

DECONSTRUCTING WHITE PRIVILEGE USING A MULTICULTURAL  
EDUCATION APPROACH WITHIN A RURAL, HOMOGENOUS COMMUNITY

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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by:  
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled:

DECONSTRUCTING WHITE PRIVILEGE USING A MULTICULTURAL  
EDUCATION APPROACH WITHIN A RURAL, HOMOGENOUS COMMUNITY

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## DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom and dad for their unwavering support and belief in me. Through all of the scenic journeys we've traveled together, this is just one more on the map. Go Team Mango!

Also, I can't imagine this process without Stephen, my champion and cheerleader. You help to make everything in my life a million times brighter, and I am grateful to have shared this experience with you.

And Arrow. My steadfast study buddy.

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## ABSTRACT

Multicultural education training for K-12 educators can often be found in urban cities, but unfortunately, school leaders in smaller communities often fail to address hegemonic thinking and attitudes for teachers. This qualitative case study examined one small, rural community to learn what components of Banks' dimensions of multicultural education were evident in the areas of professional development, curriculum, and personnel decisions. Using the concept White privilege to address teachers' perspectives of racism and minority students in their community was at the forefront of this study. While there were overlaps between these areas, only the most salient findings were presented. Teachers often claim they were colorblind towards their students of color, and the researchers argued this line of thinking perpetuates ingrained stereotypes. The study attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice by recommending three different options ranging from minimal change to second-order change.

Keywords: multicultural education, White privilege, rural, homogenous community, and professional development, qualitative

SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

## **Introduction to the Background of the Study**

A significant number of K-12 school districts have incorporated multicultural professional development programs (Denvei & Carter, 2006; Dilworth, 2004), especially in communities with a diverse population. Other communities, particularly those with a homogenous population, have struggled with implementing a multicultural educational framework to support students and educators (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004; Parks, 2006). For many individuals introduced to issues surrounding oppression, feelings of frustration, remorse, and moral culpability often arise (Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009; Tatum, 1992). Despite the difficulty in discussing and contemplating oppression, there remains a need for organizations (specifically school districts) to facilitate changes to support a multicultural education framework. Racism is as prevalent as ever, and, since 2014, a number of events have triggered conversations in social media, the news, and among politicians, resulting in several momentous changes in U.S. history.

The killing of an unarmed African American teenager, Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri by a police officer (Healy, 2014), seemed to mark the beginning of a grassroots movement to re-examine how African Americans are legally treated. A series of similar shootings across the country sparked debate, but the case in McKinney, Texas where an officer assaulted an African American adolescent female (Orfield, 2015) received attention in a different way. Located within a predominately White suburban neighborhood, the incident in McKinney, Texas revealed discussions of diversity are gaining momentum in more and more communities across the country.

In a community dominated by the White majority, it is possible to overlook the need for increasing global awareness (Figueroa, 2004; Hill & Allan, 2004; Moodley,

2004). Through no intentional fault of individual citizens, being White in a predominantly White community makes it possible, through the intricate hierarchies of power structures, to be unaware of the privileges afforded to those in the majority. Tatum (1997) asserted while some members of society are more prejudiced than others each member has grown up with certain beliefs, stereotypes, and distortions that influence the thoughts and perceptions they hold. Even though people are not to blame for the ideas they were socialized towards as children, they are responsible for their own behavior as adults (Tatum, 1997), in the same way while the current generation may not be responsible for the level of air pollution, it is still their responsibility to reduce further pollution.

While this study is intended to provide insight into how multicultural education for educators facilitates tolerance and understanding to prevent ethnocentric and hegemonic thinking, it will focus primarily on the topic of racism as a way of breaking down many perceived barriers to multicultural education. McIntosh first introduced the concept of “White privilege” as becoming aware of the ways those who are White have an unearned privilege due to skin color and “have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence” (1988, p. 1). Being a member of the majority race has obvious advantages, and yet as a member of the majority becoming aware of how that advantage discriminates against others, whether intentionally or not, is an important step in eradicating discrimination and racism. This level of responsibility can be better understood through multicultural educational pedagogies.

Though multicultural training practices may not be a top priority in the realm of professional development yet, the population will be more diverse than ever and no single

racial group will hold the majority by this century's middle (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). According to Burden, Hodge, O'Bryant, and Harrison (2004), K-12 public schools have enrollments of 53 million children, with 35% of them being students of color. It is disturbing many educators, particularly those in the White majority, hold an "ethnocentric view in the sense that cultural diversity is excluded, minimized, and/or ignored" (Burden et al., 2004, p. 175) when creating and implementing professional development training. Ethnocentrism is the belief one's culture is "better or more natural" (Northouse, 2013, p. 358) than others, and therefore people give preference and value to those with similar beliefs, attitudes, and cultures over those from other groups.

General diversity training goes back to the late 1960s and early 1970s as a response to the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 (Anand & Winters, 2008). Today, there are numerous professional development multicultural programs, (Denvei & Carter, 2006; Dilworth, 2004; McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004; Parks, 2006) but few appear to systematically track and analyze their impact on K-12 teachers. When diversity training is implemented, it is often used to fix a problem within a classroom or building rather than providing meaningful professional development to educators throughout the year. For example, a diversity consultant may be called upon to address a classroom of students if an incident occurs rather than helping educators confront their own biases and exposing students to learning opportunities about people from all different walks of life throughout the school year. Therefore, the researcher is (a) interested in conducting a case study in a community with a small minority population, to learn how they are currently integrating components of multicultural education in the areas of professional development and training, curriculum for students, and personnel decisions, and (b) what

barriers prevent multicultural education, specifically when addressing issues of race, from occurring within the district.

## **Statement of Problem**

### **Problem of Practice**

Because the current multicultural training for educators within the Peyton School District (name has been changed) is negligible, it is crucial to examine the reasons behind this oversight. Current multicultural education programs for educators are often designed to superficially teach students about diversity and people from various cultures (Bureau of the Census, 1995), but few programs are in place for helping teachers confront their own biases or utilizing essential learning components to ensure the success of adult learners (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). McIntosh asserted many, if not most, White students feel they are not racist, and therefore, racism does not affect them because they are unaware of unearned entitlement based on their skin color (McIntosh, 1988). It is the researcher's assertion this remains true for the White population at large, including White educators. Therefore, it is necessary to confront these biases while simultaneously developing a meaningful multicultural framework, resulting in the creation of change agents within educational settings.

### **Gap in the Literature**

There is an abundant amount of literature exploring concepts surrounding this study including professional development, White privilege, and multicultural education. However, there remains a significant gap on empirical studies conducted on multicultural education programs for educators in general, much less homogenous populations. More specifically, there are very few studies conducted within a K-12

setting. Lisi and Howe (1999) identified four key factors addressing why achieving multicultural education remains such a challenge and why studies have been difficult to measure. First, most educators did not receive sufficient preparation to become multicultural educators. Second, current efforts to support teachers are inadequate, such as limited time to participate in workshops, or a lack of support in the implementation stages. Third, those attempts at incorporating multicultural education focus on building cultural awareness, and do not provide educators with opportunities for applying new knowledge. Finally, those providing professional development, such as state agencies, or individual school districts have little collaboration among one another while teachers are expected to support initiatives from various departments without greater collaboration at a systemic level. Therefore, research about K-12 multicultural education for educators in a predominantly White community adds to the existing literature base.

Another gap in the literature involves a comprehensive study specifically using Banks (2004a) multicultural education dimensions. There have been studies conducted on various aspects of Banks multicultural model, but no studies examining each of the components as the sum of its parts. Therefore, the researcher intends to contribute to furthering the studies using Bank's multicultural education dimensions and how they can support communities with a small, minority population.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was two-pronged. First, the researcher was interested in exploring to what extent Peyton School District utilizes current multicultural educational practices in the areas of professional development and training, curriculum, and

personnel decisions. The researcher examined the current goals of multicultural education, and how multiculturalism was portrayed in the classroom.

To further examine these issues, the study also sought an explanation as to what extent multicultural education helps educators address their own biases, and more specifically, how the concepts of Whiteness and privilege (Lawrence, 1997) perpetuated hegemonic constructs. Burden et al. suggested moving from “ethnocentrism” to “ethnorelativism” of intercultural sensitivity (2004, p. 173). DeSensi (1995) provided a description of the difference between ethnocentrism, which can be explained as a process in which “stages include the denial of, defense against, and minimization of difference. The denial of difference indicated one does not recognize cultural difference, perhaps due to isolation or intentionally separating oneself from it,” while “ethnorelative stages include the acceptance of, adaptation to, and integration of difference. The acceptance of difference involves recognizing and appreciating cultural differences in behavior and values. Adaptation to difference requires developing communication skills that enable intercultural communication” (p. 36).

The second purpose of this study was to make recommendations to Peyton School District regarding barriers preventing multicultural education, specifically when addressing issues of race, from occurring within the district. To make recommendations, the researcher sought answers to the following gaps of knowledge within the community. First, the researcher examined what effective practices were currently taking place within the district and what supports needed to be implemented for the district to develop a multicultural framework. Another approach to identify successful multicultural models already in place that could be used to compare one organization to

another in a method referred to as benchmarking (Gill, 2010). Seeking multicultural education frameworks developed around principles that support and facilitate adult learning were also employed. Finally, the researcher looked for insight into the perspectives of educators and administrators, to determine the current levels of awareness of ethnocentric thinking, and how could they become more aware of their own privilege and biases.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What components of Bank's (2004a) model of multicultural education are being applied within the district in the following areas:
  - a. professional development and training
  - b. curriculum for students
  - c. personnel decisions
2. What barriers prevent multicultural education, specifically when addressing issues of race, from occurring within the district?

### **Conceptual Frameworks**

Two overarching conceptual frameworks were used as a way to guide the present study. Critical theory was used to examine the social conditions resulting in a power imbalance by asking the questions "Who benefits from the current structures in place?" and "Who decides which structures are important?" (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). The second conceptual framework used Bank's (2004a) model of multicultural education to examine effective practices for in-service educators while also taking into account critiques of multicultural education.

## **Critical Theory**

A critical theory lens was used to examine multicultural education as a framework for guiding organizational change. Critical theory falls under the transformative worldview, which combines politics with a political social change agenda and actively advocates for marginalized people (Creswell, 2014). Issues commonly addressed within this perspective include “empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation” (Creswell, 2014, pp. 9-10). While many K-12 educators value diversity, incorporating a multicultural framework has not become a systematic priority within many homogenous school districts, as evidenced by the lack of empirical scholarly research.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) explained how paradigms, or a set of beliefs, have been used to clarify the researcher’s position from the ontological, epistemological, and methodological components of a study. In a critical theory study, the ontological perspective examines realities and recognizes the social and political factors, appropriate or not, and how they become entrenched into institutional structures and viewed as reality over time. The epistemological position links the researcher and the participants with the values of the researcher influencing the direction of the study. The methodological aspect of the study necessitates a dialogue between the researcher and the participants of the study, and “that dialogue must be dialectical in nature to transform ignorance and misapprehensions...into more informed consciousness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Using the ontological, epistemological, and methodological views provided a foundation for conducting a critical theory study.

Critical theorists recognize how those in power form what becomes accepted as truth within society and how hegemonic ways of thinking subsequently become accepted as universal truths for the mainstream population (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Critical theory has been used as a way to understand how social communities, in this case, schools, construct structures allowing privileges to some groups while denying others based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, class, and physical ability (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), it is the charge of critical theorists to unveil those truths, which have been adopted without question and in reality are detrimental to others. Using the concept of “White privilege” coined by McIntosh (1988) provided insight into how ethnocentric “truths” are adopted into society with often deleterious effects on those excluded from the mainstream population.

### **Multicultural Education**

Banks (2004a) suggested the dimensions of multicultural education can be divided into five distinct categories and provides a conceptual framework for the researcher’s study. The categories are interrelated and are used as a way to define and conceptualize concepts surrounding multicultural education. These categories include content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy model, and empowering school culture and social structure. *Content integration* incorporates the techniques and ways teachers provide examples and exposure to different cultures, specifically within their own discipline of area of expertise. Multicultural education can become stagnated in specific disciplines such as English and social studies but overlooked in mathematics and the sciences (Dilworth,

2004). The *knowledge construction process* considers the way teachers facilitate teaching, how knowledge is acquired, and how those in various racial, ethnic, and social-class groups are impacted. *Prejudice reduction* focuses on students' racial attitudes and the strategies employed to facilitate more egalitarian attitudes and values. Creating an *equity pedagogy* occurs when teachers reshape their teaching to highlight academic success of students from diverse backgrounds. This entails using a variety of teaching styles consistent with different cultural groups. Finally, *empowering school culture* is a concept used to redefine the way school leaders structure and reorganize the organization to benefit students from diverse backgrounds. Limitations of the model are only approximations and do not necessarily explain reality with all its complications. These dimensions are used as a framework and are not mutually exclusive.

Incorporating multicultural education within a school can be a challenge, particularly for homogenous populations. While multicultural theorists have developed adaptations of multicultural education from Banks (2004a), most include some variation of inclusion, infusion, deconstruction, and transformation (Gay, 1995). Freire (1993) contended multicultural action includes elements of dialogue, action, and reflection. From Freire's perspective, dialogue is not simply talking to people about oppression or imposing one's views onto another group of people, but instead, having conversations with people including multiple perspectives. Multicultural education has often been regarded as an issue needing to be addressed for populations with students of color (Gay, 1995). Gay (1995) asserted the idea that if there are no students of color enrolled in the school, it is often difficult to justify the need for multicultural education, and yet multicultural scholars asserted "the most fundamental and deeply ingrained

values, beliefs, and assumptions which determine all educational policies, content, procedures, and structures ... will be revolutionized by being culturally pluralized” (p. 6).

### **Design of the Study**

To gain greater insight into the perceived need for multicultural training especially in regards to race, the researcher employed a qualitative methodological design based on a critical perspective for educators within the K-12 public school system (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The topic of multicultural education and race is often polarizing, especially in communities with a small minority population. Therefore, the researcher conducted a case study to gain insight into the perceptions of how one community addressed multicultural education, specifically race education. Case studies may include the study of a program, a specific event, an examination of one or more individuals, or a process (Creswell, 2014). This case study examined one community, including the current curriculum, professional development practices, and personnel decisions.

Yin (2009) described the need for conducting a case study as a two-pronged approach. First, a case study explores the breadth of a situation or an occurrence within the context of a phenomenon, particularly when the relationship between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined. In this case, the phenomenon is to understand the current perceptions of educators under the auspices of multicultural education, race specific, and how those perceptions affected those within the context of a population with a small minority population.

Second, using a case study as an approach to better decipher a phenomenon allowed the researcher the ability to address and account for the potential number of

unexpected variables (Yin, 2009). As a result, a case study is dependent on various data sources, necessitating the importance of triangulating data. The case study also allowed for consideration of previous theories, serving as a way to manage the collection of data and its analysis (Yin, 2009).

### **Setting**

A case study of Peyton School District, a community with over 90% of its citizens classified as White (Peyton website, 2015), was used to examine current multicultural education practices, race specific. A bounded case study was used because it is finite, and it includes a specific group of people, in this case Peyton School District (Merriam, 2009). Peyton was intentionally selected as the setting because of a gatekeeper who was able to provide access for the researcher (Creswell, 2014). This was important because with Peyton's small minority population and close community, the researcher needed insider access to examine how, if at all, the school facilitated multicultural education in regards to race, and how the community addressed White privilege to educators and students.

The location of the setting was important for a variety of reasons. First, this community typifies many other small communities in the Midwest. Peyton is rich in history with the school system established around the time of the Civil War. Peyton emphasizes the importance of community involvement, and it has a small minority population. Peyton's close proximity to the researcher allowed her to conduct research in various schools around the city while collecting data. Peyton School District has a well-developed plan for professional development, and although it currently does not address many areas of multicultural education, the district has a framework to support students

living in poverty. While issues of race and class are separate issues, it was possible to incorporate some of the supports already in place when addressing the implementation of a multicultural education framework.

### **Participants**

To better understand the complexities of a multicultural education framework, the researcher chose teacher and administrator participants from Peyton. Participants were represented from a range of subjects they teach such as literacy and math as well as from other disciplines including, science, social studies, music, art, and physical education. The importance of selecting teachers from all disciplines was essential to the study because while subjects, such as literacy and social studies, lent themselves well to the discussion of multicultural education (Dilworth, 2004), other subjects such as math and physical education are often overlooked when it comes to incorporating multicultural education.

Additionally, the researcher selected participants in a variety of grade levels from K-5, middle school, and at the high school level. Multiple grade levels lent itself to a stratification process (Creswell, 2014) where the characteristics of the participants were separated based on their assigned teaching levels. By selecting teacher participants within the same district but in different grade levels, the researcher was able to triangulate data (Merriam, 2009) and determine if perceptions of multicultural support varied among educators. The study also examined to what extent teachers have considered the importance of providing a multicultural framework, and how White privilege potentially skews incorporating multicultural principles within the organization. As educators' perceptions were the main way of collecting data to analyze,

selecting participants across grade levels was essential in discerning levels of support either via school district or by instructional level.

Administrators were key participants within the study. This included building principals, instructional coaches, and administrators. Including the perceptions of the administrators was vital; they hold additional knowledge and information regarding policies, processes, and procedures to which educators may not be aware.

Sampling varied depending on the researcher's ability to access educators. The superintendent of the district granted the researcher permission to conduct interviews and focus groups during regularly scheduled professional development. Professional development occurred each Wednesday morning for all K-12 schools. The researcher employed purposeful sampling in which participants were selected based on their ability to convey the thoughts or situations of the average person, in this case the perceptions of the average educator (Merriam, 2009). Convenience sampling (Merriam, 2009) initiated the selection process to determine the settings of the study inasmuch as the researcher has potential connections through Peyton. After the sites were chosen and approved, random sampling was employed when interviewing various teachers across grade levels, based on a random selection of teachers across disciplines (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). The support of the administrators was key in this selection. Snowball sampling (Merriam, 2009) was utilized when seeking participants to participate in focus groups. Participants came from the recommendations of administrators who have made concerted efforts to include some level of multicultural education within their classrooms.

## **Data Collection Tools**

Data collected for a case study can come from a variety of sources (Yin, 2009). This case study included observations and field notes, interviews, and focus groups to collect data. Data was collected during three site visits, one at the elementary school, one at the middle school, and one at the high school. Each visit followed a similar structure beginning with attending professional development and staff meetings occurring once a week. Focus groups with teachers and interviews with administrators took place at each building. The researcher engaged in direct observations (Yin, 2009) throughout the building and in the classrooms while also collecting documents and artifacts. The primary purpose of collecting documents was “to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2009, p. 103). Data was collected to develop the case study of current multicultural education within Peyton.

Interviews conducted with educators and administrators allowed the participants the opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas (Creswell, 2014). The topics of White privilege and ethnocentrism can feel threatening, especially to White educators, so acknowledging this sensitivity was paramount in keeping and maintaining trust among participants. The researcher interviewed gatekeepers (Creswell, 2014) and top administrators within Peyton School District. Interviews were conducted with teachers regarding their perceptions of how comfortable they are teaching from a multicultural pedagogy, their views on multicultural education, how they do or do not include multicultural education within their classrooms, the level of support they feel for teaching multicultural education, and their comfort level for teaching some issues over others. Interviews were structured with a specific set of questions (Gay, Mills, &

Airasian, 2006) and lasted approximately one hour. Using a structured interview allowed the researcher to ask participants from each of the sites the same set of questions (Gay et al., 2006). An interview protocol was developed (see Appendix A) to provide consistency among interviews and interview questions (Creswell, 2014). The researcher audio recorded and transcribed each interview while taking notes in the event of an equipment failure (Creswell, 2014).

Focus groups were planned for educators, so they could share their thoughts on multicultural professional development in a non-threatening fashion and away from their administrators. Often, focus groups are utilized to explore various perceptions among groups of people and to uncover the thoughts and feelings people hold, especially with complicated topics (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The sessions lasted between one and two hours and had 4-10 participants. It was not the intention to “shame” districts for having little professional development for teachers in diversity and multicultural education, but rather to understand why there is so little and how to better support the district in providing support for educators in the public school system. Similar to the interviews, a focus group protocol was developed (see Appendix B) and sessions were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

Observations were conducted throughout the study as a way for the researcher to categorize evidence of multicultural education within classrooms and throughout the buildings at each of the school sites, as well as through collecting relevant documents. An observational protocol was designed (see Appendix C) to search for similar types of evidence throughout each of the sites. Documents are useful in order to understand the

language used by participants (Creswell, 2014). For this study, a protocol was developed aligning with Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education.

Being cognizant of ethical issues helps to protect participants, and ensuring their protection was a top priority (Merriam, 2009). The researcher provided a consent form (see Appendix D) explaining the purpose of the study for participants to sign before beginning interviews or focus groups. When analyzing data, a propensity for siding with participants who agree with the researcher may occur, so the researcher strove to provide an unbiased analysis of participant data and not what was convenient for the researcher's study (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, the researcher received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before embarking on the study and obtained permission from Peyton School District and participants (Creswell, 2014).

### **Data Analysis**

Within the methods section, the researcher began to analyze the data to search for patterns (Spradley, 1980). One process for organizing qualitative data into meaningful segments is commonly referred to as *coding*, allowing patterns or themes to emerge (Creswell, 2014). Within this study, the data was coded into open and focused coding, eventually resulting in distinct, emergent themes. The initial open coding process began with a line-by-line coding process. According to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), this process involved "writing words and phrases that identify and name specific analytic dimensions and categories" (p. 175). Once the open coding has taken place, a focused or axial (Merriam, 2009) coding system is the next process used to organize and sort the open codes appearing frequently in the data (Emerson et al., 2011). During this phase, the line-by-line codes begin to show trends and conceptual ideas revealing the primary

and predominant themes. Naming the themes or categories typically derives from one of three sources (or some combination of the sources): the researcher, the participants, or outside resources (Merriam, 2009).

When developing the interview and focus group questions, the researcher was specifically looking at how the district developed professional development, curriculum, and personnel decisions in order to determine where the schools fit within Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education. Therefore, after completion of the initial open coding process, the researcher reviewed the data again, this time using a priori coding. A priori coding was used to organize the data into the pre-established codes (Stemler, 2001) of professional development, curriculum, and personnel.

Interviews and focus groups continued until saturation or when new information was no longer being presented (Creswell, 2014). Observations and document analysis were also used and coded to support findings in the interviews and focus groups. Upon completion of the coding process, and once saturation occurs, the remaining steps included "making an interpretation...of the findings of results" (Creswell, 2014, p. 200).

The researcher frequently checked for qualitative validity and reliability to strengthen the accuracy and credibility of the study. Validity and reliability were checked through a variety of techniques. Validity refers to evidence that the researcher measured what they intended to measure (Creswell, 2014; Fields, 2013), whereas reliability refers to how well the findings can be duplicated or replicated (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Creswell (2014) listed eight different strategies to assist the researcher when checking for validity such as triangulation, member checking, using rich description to report the findings, identifying researcher biases, presenting the negative or discrepant

information that may result from interviews, spending copious amounts of time in the field, using peer debriefing to determine if the study resonates with others outside of the field, and using an external auditor who is completely unfamiliar with the researcher's field to check the entire study. Yin (2009) suggested using a case study protocol during data collection to create reliability within the study while Merriam (2009) suggested creating an audit trail describing how data were collected, how categories or themes were selected, and how decisions were made during the study. These methods were employed throughout the study to ensure accuracy and reliability.

During the interpretation of data, Emerson et al. (2011) asserted researchers have no boundaries, can draw from their own insights developed during the search process, incorporate direct life experiences within the setting, and convey concepts provided by specific disciplines. Not using preconceived ideas to make assumptions from the data was an important step when mining through the data. The researcher was cognizant of using the data to discover the larger, more encompassing themes rather than using previous experiences and/or assumptions to answer preconceived ideas.

Throughout the research process, attention to protecting participants and Peyton School District were carefully followed. The very nature of discussing race, especially with participants who may be unaware of the ethnocentric behaviors they may be exhibiting can be a sensitive topic. Ethical considerations for the sensitivity of the topic were considered in the way interviews and focus groups were conducted. The study only involved educators and administrators, and while thought was put into interviewing minority students to determine if they felt their teachers were culturally sensitive, the researcher decided to restrict the study from minors and focus on consenting adults.

## **Limitations**

The following section discusses limitations within the research. First, while studying multicultural education includes the equity, freedom, and social justices of all people (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2015), it was outside the scope of this research to include other marginalized groups, outside of examining race. Further studies should use Bank's multicultural education dimensions to explore other marginalized groups. Second, the researcher was primarily collecting data through personal interviews and focus groups, using an "observer as participant" (Merriam, 2009, p. 124) stance. Through an observer as participant stance, the researcher has access to the community and people within the schools, although information may be limited since the researcher is not part of the "in" group. As someone who is not a member of the Peyton community, the researcher was potentially limited to certain information.

Other limitations included the selection of the participants and the setting. By selecting to interview and conduct focus groups with only teachers and administrators, the perspectives of minority members and students were excluded from the study. While their perspectives would unquestionably provide valuable insight, the researcher chose to conduct the study from the leaders and educators' frames of references. Using rich, thick description as a strategy was used to describe participants, the setting, and findings enhances the study's transferability (Merriam, 2009). Finally, while the selection of studying one community in-depth has tremendous advantages, findings from the study may have transferability issues.

## **Researcher Bias**

When utilizing qualitative analysis the researcher's biases or position needs to be clearly stated to maintain the integrity of the study (Merriam, 2009). Using critical theory as a framework to reduce the marginalization of others and to create actions towards breaking down barriers often indicates the researcher is working towards a goal, in this case to increase awareness of a multicultural education framework. It is important to note the researcher comes from a middle-class background, is a White, heterosexual female, with no physical disabilities. Nevertheless, the researcher has occasionally experienced discrimination being a member of a small Jewish community living in a predominantly Christian environment. As a member of the religious minority, the researcher has grown up with a heightened awareness and sensitivity to the plight of people in other minority groups.

Although the researcher currently resides and works in a community close to Peyton, she spent ten years working, learning, and teaching in New York City. Those experiences had a significant impact on her views regarding White privilege and the various stages of multicultural education. Therefore, while the researcher may have some preconceived ideas of how schools systems operate and personally felt connected with the importance of multicultural education, it was necessary to take precautions so as not to skew the findings and to seek out evidence that only supported the present study (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Multiple steps were taken in order to reduce the possibility of bias in the research and to minimize potential conflicts of interest. Horner and Minifie (2011) discussed the importance of everyone involved in research to be aware of the multiple pitfalls that can

occur in the research process and “strive to adhere to best practices as they evolve” (p. 14). When considering areas where biases may influence research, it was prudent to be aware of potential biases before and during the research process to minimize the possibility of incorporating it into the study.

Another way to avoid potential bias within the study was to recognize a variety of perspectives. Rather than focusing on universal truths, the researcher considered the social, cultural, historical, personal, and professional experiences, which may also change over time (Drake & Heath, 2011). Drake and Heath also recommended a deep level of reflection to consciously recognize different viewpoints.

### **Design Control**

Within the design of the study, measures were taken to increase the validity and reliability. Using a variety of documents, interviews, focus groups, and observations helped to triangulate the data, but there were potential weaknesses from each source of evidence. Yin (2009) provided strengths and weaknesses of various sources of data. First, while documentation can be discreet and inconspicuous, there is a possibility the researcher may report bias or reveal the researcher’s own biases. Focus groups and interviews provide a glimpse into the perspectives and perceptions of the participants; however, precautions must be made to prevent biases from badly written questions and from what Yin (2009) called reflectivity, or the phenomenon where the interviewees respond to what they think the researcher wants to hear rather than providing candid responses. Finally, while observations allowed perspicacity into the functioning of an organization, bias can occur if either the participants or the observer manipulate or modify the situations. By using a variety of sources as evidence and creating a chain of

evidence for the reader to follow helped to increase the reliability within the study (Yin, 2009).

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

#### **Diversity**

There are numerous ways to define diversity. In lieu of the discussion of diversity within a public school setting, the definition used throughout this study comes from the National Education Association (NEA):

Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. The dimensions of diversity include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status. The field of education includes diverse professional job categories ranging from classroom teachers to education support professionals to higher education faculty to retired professionals. While diversity itself is not a value-laden term, the way that people react to diversity is driven by values, attitudes, beliefs, and so on. Full acceptance of diversity is a major principle of social justice. (National Education Association, 2015, para.1)

#### **Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism is the belief one's culture is "better or more natural" (Northouse, 2013, p. 358) than others; therefore, people give preference and value to those with similar beliefs, attitudes, and cultures over other groups.

#### **Ethnorelativism**

According to DeSensi (1995), "ethnorelative stages include the acceptance of, adaptation to, and integration of difference. The acceptance of difference involves

recognizing and appreciating cultural differences in behavior and values. Adaptation to difference requires developing communication skills that enable intercultural communication” (p. 36).

### **Multicultural Education**

Despite numerous definitions of multicultural education, the following definition was selected based on its synergistic connections to Bank’s (2004a) dimensions of multicultural education:

Multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity... It affirms our need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice. (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2015, para. 1)

### **White Americans**

The researcher chose to use the term White Americans to describe people from the dominant culture. While there are appropriate terms for naming people from various minority groups, there is not a consensus in the literature for the best term to identify those in the dominant culture. “White” and “White alone” are the terms used in the U.S. Census.

## **White Privilege**

McIntosh first introduced the concept of “White privilege” as becoming aware of the ways in which those who are White have an unearned privilege due to skin color and “have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence” (1988, p. 1).

## **Significance of the Study**

The findings from this research will ideally contribute to the direct teaching practices and professional development for teachers, educational leaders, and policy makers. Challenges of incorporating multicultural education may be due to *mélanges* of ill-fitted programs in order to satisfy district’s diversity policies, or because the topic is so magnanimous it has yet to satisfactorily make lasting changes in the educational system. Yet, the importance of scholarship and applied research into practice cannot be overstated (Blake-Beard, Finley-Hervey, & Harquail, 2008).

The goal of the study was to provide insight into what is, or, conversely, what was not currently happening within the local school district and to make recommendations for how to improve in this area. Additionally, the findings of the study will hopefully serve as an impetus for other communities with small minority populations on how to better incorporate Bank’s (2004a) model of multicultural education. Based on the findings of this study, one of the key contributions to the scholarly research was to improve the existing literature base by helping to debunk some of the current ineffective multicultural practices as well as the cyclical nature of diversity training being merely a fashion trend (Oswick & Noon, 2014). Finally, this study will contribute to the K-12 literature and knowledge base by providing a case study of how one community is addressing the need for multicultural education within the context of school educators.

## **Summary**

Understanding the importance of incorporating a multicultural education framework, particularly for communities with a small minority population, by examining one community and how they support staff, educators, and students in regards to multicultural education, specifically race, is at the focal point of this investigation. In the end, the researcher wanted to know what was currently happening in regards to the implementation of a multicultural education framework and what supports educators need in order to successfully implement such a framework. Based on a gap in the literature, the researcher also intended to add to the existing literature base. By conducting a qualitative, bounded case study, the researcher hoped to gain insight into how people in the majority dominant group contribute to eradicating racism and discrimination, or how are they contributing to the oppression of minority students. While many people fear the discussion of race in schools, the changing demographics indicate a need to address these issues at a district level and prepare educators for teaching all students.

SECTION TWO:  
LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT FOR STUDY

Over the past hundred years the leaders, educators, and members of Peyton have striven to build a solid educational foundation for their community. One does not have to look far to see the pride the community has in their schools, faculty, and in their students. Coaches have set up foundations, alumni have returned as teachers to give back to their community, and local business leaders serve as board members. In one visit to the community, a local church was announcing an upcoming Veteran's Day concert being conducted by 2nd grade students, welcoming all community members to attend. In addition to the investment the community has in its students, educating faculty and staff members through professional development has consistently been a priority for this community.

The community has come together to pave the way for effective professional development and has invested a significant amount of thought and planning into how to best serve children living in poverty. In addition to the traditional school model, Peyton has also instituted non-traditional school models and has found numerous ways to foster a symbiotic relationship between the school district and the community. While there is little doubt the community strives to support its members, there remains an absence of professional development, curriculum planning, and cultural awareness of citizens who are not in the White majority (Superintendent, personal communication, 2014). In order to implement changes towards multicultural education, the first goal is to reform schools to provide students, including those from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds with an equitable access to education (Banks, 2004a).

Proponents of multicultural education or, "a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity," (National Association for

Multicultural Education, 2015, para. 1) have striven to educate, advocate, and reframe organizations to support educators and students. Despite the work being done to serve those living in poverty, there has been little accomplished in other aspects of multicultural education, especially in regards to race. Drawing upon principles of organizational analysis and effective leadership can be beneficial to the implementation of creating multicultural education frameworks in the attempt to providing an equitable education for all community members. Studying the organizational analysis of Peyton School District through the lens of the human resource and political frames (Bolman & Deal, 2008) illustrates measures the district is currently taking to eradicate social injustices and also leaves opportunities for improvement in the area of multicultural education. Additionally, the current leadership styles, specifically servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; Northouse, 2013; Spears, 2010), closely align with current beliefs and values of the district and supports the inclusion of multicultural education, specifically in regards to race.

## **History of Organization**

### **Demographic Background**

The city of Peyton resides in the heart of the Midwest. With a population of slightly more than 10,000 residents (Peyton website, 2015), Peyton is a thriving community that focuses on the education of its students. The city is also home to a small university and a public school system that has been recognized for numerous accolades in education. As a result of the strong emphasis on education, education plays a pivotal role within the community. So much so, that partnering “with the community to ensure that every student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary for productive participation as

a responsible citizen in an ever-changing society” is part of the Peyton School District mission statement (Peyton School Manual, 2013, p. 3). In fact, one data source reported that Educational Services comprised the largest component of the city’s industry for males, while Educational Services was the second largest component of the city’s industry for females (Peyton website, 2015), reinforcing the dedication to education among all community members.

Like many small towns surrounding Peyton and within the Midwest region, there is a small minority presence. In 2013, over 90% of the community was classified as White alone which was less than the state’s average. Just over 5% of the population was classified as Hispanic, Asian, Black, American Indian, or mixed race, with Hispanics being the largest of the minority population (Peyton website, 2015).

According to the superintendent of the Peyton School District, poverty is one of the greatest hurdles for this community (personal interview, November 4, 2015). The unemployment rate is slightly less than 10% and is higher than the state’s unemployment rate by nearly a full percentage point (Peyton website, 2015). Additionally, nearly 60% of the county’s students were enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program compared with 50% of students enrolled statewide (State website, 2014).

### **Organizational Background**

The history of Peyton has deep roots, with its first settlers arriving in the mid-early 1800s (Peyton website, 2015). Establishing a solid education system was a priority, and in the late 1800s, a religiously affiliated university was relocated from its original site to Peyton. Today, the university has less than 4,000 undergraduate and graduate students and has partnered with area hospitals to develop a strong program in the health services

field (University website, 2014) while continuing to maintain a strong religious presence.

The university has deep ties to the community, yet the education system for school-age children was in place long before its first higher institution. An early map from Peyton showed a schoolhouse within the city's first few years of existence, and not long after the Civil War ended, the first public school was consecrated (Peyton School Manual, 2015). Today, Peyton is home to two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school, with nearly 3,000 students enrolled. The community has also deemed early childhood development to be a priority. The development of a child care facility serving children from birth to kindergarten as well as the establishment of a preschool for children preparing for kindergarten are part of the make-up the educational community.

Supplementary learning programs are another component of the success of Peyton District schools. Special education at Peyton is designed to support students with disabilities, as well as providing support to their families. With nearly 10% of students requiring some level of special education services, meeting the individual needs of students with a disability requires a team of parents, caregivers, and classroom teachers (Peyton School Manual, 2013).

For some, the traditional school model does not meet the needs of all students, so the alternative school in Peyton serves at-risk students. At-risk students who attend the alternative school go for a variety of reasons: "behavioral concerns, social anxiety, attendance problems, credit deficiencies, or home problems are all possible reasons a student might not excel in a regular classroom, but [the program] endeavors to look beyond the outward day-to-day disruptions to formulate an education plan that works for

each student” (Peyton School Manual, 2013, p. 33). The alternative school has a reciprocal relationship with the community allowing students to volunteer throughout the school year while the alternative school works to provide opportunities for students to participate in job tutoring.

Finally, Peyton has created a number of programs for families and community members to become involved in the education of all students. One such program is a nationally recognized program called, Watch D.O.G.S., a program of the National Center for Fathering where fathers, uncles, step-fathers, grandfathers, or other father figures volunteer in a variety of ways (National Center for Fathering, 2015). In another program, Peyton partners with a local science museum to provide additional exposure to science for students in middle school while all fifth grade students participate with local police in the nationally recognized Drug Abuse Resistance Education program commonly referred to as D.A.R.E. Another area where Peyton involves the community includes developing technology savvy students, especially with the increased popularity of social media. For high school students, they have the opportunity to learn self-discipline, teamwork, and other leadership skills through the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC). For students interested in pursuing a higher education degree, a program was implemented to help high school students afford college through a partnership between a state funded program and the Department of Higher Education allowing qualifying students to attend participating community and technical colleges (Peyton School Manual, 2013). While these are not all of the extracurricular programs offered in Peyton, these examples help to illustrate the wide range of opportunities for students and community members alike.

## **Organizational Analysis**

To facilitate critical changes, an organization must be adaptable and flexible (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997/2011), and examining an organization using theoretical frameworks helps the researcher and reader clarify and organize different components in a study. Bolman and Deal (2008) offered frameworks, or lenses, to study and reframe organizations. Framing within an organization can be beneficial because it provides a “mental model” for how to categorize various aspects within the organization while reframing is “examining the same situation from multiple vantage points” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 339).

In the context of this study, the human resources and political frames are used to examine various components within the organization. Specifically, the human resource and political frames serve as a way to delve into two important components within the district, professional development in general, and Ruby Payne’s (1996) framework into better understanding poverty. As an example of the district’s commitment to helping educators achieve success and empowering people to play an active role in the lives of the students, this section begins with an overview of the frequency of professional development for educators, who determines the professional development topics, and how professional development information is disseminated to educators. This section then segues into a more specific and narrow professional development framework developed by Ruby Payne (1996) used to help educators create a deeper understanding of families living in poverty. As a community with high poverty rates, this framework serves as a way to better prepare educators for the specific issues surrounding children

and families in poverty and tackles some of the power issues surrounding one group of marginalized community members.

### **Overview of Professional Development Through a Human Resources Frame**

Within the Peyton School District, professional development is vital to the success of teachers and their students. Investing in the people within the organization has held a prominent position for the leaders of Peyton School District and its community. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), the importance of a human resource frame reinforces the reciprocal relationships between people and organizations. The authors expand this symbiotic relationship by explaining people need organizations for a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards while organizations need people for their creativity, manpower, and development of the organization. Teachers need the Peyton School District for intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, such as, but not limited to; achieving professional satisfaction, working with like-minded individuals, having summers off, and giving back to the community. In return, the organization secures teachers who have received a degree specifically tailored to educating children, people from varying backgrounds who can provide new, fresh ideas, and people who will carry out decisions throughout the organization. These complementary relationships help to provide consistency and continuity throughout the organization and its members and strengthen its human resource connections.

Empowering employees is a key tenet of the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Organizations dedicated to empowering their employees involves ensuring effective communication, promoting independence from its employees, promoting teamwork and collaboration, and creating an environment that is meaningful to its

participants. Bolman and Deal (2008) also include promoting diversity, promoting egalitarianism, providing information and support, and redesigning work when needed as other ways to empower employees. In many ways, Peyton School District has striven to provide employees with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to empower their teachers. Specifically, providing effective and carefully planned professional development is one of those ways the district works towards empowering teachers.

Due to the growing needs of the community, professional development is provided in a variety of formats. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), professional development is a vital source of empowering teachers by providing necessary information and support. Professional development serves as a forum to disseminate information to all faculty members, provides training for a variety of topics, and supports previously implemented programs. Every week, all certified staff members participate in a late start day for students within their building, and professional development is incorporated into those meetings. Also, teachers participate in a minimum of two scheduled vertical team meetings per year. Teams may meet more frequently if necessary and as often as once per month.

Peyton also offers additional professional development opportunities outside of the regularly scheduled weekly meetings, supporting the importance of job redesign and enrichment. Workers develop greater confidence and awareness when their job has been redesigned and therefore feel more rewarding (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Embedded into the school year are three separate professional development dates dedicated specifically to district and building needs. For teachers wanting additional training, an optional summer institute is offered and teachers receive a small stipend if they present or

attend. In addition, a four-day training and an eight-day training program is provided on an annual basis with approximately 15-20 teachers in each class (personal communication, November 29, 2015). Job redesigning through professional development allows teachers an opportunity to further their own education or skills.

According to the assistant superintendent, professional development topics are dependent on a needs assessment, which is conducted annually and is intricately linked to the district improvement plan and the individual building school improvement plans (personal communication, November 29, 2015). Each building has its own professional development committee, and that committee work closely with the principal to decide upon a central focus for the upcoming year. In this way, Peyton School District demonstrates the importance of building upon the human resource frame and incorporating autonomous self-managing teams.

Professional development committees must also consider topics from the district level. For example, an emphasis on literacy had been a previous, central focus for professional development district-wide and helped to lay the foundation for the implementation of a strong focus on writing for the current school year. With the upcoming adoption of new mathematics resources for kindergarten through eighth grade students, professional development plans are already in progress for the summer and forthcoming school year. According to the assistant superintendent, the new math resources are significantly different from the way teachers had previously been taught, so the district is taking ample measures to provide significant planning time and collaboration for the upcoming changes (personal communication, November 29, 2015). One way they plan to do this is by visiting other districts that have already

implemented the changes and are also using the same resources as Peyton. This is viewed as a priority for crucial changes to the current instructional practices. Furthermore, the leadership team is committed to supporting faculty members in order to ensure the success of the program for the students (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, November 29, 2015).

Professional development is disseminated to teachers in a variety of ways. Typically, the building instructional coach presents professional development. Additional sources of professional development training may include the building principals, the district curriculum director, teachers, and periodically outside presenters. The professional development committees also plan events targeted towards specific faculty and staff members depending on the needs and interests of the school. Professional development may also be used as a way to relay pertinent information for upcoming professional development events (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, November 29, 2015).

While some of the professional development topics come from the district level, teachers play an essential role in regards to professional development. As a district dedicated to promoting egalitarianism, another way to empower employees through the human resource frame is by creating an environment where decision-making is democratic (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A needs assessment is conducted annually and data are collected from teachers within each building site to determine the needs of the educators. A collaborative team approach is used for decision-making and includes the building principal and the professional development committees within each site. While teachers have an opportunity to contribute their ideas to professional development,

ultimately it is intricately connected to school improvement plans, which are aligned to the district comprehensive school improvement plan (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, November 29, 2015).

### **Ruby Payne and the Political Frameworks**

To better understand the role of power and the political framework, five key assumptions and how these assumptions influence the dissemination of power within an organization are used to illustrate power conflicts. Bolman and Deal (2008) listed the following assumptions:

1. Organizations are coalitions of assorted individuals and interest groups.
2. Coalition members have enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality.
3. Most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources--who gets what.
4. Scarce resources and enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset.
5. Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiation among competing stakeholders jockeying for their own interests. (pp. 194-195)

Currently, the Peyton School District utilizes a framework for understanding poverty developed by Ruby Payne, an educator since 1972. Throughout her years and experiences as an educator, she has used her own research and the work of Stephen Covey to help formal institutions create and develop relationships for students of poverty. According to Payne, when students successfully move out of poverty and into the middle class, 90% of the time it is due to the relationships they have formed, either with a teacher, a counselor, a coach, or other trusted adult who took the time to build a

meaningful relationship with them (1996). These relationships help to build coalitions and serve the needs of a particular group, in this case, those living in poverty. Therefore, this section describes how power, coalitions, and conflict relate to the current Ruby Payne framework in Peyton and the implementation of multicultural education frameworks to better educate faculty members and support students of color.

In order to provide teachers with a better understanding of how poverty manifests itself within the school system, Peyton teachers receive training using the principles of Ruby Payne. In the second year of the new teacher institute, teachers receive substantial training regarding major ideas and concepts “embedded within the Ruby Payne Framework” (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, November 29, 2015). Additionally, substitute teachers also receive an abbreviated but required version of the training before they can receive a substitute assignment within the district. Building principals also reiterate the ideas during back-to-school meetings. According to the assistant superintendent, one principal takes teachers on a field experience to visit different parts of the district, and it is “a powerful visual reminder that our kids come from a wide range of backgrounds which include a wide range of resources” (November 29, 2015).

A key tenet of the Ruby Payne Framework is the importance of forming relationships, or coalitions, with students and their families. Within the district, and especially within each school building, relationships are continually reinforced. The district leadership strives to establish and sustain positive relationships through a variety of ways. Specifically, Peyton has numerous opportunities for parental involvement and has implemented a district-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)

program. Through the PBIS program, students are encouraged to develop positive behaviors and are recognized for making appropriate choices (personal communication, November 29, 2015). Fundraisers help to support and maintain PBIS and students and faculty members participate in a number of ways. For example, fundraisers vary from a dodge ball tournament where the teachers are competing against one another to building-wide fundraisers where students can donate a nominal fee to participate in fun activities like crazy hat day (Peyton School Manual, 2013). These activities help to strengthen internal relationships among students and educators and to strengthen coalitions within vested group members.

Ruby Payne suggested a number of school-based support systems to specifically meet the needs of students in poverty that Peyton has adopted in order to better serve their students. Some of these support systems include creating a school wide homework support built into the fabric of the day and providing supplemental school wide reading programs encouraging students to read more frequently and designed so students are not penalized for information their parents may not know or are unable to provide for them (Payne, 1996). Peyton also teaches coping strategies for students needing assistance in a variety of areas while also grouping students by skill for reading and math. One way Peyton provides support for their students in this area is through an afterschool program dedicated to providing additional learning opportunities, a health and wellness coach to keep students active, a hot family-style dinner, and transportation home (Peyton website, 2015).

Other school-wide support systems include the direct teaching of classroom survival skills such as how to effectively study while following ubiquitous rules such as

how to follow routines, how to participate in class, and how to stay seated. At Peyton, the direct teaching of skills occurs through a freshman-mentoring program and the previously mentioned PBIS program (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, November 29, 2015). Closely related to the direct teaching of classroom skills is the requirement of daily goal setting and procedural self-talk (Payne, 1996). At Peyton, this is taught through the ideas of Carol Dweck, a researcher in the field of motivation, using the concepts of a fixed mindset versus a growth mindset. According to Dweck (2010), those with a fixed mindset believe intelligence is something one is born with, whereas those with a growth mindset have an understanding intelligence can evolve and develop throughout the course of one's life.

Peyton also uses team interventions as a support system (Payne, 1996) as another way to advocate for students. In team interventions, members of the school community work with families to develop a plan to ensure the success of their children. This type of intervention works best when interactions with the parents are encouraging and productive (1996). Finally, Peyton also utilizes the services of a local organization, dedicated to meeting the needs of students in the areas of "health, hunger, and hygiene" (Charitable website, 2015). This organization provides valuable items such as socks and shoes, toothbrushes, and eyeglasses for students, enabling students to come to school and better prepared to learn. Students, educators, local businesses, and churches have been committed to donating time, money, and various goods to help the students within their community (Peyton School Manual, 2013).

Despite the number of schools and communities nationwide who utilize the principles espoused by Payne, some educators and scholars have begun to question the

legitimacy and assertions of Payne's analysis of students living in poverty. These arguments are worth mentioning because Payne's framework has become commonplace in districts across the country and in many professional development programs (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008; Gorski, 2006). Beyond allegations of Payne's research being "self-promoting" and "utterly free of peer review" (Valencia, 2006), one of the most egregious criticisms of Payne's Framework for Understanding Poverty is the over usage of the deficit thinking model. Essentially, educators who fall into the trap of deficit thinking believe students who struggle or are unsuccessful in school do so because of the student's own deficits or deficiencies rather than addressing the inequities set up within the structure of the school (Bomer et al., 2008; Gorski, 2006; Valencia, 2009). When deficit thinking occurs, educators perpetuate negative stereotypes of children and their families living in poverty (Bomer et al., 2008).

According to Valencia (2009), many scholars believe the deficit thinking model is detrimental because "it ignores the role of systemic factors in producing school failure, lacks empirical verification, relies more on ideology than science, grounds itself in classism, sexism, and racism, and offers counterproductive educational prescriptions for school success" (p. 2). One way to counter the over usage of the deficit thinking model in schools is to exchange it with another model, such as the Normed-Opportunity Paradigm, where teachers encourage and empower students not in the dominant group (Walker & Cormier, 2014). Subscribers of the Normed-Opportunity Paradigm recognize "students of color and students from homes of poverty are not unteachable and that they do not harbor inherent deficits that limit their success" (Walker & Cormier, 2014, p. 38). Creating a Normed-Opportunity Paradigm becomes especially significant when

considering the power roles within a school community and creating coalitions of community members willing to shift deficit thinking into a constructive forum to support not only students living in poverty, but also students of color.

While Peyton School District has formed a partnership between the people involved and the betterment of the institution by creating numerous programs to increase student success and providing a variety of opportunities for teachers to partake in meaningful professional development, there are still challenges within the organization. According to the Superintendent, the biggest organizational dilemma within the organization is directly related to Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resource framework and deals with the ability to accept change.

We have a great tradition in Peyton and change comes slow and often times are very difficult to navigate. It is not that we don't want better for our students, but we are also very proud of where we come from and it has worked in the past and we don't understand why it isn't still working. (Superintendent, personal communication, November 30, 2015)

Peyton School District has made concerted efforts to prepare teachers for the large poverty rates within their community and how poverty is manifested within the school. However, creating dialogues and learning opportunities for educators to better understand children and families from minority backgrounds has not been a priority for many people within the district. The superintendent has acknowledged the need for implementation of a multicultural education framework (personal communication, November 4, 2015), but currently, one has not been implemented.

Although Peyton does not currently have a multicultural education framework in place, there are parallels between children living in poverty and minority children. The Ruby Payne framework contains elements essential to the development of multicultural awareness, specifically in regards to race. For example, there are connections between the dominant “in” groups and the marginalized “out” groups. Those not in the dominant groups are sometimes referred to as *others* or the excluded who are seen as “childlike and inferior” (Nkomo, 1992, p. 488). Nkomo asserted that when the *others* attempt to exercise their rights and defend their desire for inclusiveness, those in the dominant group ignore them and continue with the status quo way of doing things (1992).

One way to overcome the battle between in- and out-groups is through contact hypothesis. Contact hypothesis claims participating in positive interactions with people from different groups encourages positive attitudes between the groups (Hewstone, 2015). This especially holds true if the in-groups’ perception of the interaction is favorable (Nkomo, 1992). In the case of Peyton, educating teachers about children living in poverty has been a priority, and school leaders have put multiple practices in place to support these children and their families, utilizing the first key assumption from Bolman and Deal. However, the same emphasis has currently not been placed on the development of incorporating a framework to support and positively interact with children of color.

While the human resource frame serves as a guidepost for understanding organizations, the political frame cannot be ignored, especially when it involves the marginalization of some of its members, and consequently, resources are not allocated equally among all of the community members. Despite a small minority presence in

Peyton, there is a presence. Freire asserted education is inherently political (1993). “Power is shared; it is not the power of a few dominant individuals who improve themselves at the expense of others, but the power of a group that finds strength and purpose in a common vision” (Akkari, 2001, p. 273).

### **Leadership Analysis**

Demonstrated throughout the district of Peyton, putting people first is a priority. Establishing solid and collaborative professional development for educators and focusing on the needs of the community and the students within the district are evident. While leadership styles vary among individuals throughout the organization, examples of servant and democratic leadership are prolific and are embedded into the heart of Peyton School District.

### **Servant Leadership**

Since its introduction in the 1970s, the definition of servant leadership has been modified a number of times. Greenleaf’s (1970) original definition focused on serving first and foremost with regard to the benefit and growth of others. According to Greenleaf, leadership abilities develop when servants arise as leaders and focus on the well being of their followers. Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) furthered this definition by explaining there are two primary components of servant leadership: “who the leader is and what the leader does” (p. 59). These two elements work in tandem to create an altruistic mentality within leaders reinforcing the idea that because they lead, they also serve.

Using Greenleaf’s definition of servant leadership, Spears (2010) clarified this definition and developed ten characteristics of servant leadership as the basis for a model

that continually shifts between approach and theory. These characteristics include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. As other researchers have modified the servant leadership model, different characteristics have emerged and been added over time (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Although characteristics and definitions may somewhat vary, the focus and emphasis on a leader's desire to serve remains consistent.

Although Peyton School District and the local university are separate entities, they are aligned in their commitment to servant leadership. In fact, one of the university's core values is to foster servant leaders among their students (University website, 2015). According to Peyton's superintendent, although the two schools are separate, they work closely on a variety of programs within their community. "I believe that every educational institution should model servant leadership as that is our true mission" (personal communication, November 30, 2015).

Upon meeting the district's superintendent, it was evident he displayed many of the characteristics of a servant leader, particularly in the areas of stewardship, commitment to the growth of the people, and community building. As a steward of the community, a servant leader is aware of the responsibility they have to lead others (Northouse, 2013). The superintendent has been committed to the process of learning for students and teachers and stated what he loves most about his job is "working with the teachers and patrons of [Peyton] to prepare our students for life after high school in whatever field they so choose" (personal communication, August 14, 2013). Another characteristic of servant leadership entails commitment to the growth of the

people. Although he has held the position as superintendent for less than five years, he has held a variety of leadership positions and has personally grown from those experiences. Initially, as a leader he felt a strong need to be involved with every decision being made within the organization. With time and experience, he has learned to allow others to become involved in the decision-making process, especially when they have greater expertise. In this way, as a servant leader, he is able to also help others within the organization grow personally and professionally (Northouse, 2013).

Time and again, commitment to the community is discussed. In the opinion of the superintendent, the Peyton School District, as a community, is not only a caring place but also “gives back to its patrons at every opportunity” (personal communication, November, 30 2015). As a school employee himself, he feels a strong sense of responsibility to serve the community at large while simultaneously educating and supporting the whole child. “If we don’t ensure that our students are safe, [and] their hunger satisfied, we cannot expect them to learn at a high level. Likewise, we want our community to feel the same way which only enhances our mission of ‘Peyton School Manual’” (personal communication, November, 30 2015). Again, his principles align with the tenets of servant leadership in the area of community building in that servant leaders strive to create an environment where people feel safe and connected (Northouse, 2013).

### **Democratic Leadership**

The alignment between the local university and the public school system is visible in its dedication to servant leadership. However, from a personal perspective, the superintendent considers himself to be a democratic leader, although he understands the

need to make executive decisions and “own it” when necessary (personal communication, November 30, 2015). The tenets of democratic leadership have overlapping guiding principles of servant leadership and can be used in tandem. To better understand democratic leadership, one must examine the key aims that will be discussed here.

Woods, an educator and advocate for educational leadership and policy, with an emphasis on democracy, has written several books on democratic leadership (Woods, n.d.) and has identified five key aims in regards to democratic leadership. Woods (2005) explained democratic leadership strives to build an environment where people are encouraged to cultivate an understanding of common truths regarding humanity and to seek out ways to promote the common good of people. Second, it strives to build an environment where people seek out opportunities to engage in dialogue when there are differences of opinions. This concept is reminiscent of Freire’s *conscientização*, a term denoting the importance to “perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1993, p. 17).

The third aim of democratic leadership according to Woods (2005) involves the active commitment of people to contribute to their organization through developing relationships and building culture. Fourth, democratic leadership strives to empower people within the organization to maximize their opportunities for human growth and improvement. Finally, democratic leadership “promotes respect for diversity and acts to reduce cultural and material inequalities (social justice)” (Woods, 2005, p. xvi) a parallel concept of multicultural education.

While the superintendent is ultimately at the helm of the organization, leadership is shared among many. The superintendent explained several key stakeholders affect the

decision-making process within the organization. In each building, the principal has its own leadership team who assist in a gamut of decisions. The superintendent advocates for the building leadership teams and strongly believes in each site creating their own culture and climate depending on their needs. Additionally, teachers within the district are empowered to develop and implement curriculum for their students with approval from the Board of Education.

### **School Board Leadership**

The importance of key stakeholders cannot be overlooked. Peyton school board leaders include retired school administrators, business leaders, and healthcare professionals. These board members are all involved in volunteering, participating in their local churches, and are active members of the state's School Board Association. Additionally, the Peyton School Board obtained high accolades when they recently received an outstanding Leadership Team Award. Less than 20 schools statewide received this prestigious award (Peyton School Manual, 2013). The Leadership Team Award is granted to school boards exhibiting a commitment to professional development, regional and statewide leadership, active participation in legislative advocacy for public schools, and the successful implementation of educational policy to improve their local school district (Peyton School Manual, 2013). To receive this award, all of the school board members were required to have completed approximately 15 hours of training for the state's School Board Association, with a minimum of two members receiving advanced training, and had to attend conferences and a legislative forum (Peyton School Manual, 2013).

Despite the continued emphasis on community, both the superintendent and the assistant superintendent of Peyton School District agreed little is done to educate teachers on working with minority children and virtually no opportunities for students to interact with other students from racially different backgrounds, other than at school events or activities. The superintendent candidly shared there has been a lack of understanding in the community regarding the racial and economic divide within the community and “...sometimes turn the other cheek when it is brought up. We have to keep bringing those things to the forefront for our students and our community” (personal communication, November 30, 2015). Additionally, the assistant superintendent revealed to her knowledge there has been no organized trainings for teachers to confront their own biases and feelings (personal communication, November 29, 2015).

### **Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting**

Peyton schools demonstrate numerous opportunities for student and educator success. This can be seen in the organized way professional development is planned and implemented, in the commitment to understanding the needs of the students living in poverty, the beliefs inculcated in the staff using the Ruby Payne framework, and by the numerous support systems aimed at reaching each student’s individual needs. All of these supports work toward the overarching aim of producing citizens committed to the betterment of their community.

The use of the human resource and the political frames are helpful when examining areas of strengths and weaknesses within an organization. The carefully planned emphasis to develop meaningful professional development for teachers covering a wide selection of topics has been a priority for Peyton. Through the use of the Ruby

Payne framework, it is also evident the district is vigorously working to serve the needs of those living in poverty. Continuing to use the human resource and political frames in order to develop a multicultural education framework will benefit the community if they choose to do so. The strong emphasis Peyton already has on professional development has the potential to serve as an advantage for the community. Continuing the use of collaborative teams, empowering teachers to be involved in the reframing process, and providing support to teachers during times of transition allows key stakeholders to feel invested, especially during times of change (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The administrators at the top level of the organization candidly admitted the school district is currently doing little in terms of providing professional development to teachers in the area of multicultural education, specifically in regards to race (Superintendent, personal communication, November 4, 2015). The superintendent and assistant superintendent expressed the need to begin delving into the realm of multicultural education, but also indicated the struggles associated with beginning a new venture, especially in a community resistant to change. Discussing issues of race can be a difficult venture, particularly when there are low numbers of minority students.

It would be unrealistic for all leaders in a community to follow the exact leadership styles. However, the overtures of servant and democratic leadership within the community and among its leaders pave the way for many of the principles within multicultural education, specifically in regards to race. The concepts and aims of multicultural education will be discussed at greater lengths within the literature review and throughout the study. Yet, the implications of the superintendent and assistant superintendent supporting the need for developing this type of educational model

indicates the community is receptive to making changes. There is the possibility of strife and derision depending on the recommendations because people need to be heard and feel valued (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

To build upon existing practices for helping students and educators look beyond their community and to facilitate an understanding of all people, not just those in the majority, there are a number of ways to incorporate concepts of multicultural education into already developed practices within the district. Using Bank's (2004a) model of multicultural education, research will be conducted in three areas to determine how these components can better serve the needs of the students and educators within Peyton School District. These components will be used to determine how multicultural education can be aligned in professional development and training, curriculum for students, and personnel decisions. Finally, through data collection, the researcher will attempt to uncover how the district can identify barriers preventing meaningful multicultural education, specifically in regards to race. While the leaders of the district are aware of the need for organizational reframing (Bolman & Deal, 2014), their support of removing current barriers and for the implementation of changes throughout the organization are vital to the underpinnings of an enhanced model of multicultural education. Using the model of the Ruby Payne framework as an example of how to educate teachers and support students about multicultural education, specifically in regards to race, has the potential to support necessary changes the district will need if they are to effectively incorporate awareness to minority students and families.

## Summary

Multicultural education, especially in regards to race, is not a new construct. However, for many communities with a low minority population, creating a multicultural educational approach has not been a priority (Gay, 1995; Heard, 1999). Changes within organizations vary depending on a variety of factors, but learning communities invested in providing equity for all students involves deviating from the status quo and changing philosophies and approaches (Alejano-Steele, Hamington, MacDonald, Potter, Schafer, Sgoutas, & Tull, 2011). When there are no students of color, communities often find it difficult or make it a low priority for the incorporation of multicultural education (Gay, 1995).

Notwithstanding these challenges, Peyton School District has many practices in place to support the inclusion of multicultural education. A community already using elements of the human resource frame allows stakeholders to feel valued and heard (Bolman & Deal, 2008), while understanding the factors associated with power, a scarcity of resources, and conflicts within a homogenous population illustrate the challenges associated with the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A strong awareness of the tenets of servant leadership, especially a commitment to the growth of the community (Spears, 2010), supports the possibility of incorporating a multicultural education framework into the current system.

SECTION THREE:  
SCHOLARLY REVIEW FOR THE STUDY

Contemplating the many facets of hegemonic thinking and finding meaningful solutions can be overwhelming as the oppression of others is often subtle and subconscious. Therefore, the aim of this literature review is divided into three main categories as a way to consider practical and tangible strategies in-service educators can use to combat oppression within a school setting. The first aim is to provide an overview of multicultural education including an explanation of what multicultural education entails and its historical context. Next, the literature review will explain how the concept of White privilege often affects unsuspecting White Americans and its impact on minority groups. Finally, it will review scholarly research and case studies to determine successful multicultural professional development practices and barriers to the implementation of multicultural professional development practices.

Overcoming racism may be an insurmountable expectation, but creating multicultural educational opportunities for educators facilitates opportunities for open dialogue, creates sensitivity toward others, and diminishes fears about people from diverse backgrounds. The topic of multicultural education is often confusing because it seems to be separated into different categories: multicultural education curriculums for students, multicultural education for organizations, and multicultural education for educators. While this study will focus on the implementation of multicultural education for educators, it cannot be solely isolated from how it affects students and the organization as a whole.

### **Overview of Multicultural Education**

Learning how to educate and serve the needs for all students, specifically in regards to race, is an important aspect of education, and one many homogenous

communities struggle to implement. This section discusses the predominant goals of multicultural education within a K-12 setting and focuses specifically on Banks' dimensions of multicultural education. It also provides a historical overview of the development of multicultural education in the United States.

### **Multicultural Education Perspectives**

Many in the field of multicultural education disagree on a single definition, yet most agree on the overarching goals. Banks (2004a), a pioneer in the field of multicultural education, described three primary goals. The first goal is to reform schools in order to provide students, including those from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, with an equitable access to education. The second goal strives to ensure equity for male and female students. The third goal involves the interplay among gender, ethnicity, race, and class while Flores (2012) also included sexual orientation when considering inclusive multicultural education. When students are given facts and are provided with opportunities to have open discussions, they are not as likely to make insensitive remarks or criticize others (Flores, 2012). Learning about people from diverse racial backgrounds helps to build knowledge and appreciation for all people, despite their differences.

To successfully implement multicultural education, organizations must focus on more than simply integrating a multicultural curriculum into school systems (Banks, 2004a). Historically, multicultural education has focused on curricular content changes rather than shifting the mindset of the organization as a whole. Shifts in tolerance occurring only in curricular content are problematic and a more comprehensive approach is needed. One study using survey and interview data showed teachers associated

multicultural education with demographic diversity rather than with social justice, strategies for instruction rather than with theory, and that ineffective patterns of communication within the school precluded school-wide implementation of multicultural education (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010). Instead, Banks (2004a) suggested school leaders re-examine the way they operate systematically, including “teaching materials, teaching and learning styles, the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of teachers and administrators, and the goals, norms, and culture of the school” (p. 4). The attempt to merge theory into practice is necessary for a successful transition towards multicultural programs and institutions (Gay, 2004).

While most public schools recognize the need to incorporate elements of multicultural education in some context, many institutions fall short of adequately addressing multicultural issues. Using diversity rhetoric, or acknowledging the presence of a diverse population, does not break down the obstruction of “structural inequalities like racism, sexism, or the unequal distribution of power and privilege” (Dilworth, 2004, p. 155). According to Dilworth (2004), many scholars and educators have made efforts to reform curriculums while also providing a foundation for students to become not only more culturally aware but also become more action-oriented.

Banks (2004a) developed a model, or dimensions, of multicultural education as a method to conceptualize and organize effective multicultural practices within a school. These five dimensions include (a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c), prejudice reduction, (d) creating an equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure. A discussion of each dimension will be discussed in further detail.

Content integration addresses what should be discussed, how it is integrated, and identifies the audience. While content integration is an important step in the development of multicultural education, many school districts view this as the only means of multicultural education, a misnomer that prevents many teachers from discussing culture in subjects outside of social studies or language arts course (Banks, 2004a). It is also necessary to include a historical perspective to provide a context for deeper understanding. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, African Americans worked towards the integration of educational content reflecting the lives of various ethnic groups, so it is befitting to use African Americans as a case study.

Developing a knowledge construction within a classroom allows teachers to help students grasp and explore how cultural perspectives and biases within an area of study influence the ways knowledge is constructed (Banks, 2004a). Conceptualizations have been developed for helping teachers obtain the information and resources necessary to teach students how knowledge is understood, being able to recognize a writer's point of view, and making their own interpretations based on material learned in class. Banks (2004a) developed four levels of curriculum reform for teaching students about various ethnic groups in elementary and secondary school settings. The first level is the Contributions Approach where the focus is on heroes, holidays, and other cultural elements. The Additive Approach is the second level and it pertains to ideas and perspectives added to the curriculum without changing its current structure. The third approach, the Transformation Approach, occurs when the entire structure of the curriculum is changed to allow students to view issues and themes from the perspective of another cultural group. The Social Action Approach is an extension of the

Transformation Approach in which students actively make decisions on social issues and take action to make changes.

Prejudice reduction emphasizes the students' racial attitudes and how they can be changed. In the research and interviews Banks (2004a) conducted with teachers, he found many elementary school educators believed students have little to no racial awareness and since they are unaware, discussing race to them only creates racial problems that previously did not exist, despite these assertions being contradictory to reality and research. Banks identified four different types of studies focusing on the modification of children's racial attitudes. These include curricular intervention, reinforcement, perceptual differentiation, and cooperative learning.

Creating an equity pedagogy occurs when educators change the way they teach to highlight the achievements of students from a variety of diverse backgrounds. This includes utilizing teaching principles compatible with a range of learning styles among different cultural and ethnic groups. As an example, there are some researchers who think the way to best understand learning styles and characteristics of students of color is to study and observe them in ethnographic studies (Banks, 2004a). By using thick, rich descriptions to describe the learning styles of children of color, educators will be better able to guide educational practice.

The concept of empowering school culture is used to explain the process of restructuring the culture of the school, especially for students of color and low-income students (Banks, 2004a). A systems approach is one way to make school-wide changes to augment the academic success of students of color and low-income students. Banks (2004a) explained several advantages to addressing school reform using a holistic

perspective. For example, educators need more support in order to analyze their own racial biases while also needing additional resources and instructional materials. According to Banks (2004a), when school reform efforts fail, it is often because the “roles, norms, and ethos of the school do not change in ways that makes institutionalization of reform possible” (p. 20).

### **Historical Overview of Multicultural Education**

The United States has a long history of domination over people who are not in the majority, as evidenced by the acquisition of Native American land and the arrival of Africans as slaves. Forefathers of the Constitution wrote all men were created equal, yet this was not entirely true. In reality, equality was intentioned for free White men setting into motion the concept of White privilege (Leonardo, 2004). Leonardo explained racial privilege as “the motion that White subjects accrue advantages by virtue of being constructed as White (2004, p. 137). This became evident when the United States declared African slaves to be worth less than a whole human and reduced the slaves to merely three-fifths of a person (Leonardo, 2004) perpetuating a system of domination that continues today. For groups who hold the most power, in this case White Americans, they have the ability to construct knowledge allowing them to “construct--perhaps unconsciously--knowledge that maintains their power and protects their interests” (Banks, 2004b, p. 230).

The initiation for change within U.S. school systems has had several defining points in its development. As attitudes began to change in the country, a call for change was also seen across schools and universities. According to Banks (2004b), the intercultural education movement began in the 1930s, and during the intercultural

education movement, schools began to assist immigrant students to learn the ways of American life and to become successful citizens while also allowing immigrants to maintain their own ethnic identities. While the intercultural education movement initially began as a way to support immigrants, one of the movement leaders, Rachal Davis DuBois, began speaking out in schools with two primary objectives. DuBois's first objective was to provide immigrant students with a sense of ethnic pride, and the second objective was to teach students in the dominant culture to appreciate and understand the cultures of their immigrant peers (Banks, 2004b).

With nearly half of the United State's population identifying as people of color, the need for racial equity within schools is as critical as ever (Brown & Cooper, 2011). Policy initiatives such as the desegregation of schools through *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 provided a platform for those in education to use as an impetus for change. While the *Brown* decision had important ramifications for future movements of multicultural education, the decision did not produce immediate results and certainly did not eliminate racial tensions within schools; however, it did provide communities with new policies, procedures, and programs (Brown & Cooper, 2011).

The movement, driven by African Americans for the integration of students and content in the 1960s and 1970s (Banks, 2004a), was another time of significant change within education. Organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), as well as the direction of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led special interests groups to take an active role in educational policy reform (Banks & Cooper, 2011). This movement was

preceded by actions occurring during World War II as the war paved the way for job opportunities outside the Southern areas of the country. According to Banks:

Consequently, many African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Whites living in rural areas migrated to northern and western cities to find jobs in war-related industries. Ethnic and racial tension developed as Anglos and Mexican Americans in western cities and African Americans and Whites in northern cities competed for jobs and housing. These tensions resulted in a series of racial incidents and riots and stunned the nation. (2004a, p. 9)

Schools were originally set up to provide “political socialization and instruction” (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2011, p. 125). According to Mitchell and Mitchell (2011), some believed the way to socialize students was to suppress sentiments not authorized by officials and remove all controversial topics from schools. Therefore, anyone deviating from the dominant culture was seen as a disruption needing to be disciplined. The authors also pointed out the dissemination of knowledge focused on specific courses being taught rather than using a holistic approach. Perhaps it is this technique, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that has kept deviation from the mainstream curriculum stagnated and has prevented multicultural education from becoming more established within schools.

By the 1980s, contradictions were apparent from competing powers within the U.S. as progressive and neoconservative powers strove to form a new American identity and attempted to “influence research, policy, and educational practice” (Banks, 2004b, p. 237). As evidence of continued domination over African Americans, Banks used the example of the popular and controversial book, *The Bell Curve* in 1994, by Herrnstein and

Murray, claiming people living in poverty and African Americans have less intellectual abilities than those in the White middle classes. For those who supported the tenets within *The Bell Curve*, it provided continued ammunition to legitimize negative stereotypes towards African Americans. Not all work was negative as multicultural researchers, scholars, and educators have striven to change opposition towards hegemonic attitudes. As numerous authors on both sides of the debate continue to produce literature supporting their respective beliefs, it reflects the convictions of the American public and the academic community (Banks, 2004b).

Following the neoconservative period in the 1980s gave way to a new racial ideology, the concept of color blindness. According to Ambrosio (2013), this led the way for White college students to have feelings of reverse discrimination and victimization, especially with the implementation of Affirmative Action legislation. As a result, despite the lack of a White, ethnic culture, many White Americans “nonetheless acknowledge and invoke their racial group membership as a basis for asserting claims of reverse racism” (Ambrosio, 2013, p. 1380). Today, Ambrosio (2013) related what is currently occurring in U.S. history as a parallel for what took place in South Africa during Apartheid in 1994 where White Americans are currently coming to terms with no longer being the dominant group and the feelings of wanting to maintain their own privileges and opportunities while maintaining conflicting perspectives on an emerging new social order.

In summary, despite numerous setbacks for full integration of minorities into mainstream society, there have also been many advances. Change does not occur quickly, and a variety of factors influence the political and social climate for the

assimilation and acceptance of minorities as explained in the historical overview. Banks multicultural education framework is one example of how schools can accomplish the implementation of a multicultural education model.

### **Deconstructing White Privilege**

While this study is intended to provide insight into how multicultural education facilitates tolerance and understanding to prevent ethnocentric and hegemonic thinking, it will focus primarily on the topic of racism as a way of breaking down many perceived barriers to multicultural education. The concepts of White privilege and ethnocentric thinking are often uncomfortable for White people, and yet grappling with these concepts allows the White, dominant culture the opportunity to synthesize these concepts to those outside of the mainstream population. Being able to recognize unearned White privileges is a useful strategy for recognizing the systemic oppression and provides a forum for becoming more sympathetic to members outside of the dominant White population (Leonardo, 2004). Learning to respect people and ideas from different backgrounds requires a learning process with an outcome of being able to see the merit, worth, and value each individual adds to an organization (Tesoriero, 2006). Many people have a powerful need for feeling accepted, included, and visible; therefore, providing educators with specific strategies and pedagogies for understanding and subsequently teaching through a multicultural lens has an impact on society because at some point in one's life, most people will interact with others from diverse backgrounds. Reducing ethnocentrism while simultaneously increasing insight into the concepts of White privilege promotes a culture of understanding within an organization (Whalley Hammel, 2013).

## **White Privilege and Racism**

Those who are born White are given access to a number of unearned privileges based solely on skin color, and “it is virtually impossible to be immune from both mythical images of White superiority and the concurrent stereotypes of people of color” (Heinze, 2008, p. 2). Ambrosio (2013) explained when asking White students to reexamine their own identities and privileges, it often led to feelings of fear, discomfort, and anger. As a result of acknowledging and accepting how one benefits from their Whiteness means individuals must recognize their role in the oppression of others and accept responsibility for their role in modern day racism (Ambrosio, 2013). Acceptance of racial awareness is not necessarily linear, and racial identity theories (Helms, 2008) suggest change is gradual and a person’s sense of racism falls along a continuum (Heinze, 2008). The idea is that once someone is aware of racism and oppression, that individual does not immediately experience a change of attitude. Instead, even those who have participated in self-reflection in regards to their own racist thoughts may unconsciously or subtly hold on to racist thoughts (Heinze, 2008).

For many White Americans, discussing racism in terms of their privilege can be an uncomfortable conversation (Tatum, 1992). One approach has been to appear to be colorblind to race as a way of recognizing the social injustice of racism (Helms, 2008). Appearing to be colorblind occurs when someone indicates they do not notice the color of people’s skin. Many other White Americans feel they are sincerely good people, and since they are not overtly making racist comments, they are not racist (Irving, 2014). However, according to Helms (2008), it is important to recognize and

acknowledge one's color and background as it tells the story of heritage and only becomes negative if it is made to be a bad thing.

Another challenge for White Americans, in the discussion of racism, are the vague and unclear messages about their own race, or the lack of their own racial identity (Helms, 2008). Helms (2008) made the argument that using race, as a qualifier, is a futile way for describing people because there is no racial chromosome. A common misconception of racism is that race refers exclusively to those with brown or black skin color (Irving, 2014), and since White Americans do not have a race, they identify with their country of origin such as being Irish or Polish Americans or their religious affiliations, such as being Christian or Jewish. Adults may inadvertently confuse children by teaching them to ignore skin color, explaining that God made people different, or saying people cannot choose their own skin color rather than examining each person as a unique individual (Helms, 2008). Additionally, White Americans may see racism as a way others are disadvantaged, but they may not view how this puts them at an advantage (McIntosh, 1988).

Societal change occurs on many different levels. Individuals, organizations, communities, and lawmakers all affect the outcome of shifting attitudes. Yet, while change may initially occur within an individual or small group of people, an individual cannot single handedly eradicate centuries of oppression. Although some people work for change, many White Americans proclaim the importance of equality while concurrently "denying that systems of dominance exist" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 18). Many may deny the existence of dominance because they are unaware of how they benefit.

The concept of White privilege was not intended or developed as a way to shame White Americans, rather as a way to describe a social phenomenon and to recognize and discuss how their status, based solely on skin color, gives automatic privileges (McIntosh, 1988). Originally stemming from a feminist perspective, McIntosh (1988) used the similarities between male privileges to parallel the privileges afforded to White Americans. Just as many men are taught not to see their privileged status, White Americans are taught not to recognize their White privilege. McIntosh (1988) described 46 ways in which she had received benefits and privileges of being born as a White American including shopping without being followed or harassed, going into a hairdresser's shop and finding someone who could cut her hair, talking with her mouth full and not having others attribute this to her skin color, receiving a job and not worrying about whether she received it due to Affirmative Action, and finding bandages that typically matched her skin color. Many of the items on her list, such as finding bandages matching her skin color, represent the seemingly innocuous ways White Americans have been able to ignore obstacles many people of color endure on a daily basis.

It has been argued everybody is racist as some level, and depending on the definition of racism, this may or may not be true (Tatum, 1997). However, if the definition of racism reflects advantages systematically received by one group over another, then people of color are not racist because they do not receive those systematic advantages (Tatum, 1997). Perhaps even more importantly than being defensive of one's Whiteness and the benefits received by White Americans is to ask the question, What are White Americans willing to do to cease racism (Tatum, 1997)?

Why would White Americans give up their status? McIntosh (1988) made the parallel claim many men may recognize women are disadvantaged, but the sensitivity and taboos surrounding men's own privilege puts them at risk for being in denial for the advantages they gain by the disadvantage of women. Tatum (1997) acknowledged both a monetary loss for White Americans such as underemployment in communities of color and equity lost in housing discrimination, as well as a socio-emotional loss as White Americans may feel uncomfortable if their child marries a person of color or feelings of alienation in mixed racial social situations.

### **Critical Theory and Multicultural Education**

Critical theorists recognize how those in power form what becomes accepted as truth within society (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). They impart structures allowing those with access to privilege to gain benefits while marginalizing others based on their distinctions from the norm (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). These hegemonic ways of thinking often become accepted as universal truths for the mainstream population. According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), it is the charge of critical theorists to unveil those truths, which have been adopted without question and in reality are detrimental to others. Pairing critical pedagogy and multicultural education as a framework allows researchers the ability to “interrogate, contextualize, and problematize our own biases, perceptions, and notions” (Sanchez, Araujo, & O'Donnel, 2008).

A critical theory framework supports multicultural education because of the need to do more than simply understand concepts of multicultural education. Critical theorists do not accept merely engaging in dialogue but necessitate a call to action to promote social justice and eradicate the marginalization of people outside of the mainstream

population. Teachers often have an understanding of multicultural education and are able to incorporate the bottom rungs of Bank's multicultural model, but how to implement the top levels including prejudice reduction, creating an equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture remains a challenge. "Multicultural education requires a change in teachers' perspectives of teaching and learning in U.S. American society" (Heard, 1999, p. 462) in order to make a meaningful impact. Uncovering the hidden White doctrines of ideas taught in school curriculum and entrenched in school life is but one way for coming to terms with how to eradicate racism and increase multicultural educational frameworks (Leonardo, 2004). These are often challenging and difficult steps for educators.

### **Types of Racism**

The concept of racism can be examined in a variety of ways. Helms (2008) described three types of racism within U.S. society, individual, cultural, and institutional racism. *Individual* racism is the belief White people are superior to others and non-White people are flawed genetically, resulting in their lack of success. *Cultural* racism is the belief White language, norms, contributions to society, and perspectives are worthier than others. *Institutional* racism revolves around racism at a systemic level; increased unemployment, restricted housing options, and racial profiling are effects of institutional racism (Helms, 2008). Each echelon of racism brings with it its own set of challenges and barriers to overcome.

Freire (1993) maintained the oppressors, or those with the power are not in a position to make lasting reforms for those who are oppressed, instead, the oppressed must form coalitions to bring about change from within their own communities. This does not mean only oppressed peoples hold the only abilities to understand oppression, as many

people of color are also struggling to grasp “an organic understanding of racism” (Leonardo, 2004). For those in the White population who strive toward equality for all citizens, this mentality may seem contrary and difficult to process. However, proactive measures can be taken to reduce bigotry and racism for White Americans. For example, White Americans can strive to come to terms with how they have benefited from their Whiteness, become aware of racism in overt and covert ways, learn the difference between racism and White culture, and find ways to accept the positive benefits from being White, as it is necessary to understand one’s own heritage (Helms, 2008).

To summarize this section, discussing the privileges one gains from being born White does not often resonate well with White people, and yet, it is taking these preemptive actions that help to propel society into a more accepting place for all citizens. To ease the discomfort of the conversation, some White Americans claim to be colorblind, believing this is a way to overcome feelings of racism without realizing the negative ramifications associated with this line of thinking. The lack of a White culture is another area of ambiguity for some White Americans. For others, the fear of giving up their privileges is a frightening prospect and one some people are not willing to forgo. Critical theory helps to support multicultural education because it asks people to take a stand against inequities and social injustices. Finally, racism can be examined into three schemas: individual, cultural, and institutional racism.

### **Multicultural Education and Professional Development**

The following section will discuss incorporating multicultural education into schools. The first section discusses how to bridge multicultural education theory into actual implementation through professional development, workshops, policy, and

structural reform. It then provides specific examples and models for the implementation of multicultural education. Finally, this section discusses some of the criticisms and challenges associated with multicultural education.

### **Bridging Theory to Practice**

As previously discussed, those in the field of multicultural education face a variety of challenges. Finding successful ways to address entrenched mentalities is magnanimous in scope. However, many educators and scholars are working to bridge theory into practice, by educating teachers through professional development workshops and learning communities. In order for multicultural training for educators to be effective, the instructor must understand the pedagogies and theories related to self-identity. Alejano-Steele et al. (2011) determined teachers who have not come to terms with their own identity could have negative impacts on their students.

Multicultural scholars have worked to facilitate the development of research into practice. Theorists have developed essential principles to determine the ways policy and practice associated with diversity can be ameliorated. These essential principles have been organized into five categories including teacher learning, student learning, intergroup relations, school governance, organization and equity, and assessment (Banks et al., 2001). The first principle states, “professional development programs should help teachers understand the complex characteristics of ethnic groups within U.S. society and the ways in which race, ethnicity, language, and social class interact to influence student behavior” (Banks et al., 2001, p. 197). The authors argued the on-going need to continue training educators because of the increasing cultural and ethnic chasms among educators and their students.

One component of ongoing training, or professional development, in multicultural education is for teachers to know how to best teach students to become more tolerant and accepting as they encounter people from diverse backgrounds. If students are expected to develop skills to interact with diverse groups of people and to become well-versed in understanding ways institutions systematically perpetuate the oppression of others, then it seems natural teachers also need to be able to develop this same knowledge (Banks et al., 2001). Due to the cadre of social justice issues surrounding racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, social class, and heteronormativity, it can be intimidating for educators to know what to teach or even where to begin. Incorporating aspects of multicultural education models provides a systematic approach for supporting educators and administrators.

### **Multicultural Educator Models**

Ample activities and opportunities for educators to interact and engage in multicultural education should be provided district and school-wide in order to provide support to educators, especially in the beginning stages of implementation. While there are many large philosophical issues and implications associated with multicultural education, there are some specific and tangible approaches to facilitate a multicultural environment. Alejano-Steele et al. (2011) suggested creating safe zones to discuss issues such as privilege, equity, and racism; reading selected texts and writing reflectively; participating in activities quantifying privilege; conducting listening activities with partners; reflecting on concepts such as in-group and out-group membership and how these groups shape participants today; using word association with race/ethnic based terms to identify positive and negative terms associated with various categories; and

viewing video clips are some concrete activities for professionals. These activities can be used in isolation or in tandem with one another.

Several models have been used to create multicultural professional development for educators. The first is a model for developing a multicultural curriculum consisting of a four step process including raising a person's awareness to discrimination, becoming knowledgeable of other cultures, learning skills to becoming a culturally aware educator, and developing an action plan for implementing a multicultural curriculum (Lisi & Howe, 1999). Other models involve immersing educators into a "cultural plunge" or delving into an experience often felt by minorities in order to create cultural awareness, especially for those educators in the mainstream population (Houser, 2008). Within the cultural plunge model, three themes emerged including demonstrating courage in the face of fear, engaging in critical reflection, and developing empathy for others. While the cultural plunge allowed educators to experience the fear and frustrations many minority populations may encounter, it is important to recognize isolated experiences can lead to an oversimplification of a situation (Houser, 2008).

Many school districts across the United States have instituted multicultural education at various levels. Often these districts are in large, urban cities with high levels of diverse populations. Therefore, it was not surprising the results of a study conducted of secondary school administrators revealed those from areas who served students from smaller school districts, lower socio-economic statuses, and who often had obtained lower levels of educational achievements than administrators in larger districts, had more negative perceptions of multicultural education than those who came from larger communities (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004).

Another study looked at how preservice teachers from a small town perpetuated ideas of White superiority in their classrooms due to their own cultural norms. While this study focused on preservice teachers, it also has important implications for how cultural norms may be perpetuated with inservice teachers. Data collected from students completing a multicultural education course found when preservice teachers (the majority of those who came from homogenous communities) first began writing about diversity, they had a generic and cursory understanding of diversity and how to be accepting within the classroom. But, after being exposed to concepts in the multicultural education course, preservice teachers demonstrated a broader understanding of diversity to include “race, discrimination, and issues of power” (Parks, 2006, p. 49). This becomes particularly relevant when preparing and planning for multicultural educational opportunities in communities with little diversity and understanding some of the challenges associated with implementation. Knowing small communities tend to have more hegemonic tendencies allows educators to better prepare preservice teachers for the incorporation of multicultural education.

There are numerous recommendations for helping White Americans, and specifically educators, reduce racism within this country. Colin and Lund (2010) suggested a number of recommendations for White educators. First, it is vital to recognize racism is inherent and systematic within the United States, and second, racism is a fundamental aspect of this society. Second, it is important to learn how to reflect upon previous encounters with people from different backgrounds to better recognize racism when it occurs. Third, despite the challenges and fears of addressing racism in the classroom, it is important to do so. Fourth, learning about people from other cultures and

backgrounds and then engaging in dialogue to fight against racism helps to develop appropriate norms within the organization. Finally, they recommend accepting that although racism is entrenched within U.S. culture, they can acknowledge their own racist views and attitudes without feeling guilty.

### **Criticisms of Multicultural Education**

Critics of multicultural education find fault with multicultural education implementation for several reasons. McCray et al. (2004) determined several flaws of multicultural education. First, critics feel it divides America unnecessarily. With the ever-mounting pressure for educators to focus on core subjects, critics feel multicultural education takes valuable teaching time away from mathematics and literacy. While there is a deluge of scholarly information on the subjects of multiculturalism, ethnocentrism, and multicultural education, there is a gap in the literature of evidence-based research to describe what happens when schools develop diverse classrooms. For example, literature and social studies classes are often considered to be content areas where multicultural education can be safely explored, while mathematics and science classes are more reticent to incorporating multicultural education (Dilworth, 2004). Additionally, opponents feel multicultural education too radically shifts social and political structures within the country (McCray et al., 2004). Critics of multicultural education contend it detracts from the standard Eurocentric mentality and curriculum development already in place (McCray et al., 2004).

A certain amount of fear often comes along with teaching about racism and especially teaching White students about White privilege. Due to the discomfort students may feel from admitting White privilege, one study found it could be detrimental to

teacher evaluations, and ultimately their career, to teach anti-racist sentiments (Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009) because students may project their feelings of anger or denial onto their teachers. Boatright-Horowitz and Soeung (2009) suggested including questions on evaluations to measure whether or not students have gained less racist attitudes and a more multicultural perspective throughout the duration of the course.

While there is scant empirical research on the effects of how teacher educators prepare teachers in increasing multicultural competency, researchers found the factor most associated with teacher educators' level of comfort or discomfort was attributed to how qualified they felt (Gorski, Davis, & Reiter, 2012). This was surprising as self-identify was less important than the teacher's own perceptions of their efficacy, or one's confidence to effectively teach others (Guyton & Wesche, 2005). To analyze self-efficacy, the Multicultural Efficacy Scale (MES) was developed as a way to measure one's feelings of their self-efficacy, in addition to measuring minority group knowledge, beliefs about diversity, and teaching in multicultural settings (Guyton & Wesche, 2005). While this scale attempts to quantify the complexities surrounding multicultural education, more studies need to be conducted.

To sum up this section, while multicultural education is gaining momentum in some communities, there still remains a need for deeper understanding into the importance of restructuring organizations to include a multicultural framework. Finding ways to bridge theory into practice is a starting point for many organizations. Some schools have already put multicultural education components into place, and these models can be used as a guide for organizations seeking ways develop meaningful multicultural education. Criticisms of multicultural education often stem from the

perception of increasing teachers' workload and finding appropriate ways to diminish the discomfort of confronting and discussing issues surrounding race.

### **Summary**

Multicultural education does not take place in a single course or professional development seminar but must be an ongoing process developing over a lifetime (Lisi & Howe, 1999). This review of scholarly literature begins with an overview of multicultural education and an examination of the history of multicultural education. Understanding the history of multicultural education and being able to identify how White privilege affects the perceptions of White Americans is paramount to overcoming fears of the implementation of a multicultural educational framework. The scholarly review then attempts to deconstruct White privilege by examining different types of racism and how to infuse critical theory into multicultural education. Finally, the scholarly review examines how to bridge multicultural theory into practice, provides examples of multicultural educational models, and provides insight into criticisms of multicultural education. There is no single strategy or concept to memorize, and helping educators develop strategies promoting inclusiveness within a school setting is itself a primary goal of multicultural education (Davidman, 1990). While many schools have made strides towards developing and embracing the tenets of multicultural education, most have not reached the top echelons of integrating multicultural education (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010) leaving ample opportunities for improvement and further empirical studies within this field.

SECTION FOUR:  
CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

## **School Board Report**

In today's political climate, one can rarely turn on the television or get an update through social media without viewing a news story about racial conflict across the United States. From the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (Healy, 2014), to the student protests and controversy surrounding the football team at the University of Missouri (Marans & Stewart, 2015), a shift in the perception of racial contention has seemingly re-surfaced in the collective thoughts of U.S. citizens. These examples are especially poignant and powerful when the aforementioned controversies are so close to home. Racial tension has often been viewed as an urban problem, but even smaller towns have seen a shift in how they should respond, especially within the school setting. A series of racially charged shootings across the country sparked debate, but in McKinney, Texas, where an officer assaulted a female African American adolescent (Orfield, 2015), the issue of race was brought to smaller towns. Located within a predominately White suburban neighborhood, the incident in McKinney, Texas, revealed discussions of diversity are gaining momentum in more and more communities across the country. These heated and controversial issues demonstrate a need to re-examine how race is addressed in communities and in schools.

### **Background**

Rural and homogenous communities are no longer exempt from the same racial tensions often associated with larger, urban communities, and yet, smaller communities have not adequately received the support and resources to help students and educators address these societal changes. Therefore, it is no surprise that incorporating multicultural education within a school can be a daunting challenge, particularly for

homogenous populations. Traditionally, multicultural education has often been regarded as an issue needing to be addressed for populations with students of color (Gay, 1995). Gay (1995) asserted the idea that if there are no students of color enrolled in the school, it is often difficult to justify the need for multicultural education. Nevertheless, multicultural scholars asserted “the most fundamental and deeply ingrained values, beliefs, and assumptions which determine all educational policies, content, procedures, and structures ... will be revolutionized by being culturally pluralized” (p. 6).

Multicultural education is an umbrella term that encompasses groups of people such as race, sexual orientation, immigration status, social economic status, ageism, and gender. Multicultural education is defined as:

A philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity... It affirms our need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice. (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2015, para. 1)

While many modern multicultural theorists have developed adaptations of multicultural education from Banks (2004a), most multicultural education programs include some variation of inclusion, infusion, deconstruction, action, transformation, and reflection (Freire, 1993; Gay, 1995).

Today, there are numerous professional development multicultural programs (Denvei & Carter, 2006; Dilworth, 2004; McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004; Parks, 2006), but few systematically track and analyze their impact on K-12 teachers, especially in a homogenous community. Therefore, the researcher conducted a case study in a community with a small minority population, to learn how the district was currently integrating components of multicultural education. Banks' (2004a) model of multicultural education was used to guide the study, specifically in the areas of professional development and training, curriculum, and personnel decisions. Although the researcher used race as the single factor when examining the perspectives of administrators and teachers in [insert school name], the recommendations were intended to have transferability to other societal domains.

## **Discussion**

After analyzing the data provided by teachers and school administrators, it became evident [insert school name] has some key components already in place within its infrastructure to implement a multicultural framework. Many administrators and educators were aware of discrepancies between groups, particularly among those who grew up in the community versus those who moved to the community, and those who came from a higher socioeconomic status, versus those who did not. Most likely due to the small number of minority students, multiculturalism, in terms of race, has not been a major priority within the school district. The findings often reflected dissonance between teachers clearly demonstrating support to students while not knowing how to appropriately or adequately address issues of race in the classroom. Understandably, this

disconnect may be in part because discussing race and privilege are often uncomfortable topics for many White Americans (Tatum, 1992).

Teachers frequently expressed how much they valued each student and by all indications were inherently good people and good educators. Posters, bulletin boards, murals, and schoolwork displayed in the halls and throughout the classrooms illustrated the community's investment in incorporating the concepts of tolerance and acceptance. Throughout the buildings, handmade signs hung in the halls with positive messages such as "You Were Made to be Awesome" and "Believe the Best". Posters around the schools encouraged students to sign up for a variety of clubs including an anti-bullying club while murals of famous Americans lined the halls of the buildings. Even as an outsider, it was easy to imagine the powerful connections within this tightknit community.

After interviewing and conducting focus groups with approximately 30 teachers and administrators and observing almost a dozen classrooms from the elementary to the high school, it became evident the population of students was more diverse than initially perceived. Interestingly, for a seemingly homogenous community, educators shared experiences with students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. Teachers told stories about students who were Russian, Romanian, Japanese, German, Polish, and Vietnamese. They recalled students from blended families, foreign exchange students, mixed-race households, and adopted children. They talked about African American, Hispanic, Inuit, and Asian students. They discussed the difficulties they suspected their students of color must face when seeking a prom date. They also shared vignettes about awkward and uncomfortable situations with their minority students including language and cultural barriers. Although there were few students of color relative to the general

population, it became evident teachers cared deeply for all of their students, even when they did not always have the answers for how to best support them.

Teachers and administrators expressed how devoted the district has been in terms of meaningful professional development. Teachers have the opportunity to annually give feedback to their building leaders regarding their professional development needs and interests. Extensive training is provided, particularly for new teachers, on how to support students living in poverty utilizing the principles of Ruby Payne. Multiculturalism, and specifically race, has not been a priority most likely because teachers stated they often felt overwhelmed with the amount of work they already have on their plate and because of the perceived small population of minority students.

Incorporating a multicultural education framework is not a simple thing to implement, at least not effectively. It takes planning, development, support, resources, and effort. But, as communities shift towards increased global awareness, and as the population trends continue to evolve, it is important to proactively provide students with the tools they will need as they enter the changing demographic workforce. Educators can support White American students by helping them become more empathetic towards others and reducing ethnocentric views (Ambrosio, 2013; Burden et al., 2004).

Analysis of the educators' comments supported the notion that appearing to be colorblind to students of color has been a way teachers relate to their minority students. Appearing to be colorblind occurs when someone indicates they do not notice the color of people's skin. Helms (2008) refuted this notion because unfortunately the concept of being colorblind prevents educators from better understanding how students of color actually perceive their community. Helms (2008) posited it is important to recognize and

acknowledge one's color and background as it tells the story of heritage and only becomes negative if it is made to be a bad thing.

Research has indicated multicultural topics tend to occur primarily in social studies and literacy classes (Burden et al., 2004). A handful of teachers outside of social studies and literacy classes had attempted to incorporate multicultural lessons, but these were the exceptions rather than the norm. Because norms have not been created for discussing and embracing people from a global perspective, teachers often found themselves confronted with feelings of discomfort.

The findings from the study revealed that while [insert school name] has many supports in place for students and teachers, there has been little movement toward instituting the types of multicultural educational changes recommended by Banks (2004a). There were teachers who expressed concerns about the lack of awareness or empathy towards students of color within and outside of their community. There were other teachers who confirmed the description Ambrosio (2013) postulated about having feelings of discomfort and even fear when addressing the needs of students of color.

According to the research, a by-product of ignoring the existence of other races allows White educators to feel good about their own heritage and background (Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009) while denying minority students those same good feelings about where they come from and who they are as unique individuals. Expecting minority students to conform to their surroundings denies these students the opportunity to recognize, much less celebrate their own identities (Helms, 2008). So, how does a rural and homogenous community, as committed and focused in community involvement as [insert school name], address the needs of every individual student?

Developing an awareness of potential hegemonic thinking and acknowledging the different types of racism can be useful as a starting point for an organization. Helping teachers confront their own biases often initially feels threatening, but drawing on [insert school name] strong sense of community may help administrators and district leaders approach these systemic issues in a professional and supportive manner. Though the number of minority students in [insert school name] is small, there are opportunities for growth when learning how to address the needs of minority students, especially pertaining to a seemingly homogenous community.

### **Next Steps**

Creating meaningful change requires more than making small adjustments to the program. It involves working with all stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2008), including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, (2005) discussed the difference between first- and second-order changes within school settings. First-order change implies change occurring in incremental steps, whereas second-order change refers to drastic changes in structure and solutions. The suggested options for [insert school name] range from minimal to extensive and include both first- and second-order changes. The following options were provided as a way to initiate conversations among various stakeholders, including district administrators, teachers, students, and community members. Options were developed into three primary tiers. The first option is non-invasive, the second option considers many of the wonderful things already taking place at [insert school name] and utilizes first-order change, and the third option provides suggestions for creating second-order change. Using a model of multicultural education, such as the model Banks created, would provide teachers and

administrators with a framework to work towards rather than feeling overwhelmed with the unknown, especially for a rural and homogenous community.

Option A is for the school district to continue as usual (Bardach, 2012) and make no multicultural changes to their current program. In this scenario, school leaders in [insert school name] may decide to choose the status quo route because of more pressing issues or external demands. School leaders may recognize there is not enough interest or a community-wide need to create a new multicultural framework at the current time.

Option B acknowledges [insert school name] may not be ready to tackle issues of race at the current time, but could use Banks' model to address other areas of multiculturalism. Teachers who were interviewed shared anecdotes and incidences of racism, but they also shared additional concerns, including sexism, religious differences, social economic status, students with disabilities, and sexual orientation. Singling out race as a way to confront multicultural education might not be the first step for the community of [insert school name]; instead, helping teachers and students become not only more tolerant and aware of differences but also developing skills to become socially responsible citizens may be a better fit for the school district.

Option B might include choosing one or more of the other areas encompassing multiculturalism that best fits the needs of the community. Developing safe zones where students can join a multicultural club could be an example of an initial step for integrating multiculturalism in the schools. Safe zones are typically a place where an educator "is open to talking about and being supportive of LFBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning) individuals and identities" (Safe Zone Project, n.d., para.1). Taking this concept and applying it to minority students could be a

valuable resource for many students. This club could be for students who want to learn more about people from other cultures or for those seeking a club focused on global awareness. In any community, there are people who are different, and eradicating discrimination often seems a futile attempt, but that does not mean educators and students cannot establish new norms of acceptance.

Option C includes second-order changes, which necessitate thinking outside of the proverbial box (Marzano et al., 2005). The Banks' model of multicultural education goes beyond sampling cuisine from around the world or talking about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during Black History month. It involves integrating content, developing a knowledge construction process with students and educators, actively reducing prejudice, creating an equity pedagogy, and building a school culture that empowers all children (Banks, 2004a). This section is separated into four sub-options that can be utilized individually or used in their entirety.

The first suggestion includes using the professional development structures already in place, especially the work done with Ruby Payne, to provide organization toward the development of new multicultural professional development. Although [insert school name] does not currently have a multicultural education framework in place, there are parallels between children living in poverty and minority children. The Ruby Payne framework contains elements essential to the development of multicultural awareness, specifically in regards to race such as developing relationships and providing structural supports for students and educators. In the case of [insert school name], educating teachers about children living in poverty has been a priority, and school leaders have put multiple practices in place to support these children and their families. The same

emphasis could be used toward the development of a multicultural framework to support and positively interact with students of color, especially because the infrastructure for professional development in the area of poverty has already been established.

Recognizing the links between minority students and poverty may serve as an initial starting point though leaders would be prudent not to perpetuate the stereotype that all minority students are also living in a state of poverty.

The second suggestion includes utilizing community resources. For example, Lisi and Howe (1999) postulated many educators have not received sufficient skills towards becoming multicultural leaders. Leaders at the nearby university and at the school district could work together to ensure preservice teachers are receiving classes in multicultural education. Helping White educators confront and address potential biases provides a starting point for those same educators who will be entering the field of education, especially because Alejano-Steele et al. (2011) determined teachers who have not come to terms with their own identity could have negative impacts on their students.

The third suggestion recommends drawing upon the experience of school district leaders who have already implemented multicultural frameworks within their schools. A strategy referred to as benchmarking (Gill, 2010) encourages leaders to identify successful models already in place to compare one organization to another. Seeking out mentors who have already gone through a similar experience, especially in communities with comparable demographics to [insert school name] would provide support and guidance for implementation.

Finally, the fourth suggestion provides tangible approaches towards implementing and facilitating a multicultural community. Alejano-Steele et al. (2011) suggested a

myriad of concrete examples for educators. These include: schools leaders creating safe zones to discuss issues such as privilege, equity, and racism; reading selected texts and writing reflectively; participating in activities quantifying privilege; conducting listening activities with partners; reflecting on concepts such as in-group and out-group membership and how these groups shape participants today; using word association with race/ethnic based terms to identify positive and negative terms associated with various categories; and viewing video clips. These activities can be used in isolation or in tandem with one another.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the research of this study, it became apparent the community of [insert school name] honors and respects their students. Learning how to address topics, such as White privilege and racism, can be uncomfortable for teachers and school leaders. Nevertheless, knowing how to confront one's own biases can be an important first step for educators in the goal towards creating a community that embraces multiculturalism. Building on the already established infrastructure of professional development and the commitment to the education of all students puts the community of [insert school name] in a position to make significant progress towards the implementation of a multicultural framework for all students.

## Executive Summary

**Problem of Practice:** Multicultural education programs for educators are often designed to superficially teach *students* about diversity and people from various cultures (Bureau of the Census, 1995). As a result, few programs are in place for helping *teachers* confront their own biases or utilizing essential learning components to ensure the success of adult learners (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Therefore, the researcher chose to examine how one school in a homogenous community was addressing multiculturalism, specifically in regards to race.

**Purpose of study:**

- exploring to what extent [insert school name] utilizes current multicultural educational practices in the areas of professional development and training, curriculum, and personnel decisions
- providing options to [insert school name] for developing a multicultural educational framework

**Methodology:** To gain greater insight into the perceived need for multicultural training, for educators within the K-12 public school system, especially in regards to race, the researcher employed a qualitative methodological design based on a critical perspective (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

**Participants:** Participants included nearly 30 administrators and K-12 teachers.

**Setting:** A school in a rural city with a population of approximately 10,000 people.

**Data Collection:** This case study included observations and field notes, interviews, and focus groups to collect data. Each visit followed a similar structure with the primary researcher attending either a professional development or staff meeting. Focus groups

with teachers and interviews with administrators occurred at each building. Direct observations (Yin, 2009) took place in the classrooms.

**Data Analysis:** In order to interpret the data in a meaningful way, the primary researcher transcribed all interviews and focus groups. Data were analyzed using two types of coding, initial open coding and a priori coding. Validity and reliability were maintained throughout the study.

**Conceptual Framework:** Banks (2004a) developed five distinct dimensions of multicultural education, which served as the conceptual framework for the study. The dimensions were interrelated and used as a way to define and conceptualize multicultural education. These dimensions were content integration, knowledge construction, an equity pedagogy model, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture.

**Findings:**

- **Dimension 1: Content Integration:** Teachers felt most comfortable discussing race in the content areas of literacy and social studies classes. Teachers outside of these content areas rarely addressed multiculturalism.
- **Dimension 2: Knowledge Construction:** The most salient aspect of knowledge construction appeared when teachers talked about being colorblind to their students. Some teachers admitted they did not realize some of their students were bi-racial or had parents from other countries. Many teachers claimed they never notice skin color.
- **Dimension 3: An Equity Pedagogy:** Teachers and administrators discussed the homogeneity of their community. There were mixed perceptions about how they

perceived obstacles for their minority students, especially as to how minority students may identify with living in a predominately White community.

- **Dimension 4: Prejudice Reduction:** Teachers have not been provided with effective strategies for how to appropriately address comments or questions students may have about people from different backgrounds, and some teachers found themselves unprepared to address unfamiliar situations, especially when addressing race.
- **Dimension 5: Empowering School Culture:** Recruiting minority candidates has not been a priority; few minority candidates apply for positions within the school district.

#### **Next Steps:**

- **Option A:** Option A suggests the school district could maintain the status quo and continue what they are currently doing (Bardach, 2012). With the number of federal, state, and local mandates, schools are often overloaded with a variety of pressing issues.
- **Option B:** Option B acknowledges [insert school name] may not be ready to tackle issues of race at the current time, but could use Banks' model to address other areas of multiculturalism. Teachers who were interviewed shared anecdotes and incidences of racism, but they also shared other concerns including sexism, religious differences, social economic status, disabilities, and sexual orientation. Improving current practices is an example of first-order change (Marzano et al., 2005).

- **Option C:** Option C is the most ambitious approach. It provides strategies and/or elements of multicultural education and includes examples of second-order change (Marzano et al., 2005). There are several ways this could be done.
  - Use the professional development structures already in place, especially the work done with Ruby Payne, to provide a foundation for the development of new multicultural professional development.
  - Utilize community resources and expand networking throughout the community. For example, leaders at the nearby university and within the school district could work together to ensure preservice teachers are receiving classes in multicultural education.
  - Provide time for teachers to participate in workshops and to collaborate with districts that have successfully implemented a multicultural framework.
  - Incorporate tangible approaches towards implementing and facilitating a multicultural community within each of the buildings. These might include: schools leaders creating safe zones to discuss issues such as privilege, equity, and racism; reading selected texts and writing reflectively; participating in activities quantifying privilege; conducting listening activities with partners; reflecting on concepts such as in-group and out-group membership and how these groups shape participants today; using word association with race/ethnic based terms to identify positive and negative terms associated with various categories; and viewing video clips (Alejano-Steele et al., 2011).

**Complete Report:**

For a complete report of the study, please contact Rachal E. Tarrasch-Scholz.

**Selected References:**

Banks, J. A., Cookson, P., Gay, G., Hawley, W. D., Irvine, J. J., Nieto, S., Schofield, J.

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SECTION FIVE:  
CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

**Deconstructing White Privilege Using A Multicultural Education Approach  
Within A Homogenous Rural Community**

### **Abstract**

Multicultural education training for K-12 educators can often be found in urban cities, but unfortunately, school leaders in smaller communities often fail to address hegemonic thinking and attitudes for teachers. This qualitative case study examined one small, rural community to learn what components of Banks' dimensions of multicultural education were evident in the areas of professional development, curriculum, and personnel decisions. Using the concept White privilege to address teachers' perspectives of racism and minority students in their community was at the forefront of this study. While there were overlaps between these areas, only the most salient findings were presented. Teachers often claim they were colorblind towards their students of color, and the researchers argued this line of thinking perpetuates ingrained stereotypes. The study attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice by recommending the district utilize their current professional development model, based on the teachings of Ruby Payne, to facilitate a new way to think about race and cultural awareness.

Keywords: multicultural education, White privilege, rural, homogenous community, and professional development

## **Deconstructing White Privilege Using a Multicultural Education Approach Within a Homogenous Rural Community**

A significant number of K-12 school districts have incorporated multicultural professional development programs (Denvei & Carter, 2006; Dilworth, 2004), especially in communities with a diverse population. Other communities, particularly those with a homogenous population, have struggled with implementing a multicultural educational framework to support students and educators (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004; Parks, 2006). For many individuals introduced to issues surrounding oppression, feelings of frustration, remorse, and moral culpability often arise (Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009; Tatum, 1992). Despite the difficulty in discussing and contemplating oppression within a school, there remains a need for these same organizations to facilitate changes to support a multicultural education framework and to support teachers through professional development.

In a community dominated by the White majority, it is possible to overlook the need for increasing global awareness (Figueroa, 2004; Hill & Allan, 2004; Moodley, 2004). Through no intentional fault of individual citizens, being White in a predominantly White community makes it possible, through the intricate hierarchies of power structures, to be unaware of the privileges afforded to those in the majority. Tatum (1997) asserted while some members of society are more prejudiced than others, each member has grown up with certain beliefs, stereotypes, and distortions that influence the thoughts and perceptions they hold. Even though people are not to blame for the ideas they were socialized towards as children, they are responsible for their own behavior as adults (Tatum, 1997).

While this study was intended to provide insight into how multicultural education for educators facilitates tolerance and understanding to prevent ethnocentric and hegemonic thinking, it focused specifically on the topic of racism as a way of breaking down many perceived barriers to multicultural education. McIntosh (1988) first introduced the concept of “White privilege” as becoming aware of the ways those who are White have an unearned privilege due to skin color and “have been conditioned into oblivion about its existence” (p. 1). Being a member of the majority race has obvious advantages, and yet becoming aware of how that advantage discriminates against others, whether intentionally or not, is an important step in understanding, if not eradicating, discrimination and racism. This level of responsibility can be better understood through multicultural educational pedagogies.

Though multicultural training practices may not be a top priority in the realm of professional development, the U.S. population will be more diverse than ever, and no single racial group will hold the majority by the middle of this century (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). According to Burden, Hodge, O’Bryant, and Harrison (2004), K-12 public schools have enrollments of 53 million children, with 35% of them being students of color. It is disturbing many educators, particularly those in the White majority, hold an “ethnocentric view in the sense that cultural diversity is excluded, minimized, and/or ignored” when creating and implementing professional development training (Burden et al., 2004, p. 175). Ethnocentrism, the belief one’s culture is “better or more natural” than others, perpetuates giving preference and value to those with similar beliefs, attitudes, and cultures over those from other groups (Northouse, 2013, p. 358).

Today, there are numerous professional development multicultural programs (Denvei & Carter, 2006; Dilworth, 2004; McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2004; Parks, 2006), but few systematically track and analyze their impact on K-12 teachers, especially in a homogenous community. Therefore, the primary researcher was interested in conducting a case study in a community with a small minority population to learn how the district was currently integrating components of multicultural education. Using Banks' (2004a) model of multicultural education, the areas of professional development and training, curriculum, and personnel decisions were examined.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Banks' Dimensions of Multicultural Education**

Banks (2004a) developed a model, or five dimensions, of multicultural education as a method to conceptualize and organize effective multicultural practices within a school. These five dimensions are (a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c), prejudice reduction, (d) creating an equity pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure. A discussion of each dimension is discussed in further detail.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Content integration addresses what should be discussed in the curriculum, how it is integrated, and identifies the audience. While content integration is an important step in the development of multicultural education, many school districts view this as the only means of multicultural education, a misnomer that prevents many teachers from

discussing culture in subjects outside of social studies or language arts courses (Banks, 2004a). One unique study looked at how to incorporate diversity training within Physical Education Teacher Preparation programs (Burden et al., 2004) bringing the attention to multicultural education to disciplines outside of social studies or language arts classes. To this extent, the goal of content integration includes the involvement of all teachers, such as physics and math teachers.

Developing a knowledge construction within a classroom allows teachers to help students grasp and explore how cultural perspectives and biases within an area of study influence the ways knowledge is constructed (Banks, 2004a). Conceptualizations have been developed for helping teachers obtain the information and resources necessary to teach students how knowledge is understood, being able to recognize a writer's point of view, and making their own interpretations based on material learned in class. Banks (2004a) developed four levels of curriculum reform for teaching students about various ethnic groups in elementary and secondary school settings. The first level is the Contributions Approach where the focus is on heroes, holidays, and other cultural elements. The Additive Approach is the second level and it pertains to ideas and perspectives added to the curriculum without changing its current structure. The third approach, the Transformation Approach, occurs when the entire structure of the curriculum is changed to allow students to view issues and themes from the perspective of another cultural group. The Social Action Approach is an extension of the Transformation Approach in which students actively make decisions on social issues and take action to make changes.

Prejudice reduction emphasizes the students' racial attitudes and how they can be changed. In the research and interviews Banks (2004a) conducted with teachers, he found many elementary school educators believed students have little to no racial awareness and since they are unaware, discussing race with them only creates racial problems that previously did not exist, despite these assertions being contradictory to reality and research. In fact, Banks and Tucker (1998) asserted adolescent prejudice is more prevalent than teachers may realize and developing strategies to help students establish more positive racial attitudes has been the key tenet of this dimension. Banks identified four different types of studies focusing on the modification of children's racial attitudes. These include curricular intervention, reinforcement, perceptual differentiation, and cooperative learning.

Creating an equity pedagogy occurs when educators change the way they teach to highlight the achievements of students from a variety of diverse backgrounds and from both genders. This includes utilizing teaching principles compatible with a range of learning styles among different cultural and ethnic groups (Banks, 2004a). An example of creating an equity pedagogy would be the calculus teacher not just teaching students about prominent women or famous African Americans in the field of mathematics, but changing the way the teacher teaches girls or African American how to learn calculus that best accommodates their learning needs. When teachers modify the way they teach to include an array of strategies and techniques such as "cooperative groups, simulations, role-playing, and discovery" (Banks & Tucker, 1998, p. 2) they can better support learners from a large range of backgrounds and cultures.

The concept of empowering school culture is used to explain the process of restructuring the culture of the school, especially for students of color and low-income students (Banks, 2004a). A systems approach is one way to make school-wide changes to augment the academic success of students of color and low-income students. Banks (2004a) explained several advantages to addressing school reform using a holistic perspective. For example, educators need more support in order to analyze their own racial biases while also needing additional resources and instructional materials. According to Banks (2004a), when school reform efforts fail, it is often because the “roles, norms, and ethos of the school do not change in ways that makes institutionalization of reform possible” (p. 20).

### **Related Literature**

There is an abundant amount of literature exploring concepts surrounding this study, including professional development, White privilege, and multicultural education. However, there remains a significant gap on empirical studies conducted on multicultural education programs for educators in general, much less homogenous populations. More specifically, there are very few studies conducted within a K-12 setting. When there are no students of color, communities often find it difficult or make it a low priority for the incorporation of multicultural education (Gay, 1995).

Lisi and Howe (1999) identified four key factors addressing why achieving multicultural education remains such a challenge and why studies have been difficult to measure. First, most teachers and administrators have not received sufficient preparation to become multicultural educators. Second, current efforts to support teachers in multicultural education are inadequate, such as limited time to participate in workshops

or a lack of support in the implementation stages. Third, those who have attempted incorporating multicultural education typically focused on building cultural awareness and did not provide educators with opportunities for applying new knowledge. Fourth, those providing professional development, such as state agencies or individual school districts, have little collaboration among one another while teachers are expected to support initiatives from various departments without greater collaboration at a systemic level. Therefore, research about K-12 multicultural education for educators in a predominantly White community adds to the existing literature base.

Another gap in the literature involves a comprehensive study specifically using Banks' (2004a) multicultural education dimensions. There have been studies conducted on various aspects of Banks' multicultural model, but no studies have examined each of the components as the sum of its parts. Therefore, the researcher intended to contribute to furthering the studies using Banks' multicultural education dimensions and how they can support communities with a small, minority population.

### **White Privilege and Racism**

Those who are born White are given access to a number of unearned privileges based solely on skin color, and "it is virtually impossible to be immune from both mythical images of White superiority and the concurrent stereotypes of people of color" (Heinze, 2008, p. 2). Ambrosio (2013) explained when asking White students to reexamine their own identities and privileges, it often led to feelings of fear, discomfort, and anger. A result of acknowledging and accepting how one benefits from their Whiteness means individuals must recognize their role in the oppression of others and accept responsibility for their role in modern day racism (Ambrosio, 2013).

The concept of White privilege was not intended or developed as a way to shame White Americans, rather as a way to describe a social phenomenon and to recognize and discuss how their status, based solely on skin color, gives automatic privileges (McIntosh, 1988). Originally stemming from a feminist perspective, McIntosh (1988) used the similarities between male privileges to parallel the privileges afforded to White Americans. Just as many men are taught not to see their privileged status, White Americans are taught not to recognize their White privilege.

For many White Americans, discussing racism in terms of their privilege can be uncomfortable (Tatum, 1992). One approach has been to appear to be colorblind to race as a way of recognizing the social injustice of racism (Helms, 2008). Appearing to be colorblind occurs when someone indicates they do not notice the color of people's skin. Many White Americans feel they are sincerely good people, and, since they are not overtly making racist comments, they are not racist (Irving, 2014). However, according to Helms (2008), it is important to recognize and acknowledge one's color and background as it tells the story of heritage and only becomes negative if it is made to be a bad thing.

Societal change occurs on many different levels. Individuals, organizations, communities, and lawmakers all affect the outcome of shifting attitudes. Yet, while change may initially occur within an individual or small group of people, an individual cannot single handedly eradicate centuries of oppression. Although some people work for change, many White Americans proclaim the importance of equality while concurrently "denying that systems of dominance exist" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 18). These

people may deny the existence of dominance because they are unaware of how they benefit.

### **Bridging Theory to Practice**

Finding successful ways to address entrenched mentalities is magnanimous in scope. However, many educators and scholars are working to bridge theory into practice by educating teachers through professional development workshops and learning communities. The attempt to merge theory into practice is necessary for a successful transition towards multicultural programs and institutions (Gay, 2004). In order for multicultural training for educators to be effective, the instructor must understand the pedagogies and theories related to self-identity. Alejano-Steele et al. (2011) determined teachers who have not come to terms with their own identity could have negative impacts on their students.

One component of ongoing training, or professional development, in multicultural education is for teachers to know how to best teach students to become more tolerant and accepting as they encounter people from diverse backgrounds. If students are expected to develop skills to interact with diverse groups of people and to become well-versed in understanding ways institutions systematically perpetuate the oppression of others, then it seems natural teachers also need to be able to develop this same knowledge (Banks et al., 2001). Due to the cadre of social justice issues surrounding racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, social class, and heteronormativity, it can be intimidating for educators to know what to teach or even where to begin. Incorporating aspects of multicultural education models provides a systematic approach for supporting educators and administrators.

## **Method**

### **Setting**

A case study of Peyton School District (name was changed to protect anonymity), a community with over 90% of its citizens classified as White (Peyton website, 2015), was used to examine current multicultural education practices, race specific. With a population of slightly more than 10,000 residents (Peyton website, 2015), Peyton is a thriving community focused on the education of its students. The city is home to a small university and a public school system recognized for numerous accolades in education.

The community currently does not address many areas of multicultural education, but the school district has invested a significant amount of planning into how to best serve their students, especially those living in poverty. Although this study did not focus on poverty, a brief description of their rationale for professional development was necessary to better understand the discussion section. In order to provide teachers with a better understanding of how poverty manifests itself within the school system, Peyton teachers receive training using the principles of Ruby Payne. In the second year of the new teacher institute, teachers receive substantial training regarding major ideas and concepts “embedded within the Ruby Payne Framework” (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, November 29, 2015). Additionally, substitute teachers receive an abbreviated, but required version of the training before they can receive a substitute assignment within the district. Building principals reiterate the ideas during back-to-school meetings. According to the Assistant Superintendent, one principal takes teachers on a field experience to visit different parts of the district, and it is “a powerful visual

reminder that our kids come from a wide range of backgrounds which include a wide range of resources” (November 29, 2015).

While there is little doubt the community has striven to support its members, there remains an absence of professional development, curriculum planning, and cultural awareness of citizens who are not in the White majority (Superintendent, personal communication, 2014). Issues of race and class are separate issues, and the primary researcher anticipated it would be possible to incorporate some of the supports already in place when examining the implementation of a multicultural education framework.

### **Participants**

To better understand the complexities of a multicultural education framework, the researcher chose teacher and administrator participants from Peyton. Nearly 20 participants were represented from a range of subjects they teach including literacy, social studies, math, science, and homeroom teachers. The importance of selecting teachers from all disciplines was essential to the study because while subjects, such as literacy and social studies, lend themselves well to the discussion of multicultural education (Dilworth, 2004), other subjects such as math and physical education are often overlooked when it comes to incorporating multicultural education. Two student teachers also participated in two different focus groups.

Additionally, the researcher selected participants from a variety of grade levels from K-12. This lent itself to a stratification process (Creswell, 2014) where the characteristics of the participants were separated based on their assigned teaching levels. By selecting teacher participants within the same district but in different grade levels, the researcher was able to triangulate data (Merriam, 2009) and determine if

perceptions of multicultural support varied among educators. The study also examined to what extent teachers have considered the importance of providing a multicultural framework and how White privilege potentially skews incorporating multicultural principles within the organization.

Administrators were also key participants within the study. They included building principals, instructional coaches, the superintendent, and assistant superintendent. The perceptions of the administrators were vital since they have additional knowledge and information regarding policies, processes, and procedures of which educators may not be aware.

Sampling varied depending on the researcher's ability to access educators. The superintendent of the district granted the researcher permission to conduct interviews and focus groups during regularly scheduled professional development sessions. Those sessions occurred each Wednesday morning for all K-12 schools. The researcher employed purposeful sampling in which participants were selected based on their ability to convey the thoughts or situations of the average person, in this case the perceptions of the average educator (Merriam, 2009). To this extent, building principals chose the nearly 20 teacher participants in the study; two principals selected a team of teachers while the third principal selected teachers from multiple grade levels.

### **Data Sources**

This case study included classroom observations and field notes, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis to collect data. Data were collected at three site visits including an elementary school, middle school, and high school. Each visit followed a similar structure beginning with the primary researcher attending a weekly professional

development or staff meeting. Focus groups with teachers and interviews with administrators occurred at each building. Direct observations (Yin, 2009) took place in the classrooms.

Five interviews conducted with administrators allowed the participants the opportunity to share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas (Creswell, 2014). The topics of White privilege and ethnocentrism can feel threatening, especially to White educators, so acknowledging this sensitivity was paramount in developing and maintaining trust among participants. The researcher interviewed the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and principals. These interviews focused on, what, if any practices were put into place for preparing educators for multicultural learning; their perceptions of how parents, the community, and minority students would respond to the implementation of a multicultural framework; ideas on how to utilize professional development practices that address poverty to facilitate a smooth transition to multicultural education; levels of support provided for teachers regarding multicultural education; potential obstacles to the implementation of a multicultural approach; and personnel decisions regarding their hiring and recruitment practices. Interviews were structured with a specific set of questions (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006) lasting approximately one hour using an interview protocol developed to provide consistency among interviews and interview questions (Creswell, 2014). All interviews were audio recorded.

Four focus groups were conducted with classroom teachers so they could share their thoughts on multicultural professional development in a non-threatening fashion and separate from administrators. The sessions lasted between thirty minutes to one hour and had 4 to 10 participants. It was not the intention to “shame” districts for having little

professional development for teachers in diversity and multicultural education but rather to understand why there is so little and how to better support the district in providing support for educators in the public school system. Similar to the interviews, a focus group protocol was developed, and sessions were audio recorded and transcribed (Creswell, 2014).

### **Data Analysis**

In order to interpret the data in a meaningful way, the primary researcher transcribed all interviews and focus groups. The researcher also took notes during the interviews and focus groups and used these to compare initial impressions to the actual words of the participants. Upon completing the transcriptions of the interviews and focus groups, the researcher reread the transcripts numerous times to gain deeper insight into the experiences of the educators.

One process for organizing qualitative data into meaningful segments is commonly referred to as *coding*, allowing patterns or themes to emerge (Creswell, 2014). With the previous steps completed, two types of coding were used to analyze the data and search for patterns (Spradley, 1980). First, an initial open coding process, beginning with a line-by-line coding process, was used. This process involved “writing words and phrases that identify and name specific analytic dimensions and categories” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 175). By beginning with the open coding process, the researcher began noticing trends and emerging patterns, especially in regards to the barriers of multicultural education within the school setting and across grade levels.

When developing the interview and focus group questions, the primary researcher was specifically looking at how the district developed professional development,

curriculum, and personnel decisions in order to determine where the schools fit within Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education. Therefore, after completion of the initial open coding process, the researcher reviewed the data again, this time using a priori coding. A priori coding was used to organize the data into the pre-established codes (Stemler, 2001) of professional development, curriculum, and personnel.

Validity and reliability were maintained throughout the study. Strategies used when checking for validity were: triangulating of the data, member checking, using rich description to report the findings, identifying researcher biases, presenting the negative or discrepant information that resulted from interviews, and spending copious amounts of time in the field. A classroom observation protocol was also created in order to consistently record observations in each of the school settings in order to establish reliability. These methods were employed throughout the study to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Throughout the research process, attention (to protecting the participants and Peyton School District) was carefully followed. The very nature of discussing race, especially with participants who may be unaware of the ethnocentric behaviors they may be exhibiting, can be sensitive. Ethical considerations for the sensitivity of the topic were considered in the way interviews and focus groups were conducted. The study only involved educators and administrators, and, while thought was put into interviewing minority students to determine if they felt their teachers were culturally sensitive, the researcher decided to restrict the study from minors and focused on consenting adults.

Banks' dimensions are briefly described in the findings section to highlight strengths or weaknesses in regards to professional development, curriculum, and

personnel decisions. Reference codes within the findings reflect two pieces of information. The abbreviation FG represented a focus group, I represented an interview, and O represented a classroom observation. The number following the abbreviation refers to the number of the focus group, interview, or observation. All participant names are pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.

### **Findings**

Banks' (2004a) five dimensions of multicultural education allowed the researcher to sift through the practices and experiences of the teachers and administrators in Peyton to gain a deeper understanding of multicultural education taking place within the community. In order to bridge theory into practice, the researcher used the criteria of current professional development, curriculum, and personnel decisions to bring awareness of how to incorporate Banks' multicultural framework to the schools. After analyzing the data, it became evident that each of the categories (professional development, curriculum, and personnel decisions) were either prominent, negligible, or had overlapping tendencies among the dimensions. For example, when the data showed a strong connection between curriculum for students and Bank's first principle of content integration, it became obvious there would be a strong link between professional development and support for teachers. The researcher chose to report the most salient findings into each of Banks' dimensions even though additional findings emerged.

#### **Dimension 1: Content Integration**

When addressing the extent to which teachers used examples and content from a variety of cultures in their teaching through content integration (Banks, 2004a), teachers felt most comfortable discussing race in the content areas of literacy and social studies

classes. Teacher perceptions of discussing race appeared more natural and organic in the curriculum when it fell within specific disciplines. For example, history teachers' curriculum included topics such as early explorers, immigrants, the Civil War, the abolition movement, culture and immigration, ancestral origins, current events, terrorists, 9/11, Civil Rights, how segregation affects students today, different historical periods, and modern day slavery. Literacy teachers also felt they were able to address diversity, and specifically race, when using literature to teach about differences. Teachers reported having the freedom to choose books and authors within their curriculum, and Ms. Wilson, a literacy teacher, emphasized her efforts of selecting authors other than "old, dead, white guys" (FG/1, line 46).

Cultural units were another opportunity teachers had to incorporate race into their curriculum. Depending on the grade level of the students and the area of discipline, teachers focused on other countries, geographic locations, how schools vary around the world, food, games, and holidays. Topics were generally taught through surface issues rather than on people and culture. Teachers also used days like Martin Luther King Jr. Day or Black History Month to discuss race. Teachers mentioned discussing leaders such as Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Rosa Parks, and Sacagawea with their students, but one teacher, Mr. Weber, explained that while it is important to discuss these leaders:

If it's something minorities are doing or anything like that, you tell what it is; you don't give importance to color. You don't give importance to gender. If this is what they did, you praise it, you talk about it, you don't...you can't sit there and just dwell on the minority aspect of it, and then forget about the White aspect of it. It's like you've just gotta keep it non-biased and look at scholastic learning

giving both sides of the fence and then you come up with what you want out of it.

(FG/1, lines 88-94)

Literacy and social studies teachers found it more comfortable to discuss race in their subject areas, although one math teacher recalled the only time of any race related curricula in her class was occasionally a minority sounding name appearing in a math problem. Another math teacher consciously incorporated race into one of her lessons by using quilt blocks when teaching a unit on geometric transformations and the slave stories behind the quilt blocks. Other teachers shared they do not teach about people from different backgrounds or races because they feel overwhelmed by the content they need to cover with Common Core and feeling as if they do not have enough time to cover their own curriculum. Overall, teachers felt most comfortable discussing race if it appeared in their curriculum, on recognized holidays, or in isolation with a particular famous person.

## **Dimension 2: Knowledge Construction**

The knowledge construction dimension addresses how to navigate the implicit cultural assumptions taught in school, often seen as White privilege, and help students become critical thinkers (Banks, 2004a). Within the curriculum, this dimension was evident from several literacy and elementary teachers who were intentionally incorporating minority and female authors. Teachers who had integrated multicultural education discussed the importance of choosing authentic literature and trying to provide students with a true sense of perspective:

This year, I had them read more literature from former slaves and looking at their perspectives and what that meant. You know, hearing their voices and not

hearing others talking about slavery. So really trying to focus on the “true perspective” on what it meant to be a slave. A male slave and a female slave and looking at the differences. (Ms. Geddes, FG/3, lines 53-57)

Another perspective of the knowledge construction appeared when teachers talked about being colorblind to their students. In a few cases, teachers admitted they did not realize some of their students were bi-racial or had parents who came from other countries. These teachers claimed the color of a student’s skin did not stand out to them (FG/1 & FG/2). Still, other teachers put the responsibility of blending in onto the students as in the case of Mr. Weber who perceived minority students to not facing any obstacles, “unless they come in with the mindset that I’m this way and so...I think if you just mesh and blend and be colorblind then you have no issues,” (FG/2, lines 102-103).

From a professional development standpoint, principals acknowledged the challenges associated within the knowledge construction, especially in regards to preparing educators for multicultural learning and practices. Dr. Mayfield candidly replied that although they were not intentionally leaving multicultural education out of professional development, the priority has been to foster a safe and accepting environment for all students to learn (I/2). Dr. Lemos anticipated three main obstacles for educators in regards to setting up a multicultural framework; not seeing it is a need, challenges associated with change in and of itself, and already having too much on their plates (I/1). He felt, however, support should start at the top, and as principal, he would provide guidance and resources to staff members.

Let’s, as a staff, be open to the fact that we need to communicate and educate and bring this topic around. So I think that would be first. I think two would be,

being careful with mandates. That we're not saying necessarily, '*you must implement this lesson three times a week or else.*' It's, '*Ok, if you're uncomfortable, how can I support you?*' Our instructional coach could maybe model the lesson for you first a few times, and then maybe I can, and let's just train and support as opposed to mandate. Because, what you're going to get if you mandate, is they're going to comply, sort of, when you're looking. When you're not looking, and let's just be honest, it's not going to happen, or it's not going to happen to be really effective. So, I think you want them to really commit to it and do it right. So just being aware of that mandate. Even though, frankly, it would be, if our district's going to do that, it would have to be with fidelity. You're not going to choose not to do it. But I'm going to support you and I'm not going to make you bend your arm. It's gonna be something that we do, but it's going to be something that we help you do. (I/1, lines 189-202)

With only minimal exceptions, evidence of teachers developing a knowledge construction with their students was not discernible in other curriculum areas, and professional development as a means to confront White privilege was not reported.

### **Dimension 3: Equity Pedagogy**

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups (Banks, 2004a). Because teachers have to adjust and become more aware of the needs of students from a variety of diverse backgrounds, it made sense to view this dimension from the area of professional development. Teachers at Peyton shared that while they teach the same curriculum, they have the flexibility to present the

information in their own way. This was evident when two history classes were observed reviewing for an upcoming test. In Mr. Weber's history class, students sat in traditional rows as the teacher stood at the front of the room reviewing information for a test they were having the next day. Mr. Weber fired off review questions, and 4 of the 25 students consistently responded to questions while the majority of students were silent unless called on to respond (O/1, April 6, 2016). In comparison, Mrs. Montgomery's 25 students, who were reviewing for the same test, were playing a lively interactive Internet game where students were working in groups of four or five with the activity being facilitated by their student teacher. Students were grouped together with some teams sitting around a pod of desks, and other teams seated on the floor. These students were actively engaged and had to work together as a team in order to be the first group to correctly answer a question (O/2, April 6, 2016).

Teachers and administrators discussed the homogeneity of their community, yet through the stories they shared about obstacles they speculated their minority students might face, it became clear there was a disparity about perceptions. Ms. Kreitz mused the biggest problem her minority students faced was finding a prom date (FG/4) while Ms. Jones thought they did not have many obstacles because:

A lot of the kids who are minority have been here their entire lives, and I think it might be different if you came from an urban environment where there were a lot more of whatever minority they might be and then they come here. (FG/1, lines 105-107)

Mrs. Montgomery shared a story about the experience of one of her African American students, Sariah. The class was studying the Civil War and Sariah told her:

*'It's kind of uncomfortable for me because I wonder what people are thinking. And they're thinking about what I'm thinking.'* Was kind of her thing. And once we got past the first day or two of it, they were fine with it. But just that initial drawing the difference to them. And one day she told them, *'You know, it's ok guys, I know I'm black.'* And it just kind of set the scene for everything. (FG/2, lines 128-132)

Ms. Bower shared a different perspective:

It seems like the black kids here fit in but I would think sometimes they would feel like they didn't belong as much. And it seems to me like the kids here feel more comfortable, not really bullying, but making race remarks or using the "N" word, and they're not sensitive to those types of things. I feel like those kids kind of just have to tolerate it because they don't really have a group to belong to.

They just kind of got to deal with it. (FG/3, lines 267-272)

Despite several classrooms looking like traditional settings, with the teacher delivering a lecture and students listening, there were other teachers who had found innovative and creative ways to engage students. Alternative approaches to traditional ways material is taught has been a key tenet in creating an equity pedagogy for all students according to Banks' model. The findings also suggested there was confusion or a lack of understanding as to how minority students may actually perceive their experiences living in a predominately White community.

#### **Dimension 4: Prejudice Reduction**

The prejudice reduction dimension focuses on the characteristics of students' racial attitudes and how using teaching methods and materials can modify them (Banks,

2004a). Helping teachers learn how to address derogatory remarks or negative slang would most likely occur in a professional development setting. Particularly with older students, some teachers queried how to address the “N” word when it came up in class. In the first scenario, Ms. Bates was reading a popular classic novel that uses the “N” word. Ms. Bates then showed a video about interviews with people’s perspective on this word, and anticipated a thought-provoking conversation afterwards. To her surprise the students did not seem interested in the topic:

I think I had one black student at the time and the rest were primarily Caucasian and they were like, ‘*we don’t really think it’s an issue anymore.*’ So, I thought that was interesting. We didn’t have the discussion that I thought we would. I don’t know if the diversity in my classroom had anything to do with that or it was just a generational thing that they didn’t see it as an issue? But that was interesting to me. I mean, that was pretty much all my classes, they just weren’t really interested in that topic. (FG/3, lines 113-119)

After a short pause, Ms. Geddes said, “I kind of wonder, should it be an issue?” (FG/3, line 121).

In the second scenario, a dialogue about the use of the “N” word occurred between several of the teachers, concluding with a remark from a student teacher:

Mr. Cook: I think they’re clueless as to why it’s offensive because they’re not old enough. Like, even with me, I think it’s a word they hear thrown around on movies and music and shows and they don’t view it in the same tone that we would view it in. (FG/3, lines 295-297)

Ms. Bates: Yeah, interesting. Cause a lot of them, they're like it just means "friends." I mean, that's just what they use, like saying, 'Hey, what's up?' (FG/3, lines 298-299)

Ms. Bower: And you know, even the black students here that have been raised here, I don't know if they realize it, because really they're just like everybody else and I think they really aren't offended by it, but they know they're supposed to be. (FG/3, lines 302-304)

Ms. Hendrickson: Speaking from my generation, I'm a few years ahead of these students, but I can attest to all of that, it's all true. We know that it is wrong, but it's not really taken seriously. (FG/3, lines 305-307)

Evidence of racial slurs were not observed or discussed with teachers from the younger grades although the researcher overheard a group of elementary school children telling each other inappropriate racial jokes such as "Your mama's so short she hang glides on a burrito," (O/9, April 20, 2016). Teachers have not been provided with effective strategies for how to appropriately address the comments or questions students may have, and some teachers find themselves in awkward situations for which they are not prepared. Take for example the uncomfortable situation for Ms. Bowers who had an African American student misbehaving in class. When Ms. Bowers called the office to report the incident, she "was afraid to tell them a black girl left my class...I felt like it was wrong for me to say she was black," (FG/3, lines 149-151). Finding ways to facilitate meaningful conversations between students and educators would help develop an understanding for creating prejudice reduction.

## **Dimension 5: Empowering School Culture**

Banks (2004a) asserted empowering school culture addresses the groups and labels within the school, disproportions in achievement, and interactions of the staff and the students across ethnic and racial lines to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups. To this extent, learning about how the district recruits teaching candidates and how they make personnel decisions provided insight into current multicultural practices. Principals in all three buildings reiterated one another when it came to hiring decisions and recruitment. Jobs are posted online, and the schools also hold job fairs. Non-discrimination policies are closely followed and the schools are in compliance with legal issues. According to Dr. Pettigrew, “As far as attempting to hire minorities that’s not a conscious effort that I have or that the district has. It really is just based on qualifications” (I/3, lines 9-10), while Dr. Mayfield relayed “very few minority candidates apply for positions over the years. I mean, I can hardly think of any” (I/2, lines 24-25).

Although the district is not immersed in multiculturalism, the schools have vigilantly worked towards creating a culture to support the socio-economic diversity within the students. Principals also felt the professional development surrounding poverty using the work of Ruby Payne would be:

Applicable to minorities too, because there’s kind of an unspoken culture for them and so I think you can definitely apply some of those strategies and techniques when working with impoverished students. I think it would transfer over to those minorities. Because in the end, you want to meet their needs and make them feel

like they belong. Especially because everyone has been trained with Ruby Payne strategies. (Dr. Pettigrew, I/3, lines 91-96)

Creating an environment of empowerment and support among administrators, teachers, and students was evident throughout each of the buildings. Nevertheless, while teachers and administrators illustrated examples of the importance of student empowerment there was an absence of establishing empowerment for underrepresented students.

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Insert Figure 2 about here

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### **Discussion and Implications**

In reflecting upon the data provided, it became evident Peyton has some components already in place within its infrastructure to implement a multicultural framework, but it has not yet made multicultural education a priority within the school district. The findings often reflected a disparity between demonstrating support to students and not knowing how to appropriately address issues of race, partly because discussing race and privilege can be uncomfortable topics for many White Americans (Tatum, 1992). The absence of urgency towards creating change, especially in regards to race, typifies the existence of racism and White privilege by perpetuating an image of White superiority (Heinze, 2008). Many teachers indicated they valued each student and by all indications were inherently good people and good educators. Nonetheless, the absence of racist comments does not necessarily mean a person is not racist (Irving, 2014). By ignoring the needs of minority students or ceasing to teach White American

students how to become more empathetic towards others, educators may be perpetuating ethnocentric views without their knowledge (Ambrosio, 2013 & Burden et al., 2004).

Within the area of content integration, participants tended to mirror the research in regards to teaching multicultural education within specific disciplines (Banks, 2004a). A handful of teachers outside of social studies and literacy classes (Burden et al., 2004) had attempted to incorporate multicultural lessons, but these were the exceptions rather than the norm. Because norms have not been created for discussing and embracing people from a global perspective, teachers often found themselves confronted with feelings of discomfort.

Analysis of the educators' comments supported the notion that appearing to be colorblind to students has been a way for teachers to understand their lack of knowing how students of color actually perceive their community (Helms, 2008). But expecting minority students to conform to their surroundings denies these students the opportunity to recognize, much less celebrate their own identities (Helms, 2008). Ignoring the existence of other races also lets White educators feel good about their own heritage and background (Boatright-Horowitz & Soeung, 2009) while denying their minority students those same feelings about where they come from and who they are as individuals. This example illustrates how being born White is a privilege while subversively denying the rights and privileges of minorities (McIntosh, 1988).

The findings from the study revealed that although Peyton School District has many supports in place for students and teachers, there has been little movement toward instituting the kind of changes recommended by Banks (2004a). There were certainly individuals who expressed concerns about the lack of awareness or empathy towards

students of color within and outside of their community. There were other teachers who confirmed the description Ambrosio (2013) postulated about having feelings of discomfort and even fear when thinking about the needs of students of color such as the example of the teacher uncomfortable with identifying her student as African American. White privilege was particularly evident in the example of the teacher who thought her minority students' greatest challenge would be finding a prom date. Although White students may also agree finding a prom date to be a challenge, her response verified the assumption that students of color have a smaller pool of students to select as well as potential problems arising from being part of a bi-racial couple in a small, predominately White community.

Developing an awareness of hegemonic thinking and understanding the different types of racism can be useful as a starting point for an organization. Helping teachers to confront their own biases often initially feels threatening, but drawing on Peyton's strong sense of community may help administrators and district leaders approach these systemic issues in a professional and supportive manner. The literature explains the importance of bridging theory to practice (Gay, 2004), yet in the case of Peyton, this community would likely benefit from exploring more about theory prior to the implementation of new practices.

Creating change means more than making small adjustments to the program. It involves working with all stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2008), including students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Due to the fact Peyton has an established and strong foundation of professional development, this lends itself to a natural starting point for the school district. Using a model of multicultural education,

such as the model Banks created, would provide teachers and administrators with a framework to work towards rather than feeling overwhelmed with the unknown, especially for a rural and homogenous community.

Another way to develop a multicultural framework would be to utilize the key factors addressed by Lisi and Howe (1999). The first challenge postulates the majority of teachers and administrators have not received the skills towards becoming multicultural leaders. Leaders at the nearby university and at the school district could work together to ensure preservice teachers are receiving classes in multicultural education. Second, providing time for teachers to participate in workshops or to collaborate with districts that have successfully implemented a multicultural framework would be helpful. Third, moving beyond simply building cultural awareness for students and teachers and providing opportunities for applying new knowledge would be beneficial. Utilizing Banks' dimensions provides guidance in this area.

Using the professional development structures already in place, especially the work done with Ruby Payne would be another way to provide structure to the development of new multicultural professional development. Although Peyton does not currently have a multicultural education framework in place, there are parallels between children living in poverty and minority children. The Ruby Payne framework contains elements essential to the development of multicultural awareness, specifically in regards to race. For example, there are connections between the dominant "in" groups and the marginalized "out" groups. Those not in the dominant groups are sometimes referred to as *others* or the excluded who are seen as "childlike and inferior" (Nkomo, 1992, p. 488).

Nkomo (1992) asserted that when the *others* attempt to exercise their rights and defend their desire for inclusiveness, those in the dominant group ignore them and continue with the status quo way of doing things. One way to overcome the battle between in- and out-groups is through contact hypothesis. Contact hypothesis claims participating in positive interactions with people from different groups encourages positive attitudes between the groups (Hewstone, 2015). This especially holds true if the in-groups' perception of the interaction is favorable (Nkomo, 1992).

In the case of Peyton, educating teachers about children living in poverty has been a priority, and school leaders have put multiple practices in place to support these children and their families. However, the same emphasis has currently not been placed on the development of incorporating a multicultural framework to support and positively interact with students of color, but it would be a natural place to start since the infrastructure for poverty has already been established. Recognizing the links between minority students and poverty may serve as an initial starting point, but leaders would be prudent not to perpetuate the stereotype that all minority students are also living in a state of poverty.

Finally, there is a realistic possibility this school district is simply not ready to tackle race at the current time. Teachers who were interviewed shared anecdotes and incidences of racism, but they also shared other concerns including sexism, religious differences, social economic status, disabilities, and sexual orientation. Singling out race as a way to confront multicultural education might not be the first step for the community of Peyton. Perhaps the goal should be helping teachers and students become not only more tolerant and aware of differences but to also develop the skills to become socially

responsible citizens. In any community, there are people who are different, and eradicating discrimination often seems a futile attempt, but that does not mean educators and students cannot establish norms of acceptance. Utilizing a multicultural framework, such as the one created by Banks (2004a), provides guidelines for supporting students from a variety of backgrounds as a way to examine current practices in the areas of professional development, curriculum, and personnel decisions.

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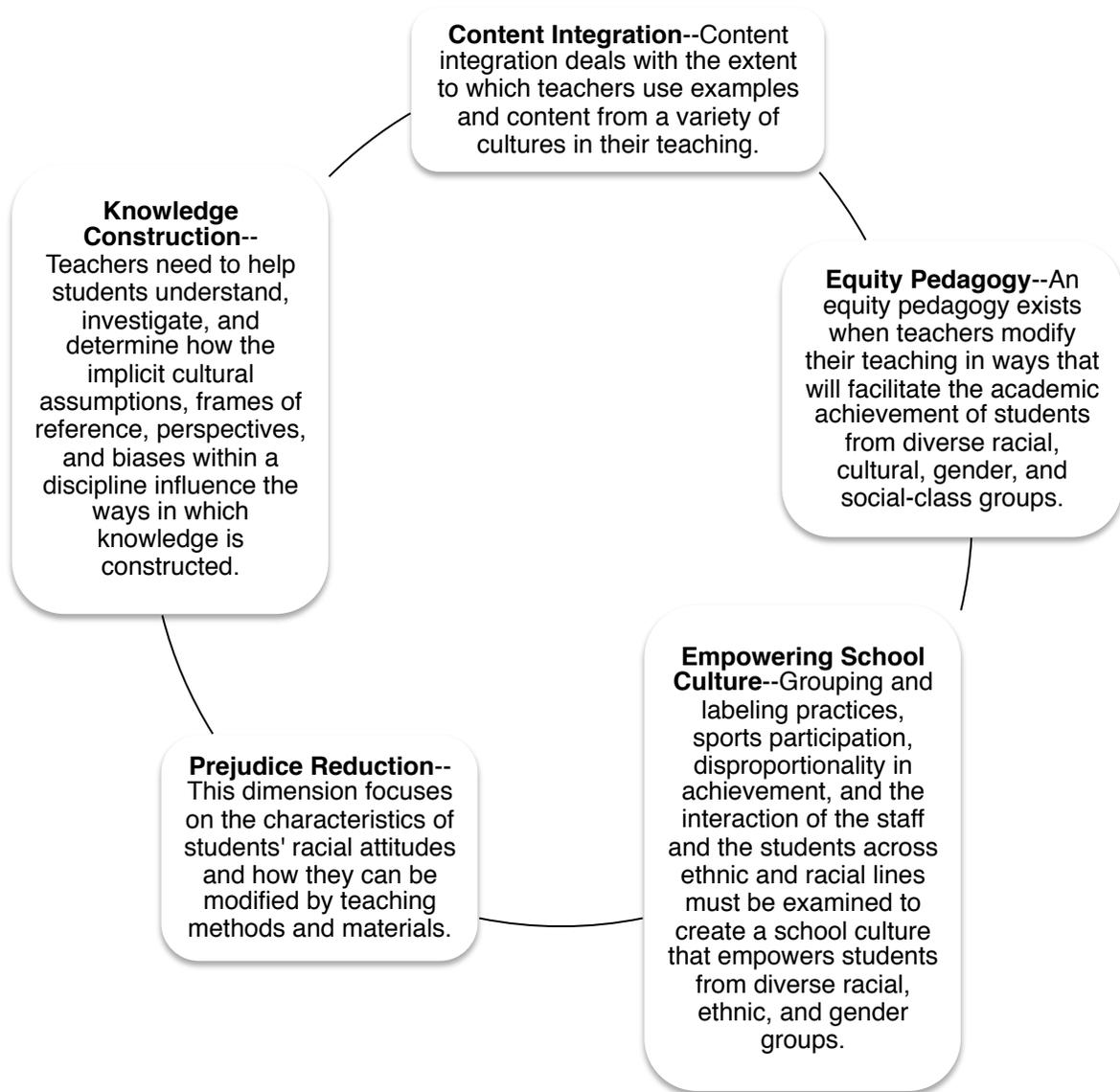
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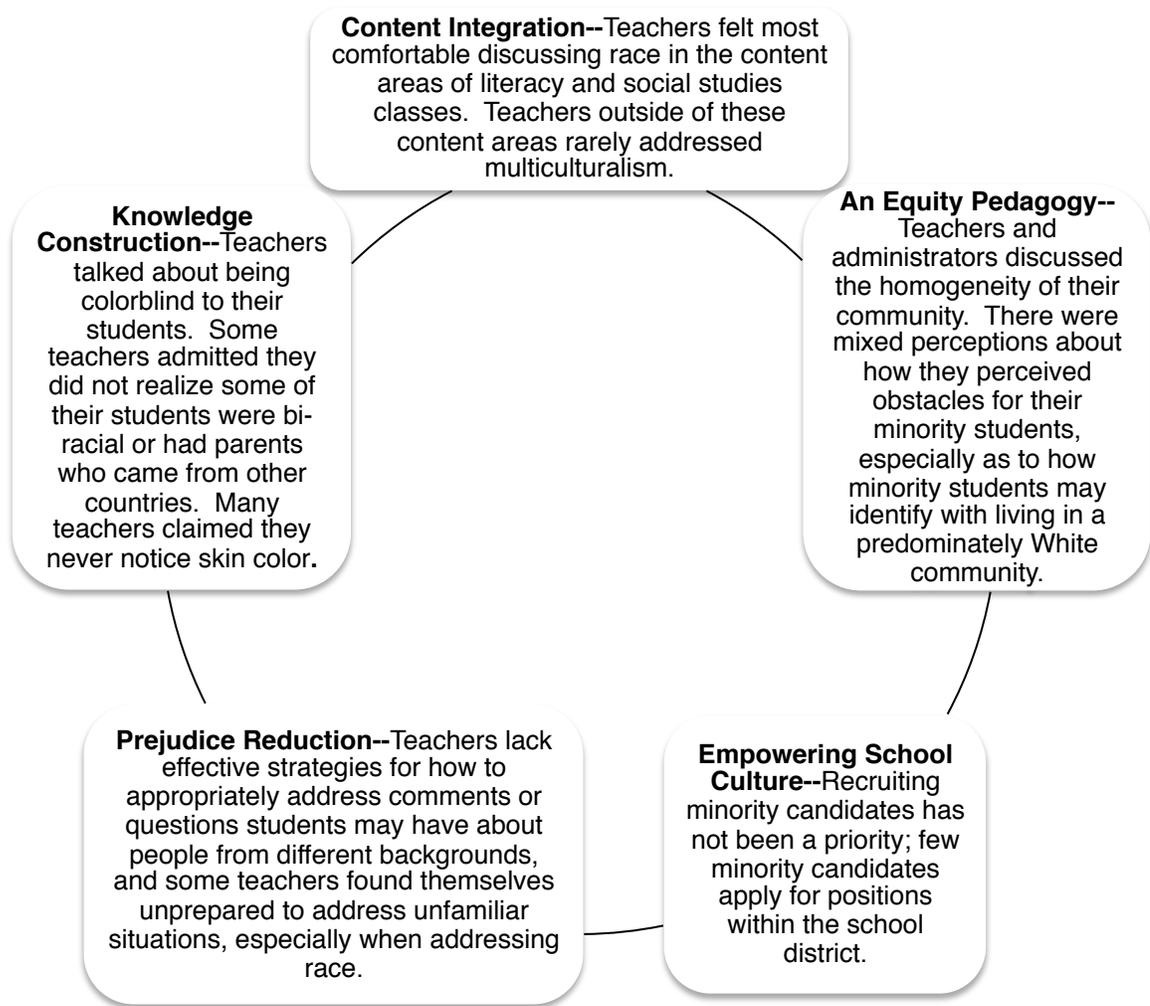
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### Author Notes

This article was written as part of a doctoral dissertation. The first author was referenced in the article as the primary researcher; her dissertation committee provided expert support for the research but was not directly involved in data collection or data analysis.



*Figure 1.* The dimensions of multicultural education. Copyright 2004a by James A. Bank.



*Figure 2.* The dimensions of multicultural education from [insert school name]. Adapted from “The Dimensions of Multicultural Education.” by J. A. Bank, 2004a.

SECTION SIX:  
SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

Like so many other challenges, the dissertation process has been one of dyadic elements, simultaneously frustrating and rewarding. I had the freedom and flexibility to select a topic that represented my interests and developed a profundity of knowledge in the areas of multicultural education and White privilege. Completion of the doctoral program and my dissertation has prepared me to be an educational leader and a scholar.

### **The Dissertation and Being an Educational Leader**

Being a leader in education is filled with responsibilities and numerous wicked problems. The dissertation has helped to refine my own leadership styles as I emerge as an upcoming leader in my community. Nevertheless, while I continue refining my leadership skills, I remain aware of the challenges personally and professionally that lie ahead.

### **Leadership Styles**

To become an effective leader, I have learned to embrace the variety of ways people exhibit leadership. Being part of this doctoral program has given me the language to identify how people vary in their leadership styles, and how I also continue to evolve as a leader.

Reading Northouse (2013), I often thought to myself, “*That’s* the kind of learner I want to emulate.” I found myself wanting to be a transformational leader, and then an authentic leader. I would lean towards servant leadership before shifting towards a cultural and global leader. Until I realized leadership is all about balance. A leader does not have to remain loyal to a single pedagogy or one way of thinking. Rather, different situations, experiences, and different stakeholders necessitate the need for multiple leadership styles.

As a classroom teacher, I strive to be a servant leader (Northouse, 2013) one that puts the needs of my students first, to be compassionate, and to nurture their mental and emotional development. When I work with my co-workers, I strive to be a team leader, (Levi, 2014) one who recognizes the value and importance of individual and group roles within the organization. While I have my own agenda of incorporating multicultural understanding at an organizational level I remain cognizant that the foundation of all team relationships involve trust and an absence of trust can be detrimental (Lencioni, 2002). Ettlign (2012) revealed suggestions for fostering transformative learning including building relationships and trust, discovering and unveiling areas of discomfort and conflict, and fostering a learning environment for participants to collaborate.

During the dissertation process, I strived to implement Ettligns's suggestions for transformative learning. I was able to gain trust from the participants in my study allowing them to share candid experiences and stories with me and therefore providing me with the rich, descriptive data I was seeking. There were times I felt discomfort, such as walking into a school and preparing to conduct focus groups and interviews. I also experienced discomfort and conflict as I initially began combing through the data I had collected and realizing I was going to need to approach the data from a new perspective. Collaboration occurred through conversations with my advisor, trusted friends, and family. Overall, the dissertation process has had a transformational effect on my own understanding of leadership, academia, and education.

### **Room to Grow**

Even the most well-intentioned leader succumbs in allowing biases to infiltrate thought processes and decision-making skewing the possibility for all people to receive

equitable benefits. Initially, I believed I was one of those people who was able to sift through my own ethics and biases in order to make socially conscious decisions to reduce discrimination among others. Maybe the better way to say it was that I *wanted* to be that person. However, the uncomfortable fact is that most people whether willingly or not, allow “unconscious thoughts and feelings to influence seemingly objective decisions” (Banaji, Bazerman, & Chugh, 2003/2013, p. 115). Banaji et al. (2003/2013) asserted it is not enough for leaders to have good intentions to reduce biases, but they must be actively vigilant by setting an example in the work environment, collecting data, and improving their own decision making skills. I continue to remind myself to keep my own biases in check such as when I listened to participants in my study who had different opinions than I did.

Since I began the dissertation, I have immersed myself into understanding the importance of incorporating a multicultural and accepting professional organization, and I am reminded of the unending barriers standing in the way of progress. Many colleagues recognize the importance of developing a multicultural organization, but it tends to be a low priority when teachers are already asked to do so much. Tatum (1997) speaks on the cost of White privilege and how it affects all people. Those in the White majority have to ask themselves some difficult questions such as: Why would a school or a community give up some of the power they hold? or Why should we change if there are no African-Americans in our school? As a leader, these are often overwhelming concepts many people in the White majority are not prepared to discuss. While often frustrating, this is the path I feel drawn towards, by educating others through my leadership and to provide equitable access for all of our citizens. The recommendations I made in my dissertation

will be useful and relevant as I continue working in a community that often feels homogenous.

As I continue to move forward in my career, something I return to again and again are the often neglected actions within learning including reflection and evaluation. I realized I too have a tendency to bypass reflection and evaluation components and am currently striving to improve in this area as I have more opportunities to lead. Drawing upon my own strengths in the areas of Input and Intellection (Clifton et al., 2006) has assisted me in seeking out new knowledge for the betterment of the group and to engage in stimulating conversations. Utilizing simple ways to reflect and evaluate using instruments such as the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) as described by Preskill and Brookfield (2009) help to foster openness in a safe and consistent manner and one in which I intend to utilize as I continue my pursuit to be an effective leader, as well as draw from my strengths in order to grow both personally and professionally.

Moving forward, I am preparing to work in a school with a significant number of students living below the poverty line. During the dissertation process, I was introduced to the teachings of Ruby Payne, whose work is aimed at helping teachers working with children in poverty. Although there are some who oppose her, as discussed in Chapter 2, I have already gained a significant amount of knowledge towards supporting the needs of children in poverty. I plan to use the leadership skills I have learned throughout my dissertation to help me become an advocate to my students and to emerge as a leader.

### **The Dissertation and Being a Scholar**

The dissertation process has been more than the final hurdle to completing a doctorate degree. It has been a battle of wills, a balance of priorities, and an homage to

becoming an expert in my field. In this section, I will address the acculturation process of becoming a scholar, contributing factors to my success, and next steps.

### **Reacculturation**

Before beginning the dissertation portion of the journey, I first had to learn the scholarly milieu, norms, and language. At the core of this journey, my advisor, Dr. MacGregor, would often remind us of her mantra to constantly “read, write, speak, and think” in order to become a scholar. Those four verbs were the foundation of everything to come over the next few years. The plethora of books, journal articles, and peer-reviews we read in class prepared me for the in-depth reading I would undertake to complete the various iterations of my dissertation, while the extent of research projects I completed with my classmates provided the scaffolding for how to write my own dissertation. We orally presented our findings in different presentation styles, and were expected to participate in class discussions. I learned a great deal from listening to my peers, and at the same time I learned how to better articulate my own ideas when speaking in front of others. Through reading, writing, and speaking, I was able to increase my ability to think cogently and put a physical shape to my ideas through the dissertation process.

Learning how to communicate as a scholar has been an enormous part of the dissertation process. I had been teaching for a number of years before returning to school. I had the terms, jargon, and understanding of a well-rounded teacher, but did not yet have the language of a scholar. Through the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis (ELPA) program and the dissertation process I had to reacculturate my previous teaching experiences into a way I could contribute my thoughts and ideas as an academic

(Bruffee, 1998). In other words, I needed to change, through collaboration and conversations, with my new peers and teachers. Bruffee would also say when a person engages in new conversations, a shift in personal opinions and feelings about a topic also changes. This shift contributes to the development of interdependence.

I do not see reacculturation as a final endpoint, rather as a starting point to further engage in earnest conversations. I have been soaking up and absorbing a variety of theories, pedagogies, and leadership styles during the dissertation process. There is never an endpoint to learning, as learning is a cyclical process each time you decided to tackle something new. But I think the cycle culminates into some form of transformation. Mezirow postulates, “a transformative learning experience requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to act or not” (2009, p. 22). Engaging in critical reflection as an individual (Taylor, 2009), through the reacculturation process and through transformative learning has provided me with the tools to emerge from the dissertation as scholar and contributor to my field.

### **Contributing Factors: My Village**

White America has a strong history of prioritizing the individual over the collective whole, and yet, I have always identified with the saying, “it takes a village to raise a child” (African proverb). This reference attributes the importance of a community to support and raise a child rather than one person, or one family doing it alone. It cannot be stated enough how important the people I consider to be in my “village” have contributed towards the completion of my dissertation and ultimately my actions as a scholar.

Throughout this process I have been fortunate to build my own team as allies. Starting with my parents who have believed in me and cheered for me since I was a child. I will be the first woman in my family to receive my doctorate and earn an EdD, just as my father did. This sense of connection and bond between my parents and the encouragement from my sister has been the base of my stronghold. Shortly after beginning the EdD program, I met the man who would become my husband, and he never complained about the hours I spent studying, writing, or working. We had numerous discussions about how this journey would affect our lives and what it could ultimately do for my career as a scholar. The support of my family cannot be stated enough as a major factor in my success.

Outside of my family, I had another unwavering support system, that of my fellow classmates. The people in this support system propelled me in a different direction. With my cohort members we could support one another with firsthand experience of each step of the process. Bruffee would describe this shared learning experience as “shifting social allegiances because knowledge results from acknowledgment” (1998, p. 136). This new social allegiances helped us develop the framework for cheering those in our group who completed each step, and rallying behind those who were still working to achieve their own goals. Once classes ended, confronting the individual work of the dissertation came into full effect, and I was fortunate to continue working with members of my cohort. These people evolved from classmates, to life-long friends.

The final support system stemmed from the mentors and advisors I have developed along the way. When I began the doctoral program, the dissertation simply

loomed in the distance and its reality seemed unattainable. Then one day, it became real, and I had the guidance and gentle steering of my advisors and mentors. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to do a multicultural study in a homogenous setting, but I did not yet have the tools to articulate the shape or parameters of my study. One of my favorite memories was on a cold, winter day my advisor suggested meeting at a coffee shop rather than in the office. I had come to the meeting with several derivatives of the same topic and we worked collaboratively to weigh the pros and cons of each possibility. I left that meeting filled with the excitement that comes from developing a plan and knowing somehow or another, the plan could and would come into fruition.

I cannot calculate how much time my “village” worked with me, and I in return worked with them. This is not to detract or take away from the hours, months, and years to complete this process that I have accomplished individually towards completing my end results. I have drawn upon my own determination and commitment toward writing a dissertation that I hope will have practical implications in the scholarly field. There have been few empirical studies on the topic I have chosen, and therefore my dissertation truly adds to the scholarly field of literature. I passionately believe I have an obligation to strive for social justice and am committed to educating others in this area. Gratitude towards my team, and gratitude for having a platform to contribute to my field has been such a strong motivating factor to my success throughout the dissertation process.

### **Next Steps**

When I began the ELPA program, I had a hazy idea of becoming a leader. I knew I wanted to contribute to my field, and in many ways, I wondered if I even had the necessary tools to come a leader. Nevertheless, as I have finally emerged from the

doctoral program and the penultimate experience of conducting a research study and defending my dissertation, I have developed the confidence and skills towards becoming a leader in my field. Never one to do things the easy way, I have gone back to school in order to fulfill the requirements of obtaining my certification in educational administration. With this final educational piece in order, I will be able to segue from the classroom and have more opportunities to support students, faculty, and my community.

The dissertation process has been like a terrifying yet exhilarating roller coaster ride. I love the thrill that comes from the anticipation of the next big incline. I am still learning how to control the fear that comes with the unknown, but I am cognizant enough to know learning how to manage those bumps is part of the experience. The thrill of going down the big hill is akin to the defense of my dissertation, with the knowledge it is only a matter of time before the ride swings me to the left, to the right, or straight back up into another challenge. By the time the ride comes to an end, I am nearly always ready to jump back in and start the process another time. While the dissertation has finally stopped at its culminating destination, just like the roller coaster, I am excited to get back into ride and experience life all over again.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions for Administrators Protocol

1. Are there any practices put into the hiring process that attempts to hire minority candidates?
2. Do you actively seek minority candidates? If so, how do you do that?
3. What practices are put into place for preparing educators for a multicultural curriculum?
4. What supports can you anticipate would make it easier to create or implement a multicultural school culture?
5. How do you think parents would react with the implementation of a multicultural framework?
6. How do you think students/families from minority backgrounds would feel with the implementation of a multicultural framework?
7. What obstacles could you anticipate with educators for setting up a multicultural framework?
8. Prejudice reduction is one of the steps of implementing a multicultural education framework (Banks, 2004a), but contrary to research, some educators feel students are unaware of racial inequities and therefore do not want to discuss problems that do not seem to exist. As an administrator, how would you support teachers who feel uncomfortable discussing race?
9. Empowering school culture is one way to restructure the culture of the school, especially for students of color and low-income students (Banks, 2004a). Since Peyton School District already utilizes techniques from Ruby Payne to address

poverty, do you think there are overlapping concepts that would help restructure school culture and empower minority students?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your thoughts on multicultural education?

## Appendix B

### Focus Group Questions for Educators Protocol

1. How would you describe the demographics in your class(es)?
2. What obstacles do you think minority students face in a predominantly White environment?
3. How do you celebrate or recognize leaders from other backgrounds in the classroom?
4. Do you see your school as an advocate for teaching about people from various backgrounds, specifically in regards to race?
5. What restraints, if any, do you feel prevent you from teaching your students about people and cultures from different racial backgrounds?
6. Do you think/feel you are part of a White culture? What does it look like?
7. What lessons or units have you taught about minority leaders that you're really proud of? If you could have changed anything about that unit, what would it have been?
8. Do you feel comfortable teaching about people that come from a different race? If so, how, and if not, why not?
9. Do you feel supported by parents and administrators to discuss race? If so, how, and if not, why not?
10. Do you feel professional development workshops provide a safe environment for discussing issues surrounding race and reducing prejudice?
11. Is there anything else about multicultural education you would like to share?

Appendix C

**School Visit/ Classroom Observation Protocol**

<b>Date:</b>		<b>Class Observed:</b>	
<b>DIMINSIONS OF MULTICULTUAL EDUCATION</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>	<b>NOTES</b>	
<b>Content Integration:</b> What is discussed, how it is integrated, and who is the audience?			
<b>Knowledge Construction:</b> Helps students grasp and explore how cultural perspectives influence the ways knowledge is constructed.			
<b>Prejudice Reduction:</b> Focuses on students' racial attitudes and the strategies employed to facilitate more egalitarian attitudes and values.			

<p><b>Creating an Equity</b></p> <p><b>Pedagogy:</b> Teachers reshape their teaching to highlight academic success of students from diverse backgrounds.</p>		
<p><b>Empowering School</b></p> <p><b>Culture:</b> Ways the school structures and reorganizes to benefit students from diverse backgrounds.</p>		

## Appendix D

### **Research Consent Form**

**What the study is about:** The purpose of this study is to gain insight into the perspectives of educators regarding multicultural education. The interview/focus group will take approximately one hour to complete. With your permission, I will also record the interview.

**Risks and benefits:** There is a risk you may find some of the questions sensitive. I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

**Confidentiality:** The data collected will be kept private. Anything you provide will not include information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be stored in a locked file, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

**Participation is voluntary:** Participating in the study is completely voluntary. You may skip any question you do not want to answer. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

**Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Rachal Tarrasch-Scholz under the advisement of Dr. Cynthia MacGregor. If you have any questions after the interview, you may contact Rachal Tarrasch-Scholz at [rtarrasch@gmail.com](mailto:rtarrasch@gmail.com) or 646-407-2827. You can reach Dr. MacGregor at [CMacgregor@missouristate.edu](mailto:CMacgregor@missouristate.edu) or (417) 836-6046

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information, and I consent to participate in the study. In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## VITA

Rachal Elisabeth Tarrasch-Scholz was born in Springfield, MO. After graduating from the University of Missouri with a B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies she worked as a Youth Director in St. Louis, MO. From there, she moved to New York City and began her career in education. She was selected as a New York City Teaching Fellow and completed her M.S. in Education through Mercy College while simultaneously working with children with special needs for five years. She spent a year teaching English in Buenos Aires, Argentina before returning to New York and working at a charter school teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Returning to Springfield, MO, she spent five years teaching 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at a private, independent school while working towards her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. Never one to stop learning, she is currently working towards a certification in Educational Administration where she hopes to continue supporting students of all ages.