return to class. I commented that it is important to build rapport with students very early on: "They need to know that you care about them and that you will not stand for an environment that is not conducive to learning for the entire class." I mentioned that many times the school disciplinary procedures are responsible for what is called the school-to-prison pipeline in the U.S. I shared that the school-to-prison pipeline mostly effects African American and Hispanic students due to subjective discipline. Upon returning to the bus after the meeting, Macey asked if she could talk with me about my comments. With the conversations of our twenty or so colleagues going on around us, and the rugged beauty of the landscape breezing by our window, Macey and I began to talk about school, race, culture, and discipline.

Relevancy

Macey was sincerely concerned about her ability to be sensitive to the fact that when children of color are sent out of a classroom, the results can and often are much more drastic than when White students are reprimanded by removal. She wondered if her background and lack of culturally relevant teacher preparation would render her blind to, or even a contributor to the systemic racism that exists in America's schools. While Macey's concerns represent her personal narrative, they may resonate with the majority of U.S. educators who share similar characteristics and are struggling to meet the needs of the new student population in their classrooms.

Methodology

When we tell, and retell stories, "we interact with one another and respond to and with one another; we share and understand who we are, who we have been, and who we are becoming" (Wang, 2017). The process of storytelling is a central component of narrative inquiry, a qualitative method of research first used by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) to describe teachers' personal stories. These pedagogical stories can have the effect of "cultivating and forming one's disposition of mind" (Kim, 2016, p. 127), including that of the researcher. Narrative inquiries engage in powerful and "transparent reflection and questioning of their own position, values, beliefs and cultural background" (Trahar, 2009, p. 7). Consequently, a double journey may emerge between participant and researcher which creates a two-person knowledge community where "relational, story-telling places" (Craig, 1999, p. 399) provide opportunities for critical reflection and growth for both.

Creswell (2002) lists researcher-participant collaboration as an advantage of narrative inquiry, stating that in educational settings in particular, the bond established between researcher and participant helps reduce the commonly held perception by educators that research is separate from practice and has little practical application. "For the educators actually being studied, sharing their stories may make them feel that their stories are important and that they are being heard" (p. 531). With so many issues plaguing our education system, researchers and stakeholders have counted on quantitative data to initiate reforms and educational programs, but when these initiatives fall short, it is qualitative research that can best discover the *why* by gathering the details from the practitioners and moving beyond the deductive reasoning process to explore the individual stories that make up the big picture. Narrative inquiry allows the

theorists and policymakers to see what the educators know to be the real day-to-day problems, collecting and assembling individuals' stories in a variety of ways.

Narrative inquiry involves the gathering of narratives using various data collection methods including, but not limited to interviews, observation, fieldwork, visual data, archival data, and artifacts (Kim, 2016). Kim suggests "we should use imagination and creativity to find as much meaningful data as possible to accomplish whatever research purpose we have for narrative inquiry" (p. 180). Thus, whether stemming directly or indirectly from narrative inquiry, this study employs two qualitative research methods to capture and interpret the rich experiences of the authors: interactive interviewing and parallel stories.

Interactive Interviewing

Discomfort can arise when we reflect on our own biases and predispositions, and attempting to share these reflections can create additional anxiety and stress. However, when a researcher acts as co-collaborator with participants, the communication process may become less daunting. Interactive interviewing gave both parties in this study the opportunity to gain an in-depth and intimate understanding of each other's internal and external experiences with the sensitive topic of how race and ethnicity effect the relationship between teachers and their students. Ellis (2008) makes the following statement about interactive interviewing:

> Emphasizing the communicative and joint sense making that occurs in interviewing, this approach involves the sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers, who tell (and sometimes write) their stories in the context of developing relationship. (p. 444)

Conversations during our seventeen-day study abroad, two face-to-face discussions after our return, and several electronic communications created ongoing interaction between Macey and

me and allowed us to be open and vulnerable with one another regarding the topic at hand. Furthermore, although I am considered the researcher, there was no hierarchical arrangement in the interview process. We worked to establish a collaborative relationship and kept meticulous records of our interactions in order to strengthen the validity and reliability of our work.

Parallel Stories

In our country's current state of division, it is important to recognize the parallel stories that exist between individuals who, on the surface, have no intersecting lines between them. Parallel stories allows us to reveal conceptual and theoretical understandings that other methodologies do not necessarily allow (Craig, 1999). The term itself was coined by Craig (1999) who applied it to the relationships present both in the "juxtaposed accounts and in the mutual responses" (p. 401) within the various versions of stories told by individuals. By utilizing parallel stories as methodology, we were able to gain and present "insights relating specifically to stories of school, insights relating specifically to teacher stories, and insights relating specifically to the relationship between the two types of meaning recovery" (Craig, 1999, p. 407). It allowed us to reflect upon and verbalize our stories in relation to the single, ever-changing narrative of school disciplinary practices.

Note: Under each secondary heading, Macey (MM) is the first speaker, as it was her concerns that initially brought us to this exchange. My response (DWW) follows, which is then followed by a brief review of relevant literature.

Conversation in Black and White

Positionality

MM. I am a non-Hispanic White female in my 20s with an evangelical Christian, politically conservative, middle class background. I, therefore, identify with a vast majority of

the teachers presently coming out of teacher preparation programs. I hope to offer my perspective as such and share some of my journey in the pursuit of understanding the roles of cultural differences and equity in the classroom. I am currently a senior at *University* in the education department pursuing a degree in middle grades math/science education.

DWW. I also identify as evangelical Christian; that is something we have in common. However, I rarely put a name to my political stance, as my views are varied; but for the sake of parallelism, I would say I am an African American female in my 40s who leans toward conservative liberalism. I also come from a middle-class background, though in my earliest years, I did not always live in middle class surroundings. I am currently a third-year doctoral student at *University*, in the College of Education and Human Development. I'm studying curriculum and instruction, with an emphasis in urban education.

What the literature says. Positionality considers intersecting variables, such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and other social diversities (Moore, 2008). Lei (2006) comments that "all teachers need to critically reflect on their own positionality within the system of Whiteness and how their cultural lenses affect their pedagogy" (p. 85). Clearly, both Macey and I are aware that our list of internal and external characteristics are with us each time we enter a classroom and interact with our students. However, it is conceivable that many educators, including the two of us, do not realize the extent to which certain aspects of positionality affect how we relate to our students, especially those with whom we are culturally mismatched. Much of the literature regarding the effects of positionality on teacher-student relationships and teacher disciplinary practices focuses on issues of whiteness and White privilege, this owing to statistics that assert anywhere from 80 to 90 percent of the public k-12 teacher population is White, and the student population is steadily growing more and more

diverse (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Ladson-Billings (2001) stresses how important it is that the majority teacher examine this social positionality as it intersects with that of their students:

> Typically, White, middle-class prospective teachers have little to no understanding of their own culture. Notions of Whiteness are taken for granted. They rarely are interrogated. But being White is not merely about biology. It is about choosing a system of privilege and power. (p.81)

Some scholars suggest that the majority White, middle class teacher makes minimal effort to make inequity, intolerance, or powerlessness problematic and open to discussion (Gollnick & Chinn, 2016; Nganga, 2015); they understand their position of power as it relates to the very generic idea of teacher over student, but may fail to acknowledge the idea of White privilege and, therefore, fail to address the problems associated with this aspect of their power.

White teachers are not alone in this matter of positionality. “Teachers of color occupy unique positionalities when they teach students of their self-identified community in public schools” (Heer, 2015, p. 369). Conversely, teachers of color often feel pressure when teaching students of color, because they fear not living up to the expectation that they will be able to meet the student’s needs simply because they are culturally matched (Heer, 2015). Furthermore, when teachers of color teach a predominantly White student body, the teacher may deal with issues of identity and acceptance (Kersey-Matusiak, 2004) which act as barriers to relationship development.

Ultimately, positionality informs both the theorizing and the practice of education, and teachers must be critically conscious of their positionality as they consider how they will interact with students.

Theory Versus Practice

MM. This summer, I had the opportunity to go with *University's* Department of Education to Mexico for two weeks. During this time, our group met with some of the local principals. I was in a small discussion group with Mrs. Wandix-White. One of the principals asked us how we would approach a situation in which a student repeatedly engaged in poor behavior. One of the other undergraduate students and I shared what we had learned in our teacher preparation courses. We talked about Behavior Intervention Plans, 3-Tier Programs, etc. After we shared, Mrs. Wandix-White offered a different perspective, one that I had never heard before. She said the plans and programs that teachers are often taught to implement only work for a specific type of student and often fail minority students. Our time was cut short then and we had to end our conversation. I was left thinking, "How can I be wrong about this? I gave all the right answers. I have made all A's in my courses. This is what they taught me! How can she say that it would fail?" I decided to swallow my pride and ask her to explain this new concept to me. I asked why the recommended behavior strategy system fails students of color.

DWW. Relationship. Behavior modification plans, punishment and reward systems, intervention tactics…none of those things work with any consistency if the relationship between teacher and student is negative or nonexistent. I have had my own issues with students in the past, and when I reflect, I see that it was always because I neglected to establish an authentic, caring relationship with that student. On the other hand, I remember fellow teachers complaining about a particular student behaving poorly in class, but in my class the student was cooperative, productive, and successful. I attribute that to having built a rapport with him, respecting him as a human being, and showing him that I cared about more than just his grades. Because the student's behavior was often problematic, my fellow teachers had rigid behavioral expectations

for this student and doled out punishment without first understanding the situation or adapting their response to the specific needs of the student. Yes, the student was African American, I am African American, and the other teachers were White. While I believe that played a part in the relationship dynamics, I do not believe that cultural mismatch has to equate to relational negativity; just as I do not believe that cultural matching necessarily equates to positive teacher-student relationships. But when teachers do not initiate positive relationships with students and understand cultural differences that affect behavior, they tend to overreact or misread certain behaviors, which causes them to fear losing control of their classroom and hand out punishments that are far harsher than necessary. Students of color are the most frequent recipients of this inequity.

What the literature says. Children and adolescents tend to operate mostly on feelings and social influences (Steinberg, 2005); if they like a teacher, they will work hard to be a "good" student and make that teacher proud. On the other hand, students who have conflicted relationships with teachers "tend to like school less, experience less self-direction, and show lower levels of cooperation in classroom activities" (Krstic, 2015, p. 168). Positive teacher-student relationships may be even more essential in urban school settings where students face the additional challenges associated with high-poverty environments (Murry & Malmgren, 2005). Studies have found that affirming, authentic teacher-student relationships, and the connection between positive relationships and academic achievement and resilience is stronger for ethnic minority students (McCormick, et al., 2013; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011), and "the protective effect of teacher-child relationships on academic achievement may be stronger for lower-income and racial/ethnic minority students, compared to more affluent, White students" (McCormick et al., 2013, p. 612). In fact, African American and Hispanic students appear to

benefit more from close relationships with their teachers than do White students (Roorda et al., 2011; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). However, in school settings, where the student population is represented by a high percentage of children of color who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, but the teachers are still mostly middle-class White females, there exists that cultural mismatch that encourages a distrust and separation, making affirming relationships challenging and leaving students feeling disconnected from their teachers (Davis, 2003). Ultimately, teachers who are supportive and have positive, caring relationships with their students are more apt to have students who avoid negative behavior (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). So, when it comes to "maintaining control" of student behavior, it is the relationships teachers have with students, more so than any policies and procedures, that encourage students to actually follow the rules.

Equal Versus Equitable

MM. Prior to my conversation with Mrs. Wandix-White, all my knowledge of behavior management was based in BIP, vague knowledge of different programs such as Conscious Discipline or Capturing Kids' Hearts, and behavior contracts. I had frequently heard of individualization of instruction but never of individualization of behavior management. Never had I considered that what is "fair" is not the same system of punishment or reinforcement for each child. I will share more of my personal background to better explain my perspective on this topic. I attended a private school in which the majority of students were, by far, White. Furthermore, each student had nearly identical home lives, future goals, parental styles and expectations, etc. Because of this, teachers at my school could easily implement one behavior strategy and find success with all but maybe one student. In all my life, what was "fair" was what was "equal." I first heard the concept of equity in the classroom in a course called "Diversity

Consciousness" in the spring of 2015. My inner capitalist background did not like this at all. To think that some students would receive more or less support and resources depending on their unique situation seemed unfair to me, because I had never had the experience of being the one with less or no empowerment. To me, what was fair was everyone receiving the same tools. If everyone had the same tools, everyone had equal chance of reaching the goal. I came to realize, however, that my interpretation of things was greatly clouded by White privilege. Oooooh I did not like the concept of equity. The more I came to realize my privilege, the more frustrated I became. Despite myself, I started to understand that giving everyone the same tools does not mean they have equal opportunity to reach the same goal. Some people get to start the race one hundred miles ahead of others. If I really wanted to care for students, it was time for me to stop treating them the same way and start treating them in the way each one, individually, needs. To be honest, this is incredibly difficult for me. So much of my instinct goes against this and I definitely prefer my own cultural norms and attitudes. However, I am working to build a habit of treating people with equity because I know its immense value.

DWW. One of my favorite images is a modified version of Craig Froehele's equality/equity meme (2012). Froehele created the meme to illustrate his point in a political argument that "'equal opportunity' alone wasn't a satisfactory goal and that we should somehow take into consideration equality of outcomes" (Froehle, 2016). The meme depicts three individuals attempting to watch a baseball game happening on the other side of a wooden fence. To represent equality, the first image shows each person on a crate of the same height. Of course, they are getting equal treatment by each getting one crate to add height, but now the taller one sees even better, the second is high enough to peek over the top, and the third's view is still blocked by the fence. In the second frame of the meme, each of the three are given crates of

different height to make it possible for each to have equal access to the game; in this instance, they are being treated equitably. However, in the revised meme, there is a third frame. In this frame, the cause of the inequity, the wooden fence, has been removed. Now each of the three individuals can stand on his or her own two feet and still have access to the end goal: watching the baseball game. This meme is a befitting symbolic representation of the disciplinary practices in America's elementary and secondary schools. Things like unilateral discipline practices, zero tolerance policies, and colorblind philosophies act as the equal sized crates that, theoretically, place everyone on equal footing; but the subjectivity with which unilateral punishment is administered, and the lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity associated with colorblindness creates further inequities. It is a difficult concept, but I think our heads can rationalize equality, but it is our hearts that have to acknowledge the need for equity. As an African American woman, I can see it, and I can feel it. It is easier to fight for justice when you have been a victim of injustice. It is just easier to see the need for something different.

What the literature says. In theory, blanketed, rigid disciplinary policies (zero tolerance policies, for example) remove bias and limit discrimination in discipline practices because they do not allow the discipliner to exercise discretion or be subjective when administering punishment. In practice, these types of policies have proven to be inequitable and detrimental to certain populations (Boccanfuso & Kuhfeld, 2011; DeMitchell & Hambacher, 2016). When the act of misconduct itself can be viewed subjectively, scholars suggest that students of color are judged more harshly (Mitchell, 2014; Herbert, 2015). The cultural mismatch between the majority of America's teachers and the U.S. student population often creates situations in which home and school culture are at odds; and in this society where all behavior is measured against a White, middle-class, Christian code of conduct, it is easy for subjective interpretations of

misbehavior to result in biased judgements and excessive punishment. Disparities between Black and White student discipline, in particularly, occur most often in discretionary categories, like insubordination and insolence (Skiba, 2014); and these discrepancies may be caused in part by lack of cultural sensitivity or inadequate training in culturally responsive classroom management.

Propensity Versus Preparation

MM. Many of my peers in my education courses feel my same deep love for children and desire for their success. I would not doubt the intentions of any of my classmates. However, nearly all of my classmates are female, and nearly all are White. Many of us have not been in environments in which we would have been exposed to the perspectives of people of color who have been mistreated by the educational system, either through bad intentions or good intentions gone wrong. Because of this, we teach to “us”- “us” being White students of White culture. We want our students to succeed but are either unaware that our classroom management style is frequently harming students of color, or we are aware but do not know what to do because we have never had to live the experience of a minority in the United States. So many people feel awkward having discussions about these matters and this further alienates us from students and families who have different cultures. This alienation prevents us from ever having that genuine rapport that Mrs. Wandix-White shared with me as her true treasure in mastering classroom management. I believe that many, if not all, of the pre-service teachers at *University* crave this cultural understanding and sensitivity but that we are afraid and uninformed on how to achieve it. The fear of being disrespected as pre-service and first year teachers runs deep in many of us. Many of the cultural norms and habits of minorities are interpreted as disrespect and thus responded to with a harshness borne out of fear of losing control. Because we have not received

adequate training in how to adapt our behavior management to specific cultures, backgrounds, classes, and ethnicities, we default to our own experience and fail to treat students equitably.

DWW. I mentioned relationship before, and I believe it is paramount; but it also takes training and preparation, and if your certification program did not prepare you to teach and connect with *all* students, then you have to be willing to seek professional development or mentoring that will help. You have to do it yourself. I tend to agree with Macey—I do not think any teacher enters the profession wanting or intending to emotionally or intellectually harm their students. But if we ignore the problem, disregard the conversation, or neglect seeking additional training, we are, ultimately, causing great harm to our students. So, I am glad that we are having this conversation. I have no doubt that there are teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities out there that authentically seek to train and develop qualified teachers not only to know their content area and understand the complexities of instruction and classroom management, but also to appreciate the diversity and recognize the importance of valuing student differences. We, teachers, just have to do a bit of research to find legitimate opportunities to gain authentic training and, most importantly, to engage in critical self-reflection to determine if we need to focus on external growth and development, like culturally relevant curriculum content, diverse instructional designs, and varied lesson plans; or internal growth and development, like cultural sensitivity, respect and appreciation for all students, and general humanitarianism.

What the literature says. One sure answer to how do teachers develop authentic cultural sensitivity, effectively manage their classrooms, and successfully navigate school disciplinary policies in order to execute equitable disciplinary practices that eliminate racial disparities in school discipline is proper training. Pre-service teachers need legitimate pre-service teacher

training that truly prepares and equips them to meet the needs of *all* students. The demographics of the U.S. demand that prospective teachers learn to effectively educate culturally, linguistically, socioeconomically, and racially diverse students. Regrettably, however, many new teachers who have completed pre-service education programs enter their classrooms with minimal prior contact with racial groups other than their own (Milner, Flowers, Moore, Moore, & Flowers, 2003), and they exit these programs with no greater cultural knowledge or understanding. While students of color account for nearly half of all students in public schools, the teacher workforce is still predominately White "and so teacher training programs are increasingly trying to figure out how to bridge this divide" (Romo, 2016). Goodwin (as cited in Villegas & Lucas, 2002) states, "the typical response of teacher education programs to the growing diversity among K-12 students has been to add a course or two on multicultural education, bilingual education, or urban education" (p. 20), but since these added courses are often optional, "students can complete their teacher education programs without receiving any preparation whatsoever in issues of diversity" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 20). Milner (2015) points out that professional development and teacher education programs are not effectively preparing teachers to be managers of their classrooms, let alone effective teachers of diverse or urban classrooms. Milner also discusses a study showing that when preservice teachers were given training on management strategies to use in diverse classrooms, many teachers were still unsuccessful because of "subtle forms of racism and strong cultural norms' that impacted the teachers' practices in the study" (p. 576). The difficulty may lie in preparing teachers to be effective managers in diverse school settings while simultaneously helping them to avoid accepting the fallacies and stereotypes regarding what it means to teach, learn, and manage in diverse classrooms.

Ultimately, the absence of transformative field experiences that put new teachers in diverse school communities, and a lack of impactful pre-service teacher preparation, especially in the area of culturally responsive pedagogy, leaves teachers unprepared to meet the challenges of their new career and magnifies the cultural mismatch that exists between the majority teacher pool and the growing multicultural student body that exists in America's schools.

Discussion

Insights Relating to Stories of School

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are well over 90,000 public k-12 schools, and over 34,000 k-12 private schools in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Thus, there are over 120,000 unique school narratives to be told. Macey attended a private, predeominantly White school where the students, families, and surrounding commuities were homogeneous. There were very few students of color in her school; none in her inner circle of friends. Macey's understanding of behavior and school discipline emerged as fundamental aspects of her school experiences in this shielded private school where she was with essentially the same group of students for 12 years. Parents were actively involved and counted on to instill and uphold the school's code of conduct. As Macey stated, because "each student had nearly identical home lives, future goals, parental styles and expectations" teachers and administrators were able to "[implement] one behavior strategy and find success with all but maybe one student." This is rarely the case in urban or other public school environments where the diversity of students, variability of socioeconomic status, variances in family dynamics, and miscellany of life experiences makes any type of standardized corrective processes often unreasonable and frequently ineffective. The founding stories of these

divergent types of schools are deeply rooted in their communities (Craig, 2000), communities that may only be separated by miles, but are essentially worlds apart.

Insights Relating to the Relationships Between Personal and Institutional Narratives

As stated in Craig (1999), the parallel stories methodology allow us to determine the extent to which Macey's and my teacher stories are uniquely situated within the stories of school we have both experienced. I attended both extremly diverse public schools and predominantly White public schools. I have taught in a variety of school settings: public urban, public suburban (as a substitute), private Christian, and private secular. As a student, I recall being sent out into the hall for "speaking out of turn," while my White classmate was merely told to be quiet. As a teacher, I specifically witnessed the inequitable treatment of an African American male and a Hispanic female at the hands of an all White administative team. These experiences surely influence my attitude, beliefs, and practices regarding school discipline. I recognize that at times I have been more lenient on students of color, because I have assumed they have received the opposite consideration at the hands of other teachers with whom they are culturally mismatched. Likewise, Macey's experiences as a student in a school that adopted the policy of treating their homogeneous student body virtually all the same shaped her experiences and influenced what she came to know (Craig, 1999). This is illuminated by her initial dislike of equity in favor of equality. Macey planned to treat all her students the same, no matter what.

Ultimately, our respective narratives "revealed the past residue of human experience on [our] professional landscapes and showed how such residue pervades school contexts" (Craig, 1999, p. 408), manifesting itself in our beliefs and ideas about school disciplinary practices. Fortunately, our ongoing conversation helped both of us recognize that our previous school

experiences have definite impact on our present state of mind; and it may be time to challenge our respective mindsets in order to better serve our future students.

Insights Relating to Teacher Stories

(In Macey's words) For my senior student teaching experience with *University*, I was paired with a mentor teacher with whom I shared a similar background in terms of education, belief system, socio-economic status, and ethnicity. Being so inexperienced, I attempted to mimic her in every procedure and attitude toward our fifth-grade students. (We were both White females with a student population of 60% Hispanic, 20% White, 17% African American and 80% economically disadvantaged). Her management style was one where she was able to rest on prior relationship building and "intimidate" students into adhering to her expectations. This did not work for me due to my lack of prior relationship with the students, my entrance into the classroom in the spring semester, and my very unintimidating personality. The gap between my culture and the culture of my students quickly became apparent to me, and it led me to view the enforcement of classroom expectations as a daunting task. I reflected on my conversation with Mrs. Wandix-White and recalled that this view could easily lead to me becoming harsher on the students who I feared would be a threat to my authority without first seeking to study their backgrounds and understand them. While this still remained a struggle for me, I was much more aware of the habits I developed in the treatment of my students – who I most frequently redirected, who I had relationships with, who I entrusted with leadership, etc. While I first sought to emulate my mentor teacher, I started to distance myself from her management style; not because it was inadequate, but because it was not consistent with my personality. To develop genuine relationships with my students, I had to be honest about who I was, even in discipline.

Now as a first-year teacher, I teach first grade at a Title I school with a student population that is 83% Hispanic, 5% White, and 5% African American. 88% of the students are economically disadvantaged. I find myself once again faced with the challenge of building deep relationships based on sincere care while attempting to understand students with backgrounds very different from my own. Many of my coworkers share similar backgrounds and cultures with the students, and I have seen how quickly trust is established between them. These teachers have influenced my practice as a teacher by modeling an attitude of humility when approaching students with misbehavior – not looking to prove their dominance but genuinely looking to help the student better express his or her problem. The power of that attitude has resulted in the development of wonderful relationships and a more peaceful, positive atmosphere than I could have ever expected.

Conclusion

The American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) listed findings suggesting that the “disproportionate discipline of students of color may be due to lack of teacher preparation in classroom management, lack of training in culturally competent practices, or racial stereotypes” (p. 854). Classroom teachers are at ground zero of the student disciplinary chain of events, since the classroom or a campus area that teachers monitor is most often where student misconduct is witnessed, addressed, and reported. When the classroom teacher fails to effectively address students’ minor infractions on his or her own, students, especially students of color, can end up facing severe consequences for petty acts of misconduct. State teacher training programs, as well as school districts and individual schools must provide pre-service and active teachers with ongoing culturally responsive education and effective classroom management training. However, Milner (2015) discusses a study showing that when

preservice teachers were given training on management strategies to use in the urban classroom, many teachers were still unsuccessful because of "'subtle forms of racism and strong cultural norms' that impacted the teachers' practices in the study" (p. 576). The author suggests that the difficulty may lie in preparing teachers to be effective managers in urban school settings while simultaneously helping them to avoid accepting the fallacies and stereotypes about what it means to teach, learn, and manage their classrooms. Therefore, training and professional development opportunities must also provide teachers with opportunities to examine their own perceptions, biases, and predispositions that affect the way they interact with students of color.

In addition to classroom management skills, teachers must learn how to initiate and maintain positive relationships with students, one characterized by social and academic support, high expectations, authentic caring, and genuine interest. However, teaching has become so focused on rigid curriculum and high-stakes testing that the endless list of things to do overshadows the practice of care and establishing relationship (Cooper, 2004; Narinasamy & Mamat, 2013; Wilde, 2013;). At minimum, there is a need to restructure teacher preparation programs to include training that promotes a commitment and capacity to care for all learners, paying attention to each student's unique needs.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Discussion of Findings

Extant scholarship on care in the classroom illuminates the significance the teacher-student relationship has on the student's overall academic and personal growth and development (Comer, 1988; Gay, 2010; Hansen, 1993; Noddings, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; Webb, Wilson, Corbett, & Mordecai, 1993; Wilde, 2013). In fact, the concept of care has become essential to any discourse about teacher competencies that are vital to the teacher's success in the classroom (Drudy, 2008). Research indicates that it is especially important for teachers to create a classroom culture of care and build authentic relationships with students of color who are historically marginalized and reported to have poorer quality relationships with their teachers (Murray et al., 2016). Research also suggests, however, that establishing genuine, positive, value-creating relationships between the often demographically divergent teacher and student can be quite difficult (Davis, 2003; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). This is especially true in the U.S. where historically turbulent race relations and deep rooted inequities in education seem to persist.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), over 80 percent of America's public school teachers are White. In contrast, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American youth make up the majority of the approximately 50.7 million students in the nation's public schools (Education Writers Association). During the 2018 American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual conference in New York, I attended a session during which a presenter stated that true relationship is not possible when there is a forced, unjust power

dynamic at play. In the case of U.S. schools, there is the power dynamic of position and of race. But Valenzuela (1999) asserts that teachers and students can have genuine relationship if teachers exhibit an authentic form of caring, which is care that promotes and honors students' cultural values, beliefs, and experiences. Caring requires actions. As Gay (2010) notes, "feelings are important, but culturally responsive caring as an essential part of the educational process…focuses on caring *for* instead of *about* the personal well-being and academic success of ethnically diverse students…" (p. 48). Thus, at the outset of this dissertation, I listed two key research questions which produced answers that may help teachers discover ways they can authentically care *for* students.

How do teachers create a culture of care that leads to increased opportunity for the academic and personal success of historically marginalized students? What are teachers' practices that demonstrate caring relationships and interactions with their students, especially with their students of color? Synthesizing the three studies, it is clear that a true culture of care does not simply emerge but must be purposely created. Furthermore, a genuine school or classroom culture of care is not solely formed within the walls of the school, during school hours. Pre-integration African American teachers show us that community involvement is important. Getting to know students and their families in spaces where they feel more comfortable can help establish bonds that transcend the power dynamics associated with roles, titles, and positions within the academic environment. Taking an active interest and getting to know students also helps to reduce disciplinary issues. It is much easier to be patient, understand, and empathize with students when teachers are aware of the challenges students may be facing that effect their classroom conduct. Thus, creating a culture of care involves responsiveness, and "being responsive is understanding cultural influences on the behaviors and mental ecology of

the classroom, and using this knowledge to guide actions" (Gay, 2010, p. 58). Ultimately, teachers can begin to build caring classrooms and demonstrate caring relationships by showing genuine interest in students and fostering a safe, nurturing learning environment that leads to secure, confident students who trust their teachers and feel safe to work toward academic and personal growth; which, in turn, helps them to reach their ultimate academic goals.

Future Research

In researching the importance of a classroom culture of care on students' personal and academic outcomes, it became clear that while caring is commonly seen as a vital part of teaching, what demonstrates a classroom culture of care is understood in a variety of ways (Drudy, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Noddings, 2005), and teachers and their students often perceive the act of caring very differently. Some scholars point out that student's perceptions of caring differ by ethnicity and/or gender (Hayes et al., 1994; Kang, 2006; Valenzuela, 1999; Webb et al., 1993). For example, Hayes et al. (1994) found that African-American students in their study thought teachers demonstrated care when they helped students with their academic work, offered students words of affirmation, and responded to each student as an individual, while White students perceived a caring teacher as one who provided good subject content and was fun and humorous. Along this line, understanding the difference in perceptions of care amongst various races may be important to teachers' ongoing efforts to exhibit caring behaviors that truly demonstrate care to all students, not just the ones who share the teacher's demographic background.

As Noddings (2005) notes, "No matter how hard teachers try to care, if the caring is not received by students, the claim 'they don't care' has some validity. It suggests strongly that something is very wrong" (p. 15). Ultimately, whether derived from theoretical reflection or

empirical studies, five (5) themes emerge in the dearth of scholarly research regarding how different cultures view care in the classroom: cultural values, care perspectives, colorblindness, teacher background, and power dynamics. I have included a synopsis of my discoveries, nevertheless, consideration of this related, yet distinct culture of care theme is worth further consideration.

Cultural Values. Cultural differences regarding care are evident from the onset of a child's life. For example, Samoan parents expect their children to be independent. The mothers take little care of their children after they begin to crawl (Levine & New, 2008); so, a schoolteacher who coddles or provides too much support for a Somoan child might not be considered a caring teacher. Gusii children are expected to have total respect for adults and must not even initiate conversation with those considered to be their superior. Hence, if a teacher pushes a Gusii child to speak up and express his or her opinion, this community of people would not consider that to be caring, responsible behavior (Levine & New, 2008). Trobriand Islanders encourage their children, from a very young age, to be quick witted, sexually free, and highly socially skilled; and they do not require obedience to authority (Levine & New, 2008). Attempting to teach a child of this culture traditional Western manners would not be thought of as caring. Yes, these are cultures we may not see in too many of America's classrooms, but these references help make it clear that "differences on caring are derived from having distinctive cultures, different traditions and ways of thinking" (Kang, 2006, p. 37).

Delpit (2006) makes the following observation about African-American communities' expectations of a caring teacher:

> …teachers are expected to show that they care about their students by controlling the class; exhibiting personal power; establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships;

> displaying emotion to garner student respect; demonstrating the belief that all students can learn; establishing a standard of achievement and "pushing" students to achieve the standard; and holding the attention of the students by incorporating African-American interactional styles in their teaching. Teachers who do not exhibit these behaviors may be viewed by community members as ineffectual, boring, or uncaring. (p. 142)

Furthermore, Valenzuela (1999) comments that the "unfriendly institutional structures" (p. 255) that promote division between youth of color and their White teachers and administrators preclude any semblance of a culture of care or respect for cultural differences.

Without knowledge and understanding of the person to be cared for, it may be difficult to provide the care needed. However, "if one has an idea of the cared-for's identity, it will be much easier and more effective for the one-caring to be in the role of caring" (Kang, 2006, p. 41). Ultimately, "caring means nothing unless it means something to both, or all, parties involved in the action" (Webb et al., 1993, p. 44). Adapting their "caring" behaviors to correspond with cultural differences will help teachers develop positive relationships with students and exhibit care that the cared for may actually accept as authentic.

Care Perspectives. One reason that care in education represents a complex phenomenon is that teachers and students have differing perceptions of what constitutes care in the classroom, and that difference is affected by several variables, including age, ethnicity, gender, the cultural mismatch of the teacher and student(s), and other demographic factors (Hayes et al., 1994). It becomes problematic, however, when the act of caring is taken up solely from the teacher's perspective without consideration for the students' point of view (Kang, 2006). Understanding the differing perceptions of the authenticity of a caring relationship from the perspective of the

carer and the cared for is essential (Webb et al., 1993). Alder (2002) shares the following analysis of a study conducted by Webb et al. (1993):

> [the study] sought perceptions of students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Findings indicated that each group thought it cared about the other groups, but no group ever consulted the other. The result of the absence of dialogue was that caring acts were not being interpreted as such by the cared for. (p. 244)

The act of caring, therefore, is isolated from its context. Each group believes they are caring for the other, yet they have not considered the others' care perspectives.

Colorblindness. Often teachers feel they demonstrate care by being "color-blind" and treating all students the same (Knight, 2004; Matias & Zembylas, 2014), while students believe this type of "care" neglects to value their differences (Valenzuela, 1999). But Kang (2006) states, "it is more important for teachers to become color conscious in their classrooms and acknowledge the differences of defining or conceptualizing caring…in order to become more effective, caring teachers" (p. 36) Many teachers, in an effort to be colorblind, fail to acknowledge cultural differences. Nieto (2000) remarks that while "it sounds fair and honest and ethical, the opposite may actually be true…colorblindness may result in refusing to accept differences and therefore accepting the dominant culture as the norm" (p. 138). If the dominant culture is accepted as the norm, then that culture's idea of what represents care becomes the standard, and anyone who feels uncared for by the standard mode of caring is simply out of luck.

*Teacher Background***.** Teachers' cultural backgrounds inform their beliefs and practices of caring (Knight, 2004; Valenzuela, 1999), and these dispositions are made most evident when attempting to care for students whose cultural background is different from the teacher's own (Edmin, 2017). Quite often, however, the ideology of White teachers is so rooted in a privileged

background and accepted by society at large as the most righteous system of thought, that these teachers have rarely, if ever, examined their own cultural beliefs and backgrounds (Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Delpit, 2006). It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand different cultures' view of care if one does not even acknowledge that their own view is not axiomatic.

Power Dynamics. Caring is not exempt from the politics of power dynamics (Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Valenzuela, 1999). "That is, caring is value laden in that power and hegemony render definitive expressions of caring that is normalized and deemed appropriate, while subjugating other expressions" (p. 331). Failure to acknowledge the cultural differences associated with concepts of care can be "considered as manipulating or misusing power and dominating without using force" (Kang, 2006, p. 45). Additionally, pre-service teacher training programs and professional development opportunities for veteran teachers should provide teachers with opportunities to examine their own perceptions of care and study caring practices from multiple perspectives (Noddings, 2005; Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Kang, 2006). Doing so will allow teachers to enhance their own capabilities for effective cultural communication and appropriate care.

As for students, their pathway to success will be made easier by their teachers' efforts. Noddings (2005) comments, "In order for the relation to be properly called caring, both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways" (p. 15); but someone has to take the first step. When students feel that they are authentically cared for, and their culture and cultural views are genuinely respected and considered, teachers may be pleasantly surprised by the reciprocity.

Final Thoughts

My father was born and raised in Mississippi in the 1930s-1940s. He served in the military for 20 years in the 1950s-1970s, during which time he earned a National Defense

Service Medal, several Good Conduct medals, the Bronze Star medal, an Air Medal, and two Vietnam service medals. While my father is a quiet man and has not shared much of his personal narrative, I have gotten little snippets here and there of what it was like for a young Black man's story to unfold during those racially tense times, locations, social and political settings. My mother grew up in Topeka, Kansas, in the mist of the *Brown v. Board* legal battle; in fact, my mother and a few of her siblings (she had 11) went to school with Linda Brown—the young African American girl whose name was at the center of the *Brown v. Board* case. My mother was an activist and a champion for the underdog. Her story includes volunteering as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)—sworn officers of the court appointed by a juvenile court judge to advocate for children who have suffered abuse or neglect; working to support the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); and serving as Vice President of the Kansas Democratic Party, and so much more. My parents always challenged me to do my best…to do better…to do something.

At the outset of this autobiographical narrative, I casually mentioned my stable and contended childhood. I also implied that my parents' expectations were the catalyst for my academic resilience. Nevertheless, even though the family is surely one of the most influential factors in a child's identity development, that process is also greatly influenced by the encounters and experiences one has in social settings, such as school. I think many teachers may not realize the tremendous impact we have on students and the enduring impression we can have on their mental, emotional, intellectual, and psychological development. Bernice's White teachers in the newly integrated North Carolina school may not have realized that when they refused to provide Bernice with help on class work she did not understand, their carelessness would stick with her

and become for her a way of knowing. I imagine that my elementary school teachers never thought that what one of their students would remember most about them would be their angry faces and pointing fingers. I am hopeful, however, that there are teachers like Macey Maculhy, who are aware of the importance of positive, affirming teacher-student relationships and are willing—even eager to discover ways to help rather than hinder the academic and personal growth and development of their students.

I acknowledge that creating a culture of care may not be an easy task for teachers. Noddings (2010) states that teachers "'care' in the sense that they conscientiously pursue certain goals for their students, and they often work hard at coercing students to achieve those goals…. However, these same teachers may be unable to establish relations of care and trust" (p. 1). Consequently, transformational preparation and purposeful instruction to cultivate authentic, caring and responsible environments that respect students' cultural identities are essential. Ultimately, the practice of care in teaching and learning is related to respecting and enabling all children in their differences (Wilde, 2013) and elevating students to the status of collaborators in the creation of knowledge, co-constructing meaning (Craig, 1995). After all, that is what must happen if teachers are to truly connect and build authentic relationships with students, demonstrating interest in and respect for the variety of cultural, social, spiritual, and socioeconomic variances represented in our pluralistic society, especially those variances that are present within the teacher's classroom. This is a culture of care.

The three narrative inquiry research studies within my dissertation unveil a black and white sketch of teacher-student relationships in U.S. public schools. The first lines of this sketch were scribbled centuries ago, and were drawn with harsh strokes and seemingly inerasable lead. Counter-stories like my own and those of my participants work to add depth and color to the

sketch. Conversations like the one between me and Macey help to create new angles that extend the sketch and color outside the lines. Hopefully, what will emerge is a beautiful and colorful portrait, forever adaptable with unlimited space for expansion.

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APPENDIX A

OPEN-ENDED PARTICIPANT INTERVEW QUESTION

1. In what grade/s were you when you attended segregated schools?
2. What do you remember about your teachers in the segregated (Black) schools?
3. What kind of relationship did you have with your teachers in the segregated (Black) schools?
4. Did your teachers have high expectations of you?
5. Did your teachers communicate with your parents about your progress at school?
6. Were your teachers actively involved in your community?
7. Do you remember whether-or-not you were generally happy being at school?
8. What grade were you in when you first attended an integrated school?
9. Did you desire to change schools?
10. Did you have a choice?
11. What do you remember about your teachers in the integrated schools?
12. What kind of relationship did you have with your teachers in the integrated schools?
13. Do you remember whether-or-not you were generally happy being at school?
14. Did your teachers have high expectations of you?
15. Did your teachers communicate with your parents about your progress at school?
16. Were your teachers actively involved in your community?
17. Can you share with me your most positive and most negative memory of school, regardless of whether it was in a segregated or integrated school?
18. Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experiences in school?

APPENDIX B

GROUP TEXT MESSAGE CONVERSATION

Text Messages from March 12, 2017 (included with all participants' permission):

Me: When we lived on Long Street, would you have considered that to be a rough or bad side of town?

Sister 2: Neither. It was a nice neighborhood back then…

Me: Was it predominantly Black?

Sister 2: No

Sister 1: It was actually considered the country back then.

Me: Hmm…I definitely don't recall it being the country. There were apartments all around us. In my memory, I didn't think it was bad, but most everybody was Black, and I remember when we moved to Evans thinking that it was way nicer.

Sister 2: It was.

Me: So would you have considered the Long Street area to be a low socioeconomic area?

Sister 2: Nope…those areas were like Pine Ridge.

Sister 1: In '73 when we returned to Topeka, it wasn't considered the country anymore so yes it was a bad area at that time.

Sister 2: No it wasn't a bad area…but Evans was like the come-up.

Me: That's what I'm talking about. Around '74 or '75. So you would have considered it bad at that time? And wasn't Pine Ridge right next to us?

Sister 1: Everything around us was low income.

Sister 3: As I recall, we only lived there when we came back to Kansas because mom and dad owned the property. In fact, mom and dad were landlords once we moved to Southern Hills.

Sister 1: Yes, when we returned it wasn't a good area.

Sister 2: When we returned from where?

Sister 3: New Jersey.

Sister 2: It might have been run down, but "bad"? I don't think so.

Sister 3: We never lived in a bad neighborhood. We were always working class to middle.

Sister 1: There were only 3 working middle class families around there. Everyone else was low income.

Sister 2: How would you know their income? But as far as your question, Renee, no, it was not a bad neighborhood. (Note: Renee is the name by which my family calls me.)

Sister 1: Lunch. The low-income families got free lunches and books.

Sister 2: Even at that, low income does not equal "bad" neighborhood.

Sister 1: Say what you want. It was bad when we returned in '73.

Me: Thanks y'all. I'm good with the responses you've offered.

Sister 2: That's not how I remember it.

Sister 3: I believe we would have been considered working class back then, if you consider socioeconomic status across the races. If you look at among Blacks, we were probably upper middle. Also depends on your measure of ses, e.g. income, education, occupation. So I base it on those three measurable variables, rather than perception. I never got a free lunch. (Note: Sister 3 is a PhD in sociology.)

Me: Thank you, people! I officially end this conversation.