BREAKING THE SILENCE: A QUALITATIVE CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A PRINCIPAL'S LIVED EXPERIENCE WITH HAVING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative critical autoethnography represents a highly personalized account of the intricacies and reflections of a Black female educational leader engaging in courageous conversations about race with a predominately White staff. Using myself as the subject and the researcher, my personal experiences with race, racism, and intolerance in a White socially constructed educational system is depicted autoethnographically as I learned to have courageous conversations about race. Exploring the development of my critical consciousness affected how I see race as a Black, female administrator. Singleton's (2015) *Courageous Conversations about Race* was the foundation for this critical autoethnography. As a Black female educational leader of a Midwestern early learning center, I reveal my story as an insider-outsider…trapped; as I tried to figure out how I fit at the Aranbe Learning Center (ALC, pseudonym), where the staff was 87% White and the students were 90% of color, as it related to having courageous conversations. This critical autoethnography reflects my lived experience as an administrator trying to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race. My commitment to stay engaged, experience discomfort, speak my

truth, and expect and/or accept non-closure is clear as I traversed a White socially constructed educational system.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, have examined a dissertation titled, "Breaking the Silence: A Qualitative Critical Autoethnography of a Principal's Lived Experience with Having Courageous Conversations about Race," presented by Shaunda Fowler, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure Page

TABLES

Table Page

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This dissertation process has been an arduous challenge, unlike any other I have experienced. I thought childbirth was grueling; however, for me, it does not compare to the intellectual muscle I had to gain to complete the dissertation process. I could not have completed this journey without the unwavering support and encouragement of many people. Dr. Dianne Smith, Hallmark has not created a card worthy enough to express how much you mean to me. Thank you for taking my broken wings and teaching me how to fly again. Dr. Loyce Caruthers, thank you for being a guiding light during my period of darkness. As I sat in the back of your classroom, trying to figure it all out, you challenged me intellectually and helped me to find my voice. You have truly been a lifeline during this entire process. Thank you for pushing and hanging in there with me until the end. You did not have to do it, but the Lord knows how thankful I am that you did. Dr. Jennifer Friend, your faith in my ability to get organized and to pay closer attention to detail has made me a better writer, and I thank you for your keen eye and honest critique. Dr. Candace Schlein, your overload with work and students did not prevent you from saying yes to me. That yes from you made it all seem possible. Dr. Kindel Nash, thank you for your time and willingness to help me in this process. Your insight regarding equity and early learning reminded me to keep students at the center of my work.

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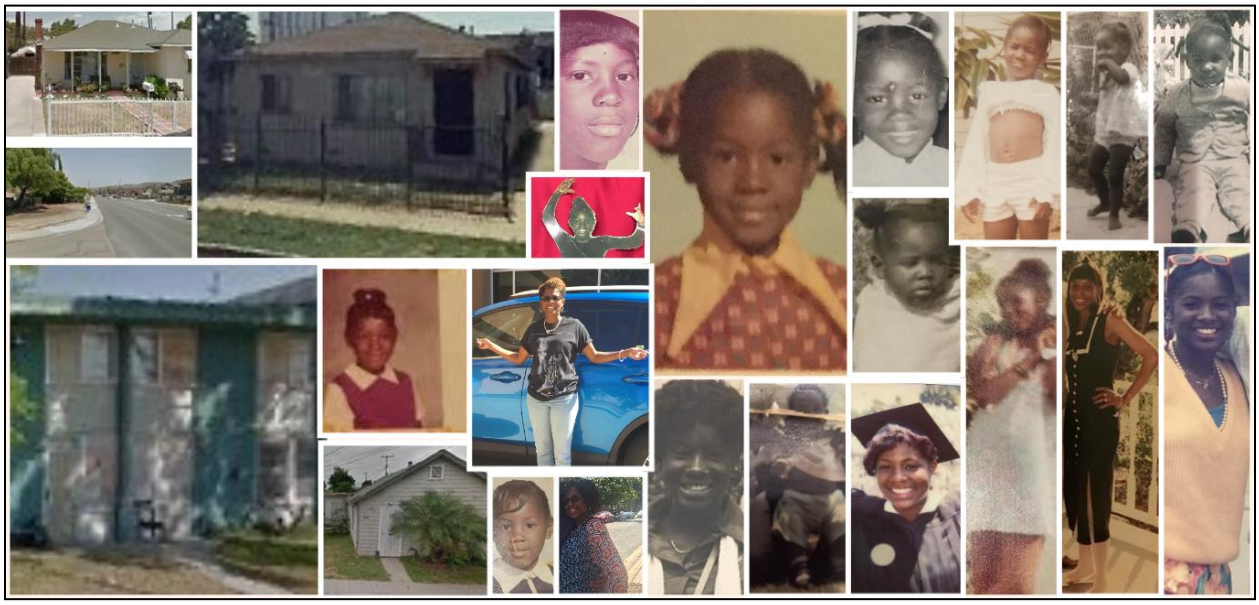
fueled my desire to finish this work. God sent you my way when being ABD (All but Dissertation) was not good enough. Finally, to Dr. Rodney Watson, thank you for your prayers and encouragement.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Elizabeth, and my son, Daven. Mom, thank you for showing me that a woman can go back to school long after becoming a mother. Son, when situations try to choke the life out of you, find a way to breathe. Your life matters. I pray you will give life and never beg for your own while staring down the barrel of a loaded weapon. Your life matters. Each day you are away taking part in the daily activities of your life, you send me love, and I send more back to you. Your life matters. In the face of racial inequity, stand up and interrupt. **Your Life Matters!**

FOREWORD



I am from a place where gang violence and rap songs get sensationalized.
I am from a place where Black female bodies are objectified.
I am from a place where in the nighttime, a symphony of gunshots and first responders replace the sounds of jazz, rhythm, and blues.
I am from Compton…Watts…the Projects…South Central…Los Angeles
I am from a place where I was not supposed to amount to anything.
I am from a place where my Black was not beautiful and I was called a Nigga by a little White girl before she asked me if I wanted some watermelon.
I am from a place where a truckload of White boys taunted me as if I were a prostitute or a piece of shit as I got off the bus from school…Hello El Cajon.
But, I am in a gracious space now and believe the glory will come,
A day for my "privileged" walk
I am from America.
(S. Fowler, 2016)

My name is Shaunda Fowler, and I am a Black woman who was born and raised in Los Angeles County, California. I intended, through video, to trace my steps on the streets of where I grew up from early childhood to college; however, time did not allow me to travel back to my native city to do so. Therefore, I chronicled significant points of my lived experience through photographs and poetic verse.

My childhood was filled with contradictions. I remember the joys of being a kid and the vulnerabilities that come with being a kid. I had not fathomed how painful and real it would get for me as I strolled back down memory lane. As I browsed through old family photos, I smiled, giggled, and even cried at the many faces of me. I turned the pages of albums slowly and fell into a trance. I could hear children laughing, running, and playing...slamming gates and dodging the metal latch that often claimed a fingernail if you were not lucky. I could even smell the fresh dirt in the summer's breeze. Eating dirt and planting watermelon seeds down my throat and into my belly were two of my favorite things to do. It was a long time before I realized I would not grow a watermelon in my body. That grandfather of mine was such a trickster. He also told me I had beautiful eyes like the grinner fish. I saw a grinner fish and did not think its eyes were beautiful. Between reading the Bible and talking world issues to anyone who would lend an ear, my grandfather bamboozled me again. He was the faux town Mayor, so he always had an audience.

My grandmother was snazzy, too. My brother and I had to get dressed up to attend a function where she received recognition for her role in the community. My grandmother was a four-foot-tall dynamo. She was a special lady. Who would grow a garden in the Projects for all to see? Yes, my grandmother! She did not leave her Southern roots behind in Arkansas. I spent most of my childhood with my maternal grandparents. They taught me compassion. Here is an example of that lesson. As an old White woman drove down Imperial Highway in front of the Projects, a gang of adolescents accosted and robbed her. My grandparents intervened and saved her life. Glory! They protected people, young and old. It did not matter to them at all. They were the bedrock for many regarding educational, social, and political concerns. I learned so many lessons by simply watching and listening. My brother and I lived

in a few places with our mom and dad; nevertheless, our grandparents were our source of family history, humor, unconditional love, and emotional support.

The first house I remember living in with my parents and my brother, Kevin, was on Aranbe Street in Compton, California. Our meager home was connected to Ms. Pearl's house. She and my mom, Elizabeth, used to go creative booking (selling lingerie door to door) during the day. I tagged along until it was time for me to go to kindergarten in the afternoon.

Before kindergarten, I attended preschool in a transformed project dwelling. During preschool, I received a certificate that said I could read. This was prior to my fourth birthday. My grandfather would always have me read for him because I was such a busybody... dancing or being nosey. I was the perfect candidate for reading letters that contained family secrets. I have fond memories of living in that little house. Life was good back then, and my brother was my best friend. He will not tell you, but I used a broom to protect him from other children in the Projects. If you saw Kevin, you saw Shaunda. We were thick as a wad of Wonder Bread until he got old enough to ditch me for a game of football or baseball.

Do you remember that house I mentioned living in, next to Ms. Pearl? Well, one day, we just left that old one-bedroom house and moved on to Gunlock Street—dad, mom, shining green couch, and two kids in tow. The only vivid memory I have of Gunlock is when I licked a Clorox bottle top while my mother washed dishes. She told me to go lie down in the corner and die. I did go lie down, but I did not die. From Gunlock, we moved to Magnolia Street, but my daddy, Troy, he did not move with us. That was the end of Mommy and Daddy.

Oftentimes, Kevin and I would sit on the porch waiting for our Daddy. Sometimes he would come, and others times he would not. Living in that dark corner apartment in the back of the building came with many challenges. The biggest one was Robert, an older boy who wreaked havoc on my brother and me daily for at least one year. It was torture, pure hell. He literally scared us shitless. When we left apartment 310, we moved right out the back door and across the sidewalk to 314, which was a front-to-back duplex situated across from a tall apartment building. But we did not move far enough away from Robert. The saga continued.

I attended kindergarten in an arena-shaped school called Clarence A. Dickison Elementary. I remember school being a protective space; however, I did not remember attending school with White students until I recently found my kindergarten school day picture in which my face was cut out. I found a copy of the missing photo. Based on the class picture, there were three White students in my class. I wondered if they felt awkward being in class with so many students of color. The first time I remember attending school with White students was junior high school.

There was a lot of racial tension during junior high school and senior high school. The cause for this racial tension was blamed on the movie *Roots.* Black people in my neighborhood would randomly select White people to mistreat because of the violence portrayed against Black people in the movie. I protected a young White girl named Linda from a mob of students during seventh grade. I shielded her in the safety of my home until the crowd dissipated, then walked her home. I did not see Linda much after that. She was terrified, and I was too naive to realize the danger we both faced. I found myself in a similar situation as my grandparents were in years before. I was sure in for a rude awakening.

A couple of years after my two mob experiences, I was called a nigga by a little White girl before she asked me if I wanted some watermelon. She hurt me to my core, and I retreated. That compassionate little girl inside of me was crushed. I wondered if the person who taught that little girl such language would have been willing to string me up the tree I once posed by in ninth grade. Times were tough in my town, and these tough times followed me to college.

I was taunted one afternoon by young White men as I got off the bus on Ballantyne in El Cajon, California. Yes, the same El Cajon where law enforcement officers recently killed an unarmed Black man. These young men violated me verbally, and I felt defeated. I was already colored invisible by a White Sociology professor. This seemed strange in a class that focused on social issues. My raised hand never received a call nor response in his class. What was I to do? I eventually enrolled in African American Studies courses, and my life was transformed. These experiences have taught me that although my true humanity as a Black woman may never be fully accepted in American society, my Black is beautiful. I proudly wear my Daddy's complexion, and Ambi fade cream cannot change the skin I am in, nor who I am beyond my Black face. I also know that I do not need Dark and Lovely to relax my kinks to personify someone's definition of beauty other than my own. I am enough, and I have learned to love me just as I am, but my journey continues as long as other people of color are marginalized. Race impacts my life 100% of the time, and I am comfortable in divulging my truth. Today, I can engage in courageous conversations about race without the weight of feeling angry or misunderstood. I believe by exposing my vulnerable self about race, other Black women with muted stories will find the voice to tell their own stories.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I see your brown skin, you do not SEE ME.
I hear your color commentary, you do not HEAR ME.
You are the figure; you are NOT the head…
I have the power, the supremacy of Whiteness,
LIKE I DID NOT KNOW
White Talk/Color Commentary
Whiteness speaking to my Blackness
AS IF I DO NOT BELONG!
(S. Fowler, 2016)

Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background to the study of a principal's lived experience with engaging in courageous conversations about race. It also guides the reader through the problem, purpose, and the research question. Theoretical frameworks combined with the literature review are included in the chapter as well. Additionally, an overview of the design and methods is discussed, followed by the significance of the study.

There have been many changes in the world since I incubated in my mother's womb during the signing of the Civil Rights Act by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964. During this period, Black folks had greater access to education, housing, and jobs long denied them under systems of legal segregation. Shortly after the signing of the act, my mother gave birth to me, her only chocolate brown baby girl, on a sunny and hot August, Monday afternoon in California. My mother had dreams of me living in a world in stark contrast to her own Southern roots in respect to race. She had no idea that several decades later, in the year of 2016, I would be faced with some of the same issues of race she experienced in times past. I wrote this poem to describe the beginning of my journey in writing this critical autoethnographic dissertation.

chocolate girl
with grinner eyes
I want to tell my story
I feel like an insider and outsider
trapped in two worlds
I will find my center
the place where I fit
then I will not have to worry about gaining entry
I will already be home

I am used to keeping my opinions to myself, because most of the things I learned early in life were from being in grown folks' business. I was not supposed to be in the company of grown folks unless they wanted me to fetch something, dance, or read for onlookers. I was never called to sing. That was left for my male cousin. Although my opinions were mostly kept to myself, I always had something to say, and I had a reason. This having something to say fueled my desire to write this critical autoethnography on having courageous conversations about race. Race matters in my life 100% of the time. Talking about race, for me, was a personal investigation of who I am as a Black female educational leader.

My personal experiences as a Black female educational leader at a Midwestern early learning center revealed that race and ethnicity play a significant role in how students are educated and how I am perceived. Many times, Black students are referred to as "these or those" students and not "our or my" students. Most times, this appears to be unintentional. In my case, on any given day, I am visible or in sight; however, not in view. I feel like a square peg being forced into a round hole; nevertheless, I own my story. My personal experiences in a White socially constructed educational system are illuminated autoethnographically in this study, as I learned to have courageous conversations about race. Much like Shauna Carter (2013), Valerie Howard Bridges (2010), and Darlene Brown (2005), who discussed the

significance of being underrepresented, marginalized, and having their authority questioned or overlooked, I echo their feelings, and like them, I exercise extreme care in all situations so I will not be quickly judged or labeled. I do not have to wear these labels or settle for anyone else's definition of me. I can unapologetically imagine and experience what it means to live my own story.

I am invisible because others refuse to see me. My journey, personal experiences, and perceptions as a principal are deeply embedded in race. At Aranbe Learning Center, my teaching staff is 87% White, and my student population is 90% students of color. It is not to say that all White teachers are indifferent to students of color or to me, whether consciously or unconsciously. We all have belief patterns and subjective maps of reality; however, I acknowledge the fact that I have been in the company of a few White educators who believe that all people of color need do in life is improve their situation by their own efforts, work harder. This belief that the playing field for students of color is equal to that of their White peers accentuates the need for educators to have courageous conversations about race.

Growing up as a Black female in a so-called concrete jungle was the only life I knew until secondary school. Racial consciousness and understanding bureaucratic red tape and systems of oppression that keep underserved populations destined for second-class citizenry were foreign to me. As a youth, I did not grapple with my racial autobiography. I grew up in a predominately Black community in Los Angeles County, California that included Watts and Compton, where my early images of White people were some of my teachers and people on television. I did not have the awareness that my being Black was so controversial. The lessons would come later.

Background

I wrote this critical autoethnography because I was concerned that I was a part of the problem. The problem stemmed from my conversations, or lack thereof, with my White staff members about race. The silence was deafening. It seemed that I was so busy trying to be politically correct that I never got to the heart of having courageous conversations about race. I did not want to say or do anything that would make it appear I harbored prejudiced thoughts or opinions. This critical autoethnography relates stories of my transgression, transformation, and agreement to have courageous conversations about race with my staff members.

How could I not address issues of race when a White woman in Spokane, Washington, who identified as being Black, became president of the Spokane National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—the most prestigious, historically Black organization in America—and go undetected (Keneally, 2015)? Richard Perez-Pena (2015) in *The New York Times*, stated, "Blacks and liberals accused Ms. Dolezal of an offensive impersonation, part of a long history, in which Whites appropriated Black heritage when it suited them" (p. 1). I believe this is an example of what Derrick Bell (2003) referred to as interest convergence. Interest convergence is the idea that White people will support racial justice only when they understand and see that there is something in it for them, when there is a convergence between the interests of White people and racial justice (Bell, 2012). Interest convergence occurs when a White person allows a breakthrough for a person of color and it serves the interest of the White person. For example, I am the spokesperson for White educators when they are not comfortable speaking to people of color. It serves the White person's interest to have me as an ally.

In another news article, Jonathan Capehart (2015) of the *Washington Post* wrote, "Blackface remains highly racist, no matter how down with the cause a White person is" (p. 1). A White person can march with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement or mock, objectify, and criminalize the Black body. It is a calculated risk to be an ally. The question becomes, what will I lose as a White person for you to gain as a person of color? Why is it so difficult to talk about race when there are glaring news reports of unarmed men of color dying at the hands of White law enforcement officers?

According to Mary Sanchez (2014) of the *Kansas City Star*, "If police were killing White males at such a rate, there would be a national outcry to rein in law enforcement" (p. 1). Glenn Singleton (2015) proposed a specific protocol to begin the dialogue. As a people, we will not see substantial change in society until we stop side-stepping the elephant in the room and talk about race, White privilege, and racial inequalities.

My Personal Background

As the principal of Aranbe Learning Center, I had to explore the bounds of race with my young, White female staff. The demography of racial inequity in American schools and in my school made it imperative for me to talk about race. I had to examine the topic of race with staff to pave the way to improve students' academic growth and development. When I walked into a place called school, it was not a magical chamber where my lived experiences got checked at the door. Who I am, based on my place on the social hierarchy, shows up, and the politics of everyday life matter, but what part of my story gets told? It is a beautiful thing when you have learned something and do not realize it until the lesson is revealed. In a moment of complacency, a sister colleague told me that I do not have the luxury of complacency. She encouraged me to self-care and to never allow anyone to steal my shine.

Courageous conversations require a lot of mental gymnastics; therefore, showing up in peace and not in pieces is crucial. So, I show up every day in my two-ness. Now, I understand the lesson.

Top of the food chain
Second class citizen
Highest degree obtained
Second class citizen
Yo llevo la mascara
Ciudadano de segunda clase

When I was in the beyond diversity class, I had to sit on my thoughts for a while and reflect on what I was willing to reveal about my lived experiences. Reflecting caused me to both embrace and deny my being. A series of highly racialized events have triggered many memories that lived in the subconscious of my early childhood experiences. I have experienced overt and covert racism. These events are discussed in later chapters. I can remember, prior to my traditional schooling, White people working in my inner-city neighborhood, teaching, feeding, and keeping me busy in the summertime. I later learned that this aid was courtesy of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), a charitable organization that worked with inner-city youth. I was unaware if these charitable acts were just for the giving, or if they were a pathway for an antiracist collaboration with the Black community. Although the CYO offered some peace and security in my neighborhood, I remember stories of fear.

Growing up in the Imperial Courts Projects (PJs), I remember listening to stories told by family members about how the National Guard patrolled the community during the Watts Riots and Civil Rights era. My brother's account of the late 1960s rekindled my memories of the Black Panther Party in my community. My brother remembered a green house on the

edge of the PJs where the Black Panthers had a headquarters. The Black Panthers provided a free breakfast program for neighborhood children in this house. I recalled the breakfast; however, my brother remembered seeing military-style weapons lined up against the walls. My brother told me the weapons were for the Black Panthers' protection from the police and for the protection of the people in the community. In addition to being a source of self-help, the Black Panthers were a source of security for the Black community. However, my brother and I had a hidden fear of the Black Panthers. My brother was afraid of the weapons he saw every time he went into the green house, and I was afraid because I was once detained and quieted in the house when something went extremely wrong. We sensed the danger we were too young to understand, but we kept going to that green house on the edge of the Projects.

My brother also confirmed my memory of the 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. curfew that was imposed to keep the people who were living in the Projects and surrounding areas off the streets. We watched officers from the Los Angeles Police Department walk up and down the streets at night, two by two.

I was not old enough to recall the actual riots, but I remembered being afraid based on the stories I had heard. I used to peek out the window in the wee hours of the night, looking for tanks and White guards. It was not my imagination. The police officers were real. As a young child, I feared for my safety at night, but I was comforted in the morning with breakfast, courtesy of the Black Panther Party that I secretly feared. This was my reality as a youngster. I did not understand my racial identity, institutionalized racism, social injustices, or White privilege until much later; and this became more apparent in adulthood as I worked in the educational system.

As mentioned, I attended Clarence A. Dickison Elementary School from kindergarten to grade five. I do remember being fonder of my Black teachers because they seemed to teach me about life's lessons. I can hear Ms. Sams, a Black teacher, saying to me, "Make it easy on yourself, Shaunda." I knew she meant for me to focus, buckle down, and get it together. Although she was stern, I believed she cared for me. I felt smart in Ms. Sams' class. On the other hand, Ms. Black, a White teacher, did not seem to care much about me at all. She would look at me with consternation as if I were a nuisance. She would twist my ears as if wringing out a wet rag. I do not ever remember her giving me any type of praise or encouragement; therefore, I never felt smart in Ms. Black's class.

I believe this was the first time I began to make distinctions and name my teachers as Black or White based on how I felt I was being treated in class. I can relate to Singleton (2015) when he said, "I knew from experiences with Black teachers prior to fifth grade, what it felt like to have a teacher who truly knew and liked us" (p. 62). My Black teachers were dedicated to educating me, and they were charged with making sure I could compete with my White peers in society. I felt that my White teachers disliked me until I met Mr. Dee, a math teacher in high school. Mr. Dee knew my strengths and my opportunities for growth as a math student. He made me feel a part of what was going on in his class, even when I was being very disruptive. Mr. Dee could put me and other Black students in our places without making us feel deflated. He knew how to relate to his students so we really did our best to learn in his class. It did not hurt that he was the coolest and one of the best dressed teachers on campus. Mr. Dee was short in stature; however, he was easy on the eyes, so yes, I really learned the FOIL method of math, which is a technique for distributing two binomials.

The education I received in a Black school, taught by Black teachers, challenged me to respect myself as a Black female. The Black teachers in my formative years celebrated students of color and taught in a fashion that today would be considered culturally responsive. Ladson-Billings (1994) describes cultural responsiveness as a way for schools to be more appropriate or compatible for culturally diverse learners. Culturally diverse learners should be reflected in the curriculum so the learners can feel a sense of connectedness to the school environment as well as to the communities in which they live.

The stories that were told by my grandparents, uncles, aunts, and people in the community offered the foundation for nurturing my racial consciousness. I was not yet cognizant that this awareness would later be the first stitches in the fabric that would transform my life. Time would bring about a change. During my middle and high school years, I attended more racially mixed schools. At the mixed schools, as a Black student, I was educated in White knowledge constructed by White Americans about White American historians, scientists, mathematicians, musicians, artists, and so forth. My cultural shock came when I realized that my early education was not enough to prepare me for the microaggressions I experienced.

Microaggression

Microaggression is a term coined by a Harvard University professor, Chester M. Pierce, in 1970. Microaggressions are the "everyday verbal, nonverbal environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages toward people of color" (Sue, 2010, p. 235). These subtle innuendos are so imbedded in our everyday culture that they easily go unnoticed. Because I attended a Black school with Black teachers at the helm, I believed I had received a much more

culturally relevant education, and I did not sense any subtle insults from my Black teachers nor by Mr. Dee. He was the exception.

As human beings, we use social cognition, referred to as the intuitive or logical representation of others, to characterize others and make inferences (Shantz, 1975). Spencer (1985) said, "identity is assumed to be influenced by underlying cognitive structural characteristics, but for Black children, identity formation is toward identity imbalance" (p. 216) unless an intervention occurs. It can also be an interaction between behavior, cognitive/internal events, and the external environment (Bandura, 1978). The development of a child's growth may be conceptualized as a continual process of exploration and testing of their inner and external worlds influenced by socially constructed meanings. Tatum (2004) posited, "We teach what we are taught…The unexamined prejudices of the parents are passed on to the children" (p. 126). My cultural identity was formed from my family's history; a rich cultural heritage, full of love and community and educators, which has enabled me to positively interact with others.

The Projects in which I grew up were filled with adults sitting on metal trashcans and peeping out of windows holding their own conversations, but also watching children at play. It did not matter if some of these adults were drunk or stoned; they looked out for me, and it was very difficult to be mischievous around these all-seeing eyes. This was an example of the popular African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Because of this mentality, I was often told stories by my maternal grandparents—stories of courageous Black folks who would later inspire me. I often heard stories of family members who triumphed over difficult situations, particularly Black women who worked to clean White women's houses and took care of their children to better their own lives. My grandfather spoke about civil rights and

the Black men who came to prominence during the civil rights movement such as Malcolm X. My grandfather, like Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, believed that Black people should stand up and speak out for themselves. My grandparents were known community activists, but I did not know the struggle. Just like Black men are unaware of their own masculinity when they are among other Black men (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 128), I did not feel the weight of my own melanin until it was brought to my attention. Recognizing Blackness in a negative light is a form of microaggression. Microaggressions can lead to racial conflicts.

Racial Conflict

Racial conflict is a polite euphemism that suggests a level playing field between White people and people of color regarding race. It does not speak to the blatant acts of racism that people of color experience in America. From the years of Reconstruction, through the Voting Rights Act, to present times, people of color continue to experience societal racism. The Black Lives Matter movement exists to illuminate how Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. Recent acts against Black bodies are more than microaggressions and racial conflicts. These acts of violence are racism at its worst.

When I attended mixed schools, I was taught that the Black Panthers were a group of militant racists who wanted to overthrow the government. Although I had my own fear regarding the Black Panthers, I did not recognize the group being described. Contrary to Malcolm X, many people supported the efforts of Martin Luther King, Jr. because of his stance on civil disobedience. Although Dr. King was not celebrated for his outstanding work at the time, he was the role model my White teachers gave me on which to pattern my life.

To use the title of Alice Walker's (1989) book, *In the Temple of My Familiar*, I felt comfortable and confident as a young Black female around people of color. The environment was safe and familiar. As said by Singleton (2015), "What a shock and blow to my confidence to move from the ranks of gifted in the Black community to remedial among my soon-to-be White peers" (p. 63). Based on my lived experiences as a Black female, I felt invisible when I attended racially mixed schools. The conflict was peaceful in nature; however, it was a conflict all the same, because my presence was marginalized and the climate was unjust. White teachers treated diverse students as "others" or foreign, and they "perceived their role to be that of 'helping minority students' to be more like White, i.e. them" (Bolgatz, 2005, p. 26). According to Hamilton and Carmichael (1992), "When one forcefully challenges a racist system, one cannot expect to be rewarded or treated comfortably" (p. 15). When people are marginalized based on their ethnicity, whether it is violence as a form of resistance or peaceful resistance, racial conflicts manifest. I have gained a small part of the American dream, such as owning a home and obtaining several advanced degrees; nevertheless, am I willing to lose any of it in my fight for racial equity? I should not have to think or feel this way. This is psychological mind control.

Conversely, I met a Black power leader at San Diego State University in the 1980s by the name of Kwame Ture (formerly known as Stokely Carmichael) who "spoke out against the missionary discourse and told White people that if they want to help, they had to free their own people first" (Hamilton & Carmichael, as cited in Earick, 2009, p. 59). Freeing self means coming to terms with and owning institutionalized racism. Most of my White teachers seemed ill prepared to teach students of color, and I felt a sense of "double vision." Walker (1983) explained that "double vision" is the ability to see self in its close community, but see

the larger society as one who suppresses in silent accuracy (p. 19). Teachers must first engage in courageous conversations about race before they can realize how their core beliefs about racial equity impact what they do daily in their classrooms.

After graduating from college, I secured a job as a teacher in a Midwestern school district. Later, after teaching for several years, I returned to college to obtain my principal's certification and became an assistant principal in the same school in which I had taught for five years. Ultimately, I went on to become a principal in a neighboring Midwestern school district. In my experience as a principal, I have found that there are many White teachers who enter urban educational settings unprepared to engage in interracial dialogue about race.

I worked with a teacher who struggled with a student of color. The situation was to the point of the parents being disgruntled and wanting a new teacher. We tried, tirelessly, to work through the challenges before switching classes. The family named the teacher as being racist toward the child. The teacher had no recourse. Her entire disposition was against this student, and I was appalled. The child was saved; however, I cringe at the thought that this child may have suffered some emotional damage.

Another time in the hallway, I heard, someone call, in a loud thunderous voice, "Somebody needs to do something about these kids!" I thought to myself, "Was I really supposed to hear that?" That was the first stage of failure, and failure was not an option. There was no sugar-coating the situation. I needed to have courageous conversations. Howard (2006) offered a framework through which White educators can explore their own racial identities, White privilege, and White dominance to begin to have courageous conversations about race.

Leadership and Race

Race continues to create "a fundamental fault line" in the U.S. (Wood, 2002). We as educators must get to a point where we can comfortably have interracial dialogue about race. This study was designed to help me discuss a larger concern "to effectively conceptualize and incorporate a context for understanding leadership and race" for equity (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 877). Pertinent to this study are some of the microaggressions I experienced as a Black female leader. As a leader of color, I have often found it difficult to lead in White work environments because of both my invisibility and hyper-visibility. In other words, as a Black female leader, I am either audible or quarantined at will. Being a Black female leader, I should lead in ways that resonate with my own racial group while connecting to the ways of White dominant society.

As I facilitated the process of having courageous conversations about race with my staff, I had to dance between the intersectionality of my own cultural/racial realities while understanding the realities of my staff. Race not only shapes my psychological makeup, but my collective identities in the larger social structure (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 890). The reality of the increasing number of students of color enrolling in school and the overwhelming number of educators being White made it critical for me to embrace a protocol that supported me in engaging in interracial dialogue about race.

According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, also known as The Forum (Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015), 48.1% of students attending schools in the United States are of a racial/ethnic group (p. 96). Included in this group are the following: 13.8% Black, non-Hispanic; 0.9% American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic; 4.9% Asian, non-Hispanic; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,

non-Hispanic 0.2%; two or more races, non-Hispanic 4.1%; and Hispanic 24.6% (Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2015, p. 96). By the year 2035, students of color will constitute a majority of the elementary and secondary student populations (Chou, 2007, p. 140). The National Center for Education Information: Profiles of Teachers in the U.S. reported more than 84% of teachers are White and female (Feistritzer, 2011). Ladson-Billings (2005) stated, "Teachers feel ill prepared or incapable of meeting the educational needs of students of color" (p. 230). These teachers may also lack a clear understanding of White power, "White dominance, and White privilege" in which the American educational system is deeply rooted (Vinnik, 2015, p. 2). This study reflects my lived experiences of being a leader in such institutions. This research builds on the idea that educators must be able to deconstruct their own racial identities to better educate all children.

The Problem

Fear should not influence our need to engage in dialogue. Typically, educators have not examined and discussed race in their schools because they fear not knowing how to go about this process correctly (Singleton, 2015). I have labored under microaggressions as a Black female leader; however, I had never turned the ethnographic gaze on myself to focus on how I engage in interracial dialogue about race. Darling-Hammond (2007) affirmed race is a "hot button" in our country, and that talking about "racial issues with respect to student interactions, student-teacher interactions or interactions among members of the school staff are uncommon" (p. 33). Race, as a "social construct, continues to be one of the most divisive constructs in our schools and society" (Howard & Denning del Rosario, 2000, p. 127). In our nation's schools, educators must grapple with teaching students with diverse identities and move beyond assimilation, tolerance, and recognition and toward "valuing and affirming"

(Gay, 2010, p. 29). Young professionals enter and leave colleges and universities without the basic knowledge of other cultures in the educational setting.

The "demand for silencing signifies a terror of words, a fear of talk…what doesn't get talked about in schools... 'undesirable' talk is subverted, appropriated, and exported" (Fine, 1987, p. 157). Apfelbaum, Norton, and Sommers (2012) stated, "numerous people are concerned about being labeled racist leaving them unsure if they should talk about race" (p. 205). The most compelling assessment of the colorblind or colormute approach is that people really do see race when perceiving others; they just do not talk about it (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Pollock, 2004). Hence, out of my fear of being labeled an angry Black woman, I became a part of the problem because I did not know the language to engage in courageous conversations about race throughout my educational experiences. Race can be defined as:

> a species classification of human beings created by Europeans (Whites) which assigns human worth and social status using "White" as the model of humanity and the height of human achievement for the purpose of establishing and maintaining privilege and power. (Chisom & Washington, 1997, p. 9)

The examination of race matters takes us to the core of American democracy (West, 1994). Consequently, racism is defined as "any activity, individual or institutional, deliberate or not, predicated upon a belief in the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of people of color, which serves to maintain White supremacy through the oppression and subjugation of people of color" (Banks, 1973, p. 30). West (1994) suggested, "race is the most explosive issue…that confronts the tragic facts of poverty and paranoia, despair and distrust" (p. 156) in democratic America.

Orelus (2013) pointed out that race is the most contested topic in America today. His essay illuminated the importance of talking about race and racism while unveiling many

"socially constructed racial categories purposely designed to justify the social and economic isolation, exploitation and manipulation of many people, especially people of color" (Orelus, 2013, p. 585). On March 18, 2008, then-Senator Barack Obama delivered an historic speech on race in America. The *New York Times* captured a segment of Obama's speech that echoes the sentiments many Black and White people expressed in 2016. According to the now-President Barack Obama:

> Race is an issue that this nation cannot afford to ignore. Black people must understand that most working- and middle-class White Americans do not feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race. As far as they are concerned, they have worked hard all of their lives to see their jobs shipped overseas and their pension dumped after a lifetime of labor…White people must recognize that the legacy of discrimination and current incidents of discrimination are real and must be addressed. Not just with words, but with deeds – by investing in our schools and our communities; by enforcing our civil rights laws and ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system; by providing this generation with ladders of opportunity that were unavailable for previous generations. (Obama, 2008, paras. 32, 40)

Colonialism, nationalism, the Ku Klux Klan, police brutality, and protest; does this sound familiar? Fifty-two years ago, Republican Barry Goldwater and sitting Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson grappled over a presidential campaign deeply rooted in racial tension (Milligan, 2016). Fast-forward to the recent 2016 presidential campaigns for Democrat Hillary Clinton and President-Elect Donald Trump; the campaign was littered with racial overtones that continue to divide our nation (Milligan, 2016). Eight years after the inauguration of America's first African American President, Barack Obama, our country is still separated by the color line.

When people of color and their White allies protest individualized and institutionalized racism, they are vilified. Milligan (2016) explained in her article that White people are anxious about the changing demographics of the American landscape and what

they stand to lose, while people of color are disappointed about what they may not gain. Race is still the elephant is the room. Who is going to speak up for the Trayvon Martins, Michael Browns, and Eric Garners of the world? The colleges and universities I attended offered courses in multiculturalism and diversity; however, none of these courses prepared me to have courageous conversations about race. Thus, I have found it challenging to talk about race. Racial talk studies have been conducted to determine how educators perceive, talk about, or avoid talking about race in public school settings.

Pollock (2004) conducted a three-year ethnographic study of a school and district in California; she used her field notes to analyze conversations encompassing the everyday lives of her students and colleagues. Pollock found that many teachers either refused to talk about race because of their "'colormuteness' or their conversations were confused, murky, partially informed, and imprecise" (p. 102). A strategy was needed that focused on who is accountable for changing the trajectory and not one that contributes to the normalization of failure (Noguero, 2008). In my situation, I realized my attitude invariably influences my actions. I had to go beyond the rhetoric and talk about race if I truly wanted to have a positive influence on the lives of my students.

In contrast to Pollock (2004), Gillis (2009) conducted an action research study based on the first edition of the book, *Courageous Conversations about Race* by Singleton and Linton (2006). Thirty-seven teachers who taught grades ranging from elementary to high school took part in professional development sessions; however, only eight teachers—two Black females and six White females—agreed to take part in the actual study, which took place in a rural South Georgia school district. The researcher in the study asked participants to reflect, through journaling, on racism, institutional racism, Whiteness, and White

privilege. The findings of the study suggested that teachers expressed a desire to move toward developing strategies to close the racial achievement gap. However, the history of racism in the patriarchal South was deeply embedded in these women's personal identities and presented challenges that needed to be overcome before real change could occur. In Pollock's study, educators refused to talk about race, while in Gillis' study, even though educators received professional development and were willing to engage in conversations about race, their deeply rooted Southern values made the topic somewhat difficult to broach.

Haupu (2014) also conducted a qualitative research study that used Singleton and Linton's (2006) Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) Protocol to examine educators' and administrators' perceptions of conversations about race and equity. Haupu explored the perceptions of educators and administrators at one K-8 school in the district where she was employed by conducting pilot interviews, personal interviews, and small group interviews. The study found when teachers engaged with professional development focused on race and equity, their racial consciousness increased and deeper relationships were developed with their students (Haupu, 2014). These three studies were similar in intent but had differing outcomes. Haupu's study engaged educators in deeper levels of racial consciousness, which made it easier for them to engage in courageous conversations.

Using dialogue as a vehicle for transforming attitudes and beliefs systems about race is a starting point for building mutually respectful relationships. I had to understand that "race is a visible catalyst and not the underlying cause" of many of the problems of our educational institutions (West, 1994, p. 4). Courageous conversations about race are important in the learning environment. I believe that my deeply rooted racial attitudes impact what I do when having courageous conversations about race.

Villenas and Angeles (2013) conducted an analysis of print media from 2007 to 2012 guided by ethnographic observations. The study was indicative of examples of everyday education issues. Findings revealed that Whiteness' flexibility was undergirded by the force of benevolent liberal race talk, which worked in tandem with racist hate speech. It echoed racist hate speech's language of deservedness, merit, and colorblindness, and simultaneously was a factor in the "identity-making of we (middle class) White Americans as culturally superior" (p. 526). White people could be flexible or dance in and out of their privilege at will. Whiteness was used as leverage to engage or disengage in issues of race. This is the flexibility of Whiteness. People of color do not have the same flexibility as their White counterparts or the luxury to randomly select colorblindness or colormuteness.

Howard (2006) realized his earlier attempts at getting White people to acknowledge their position of dominance and racist behaviors were too abrasive. The enemy of multicultural education is not White people, but dominance, ignorance, and racism. It is the educator's responsibility to students to remain open to deeper ways of knowing and doing regarding dominance. Howard (2006) asserted that White dominance can be described as "institutional practices that systematically favor certain racial, economic, and language groups, while negatively influencing others" (p. 29). Furthermore, if one's assessment and understanding of the root causes of social inequality are too superficial, then one's approach to remedial action will be shallow and unproductive (Sleeter, 1996). Freire (1996) stated, "those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their words must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression" (p. 69). It was this silenced voice I needed to awaken; my voice will not be anesthetized if I truly want to be a

transformational leader by walking the equity talk and encouraging others to speak their truth.

As a Black female school administrator, I had not systemically negotiated or made sense of my own perceptions of race or engaged in critical thinking in the educational settings. True dialogue, according to Freire (1996), "requires faith in humankind and their ability to reflect and take action based on critical thinking. Engaging in dialogue and critical thinking is not the privilege of the elite, but the birthright of all" (p. 71). As a Black female administrator, I have the right to tell my story.

Issues of Whiteness inhibit the problem of race consciousness talk. It is more comfortable to write about race and hide behind the printed word than to have face-to-face courageous conversations about race. Although the studies of Pollock (2004), Villenas and Angeles (2013), and Haupu (2014) do not have a significant focus on the racial achievement and opportunity gaps or culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies, I would not be transparent if I did not acknowledge that my race and ethnicity play a significant role in how I perceive myself as a Black female leader.

The Purpose and Research Question

In the *Souls of Black Folk* (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997), DuBois said an African American has a "double consciousness," a "two-ness" of being "an American, A Negro: two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 5). Walker (1983) called this "two-ness" double vision, while Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) referred to this "two-ness" as "shifting." These are all survival strategies for people of color. For this critical autoethnography, I incorporated these survival skills as I focused on my own personal experiences with using a protocol to

"engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race" (Singleton, 2015, p. 67). The main components of the protocol include (a) Four Agreements, (b) Six Conditions, (c) the Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass, and (d) operational definitions (Singleton & Linton, 2006). In order to understand the process I engaged to have courageous conversations about race, I internalized the protocol early in my journey. In this section, I include a brief explanation of the major components of the protocol, which are more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3.

The Four Agreements include staying engaged, experiencing discomfort, speaking your truth, and expecting and accepting non-closure. The Six Conditions encompass focusing on the personal, local, and immediate; isolating race; normalizing social construction and multiple perspectives; monitoring agreements, conditions and establishing parameters; using a working definition for race; and examining the presence and role of Whiteness. It is recommended by Glenn E. Singleton, founder of the Pacific Educational Group (PEG), that members of groups who are new to racial equity work become experts in the first two conditions before engaging in the other four. This study followed Singleton's recommendation; however, the remaining four conditions are also critical to the protocol. The Mindset Compass is designed to help participants understand how others deal with race. Finally, one must understand definitions for race, racism, privilege, and Whiteness. It is the intent that this study will help other administrators when they embark upon a similar journey with having courageous conversations about race and sharing their lived experiences.

I am the principal at the school where this study occurred. The setting for the study was an early learning center in a small Midwestern town. Although the student population at Aranbe Learning Center (ALC) was a tapestry of color, the teaching staff was a one-

dimensional thread of young, White females. As I inserted myself into the literature, I incorporated a critical lens to problematize issues of race.

My critical autoethnographic analysis examined one central question: How do my perceptions about race relate to my development as a Black female educational leader? The question was designed to foster a relevant analysis of my perceptions of race before and after the Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars (BDPDS) while using the protocol for *Courageous Conversations about Race* (Singleton, 2015; Singleton & Linton, 2006). My knowledge base for having courageous conversations about race was guided by theoretical frameworks and an intense review of relevant literature which were the key concepts for making meaning of my experiences.

Theoretical Frameworks

Theoretical framework or conceptual framework explains in graphic or narrative form the main ideas to be studied and the key factors, constructs, or variables and the assumed relationships among them. Frameworks can be theory-driven, commonsensical, descriptive, or causal (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The theoretical framework, according to Creswell (2013), informs the researcher's review of the literature, "trustworthiness in place of what I have been calling validation, a section for being reflexive through personal biography and both the ethical and political considerations of the author" (Creswell, 2013, p. 63). Maxwell (2013) suggested a "conceptual framework of a study is the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform our research" (p. 39). The theories that informed my study were drawn from initial beyond diversity training, later trainings, and scholarly article reviews, as well as engaging in courageous conversations about race.

By developing a conceptual framework, the researcher takes ownership of the study's core theory and reason for the study (Maxwell, 2013). I was a beneficiary of beyond diversity, a two-day seminar which served as the precursor to the Pacific Educational Group's Courageous Conversation about Race seminar (Singleton, 2015). Beyond diversity influenced my choice of underlying theories and concepts that framed this study: understanding White privilege, Critical Race Theory (CRT), narrative storytelling, and critical autoethnography. These theoretical frameworks helped me to identify topics for the literature review: history of race as a social construct, racial inequality, constructivist professional development, and leadership for a race conscious professional development. Combined with the theoretical framework, this literature helped me to understand and come to terms with my journey in having courageous conversations about race with my staff.

McIntosh (1988) posited, "I was taught to think that racism would end if White individuals changed their attitude. But a White skin still opens many doors for Whites, whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us" (p. 78). Understanding White privilege assisted me in recognizing how one group can see another as a subordinate class, which furthered my need to increase awareness of race as a social construct. Race as a social construct as stated by Lopez (2000) "is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions" (p. 163). Hence, history of race as a social construct was the first topic for the literature review that connected to the need to understand Critical Race Theory. CRT has a dimension of activism for transforming racially charged social situations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Understanding racial inequality and its influence in the lives of African Americans as well as

implications for other people of color is the focus of the second knowledge area. Many White people can begin to effect change by changing the way they feel about their Whiteness. Sleeter (2004b) stated, "One approach to penetrating these defenses is to affirm to Whites that their beliefs are valid for Whites, but not necessarily for people of color" (p. 39). Accepting and affirming these beliefs can give White people opportunities to have courageous conversations about race. Constructivist professional development for teachers, the third topic of the literature review, "provides opportunities for new teaching strategies, provides the chance for teachers to collaborate and includes follow-up and continuous feedback" (DeMonte, 2013, p. 4). Finally, leadership for a race conscious professional development, allows educators to view race from multiple perspectives. In *Leadership for a Race Conscious Professional Development*, Cooper, He, and Levin (2011) suggested professional development activities should "engage educators in critical examination of their beliefs and identities with the goal of increasing self-understanding" (p. 5). Therefore, it is crucial that my story is told. This critical autoethnography is in alignment with Critical Race Theory and the counter-narrative about my "moral and professional imperative" (Singleton, 2015, p. 228) to disrupt inequities in my school through racial equity leadership. An expanded discussion of the theoretical frameworks and the literature that flow from this discussion are included in Chapter 2.

Design and Methods Overview

As a Black female educational leader at ALC, I engaged in and reflected upon my engagement with initial Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars (BDPDS), later trainings, and staff interactions. The words I chose and the stories I told during the seminar gave my marginalized voice permission to speak. Naming my race, sex, and position

allowed me to make myself visible in social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other (Pratt, 2002). By keeping this study local, personal, and immediate, I advanced a critical narrative (Pyke, 2010) to uncover my own oppressive or repressive behaviors. As a Black female, I view my autoethnographic narrative as a unique and necessary perspective to the principalship as it relates to talking about race.

I danced in and out of my insider/outsider identities during the seminars; however, when I engaged in racial dialogue, I did not use any identifying language to reveal with whom I had a conversation during the study. This was my personal story; so, there was no need for comparing lived experiences.

As noted earlier, the BDPDS for dialoguing about race is based on the following foundational protocols:

> Agreements, conditions, and compass…deepen interracial dialogue about race…improve student achievement…courageous conversation *engages* those who will not talk, *sustains*…when it gets uncomfortable or diverted, *deepens* the conversation to the point where authentic understanding and meaningful action occur. (Singleton, 2015, p. 26) (Italics in original)

As I described my critical autoethnography, it was necessary that I use data from various sources connected to the two BDPDS. My first BDPDS took place on October 14-15, 2014. This was the precursor to engaging in courageous conversations about race. My second BDPDS was conducted on December 1-2, 2015.

The setting for engaging in courageous conversations about race and the stimulus for my critical autoethnographic text was ALC (pseudonym), located in a Midwest community bordering a metropolitan area. At ALC, 87% of the certified educators at the time of the study were White, and 90% of the students were students of color; statistical data are from the 2015-2016 school year. I felt a sense of colormuteness among the White educators

(Pollock, 2004) in my building; therefore, I leaned in and engaged in the work. I also felt a sense of accountability for my own behavior. I knew that I could be consciously or unconsciously harboring racial biases as a Black female educational leader that could sabotage my work as an equity leader. Singleton (2015), within the context of BDPDS, defined race as "the socially constructed…physical attributes…in the United States and elsewhere…racism can be defined as beliefs…that one set of characteristics is superior to another…a racist…subscribes to these beliefs and perpetuates them intentionally or unconsciously" (p. 50).

Since most of my education was channeled through White socially constructed concepts of race, I found it difficult to engage in interracial dialogue about race in the public school setting. During the seminar and the study, I compared how I showed up on the Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass when talking about race: thinking, feeling, acting, or believing (Singleton, 2015). The compass helped me to get in tune with my emotions when I experienced an unhealthy state of disequilibrium. This helped me to set parameters and better understand multiple perspectives regarding race. After each session, I reviewed my notes and handouts and recorded my thoughts in a journal or audio recorder.

These data aided me in compiling my autoethnographic accounts and personal feelings about having courageous conversations about race. Autoethnographic texts "appear in a variety of forms—short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose" (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008, p. 448). My critical autoethnography also reflected short stories, personal essays, journal writings, poetry, and photos. Data for this study were also derived from various BDPDS handouts, peer reviewed articles, and self-reflections (Grbich, 2013). These data

allowed for crystallization (Creswell, 2013), which "combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4). Crystallization occurs when the researcher reflects on the analysis of experiences and tries to name and articulate patterns or themes noticed while examining portions of the data in detail (Creswell, 2013).

Data analysis involved coding to identify meaningful themes; this involved my interpretation of the experiences related to having courageous conversations about race, as captured in autoethnographic writings. Maxwell (2012) described categories of data analysis as: (a) memos, (b) categorizing strategies (such as coding and thematic analysis), and (c) connecting strategies (such as narrative analysis) (p. 105).

The tradition of autoethnography is a useful method for practitioners in multicultural settings because it pursues the goal of cultural understanding (Chang, 2008). This study became more refined through disruptions and epiphanies when I viewed my experiences through a critical autoethnographic lens. I also claimed the space of CRT as a reflective mirror for making meaning of my experiences. Chapter 3 is a more in-depth discussion about the methodology I used in the study. It was important that I explain the ebbs, flows, and ethical dilemmas of writing a critical autoethnography on having courageous conversations about race from an insider/outsider's perspective.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it can inform policy and practices in public schools. It is also significant because it can give a critical framework to help others talk about issues of race when they are reluctant to do so. Harries (2014) claimed that people must use narratives in ways that reveal the embeddedness of race in everyday life to challenge racism.

In Harries' (2014) study, 17 women and 15 men in Manchester (United Kingdom) used photo diaries to explain race in their lives. The study resulted in attention being drawn to the "silencing of race" in people's everyday lives. This was made particularly clear when respondents ignored the racism they experienced. The silencing of race is endemic of the American way of life. The "use of voice or 'naming your reality' is a way that Critical Race Theory links form and substance in scholarship" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13). It is important that educators use narratives or counter-stories that contribute to the centrality of the experiences of people of color. These stories "challenge the story of White supremacy and continue to give voice to those that have been silenced by White supremacy" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006, p. 4). Although my role as the researcher and the researched may be contradictory, silencing my voice would "wind up privileging the White, middle class woman's or man's need for self-display" (Apple, 1996, p. xiv). However, many marginalized voices get left out. This study, by tracing my journey of racial consciousness, will add to the literature on how to have courageous conversations.

Furthermore, engaging in a race conscious professional development protocol can strengthen and deepen a participant's race consciousness level, which has a positive impact on instruction and student-teacher relationships. DeMonte (2013) concurred that professional development learning for teachers is the "link between the design and implementation of education reforms and the ultimate success of reform efforts in schools" (p. 2). In 2014, a Boston Consulting Group affiliated with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation engaged more than 1,300 stakeholders—including teachers, professional development leaders in district and state education agencies, principals, professional development providers, and leaders—in a combination of interviews and surveys about their views of professional

development offerings (Gates & Gates, 2014). Study findings suggested that 29% of teachers were highly satisfied with current professional development offerings, and 34% of the teachers thought professional development had improved. The findings also indicated that the teachers and staff were accepting of professional development offerings which were critical to staff development. Conversely, the study revealed that a large majority of teachers did not believe that professional development was preparing them for the changing nature of their jobs. I contend that the demographic changes in our schools make these jobs much more challenging.

Professional development sessions incorporated in the BDPDS focused on courageous conversations about race connected to the increasing diversity of America's classrooms. The foundation for the professional development sessions was derived from Singleton's (2015) book *Courageous Conversations about Race*. These trainings were opportunities for teachers, principals, and district administrators to engage in courageous conversations about race that ultimately influence their interactions with children.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I described the background of the study. Narrative storytelling "begins with experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals" (Creswell, 2013, p. 70). Narrative storytelling gave me a platform to speak my truth. The problem, followed by the purpose and research question were also discussed. Theoretical frameworks and topics for the literature review were illuminated. I ended Chapter 1 with an overview of the design and methods overview and the significance of the study.

In Chapter 2, the theoretical frameworks understanding White privilege, Critical Race Theory, narrative storytelling, and critical autoethnography are discussed. Also,

included in this chapter is a review of scholars who have taken different paths to understanding four key areas: history of race as a social construct, racial inequality, constructivist professional development, and beyond diversity leadership for a race conscious professional development. These theoretical frameworks and the literature review helped to make meaning of my experiences with having courageous conversations about race.

In Chapter 3, the methodology, I discuss the epistemological tenets of autoethnography and my role as the researcher, including issues of reflexivity. Other elements of the design are the setting, data collection, and analysis of my experience. Anecdotal records, journals, recordings, notes, and reflections allowed me to engage, sustain, and deepen my understanding of race and ways to engage in courageous conversations. Additionally, essential to this chapter are the discussions of limitations, ethical issues, and biases related to the study.

In Chapter 4, I offer "interpretive insights" (C. Schlein & J. Friend, personal communication, November 29, 2016) from the analysis of my data. My reflections were my own point of view and therefore emic in nature. Emic is considered the insider's perspective, captured and being true to the perspective of the study (Patton, 2015). In other words, the researcher as "observer not only sees what is happening but feels what it is like to be a part of the setting or the program" (Patton, 2015, p. 338). This was my personal journey, and I wrote my narrative the way I have experienced it.

Chapter 5 focuses on the implications of the results and how the study can help leaders recognize defensive tendencies that hamper courageous conversations about race. It concludes with recommendations for future research for exploring ideas on how to keep groups motivated to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race. I provide a

postscript of the final step, the dissertation defense. However, my journey for becoming a courageous leader for social justice continues.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 presents an expansive review of the theoretical frameworks and topics of the literature review introduced in Chapter 1 and chronicles some of my lived experiences. As a child, I grew up hearing and chanting, *if you are White, you are all right, if you are brown, stick around, and if you are Black, get back.* This was one of many rhymes I recited that was an exploitation of the Black community and Black girls. I had no idea that my childhood street corner and playground antics were perpetuating Jim Crow, degradation, and microaggressions based on skin color. In 1951, Big Bill Broonzy released a song about the discrimination against Black people called "Black, Brown and White" (Baxter-Stewart, 1951). Through song, he described his lived experience and the experiences of others as being marginalized and devalued.

In 2016, Royce Mann, a White male teen, 14 years of age, wrote a letter to Black people saying that he "would not trade places with them" (Yuan & Price, 2016). Mann won a poetry slam apologizing for White privilege; however, he went on to mention how his life was better due to his White privilege. At his young age, he believes that all lives matter and that society needs to turn unequal rungs on a ladder into bridges of hope for racial equality (Yuan & Price). In my early teens, I had a misunderstanding—or it was mis-communicated to me—about who I was as a Black girl child. I did not grow up having courageous conversations about race, so my story was muted. I did not discover the narrative of my social and racial identities in a "colorblind" society until later.

In this section, I present theoretical frameworks of understanding White privilege, Critical Race Theory, narrative storytelling, and critical autoethnography. I selected these

topics because they were essential in providing me with the background knowledge needed to illuminate my experiences with exploring and developing a critical consciousness for having courageous conversations about race. As I delved deeper into the research, I learned that CRT would allow me to reveal the narrative of my muted racialized life. I realized that my depth of knowledge was limited about White privilege and how difficult it is to navigate the terrain of confronting racism and the work needed to dismantle it. On the other hand, I am aware of racial inequality because I have experienced some form of it on a regular basis. Thus, examining this topic provided me with new insights and a different perspective on how to engage in courageous conversations about race. In some cases, I am sure that I have applied technical solutions to challenges that would have been better resolved with an adaptive solution. I believed that talking about race would lead participants into having antiracist relationships.

Furthermore, since this dissertation is a critical autoethnography, it is storytelling. Therefore, narrative storytelling was an obvious choice as a theoretical tradition, a design element. While doing research for this work, I read many narratives written by Black female professionals. These narratives provided me with the background knowledge I needed to illuminate my experiences with having courageous conversations about race. Finally, I incorporated primary and secondary sources related to topics that were linked to the theoretical framework for making meaning of my experiences with BDPDS (Singleton, 2015) as a conduit for engaging in courageous conversations about race. These topics contributed to an analysis of my experiences and included history of race as a social construct, racial inequality, constructivist professional development, and BD leadership for a race conscious professional development. Thus, this chapter is divided into two parts:

theoretical frameworks and a review of related literature, with both areas connected to my research question: How do my perceptions about race relate to my development as a Black female educational leader?

Theoretical Frameworks

Race is the premise of many conflicts in the news and ethnic cleansing in the world, and it is endemic to our everyday lives as we make efforts to communicate with others of different ethnic status. In researching the theoretical frameworks of understanding White privilege, racial inequality, critical autoethnography, and narrative storytelling, I uncovered issues about the dominant class that have broadened my understanding of their efforts to remain the dominant race. While I do not agree with the tactics the dominant race has used in the past and/or still practice daily, I am beginning to understand their thinking. Tochluk (2010) posited:

> As we leave our relationship to race unexplored, unquestioned, and untreated, our Whiteness becomes analogous to the far side of the moon. We never see the mysterious far side that scientists tell us appears far more battered and beaten than the visible side facing Earth. White people often act out of our unexplored Whiteness and then feel injured when our attempts at overcoming racial issues fail. (p. 5)

White people must come to terms with their individual attitudes about race and racial identity and engage in interracial dialogue. White privilege has led to inequality in our society, and offering counter-stories contributes to changing the narratives about race. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) explained narrative inquiry as a process to attend to the lived experiences of others. This alternative point of view is necessary to offer multiple perspectives. Counter-stories transcend the dominant discourse regarding truths and beliefs.

Understanding White Privilege

Understanding social dominance theory is an underpinning for courageously discussing issues of race, which notes that hegemonic groups at the top are discriminatory to members of subordinate groups. As I researched White privilege, I internalized how the social construction of Whiteness permeated American culture, which resulted in hegemony, defined as "an organizing principle disseminated in everyday life through a socializing process that is a combination of coercion and consent" (Earick, 2009, p. 19). White people tend to "function in denial and defensive modes where they are unable to see beyond their blinders" (Howard, 2006, p. 37). As Kendall (2013) posited, White people's privileges are guaranteed at birth. The discrimination is seen through the lens of White people receiving disproportionate shares of life's goods and services to preserve the status quo.

According to Kendall (2013), racism in America is a White problem. It is woven into institutions and culture. Kendall posited, "We must all recognize how we benefit by racism and are caught in its web" (p. 9). Americans must recognize that a set of books or discussions will not end racism. In race-based American society, the White race is the standard against which all others are measured (Kendall, p. 2). Further, we "(White Americans) must first examine what it means for each of us, personally" (p. 2). Kendall summarized the rationale for White Americans:

> If we do not fully understand our individual and collective roles in maintaining a system of white superiority, our relationships with people of color remain superficial, our ability to work in diverse workplaces is greatly diminished, and we fail to create a just world in which everyone has an equitable opportunity to contribute and thrive. (p. 1)

For White people to begin to examine themselves as perpetrators or bystanders, Singleton (2015) suggested that Americans need to start having courageous conversations about race which can help us in unraveling the tangled web of racial injustices.

McIntosh (2002) stated, "Whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative and average and ideal so that when we (White Americans) work to benefit others, this is work which will allow them to be more like us" (p. 77). It has been standard protocol for Whites to fabricate "scientific theories" (McIntosh, p. 77) to feel superior to other cultures. America, as a White society, promotes social reproduction of superior values and moralities more than any other group of people (Omi & Winant, 2014; Sleeter, 2004a).

Educational endeavors to teach many White people about racism are met with tenacious resistance. Racism is not viewed as a misperception, but as a structural analysis among racial groups. Equating race with European ethnicity gave White people a way to explain their mobility in America (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Omi & Winant, 2014; Sleeter, 2004a). Sleeter (2004a) stated, "People do not deny seeing what they actually do not see. Rather, they profess to be color-blind when trying to suppress negative images they attach to people of color, given the significance of color in the United States" (p. 168).

It has been argued that "race has been a master category, a kind of template for patterns of inequality, marginalization, and difference throughout U.S. history" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. viii). Sleeter (2004a) emphasized, "White people need to learn about racism…historic experiences and creative works of American minority groups and about the wide range of implications for schooling" (p. 176). It is vital that White people be reeducated and confront the vested significance White people have in continuing the status quo.

Helms (1994, 1997) suggested six stages of White Identity development to help White people understand the role they play in understanding White privileges. The six stages are divided into two phases. Phase one is referred to as the abandonment of racism and includes three stages: contact, disintegration, and reintegration. During the contact stage, White people are unaware of most forms of racism and generally have limited interactions with people of color. At this point, White people are considered colorblind. Disintegration is stage two of White identity development. White people are more racially aware at this stage, and during this period, they tend to believe racism is not the fault of White people. They cope with discomfort by not engaging in interracial dialogue. At the final stage of phase one, racial stereotypes are held, racist jokes are supported, and feelings of guilt have transformed to anger. This stage is called reintegration into Whiteness. During this stage, White people want to be accepted by their peers; thus, they continue to hold racist attitudes. The primary goal of phase one is for a White person to move from a place of obliviousness about White privilege to a place of consciousness and to understand how privilege is a source of unearned power based on race.

Phase two, known as defining a nonracist White identity, encompasses the last three stages of White identity development. These three stages encompass pseudo-independence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. Pseudo-independence is when a White person begins to question racism and has a genuine desire to help people of color. During the immersion/emersion stage, White people reflect on their privilege in America. The final stage of White identity development is autonomy. White people are racially aware and do not consider people of color a threat. This phase is intended for White people to develop a non-

racist White identity and work toward abandoning White privilege without being considered angry.

Whiteness as a privilege. Many Whites do not see their color as a privilege. They are taught not to see any differences in color through social reproduction; this is the way it has always been. Sleeter (2004b) stated, "Among Euro Americans, ethnic differences no longer define opportunities or social participation: marriage, housing, employment, education and so forth are almost always related to European ethnic background" (p. 38). Historically, many light-skinned Blacks have chosen to pass as White, while others have grappled with their ethnic identity. Piper (1992) described this dualism:

> I know firsthand, how white people behave toward me when they believe racial differences are absent…And there are very few white people who are able to behave that way toward me once they know it is present (p. 27) …I have sometimes met blacks socially who, as a condition of social acceptance of me, require me to prove my blackness by passing the Suffering Test. (p. 31)

Piper (1992) noted many times she had to prove her Blackness to the Blacks she met throughout her life. She felt that other Blacks did not feel she was Black enough because she had not suffered enough – her skin color allowed her to navigate a White world that dark-skinned Blacks could not. Piper's complexion caused her to experience microaggressions from both Black and White people.

Many Whites have been raised in a society that promotes the rightness of Whiteness (Howard, 2006). When Whites do have opportunities to interact with people of color, they try not to see their color. Sleeter (2004b) stated, "Many of them upheld the 'color-blind' perspective, believing that one is not participating in racism if one learns to ignore color and feel comfortable around children of color" (p. 38). Howard (2006) named this the "luxury of ignorance" which allows Whites to be colorblind.

Male white privilege. McIntosh (2002) stated, "Whites are carefully taught not to recognize White privileges as males are taught not to recognize male privileges" (p. 77). McIntosh (1988) shared some of her insights when she revealed the invisibility of White privilege. McIntosh (2002) realized the extent to which men worked from a basic unacknowledged privilege. Men did not equate their advantage with a woman's disadvantaged state. McIntosh (2002) further stated, "much of men's oppressiveness was unconscious" (p. 77). Power and privilege are seductive, and if the status quo is challenged, tensions escalate. When these practices fail, then they try other means as suggested in what Howard (1999) calls, "*The Seven Basics of Western Dominance*: bacteria, bullets, beads, bureaucracy, books, booze and the Bible" (p. 40) as a means of maintaining superiority over other cultures.

Recently, women have had more opportunities to make changes in education than men, since more women are educators in public schools. Sleeter (2004b) contended, "as women, many teachers have experienced prejudice and stereotyping, therefore, they perceived themselves as knowledgeable about how discrimination works" (p. 37). White women can begin to effect change by changing the way they feel about their Whiteness. Palmer (2010) revealed, "when we understand who we are and stay true to our inner self, then we can connect to our students in a meaningful and powerful way" (p. 2). Even though Whites do not see or recognize their Whiteness, it is possible for them to have courageous conversations about race.

Gillborn (2006) argued that "principal forms of anti-racism have proven unable to keep pace with the development of increasingly racist and exclusionary education policies that operate beneath a veneer of professed tolerance and diversity" (p. 11). Furthermore,

Gillborn stated, “CRT offers a genuinely radical and coherent set of approaches that could revitalize critical research in education across a range of inquiries, not only in self-consciously multicultural studies” (p. 11). In the journey of White development, it has been asserted that Whites do not recognize Whiteness as a privilege; they consider themselves as normal and morally neutral (Helms, 1994; Howard, 2006; McIntosh, 2002; Piper, 1992; Sleeter, 2004b).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Historically, Critical Race Theory was developed out of legal scholarship. It gives a critical analysis of race and racism from a legal point of view. Since its start within legal scholarship, CRT has spread through many disciplines. CRT has basic tenets that guide its framework. These tenets are interdisciplinary and can be approached from different branches of learning. The Critical Race Theory movement is a group of interdisciplinary scholars and activists interested in studying and changing the relationships between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Many researchers in the education field are critical race theorists aiming to understand our society and bring about change.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) posited that CRT claims racism is endemic to American society in that “civil right laws continue to serve the interests of Whites” (p. 48). For more than 100 years, the two broadening categories for naming race per the census data have been Black and White. Other “groups may not have been able to take full advantage of the privileges of Whiteness” but “White supremacist society will allow you to have your new forms of capital as long as they do not infringe on their old established one” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 116).

Institutional racism can be pervasive in the dominant culture without overt individual acts of racism. In effect, CRT purports that these power structures are based on White privilege and White supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color (Kendall, 2013). CRT also rejects the traditions of liberalism and meritocracy.

Legal discourse says that the law is neutral and colorblind; however, CRT challenges this legal "truth" by examining liberalism and meritocracy as a vehicle for self-interest, power, and privilege. CRT also recognizes that liberalism and meritocracy are often stories heard from those with wealth, power, and privilege. These stories paint a false picture of meritocracy that everyone who works hard can attain wealth, power, and privilege while ignoring the systemic inequalities that institutional racism provides.

Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman have been credited with the start of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998). They argued that the traditional approaches of combating racism were producing smaller gains than in earlier years. Thus, Critical Race Theory is an outgrowth of Critical Legal Studies, which was a leftist movement that challenged traditional legal scholarship. These CRT scholars continued forward and were joined by Richard Delgado. In 1989, they held their first conference in Madison, Wisconsin (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). This was the beginning of the CRT as a movement.

The five tenets of CRT include: (a) the permanence of racism, (b) Whiteness as property, (c) critique of liberalism, (d) interest convergence, and (e) counter-storytelling. The permanence of racism refers to racism being endemic in American society. It is referred to as living under the veil of racism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Critique of liberalism, which is the idea that "provides educators and students with a powerful tool to deconstruct the nature of society and its institutions" (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011, p. 15). Whiteness

as property, stated by Zamudio et al., "explains why it is so difficult to change racial inequality" (p. 31). Furthermore, Zamudio et al. (2011) defined interest convergence as "why change is often ineffective when it comes about" (p. 31). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) suggested that Critical Race Theory "departs from mainstream legal scholarship by sometimes employing storytelling" and liberalists argue that "Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation" (p. 7). Critical race theorists understand that urgent and radical change is needed to embrace the possibility of ending racial disparities.

Finally, counter-storytelling is a way to invalidate dominant stories of Whites about communities of color. "Some of the critical storytellers believe that stories are also a valid destructive function" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 48). Counter-storytellers challenge displaced beliefs mostly perpetrated by White people about people of color. Thus, counter-storytelling was a tenet that guided this study. Ladson-Billings (1999) posited CRT is "an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction-reconstruction and construction" (p. 210). CRT is about systemizing race and racial theory to confront traditional ideas of diversity and social hierarchy. My research question was designed to help me reflect on my own lived experiences as I navigated the issue of race.

Narrative Storytelling

Narrative storytelling refers to the art or process of telling a story or giving an account of events or experiences that may be significant to one's life or the lives of others, Narrative inquiry is "a process of learning to think narratively, to attend to lives narratively, and to position inquires within a metaphorical three-dimensional space" (Bell, 2009, p. 120). I negotiated this metaphorical space in terms of my personal and social relationship with the setting and how I navigated my past, present, and future selves while analyzing my data to

tell my story. Narrative inquiry allowed me to tell my story through my vulnerable self (Muncey, 2010); a self that had become fragile living within the boundaries of race. Storytelling can be used to explore race and racism. According to Bell (2009), as a form of social justice, stories offer a way for people who are oppressed to use creative ways of expression. Stories of the dominant culture are illuminated, while stories of the marginalized are often muted (Bell, 2009). Some stories take on a life of their own. Counter-storytelling is a way to bridge the personal with the political. Sometimes you just must fight to be heard.

As a critical autoethnographer, my story is interspersed throughout the text. During the study, I discovered the social and cultural patterns and the meanings and ways I engaged in courageous conversations about race in my educational setting. Ethnographers "discover what people do and why before they assign meaning to behaviors and beliefs" (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 1). Ethnography is guided by and generates theory; it is qualitative and conducted locally and when applied, offers an ideal vehicle for conducting research. Collins (1998) contended the outsider within is filled with contradictions. The outsider within appears to have a position of power but will never have access to formal membership of the dominant group. My hope was that this critical autoethnographic study would prove beneficial to others who may find themselves in similar situations.

In this study, I revealed my vulnerable self as a Black female educational leader navigating the terrain of having courageous conversations about race. My feelings and behaviors as an insider/outsider were illuminated as my story was being told in a space where the voice of a Black woman was typically marginalized or silenced. The following section presents examples of narrative stories and memoirs written and told by Black females which helped to convince me that I had a story to tell.

Michelle Norris. In her memoir, *The Grace of Silence*, Michelle Norris (2010) revealed the secret the family kept for many years about her father. It was not until she went to Chicago to visit her father's brother that she discovered he had been shot many years before. Her dad had not been seriously injured; however, the events that led up to the shooting were painful to relive, and family members felt at that time it was best to bury the incident. This book is three-fold. It chronicles her father's life during his years of military service, his efforts to seek employment that was promised to returning veterans, and events up until the time of his death. Norris highlights the Jim Crow laws, lynching, racism, boycotts, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and other events and actions suffered by African Americans from the 1920s to the 1970s.

Margo Jefferson. Margo Jefferson was born into an upper-class Black family in Chicago and came of age in the 1960s. This was a turbulent time for Blacks, who struggled with class frictions that complicated the ideals of racial unity. In her memoir, *Negroland* (Jefferson, 2015), she wrote about growing up in an area of Chicago and how she lived as an "Oreo" (Black on the outside and White on the inside). *Negroland* is the "name for a small region of Negro America where residents were sheltered by a certain amount of privilege and plenty"— "too often merely gestures at an interesting idea or worrying implication without engaging it in a sustained and revealing way" (Jefferson, 2015, p. 1). The term Oreo was used in the 1960s to refer to Negroes who attended White schools and negated their ethnic heritage to live White in a White world. Oreos "were not accepted into mainstream society because of their skin color and denounced in the Black culture because of their White oriented acculturation" during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement (Perkins, 2008, p. 111).

Transformation of the "Oreo" took many years of self-reflection and determination to live as a Black in White America.

Christina Baker Kline. Kline (2014) wrote *Sweetwater,* a compelling conversational memoir of her return to her mother's birthplace in Sweetwater, Tennessee. Cassie, the storyteller, a New York sculptor who lived with her father over a restaurant her father owned, inherited a house that her mother grew up in. Cassie's mother died when she was very young, and the attempts her father made at telling her about her mother were drastically different from her memories of her mother. Cassie created in her mind what her mother would be like if she were still alive and if she had grown up knowing her. Cassie was compelled to move to the place where her mother was born with the hope of discovering the truth about her mother's terrible death.

Donna Ross and digital storytelling. Ross' (2011) dissertation, *Digital Storytelling: Ordinary Voices, Extraordinary Stories,* explores the perspectives of women enrolled in a developmental English class at a community college which utilized digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool. The goal of the study was to contribute to the existing body of literature on developmental education best practices and women's learning, as well as to merge the two with the 21st century technology of digital storytelling. Digital storytelling, if used appropriately, results in multiple benefits for the developmental student.

Digital storytelling is a pedagogical tool which includes active, contextualized, and collaborative learning. This process helps students to become an expert in basic writing and reading skills. Digital storytelling becomes more engaging and meaningful as students produce digital narratives to share with their classmates and others. An elementary teacher for years, Donna Ross entered the community college environment to discover digital

storytelling, which put her on fire. The dissertation used audio, image, and video software to help women tell their stories with an exclusive focus on women's ways of learning.

While the four authors' impetuses to express their stories were unique to each of their lives, each author exposed a vulnerability of self through what Bell (2009) portrayed as attending to one's life as a narrative encapsulated in a space in time. For me, my story took a metaphorical three-dimensional space (Bell, 2009) entangled with the ways in which race has shaped my life. Hence, I became engaged with autoethnography.

Autoethnography

Karl Heider (1976), an anthropologist, first introduced the term *autoethnography* in 1975 in his study of the Dani people (Chang, 2008). The contemporary use of the term autoethnography refers to self as the ethnographer; however, in the study of the Dani people, Heider (1975) referred to self as the informant (Chang, 2008). Hayano (1979) first heard the term "autoethnography" used in Sir Raymond Firth's structuralism seminar in 1966 at the London School of Economics (p. 99). Hayano (1979) stated, "The recent upsurge in popularity of Third World courses and Ethnic Studies departments has also generated the need for social scientists of color to examine first their own people and communities" (p. 99). Thus, ethnography gave roots to literary works (Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010).

Ethnography means "writing about groups of people" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 21) or cultures and was conducted by future anthropologists in their home territories instead of isolated or remote territories (Ellis et al., 2011). Scholarly personal narratives liberated researchers from abstract, impersonal writings and engaged them in lived experiences (Chang 2008; Nash, 2004). Using oneself as an ethnographic exemplar is a delicate dance. Gergen and Gergen (as cited in Bochner & Ellis, 2002) contended that writing

in “one’s unique voice reverberates from multiple relationships and emotional expressiveness…This liberation from traditional forms of writing is honored” (p. 14) by readers that tend to find scholarly personal narratives more intriguing than conventional scholarly writings.

Most anthropologist graduates have conducted pre-doctoral studies in their own communities, mainly because of shrinking funds and the competition for research and development sources of funding. Qualitative researchers have used observations, narratives, and writings about lives and experiences in their research for years. Coffey (2007) suggested, “qualitative research, in its purest form is experienced by and embodied through the researchers themselves” (p. 1). Bridgens (2007) argued that sometimes it is only through autoethnography studies “that some experiences, which are ignored, distorted or silenced because of the discomfort they cause, can become known or understood” (p. 5).

Autoethnography “seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) to understand a cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1). As presented by Ellis et al. (2011), the researcher uses the tenets of autobiography and ethnography to write autoethnography (p. 1). Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre with multiple layers of consciousness (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autoethnography is both a process and a product. I wrote about my personal experiences and then brought them to life through personal and interpersonal narratives.

In contrast, ethnography is referenced as a key qualitative approach to studying the rules, norms, and acts of resistance associated with cultural groups. While autoethnography is not a specific research technique, method, or theory, it colors all three as they are employed in fieldwork. The problems with autoethnography are the problems of ethnography

compounded by the researchers' involvement and intimacy with their subjects. Critical issues of observation, epistemology, and "objective" scientific research procedures are raised (Hayano, 1979, p. 99). In summary, autoethnography is a qualitative research method that uses data about self and context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between self and others.

Ellis and Bochner (2014) stated, "through a multiplicity of evocative narratives and theoretical lenses" (p. 10) readers can become engaged in the lived experiences of the ethnographer. Furthermore, these stories can express "concrete lived experiences in novel and literary forms, depicting local stories" and including the "author's critical reflections on their lives and writing processes" (Ellis & Bochner, 2014, p. 9). Denzin (1997) posited autoethnography "involves the turning of the ethnographic gaze inward on the self (auto), while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context wherein self-experiences occur" (p. 227).

Hughes, Pennington, and Makris (2012) stated the term *auto* is used in institutions of higher learning when referring to publications in which the author presents critical reflections and interpretations of personal experience. Reed-Danahay (1997) defined autoethnography as a form of self-narrative that places self within a social context. Storying my lived experiences with having courageous conversations about race allowed me to meet at the intersection of "ethnography and poetry" (Maynard & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010) to speak my truth.

The nature of critical autoethnography. Miller (2005) contended that women's voices are typically silenced by the dominant group (generally male) in conversations. Thus, critical autoethnography developed as an alternative framework to respond to this silencing of a woman's voice. According to Boylorn and Orbe (2014), the critical in autoethnography

is similar to the critical in ethnography. They both "begin with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain" (p. 15). By giving the appearance that education is for everyone, we continue to silence the voices of the students of color, "while subsequently functioning in the interest of the dominant culture" (Freire, 2000, p. 123). Any time someone is marginalized or oppressed, a leader must emerge to speak up.

Former Attorney General Eric Holder (2009) stated, "Americans are a nation of cowards on issues of race" (p. 1). In the educational setting, conversations about race often display confused, murky, and partially informed thinking about racial inequality and racial disparities (Pollock, 2004). Pollock (2004) further revealed that people often flat-out refuse to even talk about racial issues and refers to this silence as "colormuteness" (p. 32), which is detrimental to schools. The colormuteness position can be viewed as an individual being unwilling or having an inability to engage in any conversation about diversity and difference. Errol (2014) contended:

> It is not that people are not trying...Americans, wishing to bring about a colorblind society…end up being colormute—fearful of offending…clam up about racism, confining our blunt, not-politically-correct sentiments or questions to…trusted friends and family. (p. 1)

Being silent about issues of race does not mean being neutral. Neutrality defined in a racial context is rooted in Whiteness; the White social construction created a fault line or failing for people of color to achieve in America. Dyer (2008) suggested that "Whites do not see their Whiteness in the absence of people of color…transparency casts doubt on the concept of race-neutral decision making" (p. 1). Dyer (2008) stated the view is "other people are raced" and White people are "just people" (p. 10).

I have eschewed writing about Whites as a social collective because of my limited experience, and I dare not essentialize race. “White is not just white. White is power” (Jenson, 2005, p. 2). Consequently, “scholars must confront the reality that some Whites claim they do not experience their Whiteness at all” (Lewis, 2004, p. 623). Further, I claim living in an unjust society where being Black is a problem and White is supreme. Until people collectively acknowledge that racism exists, courageous conversations about race will continue to be a needed area of study.

Critical autoethnography allows for both cultural and personal critique. My critical autoethnography was in part the result of my perspectives about race, the lack of having a protocol for engaging in courageous conversations, and my trainings in beyond diversity (Singleton, 2015). Through this form of narrative, I voiced my personal, local, and immediate perspectives regarding engaging in courageous conversations about race. The use of a critical lens helps to make sense of the context of the culture (introspective and outward). Autoethnography is “oftentimes serendipitous, occurring when we are going about our everyday lives” (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014, p. 18). Because I am living these experiences in everyday life, I felt a critical autoethnography was the method I needed for my research.

As the instructional leader in the building, I have an ethical responsible to the students in my school to have courageous conversations. My cultural and interpersonal everyday experiences were illuminated in the study. Courageous conversations can have an impact on how teachers view students individually and as a group. I believe teacher attitudes toward students impact academic success. I learned this firsthand in Mr. Dee’s math class. I was the unit of analysis, which made this dissertation autobiographical. I placed myself in the social context of Singleton’s Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars for my

voice to emerge through having courageous conversations. The Pacific Educational Group, under the leadership of Glenn Singleton, uses a protocol to support adults in having conversations about race, racism, ethnicity, and privilege (Singleton, 2015). The study of race and its implications for this critical autoethnographic are described in detail in the literature review.

Literature Review

Having courageous conversations about race through professional development sessions has significant implications for grounding my critical autoethnography in a review of literature that would lead to "interpretive insights" (C. Schlein & J. Friend, personal communication, November 29, 2016) from the analysis of my data. I felt it was important to include the history of race as a social construct, racial inequality, constructivists professional development, and beyond diversity leadership for a race conscious professional development as foundational knowledge for this study. Race is a constant reality in our society, and the nature of the social construction of race is apparent with whatever new psychological or sociological framework is promoted. Race mattered when the U.S. elected the first bi-racial president.

In 2008, the United States overwhelmingly nominated its first African American president. While this was a proud moment for African Americans, many Whites felt a kinship to his nationality and ethnicity. President Barack Obama not only has African blood coursing through his veins, but White blood as well. But his White ancestral blood did not make him acceptable to everyone.

Many White educators have a point of view that their way of knowing is normal since they have socially constructed the meaning of what it means to be normal. The examination

and understanding of the root causes of social inequality cannot be too shallow (McIntosh, 2002; Sleeter, 1996). Engaging in courageous conversations about race and examining the presence and role of Whiteness deepened my understanding of why it was so difficult to engage in courageous conversations. Acknowledging the history of the social construction of race led to an understanding of the deep historical roots of inequality. First, I examine this area, followed by a discussion of inequalities that have stemmed from the roots of racial discord. I contend that constructivist professional development can lead to talking about difficult issues of race, which ultimately shapes the culture of the school. Coupled with leaders having courageous conversations about race, the final topic of the literature review, beyond diversity leadership for a race conscious professional development is needed for educators to examine their personal beliefs and assumptions about race.

History of Race as a Social Construct

Historically, within the United States, those who are judged White rarely have been challenged to think about their Whiteness (Battalora, 2002; Halley, Eshleman, & Vijaya, 2011; Kendall, 2013; Lopez, 2000). Race exists as a social and political understanding of humans (Lopez, 2000) that attempts to assign individuals into distinct groups in a way that "systematically benefits some—while limiting opportunities for others—people of color" (Halley et al., 2011, p. 7). The reality of racial disparities is Whiteness' tendency to influence the way people of color are viewed and how they are treated. In other words, race as socially constructed implies that members of a society decide what the racial categories will be and how the individuals within that society will be classified and afforded power and privilege based upon physical characteristics such as skin color (Caruthers & Friend, 2016).

In 1775, Friedrich Blumenbach published the first work distinguishing races based on physical features. His focus was on the shape of the skull and hair and included shades of skin color (Hunter, 2002; Leonardo, 2004) and facial features such as the shape of the lips. Blumenbach classified humans into five races: "Mongoloids, Malays, and Ethiopians (Africans), American Indians, and Caucasoid" (Halley et al., 2011, p. 25).

In 1912, Franz Boas developed a racist ideology using the measurement of the skull to challenge racism based on biases (Halley et al., 2011). Boas and his "students studied how the environment influences the shape of human skulls" (Halley et al., 2011, p. 26). In 1972, biologist R. C. Lewontin conducted a study of genetic diversity variation in humans. For the study, Lewontin selected samples from different populations of humans, which implied that humans can be classified into distinct racial groups. Lewontin's study argued that "observed physical differences within and across groups of humans suggested a continuum of distinctions, rather than clear and separate groups" (Halley et al., 2011, p. 30).

Francis Galton (1909), a cousin of Charles Darwin, developed the theory of eugenics in 1883. He set out to cleanse the races of idiots, imbeciles, and mental illnesses (Kolechin, 2013). Galton believed that people "of other racial groups–including Jews, Irish, Italians, and people from Africa, Asia and the Americas—presented a threat to the best, purest, smartest, strongest, and most civilized races—primarily themselves, the British" (Halley et al., 2011, p. 36). Eugenicists supported sterilizing or isolating people so they could not reproduce. In the United States, between 1929 and 1935, there were a reported 14,651 forced sterilizations. The operations included 9,327 women and 5,324 men (Reilly, 1987, p. 162).

Hernstein and Murray (1994), authors of *The Bell Curve,* sought to improve on eugenics by implementing intelligence tests. Their theory was based on the claim that little

could be done about racial inequality, since White people are born rich, therefore have more intelligence, resources, and innate talent than the other races. In other words:

> People are rich (and white people are more likely to be rich) because they, the rich, are naturally smarter than others, and people are poor (and they are more likely to be Black and Latina/o) because they, the poor, are naturally dumber. (Halley et al., 2011, p. 39)

The theory employed by *The Bell Curve* was pervasive in educating African Americans during this era. Many teachers and faculty members in public schools and higher education institutions valued the intelligence of White students, and they believed that African Americans were less intelligent.

Research in Europe and the United States shows that "racial position shapes and gives voice to the stories people tell about race and racism, and filters how such stories are perceived and understood by listeners" (Bell & Roberts, 2010, p. 2295). Halfond, Corona, and Moon (2012) conducted a study of Latina/o parents' and adolescents' perceptions of hoped-for and feared possible futures for adolescents. Twenty-nine parents (18 mothers and 11 fathers) and their 18 adolescents took part in semi-structured individual interviews that were digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes. Themes that emerged included achievement, interpersonal, personal characteristics, financial-material, cultural roots, and risk behaviors. The study findings suggested that Latina/o parents and adolescents expressed hopes and fears for future outcomes that were different from current research on Latina/os that often reflected deficit thinking about their cultural values (Gorski, 2008; Payne, 1996). These researchers worked from deficit-thinking premises that assumed students of color live in a culture of poverty that does not support middle class standards.

Keene and Padilla (2010) interviewed 25 low-income African American men and women who moved from urban neighborhoods in Chicago to White small-town communities in eastern Iowa. The interviewees, who moved to Iowa in the context of gentrification and public housing demolition, described "encountering pervasive stigmatization that is associated not only with race and class, but also with defamed notions of Chicago neighborhoods" (Keene & Padilla, 2010, p. 1217). Participants sought safe and affordable housing or were drawn by shorter waiting lists for housing subsidies that had been unavailable in Chicago. The study results suggested Chicago-to-Iowa movers displayed "defensive othering" and selective association to avoid the label of "just another one from Chicago" (Keene & Padilla, 2010, p. 1222).

Racial Inequality

Racism, in its entire destructive splendor, permeates every aspect of American life. It is one of the most crucial problems we now encounter. It is this so-called "White problem" (Kendall, 2013, p. 9) which causes the racial strife and polarization now plaguing the country, not the Black, Mexican American, Native American, or Puerto Rican "problem" who are so often blamed. Racism pervades the whole society, which causes unrest and affects us all. The analysis of racism in America, when seriously and conscientiously pursued, should begin with a mindset that is based in reality. The true meaning of racism is still hazy and indistinct. Members of ethnic minorities are often the experts on racism from an empirical viewpoint, since they are the recipients of its ill effects. Gay (1973) asserted that racism has overarching overtones regarding racial inequality. She explained:

> Racism is individual and institutional, intentional, and unintentional, overt, and subtle, it is an activity predicated on an idea or an attitude; is insidious and pervasive; ascribes to the inherent superiority of Whites over people of color; is

> learned and culturally sanctioned, and involves the exertion of power, authority, and/or control by Whites over other ethnic groups. (p. 28)

One reason why "White and people of color cannot agree on racial matters is because they conceive terms such as racism very differently" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 8). Race is a socially constructed idea, and some social scientists insist that racism is not real (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

Omi and Winant (2014) posited that some Whites fight White supremacy and do not endorse it in the common sense, most "subscribe to substantial portions of it in a casual, uncritical fashion that helps sustain the prevailing racial order" (p. 11). Some Whites who oppose affirmative action believe that Black problems are Black people's own doing. They do not see anything wrong with their White lifestyle and believe they are good people.

Types of racism. Nonwhites have outnumbered Whites throughout the world in vast numbers, yet Whites continue through power and technology to dominate the lives of people of color, particularly in America. Types of racism in America fall into three basic categories: individual, institutional, and cultural. Individual racism is defined (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Helms, 1997) as the belief that ethnic minorities are inferior to Whites because of their racial identity and the corresponding behavioral patterns which serve to perpetuate these attitudes and positions. Institutional racism (Harrell, 2000; Phillips, 2011) in its many forms is created by individuals for their benefits, and they work under the auspices of customs, laws, morals, habits, and other cultural sanctions. Therefore, institutional racism is an extension of individual racism and is indicative of racism inherent in the culture. Cultural racism involves both individual and institutional racism (Giroux, 1994; Harrell, 2000). It migrates from the elevation of the "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant" culture.

These three types of racism combine to create a society that is prolific in Whiteness with racism as socially-constructed phenomena to keep diverse groups in their place. Gay (1973) argued:

> The professed "brotherly love" which is supposed to transcend racial and ethnic identities to embrace all mankind is expressed as the "White-man's burden," which in turn has been used to rationalize imperialism, slavery, and other kinds of mistreatment; "the genocide committed against Native Americans in the name of the manifest destiny," the right of Whites to settle the frontier," the impudence of some state legislatures to pass laws making Mexican Americans White, "the portrayal of White which connotes, purity and goodness, standards of beauty" and glorified white skin, blond hair, and blue eyes, and the statement that Columbus "still discovered America" even though Native Americans were here long before his arrival. (p. 34)

The socially-constructed nature of race becomes clear when history continues to perpetrate White dominance in our history books, through the media and social connections. Creating authentic counter-narratives is a way to resist the presence of race embedded in the dominant narrative which silences and distorts the lived experiences of people of color.

African Americans and racism. There have been racial societal problems in America since the end of the Civil War. Jim Crow segregation for Blacks instituted in White America was the final resolution to racial strife. In August 1619, the first shipment of Negro slaves arrived at Point Comfort, near Jamestown, Virginia. In 1640, a Virginia judge set the tone for America's racial history when he sentenced three indentured servants who had run away and had been captured by local authorities. The judge "punished the two white indentured servants by adding one year a piece to their indenture…the third indentured servant, an African American, was punished for his failed escape to a lifetime of service" (Ball, 1998, p. 3). Slavery took hold in the South and continued for many years in many states in America.

In 1842, (Fraenkel & Story, 1994) in the case of *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that a slave owner's property rights took precedence over a state's right to protect African Americans. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1859 reaffirmed that slaves were chattel property (Landon, 1920). Dred Scott, a slave, sued for his freedom in federal court in a non-slave state in 1857 (Kutler, 1967). He lost the suit; however, it was too controversial to hold the Scotts as slaves after the trial. Dred Scott and his wife were ultimately returned to his original slave owners, who granted their freedom in May of 1857. Dred Scott lived for only one year in St. Louis, Missouri, as a freeman before he died on September 17, 1858 from tuberculosis. The Thirteenth Amendment, ratified in 1865, ended slavery.

The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, was a direct response to "Black Codes enacted across the South to control and limit the legal and political status and conduct of their recently freed slaves" (Ball, 1998, p. 6). Accompanying the passage of Black Codes was the paramilitary group known as the Ku Klux Klan founded in Pulaski, Tennessee, by six ex-Confederate soldiers and led by Nathan Bedford Forest, who became its first Imperial Wizard. The "great sin of the North after 1865 was to destroy slavery and yet not destroy the culture that slavery had generated" (Ball, 1998, p. 15). *Jim Crow,* a term named for Black Face, a song and dance routine, became an adjective for segregation of races by 1838.

W.E.B. DuBois. W.E.B. DuBois, American sociologist, historian, and civil rights activist, knew well the struggles of being Black in America. He understood that if White privilege exists and courageous conversations about race are suppressed, the lives of Black people would continue to be oppressed. DuBois explained that the problem in America is the color-line and that Black people are constantly scrutinized under the veil of race. In *The Souls of Black Folks*, published in 1903, Dubois understood that being Black in America

equated to being a problem—a problem that White people did not want to broach outright. (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997). Dubois wrote:

> Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, p. 2)

DuBois' work epitomizes the tenets of critical race theory through his interrogation of race in America—that has seemingly become permanent.

Living a double existence explains the permanence of racism in America. DuBois (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997) eloquently described the lives of Black folks, from slavery to formal education. He used sorrow songs to introduce counter-storytelling as a method to debunk the myth that White people are inherently superior to Black people. DuBois detailed how race is socially constructed and how Black people would have to work for many generations to even come close to the status of White people. Black people were often urged to surrender to Whites to keep the peace. This is an example of Whiteness as property or maintaining the status quo. DuBois (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997) also spoke in descriptive form about interest convergence. He detailed the granting and overturning of the Special Field Order 15 to grant freed slaves forty acres and a mule. This Order did not work in the best interest of former Confederate landowners; thus, Andrew Jackson returned the land to the original landowners.

Finally, DuBois' (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997) stance on racism and race relations, economic inequities, political disenfranchisement, Black leadership,

education, religion, and the Black church personified the critique of liberalism. White America, as the dominant culture, tends to work from a colorblind perspective and the concept that the law is neutral. From this perspective, change is incremental, and in this discourse, equality rather than equity is sought. DuBois had a keen way of illuminating the savage inequalities suffered by Black people at the whim of the dominant culture; however, he had a proposed solution to curtail these savage inequalities. According to DuBois (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997), "Only by a union of intelligence and sympathy across the color-line in this critical period of the Republic shall justice and right triumph" (p. 702). DuBois knew that change would not come without the help of White allies.

Constructivist Professional Development

Constructivism is the learning theory that suggests "human knowledge is constructed within the minds of individuals and within social communities" (Richardson, 2003, p. 403). Individuals who create their own understanding based on their knowledge and beliefs are considered constructivists. The focus on professional development for teachers as constructivist is guided by the notion that "humans construct knowledge and meaning from their own experience" (Brunner, 1990, p. 163). In this respect, knowledge is collaborative as opposed to being competitive. Knowledge is not predetermined and multiple perspectives are encouraged. Constructivism is a theory that is a "short lived reform or a 'fuzzy-based' practice unless educators understand the theory and the connections across the discipline" (Fosnot, 2004, p. 5). This approach departs from the behaviorist approach. The behaviorist approach provided opportunities for teachers to explore new roles, develop new instructional techniques, refine their practice, and broaden their scope. The constructivist approach

requires teachers to employ a "wide variety of teaching strategies, in order to enable students to construct their own knowledge" (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012, p. 318).

Constructivist professional development may not be as short lived as Fosnot (2004) professed. Further research on constructivism highlights other studies that differ. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) contended effective constructivist professional development will be sustaining if educators illuminate the processes of learning and development in their practices. Also, teachers' work must be directly linked to intended learning outcomes for students. The work of the teachers must be collaborative and not individualistic. Black (1999) stated that constructivist professional development requires educators to be artists concerned with insight and stories rather than simply being managers of learning. Connecting critical thinking through teaching and learning and collaborative practices will sustain constructive professional development.

While professional development, staff development, or in-service activities for teachers came of age in the mid-1980s, the constructivist approach had been used in Southern segregated schools prior to the end of legalized public school segregation during the early 19th century. Siddle-Walker (1996) related how a Southern school used constructivism as professional development. The school principal, teachers, and community came together to create a school environment in which programs addressed students' needs to think, speak, and perform. Thus, as Siddle-Walker (1996) revealed, before constructivist professional development was popular in current times, the Yanceyville community understood the value of education and of developing the "whole child" (p. 150), "teacher-student relations" (p. 120), and "infusing curriculum with student centered ideas" (p. 94). These tenets are relevant today.

Professional development for teachers grew out of in-services and staff development to discuss the needs of teachers and students. The state "legislators and administrators of local school districts saw staff development as a key aspect of school improvement efforts" (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012, p. 321). Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) developed five models of professional development: (a) individually guided development, (b) observation and assessment, (c) involvement in a development or improvement process, (d) training, and (e) inquiry. Professional development was intended to provide teachers with an avenue to apply what they had learned during their teacher training programs. However, teacher training had been world-wide, and training trends varied from one region to the next. These various forms of professional development were considered useful for accomplishing staff development goals. Conversely, Kriek and Grayson (2009) noted that "traditional one-shot approaches to professional development were inadequate and inappropriate in the context of current educational reform efforts" (p. 186). Studies conducted in the 1980s on constructivist professional development were varied and proved a need to veer away from one-shot approaches.

Constructivist approach to professional development. Attributes of constructivist professional development seem "to be compatible with the beliefs and assumptions of the emerging world-view" (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012, p. 320) about knowledge. Constructivist professional development is characteristic of the view that knowledge is relational, tentative, and largely perceptual. Attributes of constructivist professional development include the holistic world-view; it is fluid, systemic, and integrative. Constructivist professional development also has metaphorical descriptive features and is charcterized by "mutual causation with multi-causal factors and explained by deductive, inductive and integrative

reasoning" (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012, p. 321). In a "constructivist based staff development program, teachers develop the knowledge base to effectively analyze their teaching situation and choose from a variety of strategies to enhance teaching behaviors and student learning" (Posnanski, 2002, p. 190). Journaling, reflecting, and observing are tenets of constructivism.

Fishman, Marx, Best, and Tal (2003) conducted a study using teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and atttitudes as a basis for teacher cognition relative to professional development. The professional development focused on teacher learning. The study findings suggested that "systematic exploration of the design of professional development linking standards to student achievement is a necessary element of future progress in systemic school reform" (Fishman et al., 2003, p. 655). Constructivist professional development is a key component to teaching and learning.

Schools have become more responsible for changing the curriculum and are offering teachers in-service training. Myers and Halpin (2002) conducted research to evaluate the effectiveness of a constructivist-based in-service professional development model for schools. Their study included a sample of 73 kindergarten to third grade teachers from a rural school district. These K-3 teachers integrated the use of computers into an already existing reading program, as opposed to introducing a new curriculum. The study focused on: (a) skills from previous workshop experiences, (b) teachers' attitudes toward the use of computers as instructional tools, and (c) teachers' perceived and actual computer use in the classroom. Myers and Halpin's (2002) findings indicated that regardless of previous workshop experience, the constructivist-based, ongoing training strategies designed and implemented in the existing curriculum helped teachers develop more positive attitudes

toward using computers, increased their planned future use of the computer applications in their classroom, and affected the teachers' transfer of the training into their own classrooms.

Maor's (1999) study was designed as an interactive program which required teachers to use a constructivist-oriented approach to teaching and learning to promote the development of inquiry skills, particularly higher-order thinking skills. Workshops for teachers were conducted to empower them to become comfortable with using computers in science classrooms and to enable them to enhance their understanding of and ability to use personal and social constructivist approaches. Teachers' perceptions of the process of learning with the multimedia program and their reactions to their experiences were assessed using a new instrument, the Constructivist Multimedia Learning Environment Survey (CMLES). Maor's findings proposed that teachers who were considered learners in the professional development program were more familiar with a constructivist-oriented multimedia learning environment; understood the context, problems, and issues faced by students in the classroom; and were better able to facilitate students' needs and understanding in the learning environment.

Khourey-Bowers and Fenk's (2009) study was multi-faceted and explored the relationship between teachers' participation in constructivist chemistry professional development, representational thinking, and conceptual change strategies. Quantitative measures were used to assess these relationships. Document analysis focused on pedagogical content knowledge. Elementary teachers designed lessons to advance their thinking from macroscopic to abstract models. Middle and secondary teachers introduced macroscopic models to develop their understanding of previously taught abstract models. All educators implemented representational thinking and conceptual change strategies. Khourey-Bowers

and Fenk's results proposed that (a) constructivist professional development meets the needs of teachers of varying content knowledge, and (b) instruction should connect representational models with alternative conceptions, integrating radical and social constructivism.

Other studies such as those by Keiny (1994) and Brand and Moore (2011) introduced constructivist professional development outside the subject of science. Keiny (1994) designed a study aimed at exploring the implications of constructivist theory to teachers' education and development. A post-graduate course for students of education called A Teachers' Thinking Seminar was developed to explore constructive theory. Its foundation was the participants' own practical knowledge which they were willing to share in the group. Its main strategy was the dialectical process of reflection in the group, which was used as a means of enhancing the participants' ability to investigate their own practice and construct their own theories of teaching.

Brand and Moore (2011) conducted a two-year, school-wide initiative to improve teachers' pedagogical skills in inquiry-based science instruction using a constructivist socio-cultural professional development model. The study involved 30 elementary teachers from one school, three university faculty, and two central office content supervisors. Research was conducted to investigate the impact of professional development activities on teachers' practices, documenting changes in their philosophies, instruction, and the learning environment. This study included teachers' accounts of philosophical as well as instructional changes and how these changes shaped the learning environment. For the teachers in this study, examining their teaching practices in learner-centered collaborative group settings encouraged them to critically analyze their instructional practices and challenge their preconceived ideas about inquiry-based strategies. The findings noted that factors affecting

teachers' understanding and the use of inquiry-based strategies highlighted self-efficacy beliefs. New understandings and adaptation of strategies to become more student-centered and inquiry-based were realized (Brand & Moore, 2011). Overall, these studies implied that if teachers become more student-centered, they may be more accepting of having courageous conversations about race to help students be more successful in school.

Professional development effects and educators. Various scholars have reflected on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of professional development for teachers. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) suggested that professional development provided "occasions for teachers to reflect critically on their practices and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy and learners" (p. 2). Smit (2001) noted that "teachers are indeed the key role-players in the implementation phase and they are unfortunately the silent voices in this process because policy is often imposed without teachers' voices" (p. 23). Zakaria and Daud (2009) stated professional development is the "key determining factor toward improved student performance" (p. 226). Professional development is "more effective when schools approach it not in isolation (as in the traditional one-shot workshop) but as a coherent part of a school reform effort" (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 47). The constructivist approach to professional development involves teachers both as learners and as teachers and allows them to struggle with the uncertainties that accompany each role (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012).

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) recommended that professional development should:

a) engage teachers in concrete task of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection,
b) be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation

c) be collaborative, involving the sharing of knowledge among educators
d) be connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students,
e) sustained and ongoing, and
f) connected to other aspects of school change. (p. 598)

During the 1990s, new gains were made in the effectiveness of constructivist professional development. Constructivist professional development offers opportunities for teachers to bridge the gap between the intersection of what they already know and what they will experience.

Beyond Diversity Leadership for a Race Conscious Professional Development

The traditional role of the principal has undergone dramatic shifts in recent years. Sherman (2000) posited the job has called for a staggering range of roles: psychologist, teacher, facilities manager, philosopher, police officer, diplomat, social worker, mentor, public relations director, coach, and cheerleader. Furthermore, the role of the principal has been to administer and preserve the status quo rather than vivify change. In this age of accountability, much has been made of the complexities of school leadership; specifically, that school leaders negotiate multiple contexts and stakeholders who often have competing and overlapping interests (Evans, 2007). However, as this space is negotiated, educators typically have not examined and discussed race in their schools, because they have feared "not knowing how to go about this process correctly" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 31). As a Black female school administrator, I have not publicly negotiated or made sense of my own perceptions about race in the educational setting.

Teacher educators of all races and ethnicities find it difficult to talk about issues and concepts of race in public schools. The issue of race consciousness is very important in education; therefore, I conducted a critical autoethnographic study about my lived

experiences with having courageous conversations about race using the Critical Race Theory lens. Demographics in public schools are changing to a more multi-racial population, and school "leaders must decide what to emphasize, downplay, or ignore in their words, actions, and behavior and decision making" (Evans, 2007, p. 162) before making sense of what is happening regarding issues of race.

Beyond diversity professional development. As part of the beyond diversity seminar training, there could be conflicting viewpoints which may serve as a doorway to sustain "dialogue and as an opportunity to surface critical perspective about race, racial identity, and institutional racism" (Singleton, 2015, p. 120). Opening doors to such conversations needs a clear protocol or conditions that must be present to discuss sensitive issues related to race. Beyond diversity seminars address four agreements, which include staying engaged, experiencing discomfort, speaking your truth and expecting and accepting non-closure. The seminar is also guided by the six conditions as outlined in *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools,* which is a protocol for talking about race. These conditions include: Getting Personal Right Here and Now; Keeping the Spotlight on Race; Engaging Multiple Racial Perspectives; Keeping Us All at the Table; What Do You Mean by Race?; and Let's Talk about Whiteness (Singleton, 2015).

Leaders must actively influence the "culture" of the school, stimulate cooperation, and be effective in the development processes. Huber (2004) suggested, "the underlying understanding of leadership is defined as the deliberate 'control' of other people's behavior" (p. 673). Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars engage participants in Four Agreements and Six Conditions for having courageous conversations about race. Mindful

inquiry and the Iceberg model for systems thinking are used to assist participants intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively to engage in courageous conversations about race. The BDPDS have been implemented in many school districts throughout the United States.

Professional development regarding racial equity training is gaining momentum in many school districts. By increasing the awareness of how racial issues impact schooling, teachers and educators stand a better chance of ultimately impacting the racial achievement gap.

The Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass includes Moral (believing with soul), Intellectual (thinking with the head), Emotional (feeling with the heart) and Relational (acting with the hands and feet). The compass helps participants "know where they are personally as well as to understand the place from which others' contributions come; the result is an expansion and deepening of beliefs and opinions for all participants" (Singleton, 2015, p. 145). A desired outcome for using the agreements, conditions, and compass is to deconstruct misconceptions and unconscious biases regarding students of color.

The protocol is deliberate and mentally draining. The following is a brief chronology of how a BDPDS is organized:

- Seminar participants are immediately immersed in learning how to stay engaged, expect discomfort, speak their truth, and expect/accept non-closure;
- Seminar participants learn the operational definitions for how to focus on their own local, personal, and immediate circumstances; for isolating race, normalizing social construction, and multiple perspectives when dealing with race;

- Seminar participants learn to monitor agreements and conditions and set parameters;
- Seminar participants learn to use a working definition for race; and
- Seminar participants learn skills to examine the presence and role of Whiteness.

Simultaneously, while this learning is happening, activities are conducted to give the participants opportunities to test their skills and desire to become racial equity leaders. Participants get knee-to-knee and eye-to-eye to engage in dialogue about race. During this time, articles are analyzed and racial autobiographies are shared, White privilege is critiqued, arms get crossed, and tears flow. Mindful inquiry (Wah, 2004) and a systems-thinking model (Goodman, 2002), using the iceberg as a metaphor (aspects of behaviors and culture that are explicit, visible and taught versus those that are unspoken) help to filter racial dialogue. It takes time and effort for the protocol to become second nature. The role of the principal is key to leading these courageous conversations in school.

Examining the roles of leadership. Reshaping and examining my role as principal as it relates to issues of race was not an easy task, but I had to turn my gaze inside out to identify and illuminate issues of race within the school. Evans (2007) claimed it is important that individuals have "shared meanings about how race influences the way in which school personnel define and respond to educational issues" (p. 160). Evans used data from a national, multi-year, multi-modal qualitative study of social change organizations and their leaders to explore race. These organizations represented disenfranchised communities which aspired to influence policy makers and other social actors to change the conditions that affect their members' lives. Narrative analysis of transcripts from in-depth interviews in 38 organizations yielded five leadership practices that foster strong relational bonds either

within organizations or across boundaries with others. Results showed these "practices nurture interdependence either by forging new connections, strengthening existing ones, or capitalizing on strong ones" (Evans, 2007, p. 292).

While Evans (2007) was interested in leadership styles that promote relational bonds within disenfranchised communities, Geis, Brown, Jennings, and Porter (1984) conducted one of the few laboratory experiments on the effects of exposure to stereotypic commercials. The study examined whether stereotypic TV commercials could inhibit women's ambitions in life through sustaining stereotypes related to gender roles. Female undergraduates were exposed to replicas of gender-stereotypic commercials or to replicas that reversed the gender roles. These replica commercials showed dominant men and submissive women. The researchers concluded from the data the implicit sex stereotyping contained in TV commercials could serve as a script that may inhibit women's ambitions in life (Geis et al., 1984). Steele and Aronson's (1995) seminal study on racial stereotypes reported similar results regarding the effects of stereotyping; their study showed Black participants' intellectual performance was depressed because of stereotyping even when tests were not presented as diagnostic of intelligence (p. 808). A wealth of research has documented how stereotype threats can undermine performance.

Another study examined if exposing participants to gender-stereotypic TV commercials prior to leadership tasks germinated any vulnerability to taking on leadership roles (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). The study investigated whether vulnerability to stereotype threat could persuade women to avoid leadership roles in favor of nonthreatening subordinate roles. Participants were exposed to gender-stereotypic TV commercials prior to a leadership task. The study concluded that exposure to the stereotypic commercials

undermined women's leadership aspirations on the impending leadership tasks. It was shown that avoiding stereotypic domains could reduce the risks of a negative stereotype.

Leadership scholars proffered that dialogue becomes a useful tool for making meaning in communities defined by diverse worldviews, experiences, and backgrounds (Drath, 2001; Fletcher, 2004). A national, multi-year, multi-modal qualitative study of 40 U.S. social change organizations and their leaders explored the ways in which communities try to make social change by engaging in the work of leadership (Ospina & Foldy, 2010). The success of the study depended on the participants' capacities to develop partnerships that cut across traditional boundaries dividing social groups. These social groups included race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and class, as well as geography, sector, and specialized interests. Narrative inquiry techniques were used identify the leadership practices that promoted the vital boundary-crossing (Ospina & Foldy). Five leadership practices were identified which created conditions that brought diverse actors together and facilitated their ongoing ability for collaborative work: "prompting cognitive shifts; naming and shaping identity; engaging dialogue about difference; creating equitable governance mechanisms; and weaving multiple worlds together through interpersonal relationship" (Ospina & Foldy, 2010, p. 297). The identified leadership practices may produce cognitive shifts which could result in dialoguing about race.

In leadership situations, the "experiences of people of color are often treated as a special case, rather than as the potential source for theorizing from within a particularly important social context" (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 877). Ospina and Foldy (2009) posited race—"ethnicity in general and the experiences and narratives of people of color—both as leaders and as followers—in particular, have garnered significant attention over time"

(p. 877). Many Black female educational leaders have been told by family and friends that they must work twice as hard to receive half as much power and respect as their White peers. As a Black female principal, I must still be aware that leadership and power are inextricably intertwined. Paying attention to race causes one to understand the role of power in leadership (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Omni & Winant, 1994). Furthermore, Ospina and Foldy (2009) argued, "attending to race brings an understanding of power not only as a resource for individuals, but also as a web of institutionalized inequalities that systematically, and at the expense of others, provides privilege to some communities and some perspectives" (p. 877). Thus, asymmetrical relations of power can influence my role as an educational leader.

Principals and professional development. In schools, according to Sergiovanni (1993), "principals, teachers and students have to make decisions as to how they will perform their respective roles in relationship to others" (p. 13). Schools rely on bureaucratic influence in the forms of mandates, policy, systems, job descriptions, and expectations. Basing leadership practices on personal authority leads us to question if we "follow leaders because they know how to meet our needs or because they are charming and fun to be with" (Sergiovanni, 1993, p. 18). Facilitating professional development sessions on courageous conversations about race mandated more than charming and fun leadership. Conversations about race "often prove difficult, and shining light on White as a color, culture, and consciousness is the most challenging aspect of these interactions" (Singleton, 2015, p. 187). To implement future professional development sessions on courageous conversations about race, I as the principal must be sensitive to the lived experiences of my students and the teachers and also be aware that my role as the leader may discourage people from speaking their truth.

Bennis and Thomas (2002) stated, “The skills required to conquer adversity and emerge stronger and more committed than ever are the same ones that make for extraordinary leaders” (p. 40). Bennis and Thomas set out to research material for a book entitled *Geeks and Geezers*. Certain criteria were set forth for the interview of 43 individuals in top leadership positions in business. They discovered that leaders experienced various intriguing modes that influenced their leadership qualities. The study supports a “combination of hardiness and ability to grasp context that, above all, allows a person to not only survive an ordeal, but to learn from it, and emerge stronger, more engaged, and more committed than ever” (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, p. 45). Huber (2004) stated, “research results show that schools classified as successful, possess a competent and sound school leadership” (p. 669). In the article “School Leadership and Leadership Development,” Huber (2004) posited professional school leadership is described as “firm and purposeful, sharing leadership responsibilities, involvement in and knowedge about what goes on in the classroom” (p. 669). Such tasks require school leadership, which involves commitment to relationships in the context of running a school within the educational community.

An effective school leader must have skills to impact teacher behaviors. Considering “the complexity of school leadership tasks, it is reasonable to assume a complex competent structure and a multi-faceted amalgam of school leadership” is important (Huber, 2004, p. 672). As the school leader, conducting professional development sessions on courageous conversations about race was key to providing needed learning for the teachers and staff that may not happen in another venue. Studies advocate professional development sessions provide strategies for working with students as well as teachers. In a school where more than 90% of the students are of color and more than 80% of the teachers are White, it is

paramount that leadership embraces all ethnicities and races and to acknowledge and integrate their cultural experiences in the school's curriculum.

Summary

Chapter 2 examined the theoretical frameworks of understanding White privilege, Critical Race Theory, narrative storytelling, and critical autoethnography. Narrative storytelling demonstrated how lived experiences are storied. Stories of strong Black women helped me to find my voice and to tell my own story. Understanding the nature of autoethnography led to the use of a critical lens that reflected my racialized life. Critical race theory aided the adoption of a critical autoethnography to trace my commitment to bringing race to the center of my work in school.

The literature review that laid the foundation for this study included: the history of race as a social construct, racial inequality, constructivist professional development, and leadership for a race conscious professional development that entailed a description of beyond diversity seminars. A focus on constructivist professional development, along with my implementation of beyond diversity seminars at Aranbe Learning Center, forged a clear path for engaging in courageous conversations about race. The compass, agreements, and conditions for engaging, sustaining, and deepening interracial dialogue about race were also introduced in this chapter. I now turn to the focus of the next chapter, design of the study, which provided the framework for documenting my journey.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

"How do you move from hiding your life to telling your life story?"

—Carolyn Ellis

Most professional development sessions involve strategies for working with students as well as teachers. As noted, in a school where more than 90% of the students are of color and more than 80% of the teachers are White, it is paramount that leadership embraces all ethnicities and races. The story of how the district embarked upon this journey became my story as I sought to make meaning of my own experiences with race and the challenges of having courageous conversations with others about race. As an autoethnographer grounded in narrative and using a lens of critical race theory, I was a lone participant/researcher in this study. I claim my positionality as a Black female educational leader of an early learning center in a Midwestern school district. I have been an educator for more than 25 years and in a leadership position (principal) for more than 20 years.

This chapter provides a discussion of the research design and procedures that were utilized and the rationale for the selected research design and procedures. First, I describe how the district embarked upon beyond diversity for having courageous conversations about race. Next, I specify the design of the study, including the methodological framework, knowledge paradigms and theoretical traditions, research site, data collection, and data analysis. I conclude with a discussion of limitations, validity, and ethical considerations pertaining to the study.

Introspection of the Study:
How One Small School District Embarked Upon Beyond Diversity

My rationale for this critical autoethnography was realized when administrators in my school district participated in a two-day training session called *Beyond Diversity: An Introduction to Courageous Conversation and a Foundation for Deinstitutionalizing Racism and Eliminating Racial Achievement Disparities.* I was naïve about the details of engaging in an autoethnographic narrative inquiry study; however, the tone was set, and like a toddler learning to walk for the first time, I stumbled and crawled along the way.

By a vote of six to one, my school district approved an agenda item entitled Pacific Educational Group Professional Services Agreement for the 2015-2016 academic school year. This program is the action behind Singleton and Linton's (2006) book *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in School;* Singleton's (2013) book, *More Courageous Conversations about Race;* and Singleton's (2015) second edition *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Racial Equity in Schools.* This study relied heavily on Singleton's second edition because it provided an explicit roadmap about how to engage in interracial dialogue about race for achieving racial equity in schools. For this reason, beyond diversity seminars have been implemented in many school districts throughout the United States. This is how racial equity training took root in my school district.

As a principal, I was required by the district to attend a Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminar (BDPDS), a two-day seminar facilitated by a trainer from the Pacific Educational Group on October 14-15, 2014. The seminar was phase two of a six-phase plan. The two-day BDPDS is a prerequisite for all equity leadership phases

(Courageous Conversation, 2016). The seminar is designed to help leaders, educators, students, parents, and community members understand the impact of race on student achievement and the role racism plays in institutionalized academic achievement disparities (Courageous Conversation, 2016).

Brief descriptions of phases one, two and, three are provided; the final three phases of the plan were not implemented during this study. During the first phase, the district created a District Equity Leadership Team (DELT), designed for the executive leadership team members. DELT is charged with leading and managing the dynamic process of system-wide transformational change. These educational leaders received training before any training was implemented at the school level. The school board was also involved during phase one.

In phase two, "site and central office departments are challenged to embed the Courageous Conversations principles and Protocol deep into the culture and climate of their schools and departments" (Singleton, 2013, p. 199). These team members are called Leaders Engaged in Equity/Antiracism Development (LEADs). This group is responsible for deepening their understanding of institutionalized racism and its impact on student learning, as well as providing support for leading equity transformation initiatives. There are six training sessions in this phase. The following are some of the seminar topics:

- Professional development strategies for addressing racial achievement disparities
- Introduction to the Courageous Conversation Protocol
- Mindfulness: Listening, inquiring, and responding
- Understanding critical race theory
- Systems thinking and organizational learning

- Principles of adaptive leadership for racial equity. (Singleton, 2013, p. 200)

One of the most challenging seminars is learning how to listen deeply because people are naturally ready to respond during dialogue and not listen to what a person is really saying. Mindfulness or mindful inquiry is a set of standardized questions used to encourage participants to practice deep listening. Another protocol for listening is called Knee to Knee (K2K) which establishes a set time for individuals to talk and to listen. A key component for engaging in courageous conversations is being a keen listener. These seminars and training sessions were scheduled from November 6, 2014 to June 18, 2015.

The third phase is the process of becoming racial equity leaders for site equity leadership development (E-Team). The E-Team champions school-wide equity transformation by monitoring the school's policies, practices, programs, climate, and culture. Educational improvement for students is a key to a students' success in school; therefore, the principal has great influence on who becomes an E-Team member. E-Teams, proposed Singleton (2013), "should avoid attempting to carry out racial equity actions in a vacuum or prematurely" (p. 201). E-Team members must have the skills coupled with passion to conduct racial equity work.

The first set of Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminar trainings for my staff began on September 22, 2015 and continued until April 27, 2016. I did not know what I did not know during my initial introduction to BDPDS on October 14-15, 2014; however, by December 1-2, 2015, I had gained some intellectual muscle and could maintain protocol while engaging in courageous conversations about race.

Design of the Study

Methodological Framework for the Study

This study relied heavily on data about my specific experiences as a Black female educational leader in a school that was participating in professional development activities about having courageous conversations about race. Qualitative research begins with an assumption and a worldview, and inquiring into the meanings individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). I began with the assumption that I may be a part of the problem by being silent and not engaging in interracial dialogue. I wanted to know how my perceptions about race impacted me as a Black female educational leader. Qualitative researchers seek to understand underlying reasons on how social experiences are created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated the strengths of qualitative research are:

1. Data based on the participants' own categories of meaning
2. Useful for studying limited number of cases in depth
3. Useful for describing complex phenomena
4. Provides individual case information
5. Provides understanding and descriptions of people' personal experience (i.e., "emic" or insider's viewpoint)
6. Can describe in rich detail the situation embedded in local contexts. (p. 20)

When conducting qualitative research, a strong ontological relativistic claim or frame of reference is important. The ontological relativistic claim should reflect multiple perspectives, opinions, and beliefs of individuals. In this case, the individual is the researcher/participant. I believed that by engaging in interracial dialogue about race, my attitude and perspectives would change and allow me to help my staff take steps to eliminating racial achievement gaps. This qualitative research study helped me to examine my lived experiences.

Ethnography is commonly referenced as a key qualitative approach for studying the rules, norms, and acts of resistance associated with cultural groups. Critical autoethnography seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experiences to understand a cultural experience (Ellis et al., 2011). Knowledge takes on a different meaning, embedded in the culture and experiences of individuals.

Knowledge Paradigm and Theoretical Traditions

Autoethnography and pragmatism. The knowledge paradigm that shaped this qualitative critical autoethnography was pragmatism. Pragmatism focuses on actions, situations, and problems being studied (Creswell, 2007). For this study, a focus was on how my perspectives and interactions with my staff changed after participating in BDPDS.

Creswell (2007) cites Cherry Holmes' (1992) views on pragmatism:

1. Pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality.
2. Individual researchers have a freedom of choice to choose the methods, techniques and procedures of research that best meets their needs and purposes.
3. Truth is what works at the time: it is not based on a dualism between reality independent on the mind or within the mind. (p. 23)

It is from this standpoint that I selected key theoretical traditions to design my study. Theoretical traditions may be defined as a spotlight; they are used to illuminate what we see (Maxwell, 2008) by drawing attention to particular events.

The theoretical traditions, or design elements of the study, sought to answer the question: How do my perceptions about race relate to my development as a Black female educational leader? With critical autoethnography, Critical Race Theory, and narrative inquiry as theoretical traditions, it was possible to describe how my perceptions about race related to my development as a Black female educational leader. These traditions have been

thoroughly explored in Chapter 2; thus, I provide a brief discussion here. I first discuss critical autoethnography, the major design element of my study,

Critical autoethnography. Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that utilizes data about self and context to gain an understanding of the connectivity of both. Altenbaugh (1992) conducted oral testimonies in an attempt to understand public school teachers' responses to the growth of the school bureaucracy of the Pittsburg metropolitan school system from 1911 to 1968. "'Critical' connotes an explicit focus on how power intersects with one's personal experience and the structural forces that helped to create those experiences" (Potter, 2015, p. 1436). I chose to conduct a critical autoethnography because I wanted to critically self-reflect and analyze my biases and feelings regarding the social construction of race and why it was difficult to have courageous conversations about race in mixed company (Blacks and Whites).

Boylorn and Orbe (2014) merged "autoethnography with critical theory to situate lived experiences within larger systems of power" (p. 19). My autoethnography uses a critical lens endorsing the method of critical autoethnography noted by Quantz (1992), which tells a story of "one person's reflections on his/her own work and thinking as a result of the study and personal experience" (p. 171). In this study, I combined ethnography, biography, and self-analysis, which enabled me to illuminate my own culture as it related to having courageous conversations about race. Ethnography facilitates the desire to engage with one's own view and enable the views and ideas to be rendered assessable. The ethnographic method of participant/researcher is the key to achieving understanding of feelings, beliefs, and other social norms (James, 2001). Through biography, I could tell my story and conduct an analysis of its meaning.

My ways of knowing have been socially constructed by my heritage, experiences, and education. Therefore, I have been socially constructed in the Black culture as well as a White socially constructed culture. Blacks who have transitioned and embraced the White socially constructed culture will have different experiences and education than those who have retained their Black socially constructed culture. For example, my views on a White constructed culture will be different from many of my White and Black staff members. This perspective impacts how I view race in the educational system. In my attempts to have courageous conversations about race, I also used Critical Race Theory to see, feel, think, and act on these sessions through journaling and self-reflections, which became counter-narratives, a hallmark of CRT.

Critical Race Theory. Racial inequity is so enmeshed in the fabric of our lives it seems normal. It is so deeply rooted that we live our everyday lives without recognizing its subtleties (Ladson-Billings, 1999). The subtleties appear in books, pedagogical styles, and belief systems. "As a main thread woven into the fabric of our culture, White supremacy infects our psyche" (Tochluk, 2010, p. 190). Educators can no longer shy away from naming White privilege and/or White supremacy as a culprit in the marginalization of students of color.

Narrative inquiry. It is important to understand your own or another person's lived experiences. "Story is a portal through which a person can enter the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 22). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as:

> a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between the researcher and participants, over, time, in a place or series of places and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit,

> concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individually and socially. (p. 20)

Bochner (2007) stated when "stories are being gathered, they are knowledge from the past and not necessarily about the past" (p. 203). This study is not about my past, although the stories I tell are shaped by my lived experiences. Throughout this study, I lived, relived, told, and re-told stories.

Narrative inquiry is increasingly used in studies of education. The primary claim for using narrative inquiry is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) expressed narrative inquiry is most appropriate in education because it is situated in a matrix of qualitative research. Narrative inquiry is a means by which data are gathered systematically, analyzed, and presented as story.

Research Site

The research site for the study was Aranbe Learning Center, located in a small Midwestern school district. At the time of the study, the staff was 87% White, and the student population was approximately 92% of color. Tables 1-3 outline demographic, disciplinary, and academic data about the research site. Of approximately 823 students, the racial mix included 8% White, 74% Black, 10% Hispanic, 5% Multiracial, 3% Other. There were and 440 boys and 383 girls.

The school staff consisted of more than 100 personnel including one principal, one assistant principal, one secretary, an administrative intern, four cafeteria staff, five custodial staff, and teachers, including 46 regular classroom teachers, two speech, one ESOL, one Supplemental, two Special Education, and four specials teachers (Art, Music, Physical

Education, and a Media Specialist). There are also 22 para-professionals, an attendance clerk, and a media clerk. The race and ethnic makeup of the staff comprised 34% Black and 66% White. Of the certified teaching staff, 87% were White and 13% were Black. Statistical data are from the 2015-2016 school year (Aranbe Learning Center, 2016).

After I received IRB approval for my study, I began a personal journey to understand autoethnography as a research methodology. That was in April of 2016, so I did not have much time to collect data before the school year ended. I would have to wait until the Fall of 2016. I found journaling to be a valuable tool for reflecting. Many times my thoughts were reflected in poetry. Demographic student data outlined above related to the students of ALC illuminated the importance of teachers having courageous conversations about race.

Table 1 displays the ethnic breakdown of students. The variation in student population is a result of when data were collected. Even with the variation, students of color made up most of the student body, and 100% received free lunch.

Table 1

School Ethnicity Analysis 2015-2016, Aranbe Learning Center

Grade	Multiracial	Indian	Hispanic	White	Pacific Islander	Black	Asian	Total
K All	20	2	71	47	0	367	8	515
K Female	8	1	35	21	0	189	2	253
K Male	12	1	36	26	0	181	6	262
PK All	14	1	27	34	0	199	2	277
PK Female	7	1	11	13	0	99	0	131
PK Male	7	0	16	21	0	100	2	146
All Female	15	2	46	34	0	285	2	384
All Male	19	1	52	47	0	281	8	408
All Total	34	3	98	81	0	566	10	792

Table 2 illustrates that disproportionately, Black students and other students of color received more disciplinary referrals than their White peers. There were 458 disciplinary referrals during the 2015-2016 school year. Students of color received 436 referrals, while White students received 22. Students of color received 95% of the disciplinary referrals.

Table 2

Demographic Statistics of Students with One or More Disciplinary Events during the 2015-2016 School Year

Ethnicity	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
	Pre-Kindergarten		
African American	9	59	68
White	0	1	1
Hispanic American	1	8	9
Multi-Racial	0	5	5
Other			
	Kindergarten		
African American	66	272	338
White	3	18	21
Hispanic American	1	4	5
Multi-Racial	0	11	11
Other			
Total	**80**	**378**	**458**

Source: Aranbe Learning Center

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students served over 120 days of out-of-school suspension during the 2015-2016 school year. Approximately 90% of the students suspended were Black males; Black girls were the second largest group to be suspended at about 8% and the final 2% of suspensions were distributed among other students. Per the Center for Civil Rights Remedies (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015), Missouri elementary schools have the highest rate of suspension for Black children in the nation. Sadly, my school's rate of suspension for early learners during the 2015-2016 school year

was in alignment with this national report. This national report and my disciplinary summary elucidated the importance of having conversations about race with my staff to address gaps in student achievement. When students are sent to the office for disciplinary events or are suspended, their academic success is jeopardized. Teachers must be adequately trained to prepare and support children in their learning. This process begins with having courageous conversations about racial attitudes that may affect interactions with children.

Table 3 reflects student reading readiness skills in the kindergarten group. Pre-kindergarten students do not participate in standardized testing; however, a measurable skill-based assessment is being developed during the 2016-2017 school year to determine pre-kindergarten students' readiness for kindergarten. Kindergarten students are assessed in reading using the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR). The STAR provides estimates of students' reading skills. The STAR is nationally normed; thus, the results are predictable for other achievements tests. The STAR also predicts early numeracy skills. The percentage of kindergarten students at ALC who were on target for reading and early numeracy skills are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3

STAR Testing End of Year 2015-2016

Grade K	On Target	Skill
Visual Discrimination	79.4%	Letters, identification and word matching
Concept of Word	60.9%	Word length, word borders, letters and words
Alphabetic Principle	59%	Alphabetic knowledge, alphabetic sequence, letter sounds
Early Numeracy	52%	Number naming and identification, sequence completion, number-object

Source: ALC 2015-2016

Based on test results, over 50% of all tested ALC kindergarten students are on target in reading and early numeracy with the highest percentage of students scoring best in visual discrimination. Visual discrimination is their ability to identify letters and match words. However, this measure by itself is not adequate to measure success. For the playing field to be leveled, teachers must address academic achievement gaps, beginning with courageous conversations about race to combat possible racial biases among non-teachers of color.

There is a possibility that "the racial interactions between students and teachers matter for student outcomes" (Dee, 2004, p. 209). The Tennessee Project STAR, although not designed to evaluate the relationship between own-race teachers and student achievement, similarly provided some data that the "racial pairing of student and teacher exerts important influence on student achievement" (Dee, 2004, p. 196). Culturally relevant pedagogy also has a positive impact on student achievement. Sheets (1995) found Hispanic students' overall achievement improved when they were immersed in a culturally centered curriculum. King (1993) posited a teacher's racial identity produces a sort of role-model effect that engages student endeavors and confidence. For underprivileged black students, the presence of a Black teacher may encourage them to update their prior beliefs about their educational possibilities (Dee, 2004, p. 196). Stereotype threats for students of color may cause them to experience an apprehension that retards their academic identification and subsequent achievement (Dee, 2004, p. 197). Research suggests students of color do better when the curriculum is relevant and they have a positive relationship with their teacher. These data tell their own stories. It is highly likely that a student of color at ALC will be sent to the office on a disciplinary referral or be suspended for one reason or another. This is not the future we want to paint for our students. Educators engaging in a protocol for having

courageous conversation about race is a step in the right direction to closing racial disparities in academic achievement.

Data Collection

I used what Patton (2015) described as autoethnography, the "use of your own experiences to garner insights into the larger culture or subculture of which you are a part" to tell my story (p. 102). I interrogated race inequality in education, which resulted in the adoption of critical autoethnography as a theoretical tradition. I employed the study of myself as it relates to my culture to understand and described my journey through Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars (BDPDS). My critical autoethnography used data from various sources connected with the six sessions of phase two (see Figure 1).

After each session, I reflected upon my self-observations, notes from BDPDS handouts, and I recorded my self-reflections (Grbich, 2013). These data comprised my reflective journal, which assisted me in compiling autoethnographic accounts and perspectives for having courageous conversations about race. The compilation of these data was reviewed during various stages of Beyond Diversity Professional Development (BDPD) seminars.

Patton (2015) stated there are three kinds of data unique to qualitative research, which include "interviews, observations and fieldwork, and documents" (p. 14). Since qualitative data are influenced by the researcher's purpose, the types of data selected have a dramatic impact on the results. The purpose of data gathering in this study was to make meaning of my lived experiences with having courageous conversations about race. Thus, documents were my primary source of data. According to Patton (2015), documents are:

> written materials and documents from organizational, clinical, or program records; social media postings of all kinds; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries, letters, artistic works, photographs, and memorabilia; and written responses to open-ended surveys are collected. Data consist of excerpts from documents captured in a way that records and preserves the context. (p. 14)

Data collection began in April of the 2015-2016 school year. Data from my self-reflections, in the form of journaling as documents, were introspective and self-observable and contained inner perceptions. Introspection lacks objectivity of public observable events (Polkinghorne, 2005). Therefore, as the researcher, I continually reflected and made some form of systematic analysis of the data for the data to become evidence. Data collection (see Figure 1) included reflective journaling, beyond diversity program trainings and related materials such as handouts and other documents that incorporated the major texts, peer reviewed articles, and photographs representing my racialized experiences.

Research Question	Data Sources
RESEARCH QUESTION: How do my perceptions about race relate to my development as Black female educational leader?	Document: Reflective Journal Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars Documents: Major texts, peer reviewed articles, photographs

Figure 1. Research question and data sources.

Reflective journaling. Atkins and Schutz (2008) posited that reflective practices in academic writing involves descriptive and factual reporting, critical analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. However, "self-awareness is the main skill that is not usual in other academic

writing" (p. 26). I had a story to tell, and reflective journaling gave me the outlet to write about my lived experiences. Through reflective journaling, I became more self-aware. I used a reflective journal as an instrument for capturing my deepest thoughts and feelings. I also used my journal to highlight lessons learned during racial equity trainings. My reflective journal was a personal record of my journey with having courageous conversations about race. Many of my reflections were "quick writes" that stemmed from an emotional space. These quick writes usually ended in the form of poetry. Reflective journaling kept me centered when I struggled with having courageous conversations.

Beyond diversity professional development. The protocol for conducting BDPD sessions was aligned throughout the district. Each principal was provided with the text, *Courageous Conversations about Race*: *A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Singleton & Linton, 2006). I acquired two additional texts: *More Courageous Conversations about Race* (Singleton, 2013) and the second edition of *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Singleton, 2015).

After each session, I reflected on my responses and progress in my journal. During district staff developments, I reflected on my experiences with the multiple texts and the BDPDS materials. These data were used to formulate my critical autoethnography about how I thought, felt, believed, and acted while engaging in courageous conversations about race.

As part of the beyond diversity seminar training, there could be conflicting viewpoints which could serve as a doorway to sustain "dialogue and as an opportunity to surface critical perspective about race, racial identity, and institutional racism" (Singleton, 2015, p. 120). In some of sessions of the BDPDS, there would be dead silence and quiet stares until someone was brave enough to speak his or her truth. My study is a true depiction

of my vulnerable self, going through the metaphorical doorway of self-discovery. Opening doors to such conversations require a clear protocol or conditions that must be present to discuss sensitive issues related to race. Beyond diversity seminars addresses six conditions as outlined in the first and second editions of *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools.* The conditions for the protocol for talking about race are: Getting Personal Right Here and Now, Keeping the Spotlight on Race, Engaging Multiple Racial Perspectives, Keeping Us All at the Table, What Do You Mean by Race? and Let's Talk about Whiteness (Singleton & Linton 2006; Singleton, 2013, 2015). Singleton's (2013) *More Courageous Conversations about Race* is a companion quide to Singleton and Linton's (2006) edition of *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. The companion guide teaches the reader and models specific steps on how to navigate a personal journey to confront racism in one's life.

Leaders must actively influence the "culture" of the school, stimulate cooperation, and be effective in the development processes. Huber (2004) suggested, "the underlying understanding of "leadership" is defined as the deliberate "control" of other people's behavior" (p. 673). On the contrary, Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars do not advocate deliberate control over one's mind; however, a strict protocol is used to engage participants in Four Agreements and Six Conditions for having courageous conversations about race. Mindful inquiry and the iceberg model for systems-thinking are also used to assist participants in intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively engaging in courageous conversations about race. The courageous conversation about race protocol was designed to engage participants in a robust experience-driven dialogue and to broaden

individual perspectives about race, racism, ethnicity, and privilege (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Singleton, 2013, 2015).

The Courageous Conversations Mindset Compass includes four quadrants: Moral (believing with soul), intellectual (thinking with the head), emotional (feeling with the heart) and relational (acting with the hands and feet). The Compass helps participants "know where they are personally as well as to understand the place from which others' contributions come; the result is an expansion and deepening of beliefs and opinions for all participants" (Singleton, 2015, p. 145). Figure 2 shows the compass points.

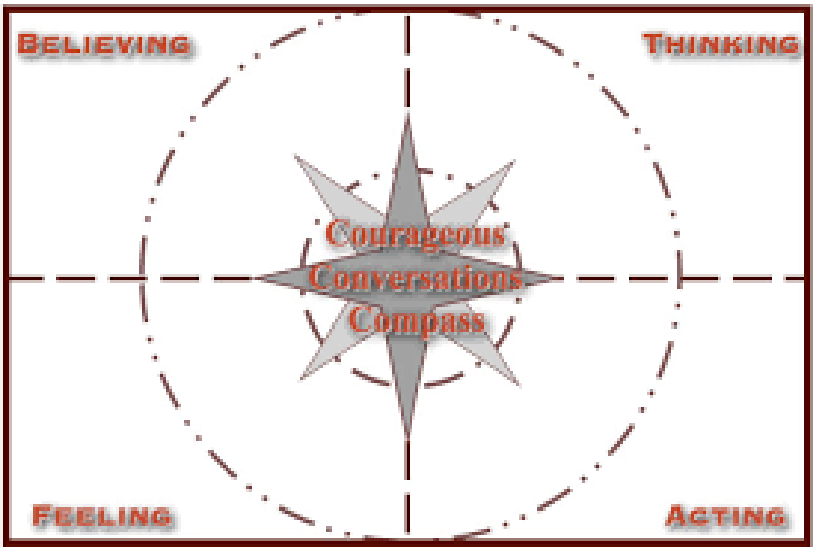


Figure 2. The Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass.
Note. Permission granted by Glenn E. Singleton

The purpose of the four agreements and six conditions is depicted in Figure 3. The purpose of the Four Agreements is to "allow educators to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about racial identity, racism, and the racial achievement disparities that exist between White students and students of color or indigenous students" (Singleton, 2015,

p.70). The purpose of the Six Conditions is for participants to engage in interracial dialogue through their own personal racial experiences, sustain conversations through mindful inquiry, and deepen their understanding of Whiteness and interrogate their beliefs about racial privilege and power (Singleton, 2015, pp. 87-216).

The compass helped to inform how I approached the work. I was cognizant of my own feelings and how others approached the work. The agreements kept me engaged in work that was often messy and uncomfortable**.** The six conditions helped me to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race.

The Four Agreements
Stay Engaged
Expect Discomfort
Speak Your Truth
Expect/Accept Non-Closure
The Six Conditions
Focus on Personal Local and Immediate
Isolate Race
Normalize Social Construction and Multiple Perspectives
Monitor Agreements, Conditions and Establish Parameters
Use a Working Definition for Race
Examine the Presence and Role of Whiteness

Figure 3. Beyond Diversity: The Four Agreements and The Six Conditions.

I have provided a discussion of the first form of documents, reflective journals, that allowed me to document how I approached the work. Other documents included the major texts related to the training and peer reviewed journal articles. A discussion of these documents follows.

Documents. Major texts and peer reviewed journal articles were also important to the development of this critical autoethnography. Patton (2015) contended, "written communications are a rich source of data" (p. 14). Documents, if closely analyzed can provide rich information. Many documents are readily available such as textbooks, articles, and photographs; thereby allowing the researcher to begin early analysis of the data. Atkinson and Coffey (2010) contended, "organizations can represent themselves collectively to themselves and to others through the construction of documents" (p. 78). I contend that through the use of documents, I was able to depict a true reality of my lived experiences. Further, Atkinson and Coffey (2010) explained:

> [D]ocuments are social facts, in that they are produced, shared and used in socially organized ways. They are not, however transparent representations of organizational routines, decision-making processes, or professional diagnoses. They construct particular kinds of representation using their own conventions. (p. 78)

In this study, I examined several documents based on what they contained as resource topics for what was going on in the social setting and for how they interacted with my lived experiences. These documents made a connection beyond the training texts and influenced how I wrote my narrative.

Trying to facilitate interracial dialogue about race can be quite challenging. Seminar participants may hold beliefs and feelings that may have been buried for years. Stirring the metaphorical pot can cause anxiety from suppressed emotions. When people feel threatened or that some things are better left unsaid, conversations can get heated. Singleton's two works (2013, 2015) and his work with Linton (2006) set the tone for my study. These documents provided the road map for helping me to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial

dialogue about race. Outlined below are a dissertation and articles which were also useful in helping me to frame the study and make meaning of my experiences.

In her unpublished dissertation, *Courageous Conversations: Rural South Georgia Teachers Reflecting on the Role of Race and Racism in the Education of Rural South Georgia Students* Gillis (2009) revealed how White educators wanted to help students of color achieve academically by engaging in courageous conversations. The difficulty is that the educators were unable to sustain and deepen interracial dialogue about race because of their deeply embedded Southern roots and lived experiences regarding people of color. This study is important in that it helped me to truly understand that racial equity work is a long and arduous task. It also revealed to me that White people are afraid to fully engage in racial equity work because they may have to give up some of their privileges for people of color to experience equity in America. This is not my belief; however, this study helped me to see how some Whites view race equity work. Although some teachers are not excited about these efforts, engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy is paramount to the academic success of students of color.

In the article, "But That's Just Good Teaching!" Ladson-Billings (1995) described how culturally relevant pedagogy can have a positive impact on the academic success of students of color. The article explains how successful teachers of students of color link school and culture. Successful teachers meet state and district curriculum frameworks; however, learning takes place authentically in a naturalistic setting. Student are free to bring their lived experiences inside the classroom. Students at ALC could benefit from a learning environment that keeps student and teacher relationships "fluid and equitable" (Ladson-

Billings, p. 163). Students thrive in nurturing and supportive environments where they do not have to provide for themselves.

Early coal mines did not have ventilation systems, so legend has it that coal miners sent canaries, who are sensitive to methane and carbon monoxide, down into the mines to check the safety of the mines. If the canaries continued to sing while in the mine, the miners felt safe. If the canaries stopped singing, there was imminent danger. Metaphorically speaking, we are sending students blindly into coal mines, a place called school. *The Canary in the Mine: The Achievement Gap between Black and White Students* (Singham, 1998) suggested strategies for closing and possible eliminating the achievement gap between Black and White students in the Shaker Heights community in Cleveland, Ohio. Singham (1998) pointed out the "situation is by no means hopeless, if we start looking at the problem in new ways and avoid simplistic 'one-shot solutions'" (p. 9). Singham defied all traditional excuses for the racial achievement disparities. This age of high-stakes testing and accountability will fail to produce meaningful results. Teachers need to engage in professional development programs that will increase good teaching practices (Singham, 1998) and these professional development programs should include a protocol for engaging in courageous conversations about race. As stated earlier, students of color will continue to end up at the bottom of the rung if educators are not willing to engage in instructional practices that promote academic achievement.

Race and racism can be very subtle in schools. It can be as simple as referring to students as "these" or "those" students and not "my" or "our" students. "'So When It Comes Out, They Aren't that Surprised that It Is There': Using Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in America" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004) framed my thinking

regarding how race and racism are played out in the educational system, and Critical Race Theory was the tool of analysis. In this article, African-American students at a prestigious White preparatory school provided a counter-narrative about how the tenets of Critical Race Theory played out in their lives at school. Although my students are much younger, it is imperative for me as Black female instructional leader to know how race impacts the daily lives of my students and how it is likely to continue to have an influence in their lives. Critical Race Theory is also a lens though which I storied myself in this critical autoethnography.

Photographs. The photographs used were from my personal photo collection (see Figure 4). Photographs offer memories of lived experiences or narrative text. This is also known as visual autoethnography (Ownby, 2011). I collected photos that depicted heightened racial experiences in my life. Some of the photos were retrieved from my mother. The photographs represented my feelings, actions, and beliefs about myself as a Black female growing up in a socially constructed White America. Most of the photographs were from my past, but not necessarily about my past. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) posited narrative and text as a process of "three-dimensional space approach, which included continuity of time, social interaction, and situation of place" (p. 120). Sometimes the story that gets told is not the intended story. It was complicated going back down memory lane, a path that is often fraught with joys, disappointments, and painful memories. As I noted in the foreword, my childhood was filled with contradictions. I remember the joys of being a kid and the vulnerabilities that come with being a kid. I had not fathomed how painful and real it would get for me as I strolled back down memory lane.

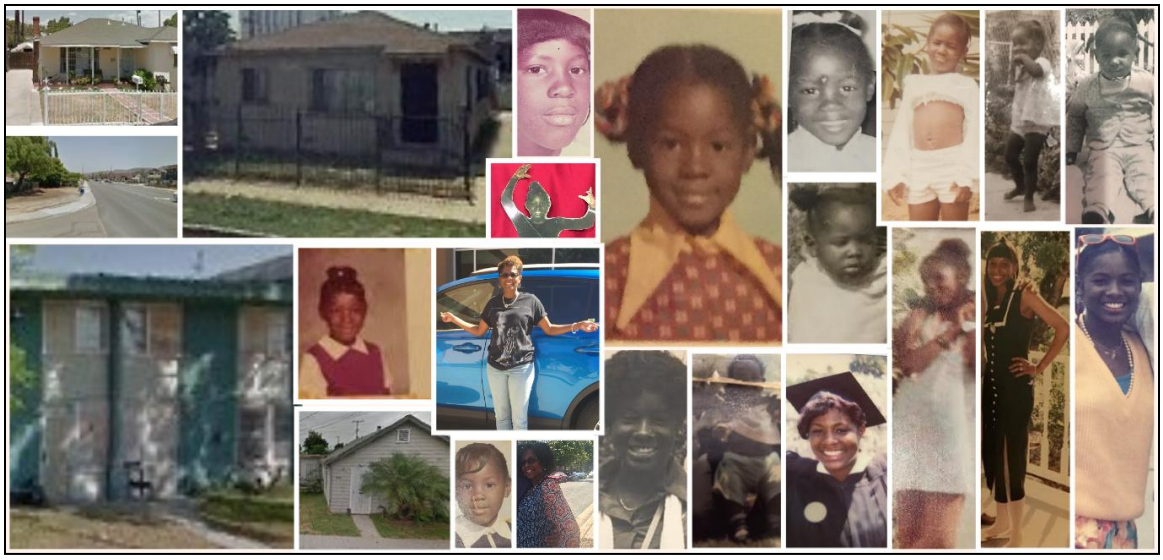


Figure 4. Collage of My Racialized Life.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was derived from the multiple data of my critical autoethnography and entailed reflective journaling as a form of document, beyond diversity seminars, other documents such as major texts and peer reviewed journal articles, and photographs. The analysis was guided by my research question: How does my perception about race relate to my development as a Black female educational leader? The statements and/or quoted selections were based upon my knowledge, experience, and background as a Black female educational leader. These data were incorporated into rich descriptions in response to the research question.

Data analysis requires decisions about how the analysis was done, and these decisions should inform and be informed by the rest of the design (Maxwell, 2012). Three main categories of data analysis were described by Maxwell: (a) memos, (b) categorizing strategies (such as coding and thematic analysis), and (c) connecting strategies (such as

narrative analysis) (p. 105). I engaged in careful reflective journaling during the beyond diversity seminars and other training sessions. I also analyzed major texts and peer reviewed journal articles. I drew excerpts from the data to illustrate my "interpretive insights" (C. Schlein & J. Friend, personal communication, November 29, 2016) and "to show the reader how the findings were derived from the evidential data" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 138). After the data were collected, it was organized into meaningful themes. These themes involved my interpretation of the experiences related to having courageous conversations about race, as captured in autoethnographic writings.

Analysis of documents. The process by which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning to a topic is called document analysis. I coded the documents to identify patterns and themes which entailed an inductive process. In qualitative data, the use of "rich descriptions" (Patton, 2015, p. 533) takes the readers into the time and place of the study and communicates participants' experiences of the world. As the auto-ethnographer, interpretive insights were gleaned from the steps outlined below:

1. The documents included transcriptions of self-reflections through journaling, major texts, and peer reviewed journal articles. After reviewing the transcription of journal entries several times, I tape-recorded those entries that were symbolic to my journey. Some of the expressions of my feelings were recorded in poetry and titles of songs that triggered memories and were linked to the six conditions of Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars (BDPDS). The tape-recorded entries helped me to verify that my reflections were valid accounts of my experiences during BDPDS.

2. Major texts and peer reviewed journals were analyzed through identifying relevant theories and concepts that indicated interpretive insights related to my experience.
3. Content analysis of documents involved descriptive coding, by labeling meanings line by line or paragraph by paragraph, followed by interpretive coding for categorizing or grouping like descriptive codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Descriptive coding does not require interpretation: a segment of text could contain descriptive codes and interpretative codes, with the latter containing more inferences related to its meaning.
4. As descriptive coding continued, the codes were placed in a code book developed to provide an abbreviation and definition that was more than one or two words. The definitions were connected to the context of the data and the knowledge base (conceptual framework) of the study. Example: Race (R-invisible, people of color, identity).
5. Interpretations were grouped to identify themes. By counting the frequency of interpretive codes, patterns or themes were identified and connected to the theoretical framework and literature review. It is at this point theorizing occurred, drawing on empirical studies and related literature.

Analysis of photographs. I analyzed my photographs using critical visual methodology to story my life. Critical visual analysis offers researchers an interdisciplinary method for understanding and contextualizing images (Schroeder, 2006). Critical visual methodology is "combined with ethnography to interrogate visual and textual data for understanding self-identification construction" (Ownby, 2013, p. 3). My identity as a Black

female administrator is lodged in the paper of these photographs. I reflected on and analyzed the photographs in totality.

The images had to be cropped to protect the identities of my picture mates. I analyzed the photographs based on my visual memory of persons, places, and things along with memories of my lived experiences. I laid the photographs out according to how they made me feel when I looked at them. I then grouped the photographs through the process of visual analysis by describing the images and pointing out features contained in the photographs. Next, I identified themes that connected to my other data sources. The smiles on the many faces of me held back a lot of pain. A story emerged and was captured in the form of a collage.

To ensure a high degree of validity, as the researcher, I sought to theorize the relationships between the patterns that emerged during analysis and produced data to support my theory (Jorgensen, 1989). Each data source was subjected to an in-depth analysis to create "rich" descriptions of themes. Yet qualitative researchers are also concerned with issues of credibility or trustworthiness of findings. The next section will discuss limitations, validity, and ethical implications of the study.

Limitations, Validity, and Ethical Implications

Some forms of limitation were from introspection of reflections from my experiences because they may have lacked objectivity. Polkinghorne (2005) posited, "evidence in the form of reports from participants' self-reflection has a long history in psychology, the first decade 1880s-1980s" (p. 138). Another limitation was self-reflection about my experiences, which could serve to change the experience. Polkinghorne (2005) suggested partial access to the researcher's "own thoughts and the numeric or language translation of these thoughts to

an instrument's questions" (p. 138) may be a limitation. Construct validity was a concern, since I accessed my own language translation. The study's limitations were indicative of my lived experiences as a Black female educational leader. My reactions, reflections, and past experiences with engaging in dialogue with White colleagues can be criticized as being narcissistic or self-indulgent (Bochner & Ellis, 2002). This study focused on the first two years of a three-year program, which is a limitation because my lived experiences will not be chronicled during the third year.

To address limitations, validity was attended to using transactional validity defined by Cho and Trent (2006) as "an interactive process between the researcher and participants" (p. 321), to determine accuracy. For my critical autoethnography, this involved revisiting "facts, feelings, experiences, and values or beliefs collected and interpreted" (p. 321). I listened to my audio recordings many times to see if my themes were emerging correctly. I also rechecked my coding and bundled or eliminated themes when it seemed appropriate to do so. Additionally, I journaled in different styles of writing to increase my knowledge across multiple continuums. I wrote narrative essays, poems, and poetry.

To break out of the traditional mode of triangulating data as a form of validity, I used crystallization as a means of checking for truth of my critical autoethnography. The process of crystallization helped to validate my truth. By utilizing an array of data, I could focus and deepen my understanding of how my perceptions about race related to my development as a Black female educational leader. I analyzed the phenomena from multiple angles to ensure a high degree of research quality. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) noted that crystallization dismantles the traditional concept of validity or truth. Crystallization provided a deepened,

understanding of the topic (Ellingson, 2009). Ellingson explained the principles of crystallization:

1. Offer deep, thickly described, complexly rendered interpretation of meanings about a phenomenon or group.
2. Represent ways of producing knowledge across multiple points of the qualitative continuum.
3. Utilize more than one genre of writing (e.g. poetry, narrative, report and/or other medium (e.g. video, painting, music).
4. Include a significant degree of reflexive considerations of the researcher's self and roles in the process of research and design, data collection, and representation.
5. Eschew positivist claims to objectivity and a singular, discoverable truth in favor of embracing knowledge as situated partial, constructed, multiple embodied and enmeshed in power relations. (2009, p. 10)

Ethical implications can be of two types; the kind mandated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and in practice or situational (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). As the researcher, I was concerned with the ethics in "practice or situational which are unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field" (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). My perceptions of the study were situational. My research defined my perspective of race and my ability to have courageous conversations about race. Ellis (2007) stated that being researcher and participant may involve some ethical issues, such as:

> intruding into the lives of unsuspecting and vulnerable others, coping with participants who changed their minds about having their story told, revealing what should have remained private, doing emotional harm to unsuspecting participants and characters in our stories, gaining consent and making sure participants knew what that meant, receiving negative response to stories we might take back to them, telling stories that might have unforeseen repercussions, or dealing with what and who to tell about the research. (p. 20)

A consideration in critical autoethnography ethics is voice. In autoethnography, voice can mean having a real researcher—and a researcher's voice—in the text (Denzin & Lincoln,

2011). There is also a concern with expressing oneself, which goes beyond understanding one's expressed self.

Ethical implications for me, as the researcher, involved how I reflected on my journey, using my voice and interrogating my multiple selves as I engaged in the research. I participated in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program to ensure I was well versed in the ethics of research with human subjects. I did not employ a strategy to protect my identity because I conducted a critical autoethnography. I was not considered a human subject. I was clear at the outset about the intent of the study, so I was faithful to the research process and the problem I chose to investigate.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I discussed the introspection of the study and specified the design. Next, I included the methodological framework, knowledge paradigms and theoretical traditions, research site, data collection, and data analysis. The data collection involved data analysis, the steps I used to analyze and interpret the data. I concluded the chapter with limitations, validity, and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, the narrative of my journey titled, "People Get Ready" (Mayfield, 1964) based on the themes identified during data analysis, illuminates perceptions about race and their connections to my development as a Black female educational leader.

CHAPTER 4

"PEOPLE GET READY"

"People get ready
There's a train a-coming
You don't need no baggage
You just get on board" (lines 1-4)

— Curtis Mayfield & The Impressions (1964)

Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars (BDPDS) are powerful, personally transforming two-day seminars that are an introduction to courageous conversations and a foundation for deinstitutionalizing racism and cutting racial achievement disparities (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Singleton, 2015). During these seminars, "it is the first time" many participants "have ever been encouraged to openly and honestly discuss race with someone of a skin color different than their own" (Singleton, 2015, p. 5). My conversations about race had always occurred in affinity groups or same-race groups. It never dawned on me to engage in interracial dialogue on a deeper level using a specific protocol. As I sat in a beyond diversity session and turned my gaze inward, I realized I was not the only woman of color in the room stifled by what I did not know about having interracial courageous conversations about race. It was somewhat embarrassing, so I embarked upon this journey believing that my story and perceptions about race may resonate with others.

In Chapter 4, my voice is illuminated as I begin telling my story within the framework of the BDPDS. I talk about my racial experience and engaging in race consciousness conversations. I also describe what this all means to me. Framing my story within the context of BDPDS also included the compass, agreements, and conditions to answer my research question: How do my perceptions about race relate to my development

as a Black female educational leader? Finally, my "interpretive insights" (C. Schlein & J. Friend, personal communication, November 29, 2016) are revealed through multiple data, which included documents of reflective journaling, the major texts related to the training, peer reviewed journal articles, BDPDS, and photographs. As noted in Chapter 3, because Singleton (2015) is the sole author of the BDPDS, he is cited many times in this study, and I draw heavily on his most recent work, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide to Achieving Equity in Schools* (2015). These interpretive insights or themes included: *people of color, stereotypes, Black and race talk* (Sue, 2015), *race*, and *White and Black*. My insights depicted a personal and professional journey toward conscientization (Freire, 1996). Conscientization (conscientizacao, Portuguese spelling) is an awakening or a "critical consciousness" toward "oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1996, p. 18).

My quest to engage in race talk (Orelus, 2013; Pollock, 2004; Sue, 2015). was conducted in a public-school setting in a small town in the Midwest, where I tried to create an authentic dialogue within the school by having courageous conversations, rather than "giving the appearance that education is for everyone; while subsequently functioning in the interest of the dominant culture" (Freire, 2000, p. 123). Race is an uncomfortable topic for most of us to broach, especially when dealing with "one's emotions and being intentional about having courageous conversations about race" (Quaye & Harper, 2007, p. 33). The refusal to engage in race talk personifies the theme of colorblindness. Schools should be for all children; however, not in the absence of seeing them for who they are as human beings. I had to first come to grips with my own perception and perspective about race and racism during the beyond diversity seminars. I was not very compliant and I had an air of "I do not need this training. I am overlooked all the time and who was reaching out for me?" I was

operating from a place of fear of showing my feelings as my vulnerable self. *More Courageous Conversations about Race* (Singleton, 2013) provided a bridge for me to navigate waters I could not tread alone. This text is rich with stories of how institutions are embracing racial equity work at a time when the racial and political climates are tense.

When I reflected on my experiences with this race equity work through journaling, I discovered that initially I did not have a language for deepening conversations about race. Doing this work helped me to understand the impact of race in my life. Constantly living in the shadow of race, I had come to perceive that marginalization was a normal way of life. I chose to tell this story because this work may encourage someone else to lift their voice and tell their own story of personal liberation. I have deliberately used the song, "People Get Ready" (Mayfield, 1964) to signal to readers that it time for all of us to begin the journey of demystifying race. I begin the next section of sharing my experiences with a poem of liberation which represents my journey of conscientization **(**Freire, 1996) for coming full circle with understanding the importance of race talk.

Conscientization (Freire, 1996): **Lifting My Voice**

Emancipated Woman
It is in the voice I bring
Emancipated Woman
I no longer stand outside the ring
Emancipated Woman
My two-ness now collide
Emancipated Woman
No longer can I hide
Emancipated Woman
I take my seat at the Throne
Emancipated Woman
I have shared my story, now I am home

It was a typical October morning when I arrived at the meeting. I entered the room through the rear door and looked for my usual spot in the back. After I found a suitable place

to prop my bag, I scurried over to the table so I could be next in line for snacks. I made sure I had enough so I could retreat into my own private world. Mission accomplished. I settled into my seat for what I thought would be an uneventful day. I was in for a surprise. It was the first day of my three-year journey of learning the protocol to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race. My journey and "interpretive insights" (C. Schlein & J. Friend, personal communication, November 29, 2016) are illuminated through song titles and lyrics, the six conditions, and voice.

"People Get Ready" (Mayfield, 1964) recapitulated my study by chronicling my journey of self-reflection and rediscovery per Singleton's (2015) beyond diversity seminars using the Four Agreements: stay engaged, experience discomfort, speak your truth and expect/accept non-closure. In addition, Six Conditions were used: focus on personal, local, and immediate; isolate race; normalize social construction and multiple perspectives; monitor agreements, conditions and establish parameters; use a working definition for race; and examine the presence and role of Whiteness. The Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass was also used to keep me centered.

The title of this chapter was borrowed from Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions' (Mayfield, 1964) song that used the imagery of a train as a route to self-awareness and freedom. "People Get Ready" is similar in its imagery to other emancipatory songs such as "Wade in the Water" (Work & Work, 1901) and "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" (Willis, 1862). "People Get Ready" (Mayfield, 1964) evokes a social and political awareness that I, too, seek to understand. My name is Shaunda Fowler. I am an African American, a Black female, a woman of color; objectified. My journey of self-rediscovery was illuminated while taking part in two separate beyond diversity seminars.

Similarly, in Gillis' (2009) study, teachers were on a path to self-awareness during beyond diversity seminars, and they had a genuine desire to get on board and move toward developing strategies to close racial achievement gaps. However, the history of racism in the patriarchal South was deeply embedded into these women's personal identities and presented challenges that needed to be overcome before real change could occur. I share a kindred spirit with the teachers in the study. Interracial conversations about race during professional development sessions are difficult to broach and deeply rooted Southern values make these conversations even more challenging. In my lived experience with attempting to engage my staff in courageous conversations, I contend Midwestern values mirror Southern values.

Beyond Diversity Professional Development (BDPD) seminars were offered by my school district through the Pacific Educational Group. During the seminars, I was constantly challenged to question my thinking and decide if I had the skill, will, capacity, and knowledge to engage in courageous conversations about race. Angelou (2014) stated, "Courage is not a virtue or value among other personal values like love and fidelity. It is the foundation that underlies and gives reality to all other virtues and personal values" (p. 13). After my second dose of BDPDS, I emerged from the experience feeling a deeper level of confidence and courage to engage in courageous conversations about race.

My Racial Experiences

My racialized life has been storied throughout this text, which I view as a counter-story for giving voice to my racialized life that has been shaped by a dominant discourse. The process of liberation was often a painful one, for I had lived in the shadows of race far too long. DeCuir and Dixson (2004) purported, "use of counter-stories allows for the challenging of privileged discourses, the discourses of the majority, therefore serving as a means for

giving voice to marginalized groups" (p. 27). At the onset, growing up during those critical times in history, the youth of my community were dissatisfied with the treatment of Blacks as a group. Our community was bordered by White communities to the north, east, and south. The Projects (housing development) where I grew up were on the west side. Inside the Projects, I felt a strong sense of community. In contrast, in my racially mixed community, people of color were consistently harassed by and feared the Sheriff's Department. People of color share this same sense of fear today. During my middle and high school years, I harbored unsettling feelings of how White people treated me and other people of color. I also noticed that in some college courses, I was invisible to the professors. This invisibility made me feel inadequate as a student and less prepared for higher education. I felt inferior to my White peers.

Many years later, in my interactions with the staff of Aranbe Learning Center, it was clear that many had a sense of superiority. My authority was always questioned or second guessed unless I was disciplining or suspending students who were considered acceptable losses. There were only four Black staff members during this time, and they encouraged me. These colleagues were a bandage for old wounds. This was a clear sign of interest convergence on the part of White educators. I will briefly relate the experiences of Malcolm, one of the subjects of DeCuir and Dixon's (2004) article, which help to explain the concept of interest convergence.

Malcolm explains, under the guise of getting a world class education, his school is building a stellar athletic program. If the team is not winning, Black athletes are marginalized. In Malcolm's lived experience, Black lives matter when games are won. As an adult, I have managed to transverse racial issues by believing, thinking, feeling, and acting

my way through situations. It is my hope that Malcolm had the skill set to navigate his racialized world as well.

As a middle-class parent, I could send my child to a private school where he could have been labeled acting White for attending a prestigious institution of learning. I believe he would have been an outsider within a White socially constructed institution experiencing some of the racial over- and undertones Malcolm experienced at his elite, predominately White school. Nonetheless, he wanted to attend a Black school where he felt embraced by his teachers and his classmates for his intelligence and his imperfections.

My son felt comfortable having courageous conversations about race, which enhanced his self-awareness. Currently, he attends a historically Black college/university where he has continued his journey of self-awareness and education in the ways of our multilayered society. Students should be able to attend schools where educators are encouraged to engage them in race talk to help improve their authentic selves. For this to occur, educators must be encouraged to step out of their zones of comfort to seek conscientization (Freire, 1996).

Understanding Race in My Life

To make meaning of my journey, I had to consciously reflect on my upbringing, education, and experiences as a Black female leader in a White socially constructed educational institution. Data used to discuss my research questions were reflective journaling, beyond diversity seminars materials, documents, and photographs. The data were interpreted through the lens of Critical Race Theory. Meanings of the data were also illuminated through crystallization and an emic or insider's point of view. With the study

framed as a critical autoethnography, I was not separated from the cultural phenomenon that occurred.

I felt that understanding the definitions of "race, racism, and racist" were instrumental in understanding where I situated myself in the work. At some point in my life, I may have been called a racist. Living in America, I am sure that my thought patterns have been caustic and couched in deficit thinking. Although I am unable to give a specific occurrence in which the words have been uttered to my face, I do know one thing for sure: I have dealt with racism or racist acts because of my race even when I perceived myself to have some semblance of presence, position, and power.

Singleton (2015) contended, "While people of color and indigenous people are urged to be patient by those in power, access to opportunity, excellence, and leadership remain the property of Whiteness, no matter how much 'progress' has been made" (p. 228). Research in Europe and the United States shows that "racial position shapes and gives voice to the stories people tell about race and racism, and filters how such stories are perceived and understood by listeners" (Bell & Roberts, 2010, p. 2295). Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is ingrained in the fabric and system of American society. Institutional racism can be pervasive in the dominant culture without overt individual acts of racism. In effect, CRT identifies that these power structures are based on White privilege and White supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color. Several questions surfaced during my study; however, one overarching question, which was my research question, provided me with the necessary insight to illuminate how I show up as a Black female administrator to engage in courageous conversations.

Engaging in Race Conscious Conversations

As educators, we need to *"race wrestle,"* a phrase coined by Pollock (2006) that means "to struggle self-consciously with normalized ideas about racial difference and about how racial inequality is produced" (p. 1). As I engaged, sustained, and deepened my understanding of my own preconceived ideas and values, I was better equipped to investigate my racialized world when making decisions to facilitate courageous conversations about race.

Given the changing demographics in public schools, educators need a protocol for thinking deeply and talking about far more complex issues related to racialized differences and racial inequality. It is numbing to think about the enormous number of children of color who are being marginalized daily in educational systems. If we as educators do not lean in and discuss issues of race, the status quo will continue to be the dominant discourse. Woodson (1933) explained:

> When you control a man's thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his "proper place" and will stay in it. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary. (p. xii)

Leaving race out of the discourse is a travesty. Educators must not be slaves to the status quo. We have the capacity to change the trajectory of how race is being talked about or not being talked about in educational settings.

Typically, educators have not examined and discussed race in their schools "because they fear not knowing how to go about this process correctly" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 21). The "demand for silencing signifies a terror of words and a fear of talk" (Fine, 1987, p. 157). Fine (1987) pointed out, "what does not get talked about in schools and how

'undesirable' talk is subverted, appropriated, and exported is a disservice to the needs of all students, particularly students of color" (p. 157). Apfelbaum et al. (2012) stated, "many people are concerned about being labeled racist leaving them unsure if they should talk about race" (p. 205). The Courageous Conversation Protocol seeks to unpack personal fears that hinder Whites and people of color from having authentic and effective conversations about race. Having discussed my experiences for coming full circle with understanding the importance of race talk, I turn to interpretive insights, also viewed as themes, that represent the meanings gleaned from multiple data of my critical autoethnography.

Interpretive Insights

My perceptions about race vacillated while attending the beyond diversity seminars offered by my school district. Part of the two-day sessions focused on the Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass. Singleton (2015) explained that people deal with racial information, events, and/or issues in four primary ways: emotionally/feeling, intellectually/thinking, morally/believing, and relationally/acting (p. 29). The one question I asked myself continuously during the first beyond diversity seminar on October 14-15, 2014, was: "Where am I showing up on the Compass?" Throughout the two-day seminar, I was all over the Compass.

I was in disequilibrium in the acting quadrant, perplexed about how to engage in the dialogue. This landed me in the thinking quadrant. I experienced feelings of sadness, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation, and irritability. I was living in my feeling zone. Yes, my place on the Compass sounds more like menopause; however, I was destined to find my center. It was a revelation when I learned what I did not know about race and how it permeates every aspect of my life. I was in the belief quadrant of the compass. One thing I

know for sure: Race is omnipresent. Once race is seen through a critical lens, it cannot be unseen.

During some activities, I "believed" that I understood my perception of "race" and how I valued myself as a Black female leader. The implementation exercise, *Got Passion,* challenged my thinking. I had to name my passion, describe how it looked and felt, and apply it in relation to equity/antiracism and leadership. I had never been challenged to personally reflect on my passion in a racialized fashion; thus, my position in all quadrants of the compass. I was caught up in a web of feelings and emotions because as a Black female, I have experienced marginalization and silence. The data analysis helped to magnify my journey and moved me from vacillation to a more balanced positionality about where I stood in the ability to confidently engage in courageous conversations about race.

The analysis of the data revealed five interpretive insights or themes identified in documents that included reflective journaling and major texts, peer reviewed journal articles, Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars, and photographs. These interpretive insights were enumerated in the data according to the frequency of theories and concepts or as explained in Chapter 3, descriptive codes that formed each interpretation. The total number of descriptive codes for all themes was 182. Each of the themes is defined in Table 4, along with the frequency of descriptive codes that led to insights or theme formation. The definitions of themes are symbolic of my experiences with learning to have courageous about race.

Table 4

Definitions and Frequency of Themes

Theme and Definition	**Frequency**
People of color: Often silenced and marginalized by their lived experiences with race, which influence identity and self-concept (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004: Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990).	93
Stereotypes: "rigid preconceptions we hold about *all* people who are members of a particular group, whether it be defined along racial, religious, sexual, or other lines" (Sue & Sue, 2012, p. 206).	13
Black and race talk: These concepts stem from talking about Black lives from an ivory tower or colorblind perspective to having conversations about race and seeing the everyday oppressions. Historically, the identities of Black females have been viewed negatively by the dominant culture. They could be a little bit of everything; for instance, smart, but not too smart; confident, but not too confident. Black females can be honest, trustworthy, and even engage in courageous conversations if they are not too threatening to the status quo (Bell, 2004; DuBois, as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997; Jones, 1983).	34
Race: Socially constructed, members of a particular society decide what the racial categories will be and how the individuals within that society will be classified and afforded power and privilege based upon physical characteristics such as skin color (Caruthers & Friend, 2016).	21
White and Black: This binary indicates that White is defined as "pure," "upright," and "innocent," while Black is defined as "dirty," "wicked," or "angry discontent (Singleton, 2015, p. 104).	21
Total	182

Interpretive Insight 1: The Theme *People of Color* (93)

> Silenced and marginalized. The activity was so powerful I had a difficult time taking notes. My brain fired off numerous statements, words, and images. The theme *People of Color* was powerful, overwhelming and invigorating. Images of me as a young, Black female in college silenced by my professor...my staff who in *silent dissent*, stared at me with plastic smiles on their faces. I could feel marginalization color my face beet red, attempting to return the plastic smile. *Race*, a trigger word for me, must be choked down to the guts of my stomach, only to spew out as epithets of hatred…hatred for a system that for more than 200 years, has not changed. God, give me strength to make it through this activity. (S. Fowler, 2016)

I believed that other *people of color* in the seminar could relate to my lived experiences; however, I was thinking about how my White peers would perceive me based on my commentary. I found it more difficult to act because I was not ready to tell my story to racial strangers. Wheatley (2002) posited we must be willing to be disturbed:

> As we work together to restore hope in the future, we need to include a new strange ally—our willingness to be disturbed…Our willingness to have our beliefs and ideas challenged by what others think. No one person or perspective can give us the answers to the problems of today. Paradoxically, we can only find those answers by admitting we don't know. We have to be willing to let go of our certainty and expect ourselves to be confused for a time. (p. 1)

At some point, I tried to find equilibrium, but when I looked carefully at the audience and searched for allies, I realized that I was not ready to be disturbed. I was still in search of me. I was not sure of what was written all over my face. I have never been great at poker. I was in disequilibrium and not ready to act. In the article, "'So When It Comes Out, They Aren't that Surprised that It Is There': Using Critical Race Theory as a Tool of Analysis of Race and Racism in America" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004), students of color in an elite college preparatory school learned the same lessons I learned growing up. They were invisible to White staff and their peers on any given day. The students provided a counter-narrative of their lived experiences using the tenets of Critical Race Theory. I wove the stories of

Malcolm and Barbara from the DeCuir and Dixson article within the theme of *people of color*. Malcolm thought he was attending an elite school that celebrated diversity, but to his surprise, he was marginalized and invisible to a school that espoused diversity. Malcolm observed the permanence of racism through his observation of racist behaviors and unfair disciplinary practices demonstrated at his school. I claim that some educators in my school practice similar types of behaviors.

Reading and learning about isolating race triggered memories of the popular James Brown (Brown & Ellis, 1968) song, "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud." I have experienced some difficult situations even though I have a so-called position of power. Interpretive Insight 1 Theme, *people of color,* was indicative of my position as a Black female administrator. Being an administrator does not give me carte blanche in a racialized world; thus, I constantly engaged in self-talk as a means of empowerment to lead in a school with a predominately White staff.

Barbara tells a familiar story (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). There was a Black student proud of her culture who wanted to wear a headwrap to graduation. Girls had to wear all white for graduation and most African designs are not all white. The student had to conform to what was acceptable in a White socially constructed environment. She wore the headress in all its whiteness. Through the school's policies and practices, the student experienced "Whiteness as property," another form of marginalization (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). Black in America, there is nowhere to hide. Even though we can't hide, we can find a way to mask our identities and pretend to be who we are not. An example of this is provided in the next section.

What color am I? One day after the initial BDPDS, I was in my office conferencing with a pre-K, Black male student. Despite my best efforts, I realized that it is virtually impossible to reason or negotiate with most children who are four years of age. As I talked with this young person, who was extremely articulate and bright, he told me he was White. My heart sank, and I was locked and loaded to ask all of the "W" questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? And of course, How? I asked him why he identified as White, and he responded, "Because I am." I was very disturbed but did not want to frustrate the child. I told him he was Black, and he uttered, "No, I'm not, I'm White." I asked who told him he was White, and he said, "My mother." I am not sure that his statement was correct, but I must assume this child had some feelings about skin color. This was one of those experiences that make you go, "hmmm." I did not want to convolute the situation more than it already was, so I let it ride. This is wrong thinking. Letting it ride is like the critique of liberalism and being comfortable with incremental change. Those "most satisfied" with letting it ride "are those less likely to be directly affected by oppressive and marginalizing conditions" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 28).

As educators, we should not let it ride. Let me offer another reason for not letting it ride. At the writing of this section, I remembered when I used to wrap a long white t-shirt or towel around my head. I would toss and turn my neck and head as I flick the "hair" from my brow, pretending to be a White girl with long hair. Wow! This explains my many years of using Dark and Lovely to straighten my locks. Educators have prime opportunities to impact self-awareness and academic achievement by engaging students of color in culturally relevant experiences. I believe I will see greater student achievement if educators in my school teach in a culturally responsive manner and meet students at their zones of proximal

development. This should not be mandated; it should be a given. Ladson-Billings (1995) believes good teachers are culturally competent and link school and culture.

As this goal relates to Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars, phase three will usher in culturally relevant practices for all students. Until then, as the educational leader at ALC, I must work the margins and assist staff to provide students with culturally relevant educational experiences and perhaps the students will not want to hide under the guise of another race and be proud of the skin they embody and the texture of their hair.

Interpretive Insight 2: The Theme *Stereotypes* (13)

> I don't see color, status quo, and we have a Black President. Once again, my color has shamed my people. I became an angry Black woman. I thought through the conversation, scribbling notes to remind me of the encounter. It was important that I address this issue again. Several things came to mind: *stereotype, I don't see color, status quo* and *we have a Black president*. This couldn't be stereotypical of my other Black students. Questions: What made this student believe he was "White?" Had he looked in a mirror? What feelings possessed his being? Was he ashamed of being Black and preferred White or did he really understand color? Colors such as crayons: Black, and yellow, brown, or green. I think I would have felt some understanding if he had said he was green, sometimes children confuse colors. It was obvious he was not talking about a pack of crayons. We have a Black president; does he not see himself in the president or believes the president is also White. The status quo of Whiteness must have taken hold of his little brain, like some alien eating out all the good true feelings and pride of being Black. Maybe he was telling me that he doesn't see color, we are all White. Once again, I must examine the presence and role of Whiteness in my life. Remember, I was the little Black girl pretending to have long blond hair. What was my story? (S. Fowler, 2016)

Reshaping and examining the principal's role as it relates to *stereotypes* was not an easy task, but one must turn the gaze inside out to find out what's really going on racially, and at the same time remain cognizant about the complex lives of all people. I realized that understanding how *stereotypes* shape the lives of all people should be a constant focus for leaders. *Stereotypes* are "rigid preconceptions we hold about *all* people who are members of

a particular group, whether it be defined along racial, religious, sexual, or other lines" (Sue & Sue, 2012, p. 206).

Hence, it is important that individuals have "shared meanings about how race influences the way in which school personnel define and respond to educational issues" (Evans, 2007, p. 160). Evans' study involved data from a national, multi-year, multi-modal qualitative study of social change organizations and their leaders. These organizations represented disenfranchised communities that aspired to influence policy makers and other social actors to change the conditions that affected their members' lives. Narrative analysis of transcripts from in-depth interviews in 38 organizations yielded five leadership practices that fostered strong relational bonds either within organizations or across boundaries with others. Results indicated these "practices nurture interdependence either by forging new connections, strengthening existing ones, or capitalizing on strong ones" (Evans, 2007, p. 292). Similarly, I found myself constantly reshaping my perceptions about *stereotypes* related to race and becoming aware of other ways to marginalized people. When I focus on my personal, local, and immediate as a Black female, I can honestly address my attitudes and beliefs. Racial *stereotypes* impact my life 100% of the time. It showed up when I was a little girl desiring long, straight hair and buying into the *stereotype* that white is beautiful and black is ugly. Racial *stereotypes* show up again when I feel the need to code switch and operate from my two-ness, reflecting an image of a White person when my Blackness should be good enough.

Interpretive Insight 3: The Theme *Black and Race Talk* (34)

> Negotiating status and fear. As I engaged in the activity, "*Where do you stand on the Color Line?,"* I noticed my position changed over time. Initially, I was way to the left, the side closest to poverty, marginalization, and feeling like my life didn't

> matter. The second time I participated in the color line activity, I found that I had moved a little to the right, not much, but some. The third time I participated in the activity, I noticed that I was closer to the center. Thoughts: Do the people who participate in the activity determine my position on the color line? When there are more whites than Blacks on the line, do I measure more to the left of the other Blacks or to the right? The time I found myself closer to the center, I noticed that several White staff members had taken my place to the left. This left me somewhat bewildered. Could they be mocking me? Surely, they could not be lower than me. Negotiating status and fear took hold. Could these White women feel that they can align with me to make me feel better about myself as a Black female? Fearing this, I remembered the game I played as a kid, if you are White, you are alright. Even though they chose to side with me for whatever reason, or maybe that was a true calling for them, they are still White, and yes, they are alright. (S. Fowler, 2016)

Teacher educators of all races and ethnicities find it difficult to talk about issues and concepts of race in public schools (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009) which is often due to status and fear. Engaging in race talk is very important in education; consequently, I felt the need to conduct an autoethnographic study about my lived experiences with having courageous conversations about race through the lens of Critical Race Theory. Demographics in public schools are changing to a more multi-racial population, and school "leaders must decide what to emphasize, downplay, or ignore in their words, actions, behaviors and decision making" (Evans, 2007, p. 162) before making sense of what is happening regarding issues of race.

Seeing through a muddled lens. My initial encounter with the district-wide beyond diversity seminars occurred on October 14-15, 2014. As a principal in the district, I was required to attend the two-day seminar facilitated by a trainer from the Pacific Educational Group. Other seminars and training sessions were put in place after the initial beyond diversity sessions. Facilitation of these seminars occurred from November 6, 2014 to June 18, 2015; several sessions were implemented. These sessions included LEADS Seminar 1 through 4 for principals, DELT Seminars for the Executive Leadership Team, and Seminars

for members of the School Board. The first set of training sessions after the initial beyond diversity seminars began on September 22, 2015 and continued until April 27, 2016. Going through the training for the second time afforded me the opportunity to use the protocol more effectively while engaging in courageous conversations about race. "Race talk is often silenced, ignored, diluted, and/or discussed in very superficial ways for fear of offending others or creating explosive situations" (Sue, 2015, p. 17). *Black and race talk* stems from talking about Black lives from an ivory tower or colorblind perspective to having conversations about race and seeing the everyday oppressions. Historically, the identities of Black females have been viewed negatively by the dominant culture. They could be a little bit of everything; for instance, smart, but not too smart; confident, but not too confident. Black females can be honest, trustworthy, and even engage in courageous conversations if they are not too threatening to the status quo (Bell, 2004; DuBois, as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997; Jones, 1983). Race is a hot button topic; however, due to my engaging in the protocol, I was better positioned to engage in *Black and race talk* and not hide racism in plain sight.

The sixth condition ("Ball of Confusion") (Whitfield & Strong, 1970). The sixth condition encourages *Black and race talk* and entails Let's talk about Whiteness which denotes White is a color, White privilege, White is a culture, White consciousness, Whiteness examined in the previous five conditions, and White racial identity development. "White is a color" addresses the foundation of Whites and a common level of understanding about their race. "White Privilege" involves the privileges White people do not recognize as privileges because there is an unspoken sense of entitlement. Singleton (2015) states, "privilege refers to the amount of melanin a person's skin, hair, and eyes…Ironically, the

more melanin a person has, the less privilege or racial advantage he or she receives" (p. 189). "White is a culture" addresses the culture of Whiteness and the lack of acknowledgment that Whites have about privileges. Because Whites may feel a sense of entitlement, they may find it difficult to believe their lives are privileged. White "people define the right way to do school and live a productive life" (Singleton, 2015, p. 195).

"White consciousness" is about the way White educators teach. Most White educators "teach their own personal culture first and the subject matter or standards second" (Singleton, 2015, p. 195). Singleton (2015) explained that White culture is characterized by individualism, whereas cultures of color are more often characterized by collectivism (p. 195). "Whiteness Examined in the Five Conditions" views Whiteness through a White lens. The first condition of Whiteness establishes a White racial context that is personal, local, and immediate. The second condition of Whiteness impacts each of us personally so Whiteness is isolated. The third condition of Whiteness normalizes the social construction of Whiteness. The fourth condition of Whiteness monitors the parameters of the conversation. The fifth condition of Whiteness is the working definition of Whiteness.

White Racial Identity Development enabled us to discover the context in which all racial matters are judged (Singleton, 2015). Many scholars have attempted to explain the White Racial Identity Development model, but due to White privilege and the ability of those who have it to simply avoid, ignore, or minimize the impact of race on their lives (Singleton, 2015), it does not get talked about as much.

The interpretive insight of *Black and race talk* helped me to become more comfortable with engaging in race talk. I did not want to be offensive because I did not know what I did not know about the social construction of race. After going through BDPDS for

the second time and understanding the Four Agreements, Six Conditions, and how to locate myself on the Compass, I never looked back. If I stay in protocol, I am less concerned about individuals thinking I am an angry Black woman when I am speaking my truth based on my lived experiences. I am also better equipped to engage my White peers in courageous conversations because more and more are being trained in the protocol.

Black and race talk continues to be an arduous task, but I must go beyond my personal baggage to better serve our diverse population of students. I have never been bashful when it comes to speaking about race among my Black peers; nevertheless, I am always guarded in what I say in mixed company. I know better; therefore, I must do better. Singham's (1998) article: *The Canary in the Mine: The Achievement Gap Between Black and White Students* sums it all up beautifully in a metaphorical sense. As educators, we already know what we need to do to improve academic achievement levels for Black students. If society requires only a small fraction of educated people and does not care about gender or ethnic or socioeconomic equity issues, then the present system of education is quite adequate (Singham, 1998, p. 14). This is not acceptable. The Black community can longer be the signals of danger in the educational system. By engaging in courageous conversations about race and teaching a culturally relevant curriculum, educators can help Black students feel a sense of pride as they sing their way out of the coal mine.

Interpretive Insight 4: The Theme *Race* (21)

> Equity and invisible. My staff, more than 80% young and female, presents a challenge. Growing up Black, I was taught that we had to be three times more intelligent than Whites, work four times as hard, and never let them see you sweat. As a young Black female, I didn't understand the requirements, but once I entered the workforce, it became evident. Whites, expecially young White females and males, seem to move up the scale with ease. My BA degree, I knew, would not garner me the revenue that a young White female with a BA would receive. Concepts of *race,*

> *equity* and *invisible* became paramount, all at the time I was not thinking along those lines. Note to self: get your PhD. My status as a principal does not seem sufficient to garner respect from these young ladies. Thoughts: Would Dr. Fowler make a difference? Will I feel or be more respected because of my title? Will I be recognized for a job well done? Get out of the clouds, Shaunda. You were hired to take care of students and teachers. Ideas: Whites like to argue and challenge the system, upward mobility. Why do White educators think they can do what they want to do? I wonder if I will be earning the same salary as other White Ph.D.'s in our system? How equitable is the pay scale? I know of several White men, by virtue of birth and with less education, who earn more money than me. I believe the glass ceiling for me as a Black women is higher than it is for White people. As a matter of fact, I think there is a brick wall. (S. Fowler, 2016)

The impact of *race* in my life raises the question "to what degree does race impact my life?" (Singleton, 2015, p. 89). While I began this study with a muddled lens of *race*, the lens of critical race theory enable me to view *race* through a clearer lens. I have accepted that *race* will always be a concern throughout my entire life and will continue to impact me until my last "getting up morning," expressed by my grandparents as until my dying day. What I see now is that although I may never see the day when Blacks and Whites are united, the hope is still there. Racism begins in the home and spreads abroad, much like love and charity.

Beyond diversity seminars and training. Because Singleton (2015) is the sole author of the BDPDS, he is cited many times in this study. The book published in 2006, *Courageous Conversations about Race,* was co-authored with Linton. I prefer to use the 2015 version because it is updated and more relevant to the study.

During the BDPDS, Singleton's Four Agreements: Stay Engaged, Experience Discomfort, Speak Your Truth, and Expect/Accept Non-Closure as well as the Six Conditions for engaging in courageous conversations about *race* were used. The Six Conditions included: Getting Personal Right Here and Right Now, Keeping the Spotlight on

Race, Engaging Multiple Racial Perspectives, Keeping Us All at the Table, What Do You Mean By "Race?" and "Let's Talk about Whiteness." These Six Conditions were used to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about *race* in accordance with Singleton's (2015) *Courageous Conversations about Race.* The four positions of the compass were used in conjunction with the Four Agreements and Six Conditions for having courageous conversations about *race*.

The first condition ("Inner City Blues") (Gaye, 1971). Getting Personal Right Here and Right Now was used to "establish a racial context that is personal, local, and immediate" (Singleton, 2015, p. 87). To further help educators and principals understand how to have courageous conversations about race, the first condition has four subcategories: Personal, Local and Immediate; The Impact of Race on My Life; Degree of Racial Consciousness; and Racial Consciousness vs. Racial Unconsciousness. Getting Personal, Local and Immediate will aid in closing the gap between students who typically perform well and students who do not. Instructional staff members examined self rather than others. The purpose for examining self first was for teachers and the principal to "address their own racial attitudes, beliefs, and expectations as they relate to their students of color as well as White students" (Singleton, 2015, p. 87). During the seminars, I examined and re-examined my perceptions about *race* and how I related to my 87% White staff. My struggle to understand the socially derived nature of *race* puts in mind of "Inner City Blues," (Gaye, 1971) and "makes me want to holler and throw up both my hands" (lines 24-25). Members of a particular society decide what the racial categories will be and how the individuals within that society will be classified and afforded power and privilege based upon physical characteristics such as skin color (Caruthers & Friend, 2016).

The third condition ("The Message") (Fletcher, Mel, Robinson, & Chase, 1982). This condition prompts educators to "normalize social construction of knowledge, thus engaging multiple racial points of view in order to surface critical perspectives" (Singleton, 2015, p. 115). When individuals acknowledge how racial meaning is inherited, interpreted, and passed from generation to generation, social construction of knowledge becomes normalized. Singleton (2015) stated, "each of us creates meaning around our current racial reality based on how we have experienced and understood our near and distant past" (p. 115). Social construction of knowledge determines "where and how people have grown up and creates the lens through which they see the world racially" (Singleton, p. 115). For some, *race* exists and does not exist in society because of the tremendous social and political complexities. "Race, how, where, and with whom we live, work, and play, forms our personal and collective racial contexts and is at the heart of how we interpret race in our lives and define race in the lives of others" (Singleton, p. 116). When investigating my social construction of knowledge, I used a Critical Race Theory lens that acknowledge the permanance of *race* in America.

Skin color is not the meaning of racial issues, but the meaning and value people assign to skin color. It is important that educators recognize the definitions of *race* and how shared racial occurrences in America are drawn from national, state, and local community contexts. Singleton (2015) explained, "through developing a greater understanding of these contexts, we can better understand the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings that people of each "racial group" bring with them into Courageous Conversations" (p. 106). An internalization and transfer of racism occurs when people of color are continuously subjected to racist acts. This brings to mind a song I used to listen to while growing up and navigating my way

through young adulthood called “The Message.” Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five (Fletcher et al., 1982) provided one of the first hip-hop, lyrical social commentaries I had ever heard.

As I tried to understand the social construction of *race* in America, “The Message” acknowledged ghetto life and how we still stand, but begs: “Don’t push me ’cause I’m close to the edge, I’m trying not to lose my head…It’s like a jungle sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from goin’ under” (Fletcher et al., 1982, lines 11-14). Engaging in courageous conversations about *race* affords a platform for those who are typically marginalized so they can use their voice to make socially responsible decisions.

When people of color “internalize negative racial messages, they may lose hope, thus buying into notions of second-class or subservient citizenship” (Singleton, 2015, p. 117). Furthermore, “White people can develop skills not to see and acknowledge the impact of race in their lives or the pervasiveness of institutionalized racism” (Singleton, p. 117). “Structured color blindness” is developed within a “White belief that people of color are less successful because they try less, or worse, because they are inferior to White people” (Singleton, p. 117). Some educators perceive that low performance and the antisocial behaviors of students are based on external factors and not what goes on in our racialized institutions. These beliefs of White supremacy can potentially harm all students and may have hidden meanings when presented by educators who profess these beliefs.

Surfacing critical perspectives offers multiple points of view about *race*, racial identity development, and racism. These points of view about *race* serve to sustain interracial dialogue because our critical perspective surfaces. It is “normal for different racial groups to offer different racial points of view as determined and defined by their shared racial

experiences" (Singleton, 2015, p. 118). Normalizing the presence of multiple racial points of view can invalidate other points of view. Because White people do not see or experience situations as people of color, White dominance insists upon people "seeing it the White Way" (Singleton, p. 118). Singleton (2015) stated, "to sustain a courageous conversation, educators must avoid forcing their own individual and collective racial points of view onto others, which often means enforcing a dominant White racial understanding of schooling as normal and correct" (p. 118). Educators should understand racial conflict and become aware of racial bias when multiple points of view are expressed.

Singleton (2015) noted, "when White educators normalize multiple points of view, they come to a much deeper understanding of the cumulative effect of racism for people of color" (p. 119). Educators of color are less guarded when the transformation of White educators is realized. They tend to be better at displaying personal and professional empathy and responsibility. Singleton (2015) affirmed, "As a North American culture, we often recognize, embrace, and promote people of color whose racial ideology is aligned with more conservative White ideologies" (p. 119). Engaging in multiple racial perspectives supports educators who consider diverse points of view as a way of employing *race* in a deeply critical way. In the lyrics of "The Message," "we do not want children in this world blind to the ways of mankind" (Fletcher et al., 1982, line 43). If we do not have courageous conversations about *race*, children of color will continue to internalize living as second rate citizens, and their hearts and minds will be filled with hate and misplaced aggression.

Interpretive Insight 5: The Theme *White and Black* (21)

> I examined my feelings about White privilege, identity and vulnerability and could not get away from the negative images that Black is unclean and dirty while White is considered pure as snow. Some things were clear, like White is a privilege, and some

> acceptance came with that. Not all Whites feel entitled to their privilege, but many more do believe in their entitlement. I critically examined if the shoe were on the other foot, would I want to share that much of my privileged life? I probably would not. It would be difficult for me to give up the many benefits just by virtue of my color. Identity shapes our culture and life and how we think, feel, believe, and act. My identity changed in various ways. I now identity myself as a powerhouse, a force with whom to reckoned. I am strong, confident, and sure of my ability as a Black female educational leader to have courageous conversations about race. I can stay engaged, speak my truth, experience discomfort, and expect/accept non-closure. I noted that I am still vulnerable at times, but able to brace myself for the discomfort and speak my truth. (S. Fowler, 2016)

White and Black people perceive acts of racism differently. People of color may tend to generalize the personal impact of race on themselves, while Whites may tend to minimize or deny racist acts. Singleton (2015) suggested, "race impacts every aspect of our lives 100% of the time" (p. 91). White people were encouraged to think about ways race or racism has outwardly affected their personal relationships, opportunities, and sense of security. People of color were encouraged to think about ways race or racism has outwardly affected their personal life in treatment, schooling, careers, everyday life, and place in society.

Singleton (2015) contended, "the percent at which we believe that race impacts our lives can be viewed as our racial consciousness" (p. 92). Determining the percentage that I believe race impacts my life helped me to understand how I view my racial consciousness. I am in perpetual thought about race and its implications for *White and Black* relationships. I know that I am judged more often by my race than by who I am as a human being. "The ability to effectively converse about race is determined by the degree to which we can consciously place the lens of race in front of us" (Singleton, 2015, p. 92).

When I was a young girl and as a young adult, I was taunted and called, "Nigga." Living a life filled with racial slurs and epithets, in the words of Marvin Gaye (1971): "this ain't living" (line 9). At the time, I did not realize how hurt I really was by these incidents.

My ignorance of racial consciousness made me a silent victim. I do remember feeling big for not "going off" or losing my temper. I was proud because I stood tall when I was hit low, but I was totally oblivious to the magnitude of *White and Black* social dynamics. The woman I am today is furious for the child in me. The child in me is more resilient than the adult who still gets angry.

I am angry beyond measure and wish I could have laid hands on the perpetrators. Of course, this would have landed me in a place I would prefer not to visit. Replaying those old scenes again make me feel nauseous and empty inside. I must be open to fully engaging in ongoing conversations about race in my lived experience in order to engage in courageous conversations about race with others.

Racial consciousness and racial unconsciousness were used by Singleton (2015) to determine the numerator and denominator of racial consciousness. The numerator determines the degree of racial consciousness, local and immediate. The denominator determines the degree of racial unconsciousness that tends to cause discomfort in White educators working with colleagues, students, and families of color. People of color are more conscious of their own racial consciousness as well as White racial consciousness. Singleton (2015) posited, "people of color tend to not only be more conscious of their own racial experience, but to understand White racial culture as well because they have lived in a White-dominated society" (p. 93). As a Black female educational leader, I have a consciousness about *White and Black* interactions and how my beliefs about a White-dominated society have been constructed. An incident with serveral colleagues was illustrative of race consciousness.

I was engaged in a conversation with a White female colleague and a Black female onlooker when a less familiar White female entered the conversation. I was clearly the

person needing to be addressed regarding the intruder's question, but the offender treated me like I was invisible, even after I tried to engage her in conversation. She addressed her question to my White colleague. She never looked at me and silenced my voice. I felt that emptiness again; however, this time, I was in the company of my peers and I felt embarassed. By the knowing looks we gave each other, I was obvious my colleagues were embarassed for me as well. I was not centered on the compass, so I walked away feeling disheartened while the intruder continued to engage my White colleague in dialogue. Although I wanted to "holler and throw up my hands" (Gaye, 1971), there was comfort in knowing that the intruder had to cross my path before any of her ideas could gain traction. She is unable to gain entry into the door she needs to unlock, because I possess the key. Or do I? When the time presents itself—and it will—a courageous conversation is inevitable.

The second condition ("Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud") (Brown & Ellis, 1968). Keeping the Spotlight on *White and Black* social dynamics involves isolating and unpacking race. Teachers and principals were asked the question, "How do the students' perspectives about race connect to your own personal, local, and immediate?" (Singleton, 2015, p. 100). Isolating race focused on the "critical need to address race explicitly and intentionally" (Singleton, 2015, p. 100).

In isolating race, "educators not only discover new meanings of race, but also more authentically, recognize the intersection of race and other aspects of human diversity and culture" (Singleton, 2015, p. 100). Educators have a difficult time staying focused on issues of race; instead they want to converse about poverty or family values. Singleton (2015) discovered that prominent educational researchers and practitioners "express solid understanding of other diversity topics, but fail to expore or even recognize race as a viable

factor affecting school culture and student achievement" (p. 101). Instead, they tend to define racial issues as internal factors; those affecting "Black and Brown students who are not meeting standards, and naming family, community, and the student themselves as the reason for the problem" (Singleton, 2015, p. 101). In blaming the students, their family, and community, educators take the focus off the school.

When educators isolate race, they gain tremendous insight into just how pervasive a role race plays in our society. Singleton (2015) asserted, "race as a topic remains difficult to examine in isolation from other social factors" (p. 102). The racial binary of *White and Black* may leave lasting personal scars and stimulate anger in some; others may view the scars as innocent or unintentional, adopting a more defensive posture, or they may disregard them altogether.

Defining the colors of *White and Black* indicates that White is defined as "pure," "upright," and "innocent," while Black is defined as "dirty," "wicked," or "angry discontent" (Singleton, 2015, p. 104). These definitions clearly play a significant role in interpreting their full meaning. So when we "isolate race, we expand our consciousness about the role race, racial identity development, and institutional racism play in our society" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 105). Educators hope to understand the deeper meaning without the distraction of other issues when they unpack race. Singleton (2015) stated:

> Desegregated schools face the challenge of providing quality education for racially marginalized students while their staff members, for the most part, have not acquainted themselves with the experience, perspective, or understandings associated with being a person of color. (p. 107)

Many educators do not meet the needs of students of color "because the challenge is often labeled 'diversity work' rather than effective pedagogy" (Singleton 2015, p. 107). Diversity

work does not serve the student of color or their families; it is too superficial. Educators must be culturally responsive to their students. Educators must help students "develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160); including the *White and Black* binary.

The fourth condition ("A Change Is Gonna Come") (Cooke, 1964). Keeping Us All at the Table illustrates how Interracial Dialogue and Creating Safety can enhance courageous conversations and instructs how to apply the Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass. Keeping Us All at the Table focused participants on the dialogue process pertaining to the *White and Black* binary. It is important that all participants feel safe in the conversation. With maximum safety, "comes an increased willingness on the part of all educators to step courageously out of their comfort zones and take the risk of speaking their truths" (Singleton, 2015, p. 129). We are "socialized to understand and comment on race differently based on our own racial affiliation" (Singleton, p. 129). During Singleton's (2015) research, he discovered that "many White Americans have been raised to believe that it is racist to notice race—that it is virtuous to be color-blind" (p. 129). Interracial Dialogue discusssed how White people and people of color regard race.

People of color "need to notice race in this country because a variety of racial situations are still damaging to their mind, body, and soul—indeed may be fatal if ignored" (Singleton, 2015, p. 129). Sometimes I believe my calm exterior masks the depth of my character. It is a challenge to lead a school where over 90% of the student population is of color and over 85% of the teaching staff is White. As a Black female administrator, my knowledge and skills are constantly challenged.

I engaged my staff in a colorline activity, and they were appalled. They were in wonderment as to why we needed to engage in courageous conversations about race. I sat in my office and pondered the thought upon my return from a walk in the hallways:

> I walk alone in suspended amination. Here she comes, no…don't dart away into the crevices of your own darkness. I think to myself…I'm not going to talk about race…no escape, nowhere to hide. This is what my mind told me the other ladies were thinking. Two educators, passing each other in the hallway. My only words were good morning. (S. Fowler, 2016)

How I visualize myself in the presence of Whites serves as my measuring stick. While I am still climbing up the scale of race consciousness, I also used the stick to measure Whites' social consciousness when I am speaking with my staff.

Interracial Dialogue is difficult because people find it difficult to talk about race, especially in mixed company. Singleton (2015) reflected, "For many people of color, a productive conversation about race is, in and of itself, healing, whereas for many White people, the conversation is often viewed as threatening" (p. 130). There is a distrust that exists on both sides of the racial divide. Conversations about race have been found to be difficult among educators, despite public and political efforts to address racial achievement in schools.

Historically, when discussing race and racial issues, White people tend to use certain authority (White dominance). Patterns have been noted in interracial conversations among many Whites and people of color. Singleton (2015) called these predictable patterns of interracial conversations, "White Talk and Color Commentary" (p. 131). By examining and better understanding these patterns, educators have opportunities to "bring balance and sustenance to Courageous Conversations about race" (Singleton, p. 132). People of color

tend to be timid and cautious in an interracial theater. I found myself more comfortable talking about race in affinity (same-race) groups.

By creating safety, educators feel comfortable to effectively participate in courageous conversations about race. I participated in a privileged walk activity with my staff, and it went better because the activity was not called a White privilege walk. The activity had a racial impact; however, it was conducted in the safety zone. This was an exception to the norm.

Unfortunately, many educators of color "feel it is unsafe or futile to give voice to their inner thoughts regarding the impact of race on teaching and learning" (Singleton, 2015, p. 138). Oftentimes, people of color feel nothing will change, so why talk about race. White educators have multiple ideas to improve student achievement, but this is often met with uncertainty by educators of color. This is because "such ideas reflect the distance between the White educator's racial experiences and that of their colleagues, students, and families of color" (Singleton, p. 138). It is important for educators to carve out time to engage in interracial conversations. The more we engage in these types of dialogues, the closer we get to bridging the racial divide.

The compass helps participants "know where they are personally as well as to understand the place from which others' contributions come; the result is an expansion and deepening of beliefs and opinions for all participants" (Singleton, 2015, p. 145). The compass has four ways people process conversations, issues and events. These four compass points are: believing, thinking, acting, and feeling. Belief has to do with the "rightness" or "wrongness" of any given situation. Thinking is our intellectual level, and feeling is our emotional level. Acting is defined by a specific behavior or action. As educators became

more confident in their courageous conversations about race, the multiple positions on the compass are examined.

I am reminded of a song by Sam Cooke (1964) that speaks to "A Change Is Gonna Come." Change is inevitable, and no matter the struggles, at some time, we are going to have courageous conversations about race in order to address the hardships that students of color and children in poverty experience. I cannot help but be optimistic that the day will come when you do not have to get back because you are Black.

The fifth condition ("Choice of Colors") (Mayfield, 1969). What Do You Mean By Race?—an element of the fifth condition—addressed a brief history of race and a working definition of race. A brief history of race discusses the meaning of race and how people view race; often couched in the *White and Black* binary. Singleton (2015) reminds me again that "racial differences are a social construct rather than a biological reality" (p. 166). Race was traditionally used to describe physical differences, status, achievement level, and mental abilities. Race will continue to be debated by social and natural scientists for many years. The history of race in the United States "is both long and complex." Singleton (2015) posited:

> It begins with the arrival of Northern and Western Europeans settlers in the 1600s, a period marked by the extermination of indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Africans. Each of these occurrences established in this country the racial hierarchy of Whites over people of color, or the American racial binary of White and Black. (p. 168)

Thomas Jefferson supported the marginalization of Black people. He advocated for the development of the U.S. Census, which clearly cast the *White and Black* binary. Black people were viewed as being inferior and White people as being superior. Jefferson believed Black people and mulattos lacked the intelligence and genetic properties ever to be White

(Singleton, 2015, p. 168). The division between races continued in the United States and during World War II; veterans created a greater continuum with Asian marriages and multiracial families. Yet with the permance of race, the *White and Black* binary remained intact. Contrasting with "images of hope, wealth, and prosperity or rags-to-riches fables was the poverty and dispair experienced by many non-White people as a result of social bigotry and government-supported racism" (Singleton, 2015, p. 169). The United States as a wealthy industrial nation believed that this achievement was totally White.

America has a long history of eugenics, dating back as far as the late 1800s. Its goal was to achieve racial purification by a well-planned genocide of the weak and infirm. Eugenics proposed to rid the country of its unthinkables by lifelong segregation, sterilization, restrictive marriage, eugenic education, forced breeding, and even euthanasia. This was particularly enforced against Black people.

Jesse Owens' triumph in Berlin in the 1936 Olympics (Baker, 1986) began a slow shift from the attitude that non-Whites were infirm or racially unpure. I wonder how Jesse Owens felt during this time. Music takes me to a different place and time, so I wonder how Jesse Owens would have answered the questions posed in Curtis Mayfield and The Impression's (1969) song, "Choice of Colors." Some of the most poignant lyrics for me include:

> If you had a choice of colors, which one will you choose my brothers. If there was no day or night, which one would you prefer to be right? How long have you hated your White teacher? Who told you to love your Black preacher? Do you respect your brother's woman friend and share with black folks not your kin? People must prove to the people, a better day is coming for you and for me…with just a little more education and love for our nation would make a better society. (lines 1-13)

Today, belief "in the athletic dominance of Black people and their lack of so-called civilized traits persist within White culture...and within schools" (Singleton, 2015, p. 170). Courageous conversations is a beginning point for people of color and White people to learn to bridge the *White and Black* binary through engaging, sustaining, and deepening racial dialogue.

White Flight became the most egregious form of discrimination in the United States in the 1960s during the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson. White people re-sort themselves when they sense too many people of color are present in their living spaces. Racial inequality in education due to White Flight of Americans created impovished schools for people of color while establishing wealthy schools for White students. There was never "any intention to create equitable institutions of education, and thus non-White schools were so chronically underfunded and inadquately supported that they could never rise above mediocrity" (Singleton, 2015, p. 173). The myth of effective schools was generated by public schools which initally were intended for White students.

The working definition of race used by Singleton (2015) encompasses corner, culture, and color. Corner entails citizenship, by birth or naturalization. Culture or ethnicity varies considerably and significantly. Singleton conveyed, "culture describes how we live on a daily basis in terms of our language, ancestry, religion, food, dress, musical tastes, traditions, values, political and social affiliations, recreation, and so on" (p. 178). He echoed the *White and Black* binary as "affixed to the melanin content found in the skin, hair, and eyes" (p. 178) The sixth condition involves talking about White as a color and the privilege of Whiteness. This condition was discussed in the section, Interpretive Insight 3: The Theme *Black and Race Talk*.

Summary

In Chapter 4, my "interpretive insights" (C. Schlein & J. Friend, personal communication, November 29, 2016) of *people of color, stereotypes, Black and race talk, race*, and *White and Black* were illuminated through documents of reflective journaling, major texts, peer review articles, Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars (BDPDS), and photographs. I also storied my life through BDPDS and included the compass, agreements, and conditions. I embarked upon this study believing in my ability to learn the protocol to engage, sustain, and deepen my knowledge in courageous conversations about race. I did not think about how delving into my own lived experiences would bring so much pain and the power to heal. By participating in beyond diversity seminars, I now consider multiple perspectives when having interracial dialogue. Reflecting on my lived experiences and engaging and practicing beyond diversity skills and knowledge, I began to see and understand how White culture subordinates others through communication patterns. When engaging in courageous conversations about race, people of color cannot do it alone. We need our White allies. While conducting an activity centered around race, I needed to "phone a friend" because the teachers were not responsive to my dialogue. As I have mentioned previously, it is a challenge for some White staff members to lean in and receive information about race from a Black female administrator. I can present a topic and my White ally can present the same information. Yet White talk is received far better than my color commentary.

The process of learning the protocol proved important for my growth and development. At the initial beyond diversity seminar, I was resistant until I found the value in extending dialogue across racial lines. Through the process of exploring the protocol, many

insights emerged that assisted me in recognizing racial biases that I have overlooked in myself and in others. This experience has added tools to my knapsack. As I continue on this journey of racial equity work, I have gained a deeper level of respect and appreciation for those who do the work for the greater good of humanity and not for personal gain. The victory is in seeing each person treated equitably. Chapter 5 focuses on implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This chapter provides a brief epilogue of my search for meaning, relates implications of the interpretative insights to prior research, and suggests recommendations for future research. At the beginning of this study, I did not realize how much I would learn from fully engaging in courageous conversations about race. I set out to explore whether my perceptions about race relate to my development as a Black female educational leader. I talked about race in my daily life; however, I was not engaging in interracial dialogue about race with staff. The school district unapologetically set in motion a plan to engage staff in courageous conversations about race. Engaging in this work allowed me to put the spotlight on myself regarding race, and that was scary.

Epilogue of My Journey

After the school board's vote, the words were clear: "I believe we are about to embark upon some racial equity work in a place called School." These were the words the superintendent spoke to his Leadership Team and principals. This was before I was immersed in the beyond diversity seminars. Without much thought, I reverted to my familiar attitude of "been there, done that." I was anticipating a one-stop shopping, quick fix. Over the years with the district, I had participated in several diversity trainings, so I figured I would get another shot in the arm to get a boost. What more did I need to know about diversity? I am a Black woman, and I know what it is like to be Black. Besides, the workshops always ended in someone feeling guilty, oppressed, or angry. Most of the participants seemed to never get past our real issues; therefore systemically, we remained stuck. Who wanted to listen to other people telling their stories of victimization? I was in for an awakening. This was not your

typical same thing warmed over—more diversity training, multiculturalism, assimilation, melting pot, salad bowl, or teaching tolerance, which was the vocabulary of old.

I am convinced that many educators shared the same feelings as I did about beginning a new program. Yet, as the training progressed, I stayed engaged, experienced the discomfort, spoke my truth, and accepted non-closure. It was evident that what is needed in schools to better educate our students of color is to have teachers who are comfortable interrupting the silence—having courageous conversations with colleagues, White students, and students of color. Foremost, we need longevity in our leadership if we are really going to impact racial equity work. Also, leaders must prepare for the inevitable. Educators are going to become angry and defensive during this work. Black teachers are going to fight feelings of anger while White teachers deal with feelings of guilt and fear of being called a racist.

Building leaders must create safe spaces, be willing to confront issues of race and culture, and develop a strategy to change the discourse between race and achievement (Noguero, 2008). The building principal, along with the Equity Team, should take the lead in interrupting racism. The BDPDS offer a way for schools to begin the work to becoming anti-racist institutions of learning. I agree with Orelus (2013), that until educators are willing to have courageous conversations about race in public schools, the problem of race will continue to be one of the most contested topics in America. It was time to disrupt the Whiteness of silence about race.

The decision had been made. I knew I was going to remain in the same position for the following school year, so I tiptoed in and methodically became fully immersed in the process of learning to have courageous conversations. I found myself at the intersection of who I think I am racially and the perceptions I felt White people have of me. In *Souls of*

Black Folk (as cited in Blight & Gooding-Williams, 1997), DuBois stated an African American has a "double consciousness," a "two-ness" of being "an American, a Negro: two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (p. 5). This two-ness is a survival mechanism for people of color; however, as a woman of color navigating a world that is socially constructed racially, it is essential I operate in this space in a realistic mode and not in a survival mode.

During my initial BDPDS training, I learned the framework for engaging in courageous conversations about race. I became familiar with the tools, but that was not enough. The training was intense, emotional, and sometimes silent. I was too afraid to speak my truth. I was a colleague and a racial immigrant wrapped in a "Ball of Confusion" (Whitfield & Strong, 1970). There were above-the-line and below-the-line attitudes and behaviors, and the room was pregnant with discomfort. Interpretive Insight 5, Theme *Black and White,* as a binary is reflective of how I felt during the training. As I proceeded through learning the protocol, it was evident that there was little to no trust between *White and Black* staff members related to race. I spoke on the surface because I did not want to appear offensive to anyone.

Now I have a different perspective on what is happening with students of color in classrooms than I did before the seminars. In most cases, I believe students are bored and do not feel a part of the curriculum. I have conversations with young people daily, and they are aware of what is and is not happening in their classrooms. The challenge is to develop relationships with all students, meet them where they are, and provide them with a robust and culturally responsive education. I believe teachers feel overwhelmed and they think students are not arriving at school prepared to learn. The journey is before us to master a protocol to

systematically dismantle institutionalized racism. The price tag is too high to allow students of color to become canaries in the coal mine.

Race has influenced my life in many ways, and it has shaped my perceptions. Because I face the subtleties of microaggressions and the feeling that some White people deliberately try to make me feel inadequate in some aspects of my existence, I had to learn how to stay engaged, experience discomfort, speak my truth, and expect or accept non-closure. I will no longer side-step the elephant in the room. Thus, I embarked upon my journey to engage my predominately White staff in interracial dialogue about race. This work has changed my perception and never again will I turn a blind eye to interracial dialogue about race. Every student deserves a champion. I believe I am a better leader for students and staff after going through this process.

I also believe my staff will become better educators because of this process. Those who do not believe in the work will leave, and those who are committed to the work will have a positive impact on student achievement, which is our goal. Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars woke the sleeping giant. My critical consciousness is heightened, and I will not allow anyone to make me feel like an angry Black woman when I discuss issues of race in school.

I am eagerly looking forward to learning and implementing the final phases of this work. My school will fully implement the full Beyond Diversity Professional Development Seminars by the school year 2018, and as the building leader, I agreed to honor and create a gracious space that would be safe for staff to engage in honest dialogue without feeling guilty about their lived experiences or feeling fearful of punitive consequences for speaking their truths.

Implications of Interpretive Insights

Misperceptions about Race and Student Achievement

Implications for having courageous conversations about race in my school encouraged me to conduct this research. Emic explorations of my experiences revealed a change in my own perceptions about race while engaging in courageous conversations. I contend I held prejudiced and classist assumptions. My reflective journal and audio recorder captured my feelings and perceptions about White educators' resistance or discomfort with having courageous conversations about race. This study pointed out the need for me to have courageous conversations about race with my staff. It also demonstrated that my perceptions about race can have an impact on how I lead.

The rate of discipline and suspensions was also an indicator that race needed to be discussed in the school. I live in a state that disciplines more elementary students and more elementary students of color than any other state in the nation. My building is not immune to this type of discipline, so we need to develop the skill and the will to engage in interracial dialogue about race if we are ever going to increase student achievement.

The first implication is for helping educators to understand that we can no longer blame the parents, family, or community for the underachievement of students of color. All parents and families want the best for their students. Singleton (2015) posited, "educators tend to define race issues as internal factors" (p. 101) for underachieving students of color. When these educators begin to isolate race, they can begin to understand how important their role is in educating students of color.

Empirical evidence suggests that African American parents routinely prepare their young children for racial socialization. There are three realms of experience: the mainstream,

the minority, and the Black cultural experience. Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, and Nickerson (2002) conducted a study on how African American parents racially socialized their children. Families with children between three and five years of age in which the primary caregiver self-identified as African American were recruited in 39 diverse neighborhoods in Baltimore, Maryland. The study used door-to-door canvassing, targeted mailings, day-care centers, and Head Start programs. The results were like other studies on racial socialization. This study revealed that African American parents, like all other parents, want to manage their children's behavior as they prepare them to develop a healthy racial self-concept. This is considered culturally responsive parenting. Hughes and Chen (1999) stated that cultural socialization of African American students has consistently been associated with better academic achievement. This is an added layer of protection for African American students who are trying to navigate racially constructed school systems.

Morland (1958) conducted a study of preschoolers ages three, four, and five. The students were asked to recognize the race of a person from photos shown. The study determined that among the four- and five-year-olds, White children had a significantly greater ability to recognize race. This study demonstrated that students recognize race at a very early stage of their development; therefore, educators must possess the appropriate language and skills to dialogue about race. Although Morland's (1958) was an older study, it continues to be relevant today because it was also revealed in the research that Black children recognized and identified White as a race more than they identified their own race as Black. This was evident in a conversation about race with one of my pre-kindergarten students.

Moyer (2014) conducted a study about why White parents should talk to their young children about race. Moyer (2014) emphasized that it is essential that White parents help

their children move through a world that sees a Black kid and not just a kid. As the saying goes…a little conversation can go a long way to head off racial prejudice. We need to begin early to communicate with kids honestly based on what is developmentally appropriate. The way educators attend to students racially has an impact on their learning. Racial literacy must be promoted in schools.

Only when educators recognize that race is not a binary of *White and Black* and instead focus on the differences in the many cultures of people of color, can they begin to understand that race is a multiplicity of ethnic identities. Seeing only *White and Black* prevents one from understanding the problems of racism and finding systemic solutions. As mentioned earlier in the text, the color Black is usually defined as "dirty," "wicked," or "angry discontent," while White is defined as "pure," "upright" and "innocent" (Singleton, 2015, p. 104). These definitions should not be applied to people. People cannot be defined by one-dimensional labels. The pre-kindergarten student who professed to be "White" in Interpretive Insight 2, Theme *Stereotypes* had no idea these negative labels were applied to his race, but he still identified as being White. Could the stereotypes associated with being Black affect how he felt about his identity? This should not be the case and points to the intensity of work that must be done in schools and communities. As educators, we must instill pride in our students, no matter their racial or ethnic backgrounds. When we "isolate race, we expand our consciousness about the role race, racial identity development, and institutional racism play in our society" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 105). My hope is that all children, especially those who get marginalized, will develop a sense of racial consciousness and embrace their identities. A story of my youth relays the denominator or

the racial unconsciousness conveyed by Singleton (2015) which is connected to racial identity.

As young children, we were aware of our Black identities; how we perceived ourselves as well as how others perceived our Blackness. A game, "Playing the Dozens," signified our racial unconsciousness. When I attended school, we signified, name called, and played the dozens in order to demonstrate power and establish social position within our community. Playing the dozens involved being able to make fun of others and to be as offensive as possible with one's insults. Winning at the game often heighten your social position. On any given day, a new champion could reign, depending on their facility with words. Little did we realize that this was also a way of releasing the pain of being viewed as less than Whites. Our identities were wrapped up in the game often colored by race. This form of signifying was displayed in remarks by Black people to my mother and insults to me regarding my skin color and hair.

> I remember around the age of five, my mother shared a story with me that this guy told her that not only did she not look old enough to have two children, but that "we" did not look to be the same race as our mother. In hindsight, how cruel was that? When I was young, my locks were very tight and I remember being called nappy headed at times. From elementary school until my freshman year in college, if someone ever gave me a compliment, there was a disclaimer of "to be so dark." In college, I took my first class in African American Studies: so, I was becoming familiar with putting things in a racialized context from being called a Nigga to being heckled by a truckload of White guys. Today, it comes in the form of being a Black female administrator in a predominately White work environment. Many times, I feel as though I must legitimize my position in the face of power inequities that privileges Whiteness. (S. Fowler, 2016)

It is important that children are enlightened so they will not blindly do things that will have an adverse impact on their growth and development. As educators, we must understand

the deeper meaning of race without the distraction of other issues. A culturally responsive learning environment would be most appropriate for students.

Race Consciousness

The second implication is race consciousness. People of color are conscious about the way race impacts their lives. This study illuminated my personal experiences with race. I viewed my experiences through a critical autoethnographic lens. I also claimed the space of Critical Race Theory as a reflective mirror for making meaning of my experiences. The tradition of autoethnography is a useful method for practitioners in multicultural settings because it pursues the goal of cultural understanding (Chang, 2008). My cultural awareness was at an all-time high as I experienced the beyond diversity seminars. I could not protect myself from myself. I had to manage microaggressions in the midst of feeling invisible and marginalized. I was vulnerable and sensitive; however, believe me when I say what I felt was real. Words do not have to be spoken for me to know that talking about race and interrupting injustice is like swimming in murky water. It was all the water I had, so I jumped in and did the work.

As a part of our racial equity work, I facilitated an activity that sent teachers out on a field experience. The goal was to navigate the schools' neighborhoods so teachers could see where and how their students lived and how it compared to their own neighborhoods. Most teachers did not venture into their school's neighborhood. They drove main surface streets and took photos from their cars. It became obvious to me that similar to the ways they kept themselves at a distance while performing this activity, they may be keeping themselves at a distance from their students as they educate them on a daily basis. There seemed to be a disconnect between their expressed commitment as teachers and their actual behaviors.

In a White socially constructed society, people of color tend to feel inferior, uncertain, and insecure about the ways they are treated in society. Similarly, when some students of color are taught by White educators, they tend to internalize their teachers' perceptions of race and apply it to themselves. For example, a kindergarten student once told me, "My teacher doesn't like me because I'm Black."

White people and Black people view race differently. Reflecting on my lived experiences while engaging and practicing skills and knowledge I gained from beyond diversity trainings, I began to understand how White people may subordinate others when communicating. White people are taught to think about ways race or racism has outwardly affected their personal relationships, opportunities, and sense of security, while people of color are taught to think about how race has outwardly affected their daily lives, schooling, and careers. As White people begin to unpack their privileged knapsack (McIntosh, 2002), they can develop a more robust understanding of their own racialized existence. I believe if White people agree to look deeply and introspectively at their racial existence, it would help them to understand their role in race relations.

As I reflect on Interpretive Insight 4, Theme *Race,* I continue to think, believe, feel, and act about race daily based on the parameters of the Beyond Diversity Seminar Courageous Conversation Mindset Compass. As the principal of an early learning center with more than 800 students ages three, four, and five, I need to be supportive in the work and ensure I have the tools to help teachers truly stay engaged and take on equity work. It is grueling and it is painful, and teachers need to feel they are being supported even in their discomfort. I must model the positive character traits of a race equity leader, not just on the surface, but in the trenches, where the work takes place.

Recommendations for Future Research

Race can be a highly divisive issue; therefore, it is more attractive to take a colorblind approach to race as opposed to a racial consciousness approach. West (1994) suggested, "race is the most explosive issue…that confronts the tragic facts of poverty and paranoia, despair and distrust" (p. 156) in democratic America. Considering the multiple issues regarding race that have permeated society, I believe it is dangerous to the future of our nation if we do not discuss race. Thus, when we "isolate race, we expand our consciousness about the role race, racial identity development, and institutional racism play in our society" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 105). A racial consciousness approach to engaging in interracial dialogue is an effective means to bridge the gap between racial disparities. Based on the insights gained from my critical autoethnography, the following recommendations are offered as future research in the field of education.

- Given the changing demographics in American schools from White, non-Hispanic to students of color and a predominantly White teaching staff, it is important for teachers to talk about race and how race affects their lives. "There is a lot of silence about race in White communities, and as a consequence Whites tend to think of racial identity as something that other people have, not something salient for them" (Tatum, 2003, p. 94). There should be more research on the value of White educators writing their own critical autoethnographies to deconstruct how power intersects their personal experiences with students of color.
- Racial inequity is so enmeshed in the fabric of our lives it seems normal. It is so normal that a pre-kindergarten student at my school was convinced he was White. There was nothing relevant to his culture going on in his classroom because

White educators usually teach from a colorblind perspective rather than from a racially conscious perspective that tends to honor students of color. Racial inequity is so deeply rooted that we do not recognize its subtleties (Ladson-Billings, 1999). The subtleties appear in books, pedagogical styles, and belief systems. More research on culturally responsive pedagogy, its sustainability, and its impact on student achievement would benefit the literature in education.

- It has been suggested that many children enter school for the first time with strong engagement skills (Hughes, Luo, Kwok & Loyd, 2008) but this changes over time with student-teacher relationships. Hughes et al. (2008) noted that a positive influence reverberates with positive social interactions between teacher and students. The opposite is true if there is a negative teacher-student relationship. It was revealed in this study that Black male students received more disciplinary referrals and out-of-school suspensions than their White peers, which has an impact on their readiness skills. Therefore, more research is needed to investigate the experiences of Black boys in schools and their relationships with dominantly female and White teaching staffs.
- Students who receive parent-like nurturing from their teachers tend to perform better academically. A teacher's perception is important to a student. Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta and Cox (2000) state judgments about the rate of problems in their classrooms may reflect teachers' perceptions of how difficult it is to teach their classes (p. 147). If teachers prejudge students, they might not see children beyond their behaviors. Future research should include Black and White teachers' academic expectations for students of color and how teachers can become

surrogate parents to students to increase academic achievement instead of judging misbehavior.

- Existing literature on administrators facilitating courageous conversations about race is scarce. New administrators must understand the robust nature of race and its permanency in our society. Administrators should be trained in a protocol to engage teachers in interracial dialogue about race and how race affects the academic achievement of learners.
- Peske and Haycock (2006) suggest that poor students of color become underachievers because of a lack of resources. Needed resources are administrators and a teaching staff willing to engage in uncomfortable dialogue. Further research should be conducted on how administrators and teachers are trained in having courageous conversations about race in their preparation as administrators and teachers.

Summary

My major concern for this study was based on my autoethnographic thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and concepts about "race." To compose this critical autoethnography, I reflected on my "double consciousness" as I grappled with my personal experiences in initial training sessions in beyond diversity and the sessions with my Equity Team. When I reflect on my personal, emotional, and physical experiences during the beyond diversity seminars and trainings, my view is clearer, and I believe a better tomorrow is coming.

My race and ethnicity influence my life in many ways every day; it has shaped my perceptions about race. I am still faced with the subtleties of White people trying to make me feel inadequate in some aspects of my existence, but I have learned how to stay engaged,

experience discomfort, speak my truth, and expect or accept non-closure. I use the Mindset Compass ("Feel, Act, Believe, and Think") every day to check my personal feelings when I have conversations about race.

In this chapter, I discussed my journey, implications of interpretive insights, and recommendations for further research. My hope is that all educational institutions implement the beyond diversity seminars and trainings. It is imperative that our future generations, and specifically our students of color, learn to have courageous conversations about race in order to challenge racial inequality. Since children are still growing in knowledge and understanding, let us be educators of the world for them. Teach them to understand, love, and respect themselves regardless of their skin tones.

POSTSCRIPT: ROOM 307

I entered room 307 in the School of Education feeling a sense of readiness to defend my dissertation; however, more than halfway through my presentation and with a simple click of the mouse, my story changed. The photograph you see here looked back at me from the large presentation screen and unexpectedly, I wept. Many of the photographs included in this study caused me to relive some happy and sad times in my life; however, I did not anticipate what I experienced in Room 307.

From my perspective, weeping was not supposed to be a part of the dialogue, but I was not in control. Something had taken hold of me and would not let go until an unanticipated narrative emerged. I had carefully selected the photographs for this study; however, I am convinced this particular photograph chose me.

You see, beyond the face…the smile and the attentive eyes…was a broken little girl, and in that moment, she made me SEE her. The timing just seemed off. There was a discrepancy between the story I knew and what my listeners were hearing. My committee members clearly understood what was transpiring. The irony of it all.

My committee members and I discussed how there are multiple layers to people, and the human experience can be messy and chaotic. My life was being storied and re-storied simultaneously for all of us to witness. How do I understand myself and my social world under these seemingly contradictory conditions? Toni Morrison, an acclaimed American novelist, provides an answer:

> Although you will never fully know or successfully manipulate the characters who surface or disrupt your plot, you can respect the ones who do by paying them close attention and doing them justice. The theme you choose may change or simply elude

> you, but being your story means you can always choose the tone. (Morrison, 2004, para. 13)

I am free to be my own story; however, this freedom comes with a price tag. Giving voice to my personal experiences was a very intriguing yet difficult undertaking. Exposing my vulnerabilities will not be in vain if this work inspires future autoethnographers to share their lived experiences. I am now encouraged to live my life out loud and on purpose

APPENDIX A

UMKC IRB APPROVAL LETTER

UMKC
Office of Research Services

UMKC
5319 Rockhill Road
Kansas City Missouri
TEL: 816 235-5927
FAX: 816 235-5602

NOT HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH DETERMINATION

Principal Investigator: Shaunda Fowler
9812 Colony Place
Kansas City, Missouri 64131

Protocol Number: 16-171
Protocol Title: BREAKING THE SILENCE: A CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF MY LIVED EXPERIENCE WITH HAVING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE.
Type of Review: Not Human Subjects Determination

Date of Determination: 04/13/2016

Dear Ms. Fowler,

The above referenced study, and your participation as a principal investigator, was reviewed and determined to be Not Human Subjects Research (NHSR). As such, your activity falls outside the parameters of IRB review. You may conduct your study, without additional obligation to the IRB, as described in your application.

The NHSR Determination is based upon the following Federally provided definitions:

"Research" is defined by these regulations as " a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge."

The regulations define a **"Human Subject"** as "a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains: data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or identifiable private information."

All Human Subjects Research must be submitted to the IRB. If your study changes in such a way that it becomes Human Subjects Research please contact the Research Compliance office immediately for the appropriate course of action.

Please contact the Research Compliance Office (email: umkcirb@umkc.edu; phone: (816)235-5927) if you have questions or require further information.

Thank you,
UMKC IRB
UMKC IRB Administrative Office

APPENDIX B

IRB COMMUNICATION REGARDING TITLE CHANGE OF DISSERTATION

On Mon, Dec 19, 2016 at 2:49 PM, Walton, Bailey <waltonbl@umkc.edu> wrote:

Also, apologies on the misspelling of your name!

Please give us a call if you have additional questions.

From: Walton, Bailey
Sent: Monday, December 19, 2016 2:42 PM
To: 'S. Fowler' <sfmakeitwork@gmail.com>; Hoover, Nancy <HooverN@umkc.edu>
Subject: RE: Shaunda Fowler - dissertation title

Hi Shonda,

Since this protocol was determined to be Not Human Subjects Research, I'm not sure whether the following solution will work or not. When you log into eProtocol click on the Protocol ID number.

There may be an option to submit an Amendment. If there is, select that option and fill out the short form that populates and change the protocol title in the actual IRB application.

The determination of Not Human Subjects Research means that it is a project that is not under the IRBs purview (from a regulatory standpoint the IRB only reviews projects that are determined to be research involving human subjects), which is why there may not be an option for amending the protocol. If the committee is requiring that you change the title, and if there is not the amendment option we can look into other alternatives. However, if they will accept the letter as written then I would not worry about trying to submit an amendment to update it with the IRB. I don't expect it will make any difference when/if you try to publish it (in case that is your concern) since it's clear that the protocol is the same one we reviewed despite the minor change in the title.

Thank you,

Bailey Walton
Compliance Officer
UMKC Research Compliance Office
816-235-1764
http://ors.umkc.edu/research-compliance/irb

For IRB Studies:
UMKCIRB@umkc.edu

For IACUC Studies:
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For IBC Studies:
UMKCIBC@umkc.edu

For RSC Studies:
UMKCRSC@umkc.edu

From: S. Fowler [mailto:sfmakeitwork@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, December 16, 2016 5:16 PM
To: Hoover, Nancy <HooverN@umkc.edu>; Walton, Bailey <waltonbl@umkc.edu>
Subject: Re: Shaunda Fowler - dissertation title

Thank you Ms. Hoover!

On Fri, Dec 16, 2016 at 3:54 PM Hoover, Nancy <HooverN@umkc.edu> wrote:

Doctoral student Shaunda Fowler's dissertation research was approved by the IRB with the following title for her dissertation: *Breaking the Silence: A Qualitative Critical Autoethnography of my Lived Experience with having Courageous Conversations about Race*. Her committee is asking her to change a portion of the title from "*of my Lived Experience*" to "*a Principal's Lived Experience.*"

Does it matter to the IRB if she makes this small change to her title?

Thanks,

Nancy Hoover
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VITA

Shaunda Fowler was told she would never amount to anything, although she had already earned a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from San Diego State University. As a counter-story to this marginalization, Ms. Fowler embarked upon a long and lonesome journey down a road filled with blocks and detours; however, along the way, she managed to pick up a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Her path seemed smooth until she stumbled upon another fork in the road. Ms. Fowler did not have the drive to move on, so she pulled over and parked. Years passed by like leaves in the wind and Shaunda Fowler found herself idling in neutral with little fuel to continue her journey. Miraculously, a good Samaritan stopped by and fueled her tank. This act of kindness set her upon a path to completing her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations, and Curriculum and Instruction. Thank the Lord for counter-stories! Shaunda Fowler is now an administrator in a small school district in the Midwest.