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Humanity in the Classroom: An Exploration of Race in Teacher Behavior and Interaction with Students

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

HUMANITY IN THE CLASSROOM:
AN EXPLORATION OF RACE IN
TEACHER BEHAVIOR AND INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

BRIELLEN E. GRIFFIN

CHICAGO, IL

DECEMBER 2020

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This project was made possible by constant struggle, love, and support from multiple generations of my family. When I close my eyes and think about the origin of this work, my paternal grandparents are always present in my mind. Edward Sterling Rice, Sr. and Mona Mae Pleasant, I am honored to be doing this work in the place that you made a home for our family. During this process, I have called out to you and you have answered. I am grateful for your love and your high expectations.

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To my babies, I mean, this is all for you. Being your mom is the highlight of my life. It's a daily surprise, a journey, and a joy. I have been in school for your entire lives and I know that you understand why this path is important for our community and our legacy. I am proud that you recognize your own humanity, that you can call out and contend with antiblackness, and that you have all, at one point or another, been part of this work. Thank you for your patience,

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If you are reading this, you are most likely invested in Black humanity and you are as tired of antiblackness as I am. This is for us. Let's get to work.

For the ancestors and for us. The time is now.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES | ix |
| LIST OF FIGURES | x |
| ABSTRACT | xi |
| CHAPTER ONE: ORIGIN STORY | 1 |
| Introduction | 4 |
| Study Goals and Contributions to the Field | 7 |
| Dissertation Overview | 9 |
| CHAPTER TWO: KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE: FREEDOM AND OPPRESSION IN THE BLACK PURSUIT OF EDUCATION | 13 |
| Education as Liberation: Ontology of Black Freedom | 18 |
| Education as Oppression: Antiblackness and the Development of Education for Ex-Slaves | 25 |
| Educational Oppression in the Segregated South | 27 |
| Educational Oppression in the “Integrated” North | 31 |
| Teachers as Intermediators: Oppression of Black Students in Policy and Practice | 42 |
| Implicit Racial Bias and Oppression of Black Students | 45 |
| Conclusion | 49 |
| Theoretical Framework | 50 |
| CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS | 58 |
| Critical Collaborative Case Study | 59 |
| Epistemology | 62 |
| Site Selection and Description | 63 |
| Participant Recruitment and Selection | 65 |
| District Context: Definitions of Race and Training for Race Consciousness | 67 |
| Data Collection | 69 |
| Narratives | 70 |
| Interviews | 70 |
| Observation | 72 |
| Group Study | 73 |
| Data Analysis | 74 |
| Positionality and Reflexivity | 77 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: TEACHERS’ IDEAS AND BELIEFS ABOUT RACE | 80 |
| Findings Overview | 80 |
| Understanding Social Context: Ideas about Race in Society and Community | 82 |
| Teaching for Diversity: Racial Tensions Within and Between Programs | 84 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| “What Do You Teach?” Ideas about Race in Philosophy and Curriculum | 88 |
| Relational Aspects of Teaching: Unpacking Teachers’ Ideas About Race, Culture, and Connection | 92 |
| Teacher Identity: Examining the Importance of Race | 96 |
| Teacher Perceptions of Racial Bias in Teaching | 100 |
| | |
| CHAPTER FIVE: TEACHERS’ PRACTICE OF RACE IN THE CLASSROOM | 104 |
| “Now I’m Going to Talk Black”: Performing Race in the Classroom | 105 |
| Antiblackness: On the Racialized Treatment of Students | 109 |
| Discipline in Black-Integrated Classrooms | 110 |
| Negligence: Ignoring Black Girls | 114 |
| Beyond the Black-White Paradigm: Latinx Invisibility in the Classroom | 116 |
| Pedagogies of Caring: Toward Anti-Racist Teacher Practice | 118 |
| | |
| CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION | 125 |
| Discussion | 126 |
| Teachers’ Understanding of Antiblackness as a Sociopolitical Reality | 127 |
| Teachers’ Practice of Antiblackness and Practice for Black Humanity | 130 |
| Implications | 133 |
| Antiblackness: Racial Ideology, Social Cognition & Teacher Practice | 134 |
| Humanizing Pedagogy or Education for Black Humanity | 138 |
| Limitations | 140 |
| Conclusion | 143 |
| | |
| APPENDIX A: TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER | 145 |
| | |
| APPENDIX B: TEACHER INTEREST FORM | 148 |
| | |
| APPENDIX C: TEACHING STATEMENT | 150 |
| | |
| APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1 | 152 |
| | |
| APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2 | 155 |
| | |
| APPENDIX F: GROUP STUDY PROTOCOL | 158 |
| | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 160 |
| | |
| VITA | 176 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1. Robinson Elementary Teacher Participants | 67 |
| Table 2. Thematic Codes and Definitions | 74 |
| Table 3. Inductive Codes and Definitions | 75 |
| Table 4. Schema for Teacher Behavior and Interaction with Students | 77 |

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Discipline & Negligence by Race and Gender in Black-Integrated Classrooms 109

ABSTRACT

The hyper-surveillance of Black students has been well documented by educators and researchers across disciplines and reflects an increase in calls for research that examines the reproduction of racial inequality in educational spaces. To contend with the presence of antiblackness in the classroom is fundamentally about recognizing the humanity of Black students and interrogating the ways that they are dehumanized by racialized structures and social interactions. To examine antiblackness and humanity in the classroom, I conducted a critical collaborative case study with six teachers from an elementary school in a diverse Midwestern school district. I engaged BlackCrit Theory to examine how teachers' ideas and beliefs about race manifest in their interactions with and behavior towards students. Based on the analysis of teacher statements, interviews, classroom observations and collaborative teacher group study over the course of two school years, findings revealed that antiblackness emerges in the relational context of teaching and learning, regardless of teachers' articulated ideas and beliefs about race. Teachers' inability to recognize antiblackness in their beliefs showed up as highly racialized treatment of students in the classroom, whereas recognition of racial bias corresponded to more actively antiracist teaching and humanizing pedagogy. These findings suggest that humanizing educational experiences for Black students must be consciously cultivated through the development and practice of anti-racist relational pedagogy.

CHAPTER ONE

ORIGIN STORY

A pivotal moment in my career as a school social worker occurred when I told a white preschool teacher that she was creating two classrooms within one, segregated by race. I was attempting to explain how her treatment of Black students was influenced by her responses to the behavior of one four-year-old African American girl who was dealing with an intense amount of family trauma, uncharacteristic of most other Black children in the class. This created a classroom dynamic in which white students with discipline issues were treated in a much gentler manner than Black students who were not exhibiting behavioral problems. In response to my assertion, she began to cry. She was very upset and frustrated. Her verbal response was, “But, I cried when Martin Luther King died.”

In the conversation that followed, I found myself drawing deeply from my social work training in empathy, a value and a skill that was severely depleted after just a few years of bridging a gap between white teachers and Black students on a constant basis. Lorraine, the teacher I currently sat with, was a frequent visitor to my office, often dragging a child by the arm to my door for “a break” from class. Lorraine was not alone; most white female teachers in our building paid me a visit on a weekly, if not daily basis, brown-skinned children in tow. My colleagues, both African American, and myself would shake our heads as they walked out the door, disappointed but never surprised at their inability to handle our students and, ironically, their increasing reliance on us to practice the empathy they seemed to lack when dealing with the

same students in the classroom.

I will admit I was surprised at Lorraine's tearful plea. She was twelve, she said, on the day that Dr. King was assassinated. Her parents sat her in front of the television so she could see the reports and she was grief-stricken, that such a great man could be killed so brutally for fighting for peace. How was it possible, she asked, that she could be creating a racially segregated classroom when she believed so strongly in racial equality?

I use this example frequently to explain how whiteness is practiced in teaching and in the professional world by conflating espoused social values with self-assessment of interracial interactions. "White emotionality" plays a powerful role in the perpetuation of racial ideology in the classroom (Matias, 2016). Teachers may talk about racial equality but fail to apply these concepts to their own practice and become emotional when challenged on this reality. Consequently, their emotions are validated while the actual injustice being experienced by students goes unchecked. I have spoken with many Lorraines, who are shocked and offended that their beliefs in diversity and racial equality are not reflected in their pedagogies.

However, I am also encountering with higher frequency teachers like Sonja, an activist educator and friend of mine who teaches about oppression and power, who also has a developing awareness of her own racialized pedagogy. During a recent conversation about my work, Sonja reflected on teaching in a diverse urban high school early in her career, where she had a realization that she was "failing" young African American men more than any other student group. In fact, she ending up leaving her first teaching job, partially as a result of this realization and an understanding that she would never have the resources or support she would need to deconstruct her pedagogy in service to these students.

As a social worker-turned-educator-and-researcher, I routinely reflect on the ways that teachers like Lorraine and Sonja informed my experiences as a student and a teacher. I grew up in small urban and suburban schools in the Midwest and on the east coast, where white students represented the majority and many students of color were bused in from other areas. As a white-looking, multiracial, Black girl, I grew increasingly aware of the privilege I received in these spaces, particularly from teachers and school professionals. While I was recognized as a student of color, I was also rarely singled out for behavioral concerns and was frequently praised for my intellectual ability. As an elementary student, I never reflected on this experience as unusual. By high school, however, I realized that I was in fewer classes with my Black friends, who had been tracked into lower level courses, and I was increasingly teased for being smart and “white.” The racial divide that I would see again as school social worker became apparent during these formative adolescent years when I began to understand the social privilege that came with light skin and the obstacles, barriers, and restrictions more frequently encountered by my darker skinned classmates.

Increased awareness and understanding of racial inequalities in schooling began to lead me towards a line of questioning that has never truly been satisfied, despite years of professional experience, research and study: why are white students treated better than Black students? Why was my intelligence and star-quality assumed by my teachers just as readily as my best friends were expected to be average or worse? Why did they have to work so much harder to be considered exceptional?

The answer, I believe, is connected to the incredulous Lorraine that I encountered decades later, shocked at my claims that she was segregating her classroom by race, and to the

antiblackness that is woven into education policy and, as I will explore, pedagogical practice (Dumas, 2016). As I observed Lorraine console and praise white children, while chastising and punishing Black children, I couldn't help but see myself and my classmates reflected in her classroom. It was evident that Lorraine, like my teachers, treated white and Black children differently. Why couldn't they admit to it? Or, perhaps, why couldn't they see it?

Introduction

This study is an exploration of antiblackness in teacher behavior and interactions with students. This work requires a deep, critical analysis of the structural and interpersonal processes of racism and the inequality it helps to reproduce in the classroom. As institutions of learning, schools play an integral role in the transmission of racial ideologies which, in the United States, is particularly rooted in the antiblackness birthed and nurtured during the transatlantic slave trade (Dumas, 2016). At the institutional level, the reproduction of racial inequality through neoliberal school reform and resegregation (Dumas, 2011; Frankenburg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011; Lipman, 2011), academic tracking (Tyson, 2011), and discipline (Ferguson, 2001; ACLU, 2016), demonstrate the continued impact of racism on Black students, in particular, and other students of color. Even (or especially) in high-performing “diverse” schools, Black students continue to receive lower grades and test scores, are disciplined at higher rates, and graduate at lower rates than their white classmates (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, Wun, 2016; Wun, 2018). And while institutional structures and practices continue to sort and segregate students along racial lines, research in the social and behavioral sciences demonstrates that the institutional agents within schools, such as teachers, can operate as both gatekeepers and facilitators (Stanton-Salazar, 2011), either maintaining racial inequality or working towards racial equity.

As bridges between educational institutions and students, teachers occupy a complex position in the racialized power structure. Their role is integrated into the organizational structure of the institution, but their work is also a fundamentally relational act. Pedagogy is about how teachers relate to students and specifically, the best way to bring about learning. And yet, it remains tethered to the power structure at all times. Freire (2000/1970), reminds us that education can be humanizing, a partnership between teacher-student and student-teacher, but that it is quite often a dehumanizing project, in which pedagogy reinforces a stratified social structure. This phenomenon is reflected in teachers' beliefs about and desires to work in "urban" communities, which they perceive to be the most "needy," and deserving of good teachers (Watson, 2011). These deficit perspectives, in which race is codified in words like "urban" and "suburban" (Watson, 2012), provide a narrative for pedagogy that dehumanizes students of color and reinforces a depiction of white teachers as "saviors" (Vera & Gordon, 2003; Brown, 2013). Even with an eye towards (in)justice, teachers' desires to "sacrifice and give back to disadvantaged students of color" (Matias, 2016), are too deeply entangled with dehumanizing frameworks to be effective in an institutional context.

On an interpersonal level, deficit frameworks influence how teachers engage, or don't engage, students of color. In the context of teaching, engagement is operationalized through the construct of teacher caring (Noddings, 1992). When students "believe their teachers care for them and their well-being," they experience educational success in the form of improvement in "attendance, attitude, effort and identification with school" (Roberts, 2010; see also Steele, 1992; Noblit, Rogers, & McCadden, 1995). Despite the potential of relational pedagogy, students of color often experience "inauthentic" teacher caring (Valenzuela, 1999), characterized by deficit

narratives of student abilities and engagement. In particular, reflections of Black male students reveal that teachers communicate low expectations and even “withhold knowledge” from them (Conchas, Lin, Oseguera & Drake, 2015). These young men have also described feeling watched, targeted, and ignored by teachers, even when they are behaving appropriately and are engaged in their learning (Jenkins, 2017). The perception of Black boys as “trouble,” “bad,” or a “problem” (Ferguson, 2001, Noguera, 2008; Howard, 2013) operates as a barrier to authentic teacher-student connection. Howard (2013) asserts that a “paradigmatic shift” is necessary to get away from deficit frameworks that pathologize young Black men. Reframing the question, Howard (2013) asks how the perception of Black boys as “problematic” can “influence teacher behavior?” (p. 59). In other words, how do teachers’ perceptions of Black male students influence their behavior towards these students? And what is it about students’ blackness, in particular, that invokes differential behavior from teachers?

A paradigmatic shift away from deficit framing of Black students forces us to grapple more concretely with the presence of antiblackness as a fixture of education policies and processes, and a concrete barrier to teacher caring. For example, a reframing of educational inequalities that centers antiblackness shifts away from the deficit language of “gaps” in achievement and towards the “education debt” accumulated by insufficient efforts to ensure equitable schooling for Black Americans (Ladson-Billings, 2007). This shift centers the structures and processes enabled by racism, rather than focusing on the inequalities that emerged as a result. Howard’s (2013) emphasis on teachers’ “perceptions” of Black boys as “problematic,” removes the construct of Black boys as the problem and redirects inquiry towards the perceptions and behaviors of teachers. This demands interrogation of how teachers’

perceptions are racialized, thereby producing differential behavior towards Black boys and, consequently, disparate educational outcomes. Howard questions the root – racism – rather than the result – inequality.

To contend with the presence of antiblackness in the classroom is fundamentally about recognizing the humanity of Black students and interrogating the ways that they are dehumanized by racialized structures and social interactions. This is a departure from deficit-based inquiries, which focus on racialized “gaps” in education outcomes for Black students, and are fundamentally rooted in a “concern with the bodies of Black people, the signification of (their) blackness, and the threat posed by the Black to the educational well-being of other students” (Dumas, 2016, p. 12). Refocusing on antiblackness is a break from ideological frameworks that position “slavery” as the “ontological position of Black people” (ibid. p. 13), and a strategic turn towards inquiries that deconstruct the consequences of slavery as a racialized social system in which Black people were reduced to bodies and property. To truly understand the current “position” of Black students, we have to willingly contend with the reality that educational institutions of the twenty-first century are still defined by policies and practices that regulate, control, and police Black children as if they were still legally-sanctioned property, rather than human beings.

Study Goals & Contributions to the Field

The underlying goal of this work is to analyze antiblackness in education practice to move us towards more liberating, humanizing educational spaces for Black students. This project is situated in the paradox of education as a site of potential liberation and a tool of oppression. This paradox is fundamental to analyses of antiblackness in education for two reasons. First,

deficit approaches to understanding racial inequalities in education fail to recognize the rich history of education in the African American community, even during legal enslavement. Despite the fact that Black education was criminalized during slavery and punishable by death, many African Americans became literate and extended this knowledge to their communities after slavery ended, leading the movement for public education, academic excellence, and teacher education (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 1996; Walker, 2013). The belief in education as a site of liberation is not only a fundamental value of the Black American community, it blatantly opposes deficit framing of Black students as responsible for their own failure.

Secondly, the longstanding narrative of education as liberation in the Black American community persists despite the continued use of education as a tool of oppression. Paradigmatic shifts in education research, led primarily by Black educators and scholars, demonstrate a commitment to reorienting inquiries of racial inequalities from “failure” to “success” (Howard 2013, p. 63). This work has largely focused on how teachers successfully navigate teaching Black students in the context of institutional inequities (Delpit 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2013), emphasizing the role of teachers as mediators of ideology and policy through their daily interactions with students. Even as this growing body of work focuses on success of Black students and their teachers, the persistence of deepening inequalities in education outcomes for Black students calls us to reconsider the role of teachers in perpetuating oppression through antiblackness in educational practice.

This project is a commitment to understanding how antiblackness in teacher behavior dehumanizes students at the interactional level of teacher-student dynamics in the classroom. As such, this research addresses a lack of overlap between research that is advancing our theoretical

and empirical knowledge of systemic antiblackness in education policy and an increasingly visible body of research that examines racism in social cognition. By connecting teachers' ideas and beliefs about race with their behavior toward and interaction with students in the classroom, this project demonstrates how race manifests in the processes of teaching and learning.

Dissertation Overview

I begin this work with a review of literature that rearticulates the liberation/oppression paradox as fundamental to analyses of antiblackness in education. I break apart the paradox by suggesting that the legacy of slavery that defines deficit frameworks in educational research cannot be considered without the legacy of freedom, the true ontological position of African Americans as human beings. This paradigmatic shift aligns this particular examination of antiblackness in teacher practice with a philosophy of "education as liberation" (Freire, 2000 / 1970), which has been openly espoused by the Black American community, even since bondage.

Secondly, I explore the role that teachers have played in the oppression and liberation of Black students. This analysis focuses on the historical development of education as a social institution, with particular attention to the role of African Americans in shaping education agendas and institutions, as well as the ways in which legal and social policy reified the oppression of slavery through regulation of these same institutions. Through this analysis, I map antiblackness as a through line, demonstrating how education policy and teacher practice have contributed to the dehumanization of Black students over time. This research highlights how teachers' perceptions of, behavior towards, and relationships with Black students demonstrate antiblackness.

Finally, I introduce a new line of inquiry that calls for an attuned approach to

understanding the mechanics of antiblackness in the classroom. This line of inquiry refocuses antiblackness on interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, which bridges the gap between research that challenges us to think about antiblackness in theoretical and political ways, with research that is actively engaging the cognitive and relational aspects of race. I ask, *how do teacher ideas and beliefs about race manifest in teacher behavior toward and interactions with students?* As this research question suggests, this study posits that race, as an ideological concept, influences teacher behavior and can be observed in their interactions with students. This approach accounts for the idea that racial ideologies are interlinked with “implicit social cognition,” the unconscious or subconscious processes of cognition that can influence how we perceive, process and behave in the social world (Greenwald & Banaji, 2017; Payne & Gronkowski, 2010).

A focus on behavior has the potential to target the processes by which racial ideology informs teachers’ perceptions of Black students and, consequently, their treatment of them. Moreover, a focus on antiblackness in cognition can separate what teachers say they believe about race from how they behave towards students of color. Much like my former colleague Lorraine, who could not understand how her treatment of students could be anti-Black when she espoused beliefs of racial equality and social diversity, teachers’ desires to teach, support, and bond with students of color are not uncomplicated by racial ideology (Watson, 2011; Matias, 2016). In order to understand the role of antiblackness in shaping educational inequalities, we need to explore the ways that antiblackness is reproduced in teacher-student interactions, and in turn, how those interactions impact development or restraint of bonding, communication, and support of Black students through teacher behavior.

At the end of the literature review I outline the theoretical framework for this project, Black Critical Theory (Dumas & ross, 2016), which serves as a foundation for examining antiblackness in education policy and practice and creates space for liberatory possibilities in education. Chapter three explains the critical collaborative methodology of this research and includes a rationale for qualitative research. The findings are discussed across two chapters. Chapter four explains teacher participants' ideas and beliefs about race, as articulated through written narratives and interviews. These findings demonstrate teachers' varied understandings of race and racism, with a focus on the sociohistorical position of Black students in the education system. These findings also discuss teachers' awareness of their own racial bias and their understanding of implicit bias as a feature all people's cognition. Chapter five examines the manifestation of these ideas and beliefs about race in the classroom, through teacher behavior toward and interaction with students. These findings show most teachers discipline Black students more than their Latinx and white counterparts and take fewer opportunities to support Black students in the classroom. These findings also reveal how teachers create affirmative environments for Black students through their concerted efforts to counteract personal racial bias and systemic racism through pedagogy.

Finally, Chapter six is a discussion of findings, including implications for teacher education, pedagogy, and practice. I argue that the findings reveal how Black students are routinely marginalized through teacher practice and that this practice is connected to teachers' understanding of the ways that racism manifests through social cognition. Additionally, I demonstrate that teachers who make a concerted effort to identify and explore their own racial bias are able to create humanizing experiences for Black students by actively engaging anti-racist

approaches to pedagogy and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE:

FREEDOM AND OPPRESSION IN THE BLACK PURSUIT OF EDUCATION

The legacy of slavery in the United States is palpable. American slavery, in particular, rested on the dehumanization of Africans and the continued inscription of antiblackness in every aspect of institutional life. Laws concerning the bondage and sale of enslaved Africans, their ability to move around or in between plantations, their access to food, clothing and shelter, were all regulated by local and federal government bodies and enforced by all matter of extralegal action. Four hundred years after the first enslaved Africans were forcibly shipped to the British American colonies and sold to white men, and more than a century after slavery was made illegal in the United States, antiblackness is still the through line of legal and social policy. It is the unifying character of police brutality, the “war on drugs,” and welfare reform. It is the scaffolding on which the prison industrial complex was constructed as the “new Jim Crow” (Alexander, 2010) and the reason that “Black Lives Matter” (Garza, Cullors, Tometi, 2013) has become the mantra, declaration, and rallying cry of a movement that seeks to reclaim Black humanity in spite of every assertion that our lives “matter” less than other lives. It is 2020 and our humanity, our full personhood, is still in question.

And yet, the narrative that I grew up hearing in my house was a constant reminder of my unlimited and unquestioned humanity. I cannot remember the first time my father told me, “Keep

your eyes on the prize.” It could have been a shout to my back as I rode my bike for the first time, or a quiet affirmation, a whisper during an early moment of personal struggle. When my daughter was born during my sophomore year of college, I found myself facing new challenges, new internal barriers. I questioned my own intelligence; I did not see the road from a C to an A, or even a clear path forward. “Keep your eyes on the prize,” my dad would say. By that time, I had come to expect it, these words. They were encouragement without judgment. They were a reminder that my victories were not just mine, alone. Even as they softened my self-doubt and validated my struggle, these six words also reminded me of the responsibility to persevere and of the significance of my victory, no matter how small.

I certainly did not know the history of this phrase when I was a young child, but my father, as a Black child of the Jim Crow era, knew it well. By the time the Civil Rights Movement had gained momentum in the 1950s, “Keep your eyes on the prize,” was a common refrain heard during protests and marches for Black freedom. A variation on an African American spiritual “Keep your hand on the plow” or “Gospel Plow,” most likely dating back to slavery, the song draws on biblical references to unjustified imprisonment (Acts 16;19-26) and faith in “heaven” as a reward for a life lived righteously (Luke 9:62) (Lomax & Lomax, 1941; White, 1928). A 1963 version recorded by popular white folk artist Pete Seeger at Carnegie Hall, draws from the older “Gospel Plow,” and emphasizes “freedom” as the prize to be won:

Paul and Silas bound in jail
 Had no money for to go their bail
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on

Paul and Silas thought they was lost
 Dungeon shook and the chains come off
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on

Freedom's name is mighty sweet
 And soon we're gonna meet
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on

I got my hand on the gospel plow
 Won't take nothing for my journey now
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on

Only chain that a man can stand
 Is that chain o' hand on hand
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on

I'm gonna board that big Greyhound
 Carry the love from town to town
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on

Recorded during a fundraiser for Highlander Folk School, this popularized version captures the changing meaning of freedom as the “prize,” during the transition from slavery to the 20th century fight for civil rights. While African Americans were legally enslaved, “heaven” represented the only freedom possible. A life lived in devotion to God promised freedom in death, if not in life. A century after slavery’s legal end, the “prize” was still freedom, but not only in death. Black freedom in the 1960s meant freedom from the racist practices of Jim Crow, the legal chokehold on Black life in the south. The “prize” was freedom in life, to be wholly Black and fully imbued with the rights of citizenship afforded to US-born Americans.

Over the course of my life, the prize has meant many small victories: biking with no training wheels, passing a class, graduating college. But the prize has also, always, meant freedom. Without restraint, without condition, in life, and not only in death. As a member of the African diaspora, as a descendent of enslaved African Americans, freedom is both the quest and the goal, and the given. It is my duty to seek it, despite the struggle. It is my responsibility to claim it, despite every effort to deny that it is mine. The legacy of slavery *is* a legacy of freedom,

even as it is routinely contested in the personal, social, and political lives of African Americans.

It is a paradox: insistent faith in freedom despite the persistent truth of oppression.

In the context of education, the paradox of freedom despite oppression has been a driving narrative in the quest for and realization of educational opportunities in the African American community. The roots of Black education in America are intimately tied to slavery and are defined by a belief in education, specifically literacy, as a figurative and literal pathway to freedom. Beyond the era of legal enslavement, African Americans' struggle to develop, support, and sustain educational opportunity has been confronted, at every turn, by legal, institutional, and social resistance to Black freedom. Educational institutions led by African American communities often maintained narratives of liberation despite hostile forces, advancing rigorous academic agendas and supporting the development of Black leaders (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 1996). However, the repeated coopting of Black-led educational efforts by local and federal government and private funders, as well as divergent perspectives on the nature and aim of education within Black communities, have presented a consistent challenge to the realization of Black freedom through education.

Throughout this varied history, educators have walked the line between social values of liberation and institutional policies of oppression. Teachers operate as intermediaries between institutions and students, and their navigation of this unique role is varied in pedagogy and practice with the changing circumstances of Black education. As (white) government, philanthropic, and corporate control of Black education has solidified over the course of American history and into the present day, antiblackness has become characteristic of educators' work with African American students. Especially in the post-*Brown* era, which precipitated a

decrease in the number of Black educators and an increase in the number of Black children scattered to predominantly white schools (Fairclough, 2004), studies of teacher preparation and practice have become focused on the cross-cultural and cross-racial conditions of teaching. Importantly, much of this research can also be characterized as anti-Black, as it engages with Black students as problems to be solved, while a steadily growing body of research seeks to interrogate antiblackness in teacher practice. Taken together, this work encapsulates the landscape of antiblackness in teaching, as it is currently theorized and understood, and pushes us towards new investigations of antiblackness in teacher behavior and interactions with students.

What follows is a fleshing out of the ontology of Black freedom, which is rooted in the idea of education as liberation, and of Black people as free human beings. This rooting is an intentional rejection of slavery as the orienting legacy of Black Americans and of the deficit frameworks that continue to plague educational agendas and research about Black students. From this root, I describe how education has been used as a tool of oppression in African American communities, through the weaving of antiblackness into education policies and practices. Further, I explore the role of teachers in the oppression of Black students, historically and presently. This section engages research on the intersection of race and teaching at the classroom level and explores the concept of implicit racial bias as potential factor in the manifestation of antiblackness in teaching. Finally, I theorize the ways in which antiblackness in teacher practice can be explored and interrogated toward more humanizing educational experiences for Black students and Black communities with a focus on the liberatory power of education for freedom. Together, these bodies of work provide sociohistorical context to the need for studies of antiblackness in the classroom by demonstrating what we understand about

the racialized processes of teaching and learning, and where we have left to go. These ideas weave together into a framework for Black Critical Theory (Dumas & ross, 2016), at the end of the chapter, that provides a lens to explore antiblackness through an examination of teacher-student interactions in the classroom.

Education as Liberation: Ontology of Black Freedom

“Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave” (Frederick Douglass). Freedom necessitates action. For Black people in the United States, freedom has required action from the beginning. The forced mass migration of Africans to the Americas beginning in the early 16th century delineated the condition of Black people as decidedly not free and certainly not human. The year 1619 is commonly marked as the arrival of Dutch-enslaved Africans to the American colonies, when “20 and odd Negroes” set foot on the shore of Virginia and were bought by English immigrant colonists. However, a focus on the 1619 arrival in Jamestown negates at least a century of free African people and governments actively working against European efforts to profit off their enslavement (Guasco, 2014). Despite every effort to grow the transatlantic slave trade, African captives never stopped fighting to regain their freedom, nor did their American descendants. For Black Americans, freedom has always been the origin and the goal.

Even before England made a formal entrée into the slave trade, they were well aware of the ways in which a constant striving for freedom made slavery a risky business. In 1583, Oxford cleric Richard Hakluyt published *The Spanish Colonie*, an analysis of Spanish success in the Americas, commissioned by the British crown (Guasco, 2014). He argued that captives’ desire for freedom from “intollerable” Spanish rule would position the English as more suitable rulers. “People kepte in subjection desire nothinge more then freedome. And like as a little passage

geven to water it maketh his own way, so give a small meane to such kepte in tyranie, they will make their own way to libertie, which may easely be made” (Hykluyt, as quoted in Guasco, 2014, p. 13). Further, Hykluyt suggested that the Indigenous Americans and Africans would be more likely to partner with the English, and perhaps easier to enslave, if they avoided the brutal tactics of the Spanish, and instead emphasized “humanitie, curtesie, and freedome.” While Hyklut’s support of the English conquest of the Americas was not conditioned on slavery, it did not rule it out, and by 1619, freedom gave way to free labor when the “first” enslaved Africans in the British American colonies were sold to English settlers in Jamestown. By the late 17th century, the two words “*Negro* and *Slave*” had become “*Homogenous*” and necessarily in opposition to the Englishman in America (Godwyn, 1680).

Though the English had certainly abandoned the freedom of Africans in the Americas in the name of profit and growth, enslaved Africans did not. Limited documentation of the early years of slavery in British-ruled American colonies reveals that enslaved Black people routinely attempted to openly defy bondage through daily resistance to work demands and through consistent efforts to escape (Franklin & Schweninger, 2000). In response, fugitive slave laws emerged in multiple colonies beginning in 1643 with the New England Confederation, and became federal law in the new republic of the United States of America with the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. The federal enactment of the law was significant in that it curtailed freedom completely, encoding the slave status of children born to enslaved mothers, for the duration of their lifetime. Even when the importation of enslaved Africans became illegal in 1808, documented attempts for freedom increased, including the revolts led by Denmark Vesey (1822), Nat Turner (1831), and the escape of Harriet Tubman (1849), who returned 15 times to free other

enslaved African Americans (Draper, 2018). By the mid-19th century, hundreds were successfully escaping each year, signaling a weakening of the original federal law (Nevins, 1947). Unsurprisingly, the nation doubled-down on the punishment of runaway slaves, culminating in the harsher Fugitive Slave Act (or Law) of 1850, which mandated fines of officials who did not arrest runaways and imprisonment of any person who aided a runaway with food or shelter. The price of freedom increased, quite literally, with bounties at 15 to 30% higher than before the law was passed (Lennon, 2016), as did the punishments doled out to captured runaways (Franklin & Schweninger, 1999). Tracked down, attacked, and captured by dogs under this “Bloodhound Law” (Nevins, 1947), escapees were often made to endure brutal punishment before being returned to their legal owners, making freedom even more difficult to realize.

Yet, insistence on freedom only grew stronger for Black Americans. Frederick Douglass (1845), the notable Black abolitionist and writer who escaped slavery in 1838, described the desire for freedom as satiable only by its attainment.

I felt assured that, if I failed in this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one – it would seal my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with anything less than the severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. The wretchedness of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me. It was life and death with me.

For Douglass, as for many enslaved Black Americans of his time, to remain a slave was not an option. In fact, he attempted to escape twice, from two different owners, before successfully gaining freedom. In his reflections on life as a slave, Douglass credited learning to read, and the “knowledge” gained thereby, as his “pathway from slavery to freedom” (Douglass, 1845). After learning the alphabet from the wife of a former master’s brother, he continued to teach himself to

read in secret, gathering resources as he could. He taught other enslaved Black people to read using the Bible, until local plantation owners became aware and attacked the congregation. As he later reflected, his belief that “Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave” (Douglass, 1881), was shared by slaveholders. Douglass’ tutelage under Sophia Auld, who taught him “A, B, C,” ended swiftly when her husband, Hugh, discovered it was taking place (Douglass, 1845).

Quoting Mr. Auld, Douglass (1845) wrote:

“Now,” said he, “if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy.” (p. 36)

There seemed to be no lack of agreement between Black slave and white owner: education was, indeed, a pathway to freedom, and the key to loosening “the white man’s power to enslave the Black man” (Douglass, 1845, p. 36).

Of course, Douglass was certainly not the only enslaved African American, or free white American, to have correlated education with freedom. By 1740, South Carolina had already enacted a law making it illegal for slaves to become literate in English (Negro Act of 1740, South Carolina), just one year after 75 slaves, led by a literate slave, attempted to flee to freedom in Spanish Florida under a banner reading “Liberty!” (Kars, 2008). Forty were killed by the South Carolina Militia, who mounted their heads on stakes placed along major roads as a warning to other slaves who might be conspiring for freedom (Ohio Historical Society, 2013). Indeed, the continued resistance of enslaved African Americans to the institution of slavery is perhaps best captured by their unceasing commitment to literacy, on pain of death. Nat Turner’s rebellion in 1831, which was led by a literate and passionate Turner, seemed to catalyze a rush to

suppress literacy in slave states. By 1835, anti-literacy laws had been enacted in most southern states, criminalizing education for enslaved Black people (Anderson, 1988). Yet, slave narratives that emerged during the same time demonstrate the commitment to education as a pathway to freedom. Like Douglass, most enslaved people were “self-taught,” using every opportunity to study individually and in community with others, most often in secret (Williams, 2009).

Acquiring the ability to read increased access to freedom, even increasing knowledge of the abolitionist movement in the north. The narrative of James Curry, published in *The Liberator* (January 10, 1840), an abolitionist newspaper, described how learning to read using the Bible owned by his “master’s family,” encouraged his pursuit of freedom as a divine right.

There I learned it was contrary to the will of God, that one man should hold another as a slave. I had always heard it talked among slaves, that we ought not be held as slaves; that our forefathers and mothers were stolen from Africa, where they were free men and women.

In Curry’s analysis, literacy helped to reestablish a connection to Black people’s ontological position as free, which fueled his desire for freedom.

Free Black people living in the North during the antebellum period were no less committed to literacy and education as tools for freedom. Until the early 19th century, free African Americans in northern cities worked actively to establish reading circles, schools, Bible study, and other educational mechanisms to serve their growing communities (Moss, 2009). Though there were not abundant laws controlling Black literacy or schooling in the North until about 1820, white residents were not always welcoming to Black residents attempts to pursue public, co-educational resources. Like their enslaved counterparts in the south, Black northerners often had to fight for access to schools that served white students, a fight that would continue well into the 21st century. In 1850, *Roberts v. City of Boston* (5 Cush [Mass.] 198) challenged

Boston's segregated school policy. Benjamin Roberts appealed to the Supreme Court, in hopes that his daughter would not have to pass three white schools closer to their home to attend an all-Black school. The court ruled in favor of the school district and legally segregated schools were maintained until 1855, when segregation was banned by the Massachusetts legislature. In preparation for the initial case filing, Roberts remarked the irony that "we witness Englishmen, Frenchmen, Irishmen, Germans, Scotchmen, and others, in our community to enjoy all the local privileges, and are not ignorant of the fact that we are shut out from the institutions of learning *in the land of our nativity*" (Moss, 2009, p. 130). While the desegregation of public schools in Massachusetts marked an important advancement in the struggle for Black education, it had come only at the constant striving of free Black citizens to demand equal rights as free Americans.

The legal end of slavery in 1863 only accelerated the growth of Black education on a national scale, backed by African Americans' commitment to universal public schooling (Anderson, 1988; Moss, 2009). While white Americans hesitatingly handed over their tax dollars to fund public education, African Americans not only supported public schooling through tax dollars; they were often taxed twice (Anderson, 1988). Since many public schools remained segregated, and few public schools were furnished for use by Black children throughout the South, the tax dollars submitted by Black residents directly funded the education of white children. The majority of Black Americans became free "at the very moment that public educational systems were being developed into their modern form" (Anderson, 1988, p. 2), yet the resistance of white Americans to Black freedom demanded that Black education continue as a project of self-education, funded by the Black community in addition to taxes that were already

going towards (white) public education. Moss (2009) remarked that, “In the end, what mattered most to African American parents, teachers, students, and activists was not whether, in fact, public schools were actually the great equalizers...but their own ability to educate themselves in the face of indifference and hostility” (p. 195). African American commitment to education resulted in an explosion of school development, continuing the practice of self-education that developed during slavery. Working together, Black communities fundraised to build schools, recruit teachers, and educate everyone from children to elders (Anderson, 1988). Reflecting on oral histories of education in Black schools, historian Adam Fairclough (2004) noted that, “Teachers, pupils, and parents formed an organic community that treated schooling as a collective responsibility” (p. 1). As collective freedom became a reality for Black Americans, so did an embrace of education as a tool for full citizenship.

While Black communities openly practiced education as freedom, law and policy swiftly turned towards control of Black educational institutions and programs. The brief period of “reconstruction” after the Civil War had provided some government resources, in the form of economic and military support, which were quickly withdrawn and replaced with a recommitment to the subjugation of Black people through continued efforts to curtail citizenship rights and control access to labor (Anderson, 1988). In an environment of continued suppression, the practice of freedom through education came to define the emergence of Black schools, teachers, and curricula, even in a nation that had supposedly legalized Black freedom. Thus, Black education continued for nearly a century after the Emancipation Proclamation, as a largely self-determined effort. It is important to understand the ways in which legalized control and strategic funding of Black educational institutions thwarted this self-determined practice of

freedom, mutating into an extension of the oppressive laws and policies that increasingly regulated Black life after slavery. A closer look at the development of educational institutions, those developed *by* Black people and those developed *for* Black people, which were not always the same, reveals the divergent foundation on which current antiblackness emerged in educational policy and practice.

Education as Oppression: Antiblackness and the Development of Education for Ex-Slaves

The presence and trajectory of African Americans in public education shifted on a national scale after the Civil War. For the first time in the nation's history, all Black people became legally entitled to public education. In the south, where education of enslaved Black people had been illegal, the nullification of slavery presented a new challenge to public entities, which had been historically white. Ex-slaves actively pursued educational opportunity, soliciting Republican politicians, the Freedman's Bureau, northern Missionary societies, and the military for support in establishing and maintaining educational institutions (Anderson, 1988). African American post-war push for education in the South was considered an "uprising," and "a central threat to planter rule and planters' conceptions of the proper roles of state, church, and family in matters of education" (Anderson, p. 5). In the south, Black support of universal education was just as controversial as Black education, itself. The idea of universal education was threatening to the rich, white planter class, even without accounting for Black inclusion because it allowed access to an increasing number of poor whites who had remained largely uneducated, illiterate, and economically oppressed until the Civil War (Collins & Margo, 2006; Margo, 1990). The swift emergence of motivated Black leaders who supported public education provided a significant challenge to the status quo, momentarily upending the planter class' control over

educational attainment. “It was a whole race trying to go to school” (Anderson, p. 5), and stopping them would require a reconstitution of law and policy that segregated, regulated, and controlled Black education.

In the north, integrationist approaches to increasingly prevalent opportunities for public education were tested by an increase in the Black population post-Civil War. Just as African Americans actively pursued educational opportunity throughout the south, thousands migrated to northern states in search of economic, social, and civic freedom, in addition to educational opportunity. The Great Migration, spanning from 1915 to 1970, accounted for the movement of over 6 million Black people from South to North, who left behind an increasingly oppressive social and educational context (Wilkerson, 2010). Southern Black migrants were often more educated than their counterparts who remained in the South, averaging two more years of schooling by the 1940s (Tolnay, 1998). By the 1960’s, Black migrants represented the most educated group to arrive in Northern cities to date, with migrant literacy rates approaching 90% in places like Chicago (Cherry, 1965). Despite the education levels of incoming Black migrants, Northern schools increasingly supported racial segregation and demonstrated patterns of defunding schools with high Black populations. In Chicago, where the Black population increased from less than 2% in 1890 to over one million (about 30%) by 1970, the development of public education was characterized by increasingly race-neutral approaches to policy, or policies that ignored race, supplemented by practices that favored white students and communities (Homel, 1984), resulting in one of the most segregated school districts in the country by 1980. Rather than an anomaly, Chicago represented a larger trend in education policy and practice that characterized the northern schooling leading up to the integration mandate of

Brown II (1955), and since.

Taken together, the development of public education in the North and the South after the Civil War demonstrates the diverse, and seemingly divergent, ways in which antiblackness became institutionalized in schooling in the United States. While the South openly embraced segregated schooling as law before *Brown* and sought to shape the context of Black education to reinforce a racially stratified class structure, the changing population in the North precipitated race-neutral policymaking and educational practice that helped to shape current inscriptions of antiblackness in schooling on a national level.

Educational Oppression in the Segregated South

Many planters, believing that schooling actually spoiled a good field hand, preferred their laborers illiterate or at best semiliterate. James Anderson, p. 149

Sometimes there is a weather worn, pine-built schoolhouse for our children, but even if the school were open for the full term our children would not have time to go. We cannot let them leave the fields while cotton is waiting to be picked. Richard Wright, 1941

The fervor with which African Americans embraced education after Emancipation was met with an equally fervent call to shape and mold Black education to meet the social, economic, and labor needs of the rich, white planter class that controlled the South. Aware that attempts to “reverse the trust of ex-slaves school campaigns would invite greater black resistance and possibly northern intervention,” southern whites sought to control and restrict public schools in Black communities, “adapting it to the region’s traditional social structure and racial mores” (Anderson, 1988, p. 31). In direct opposition to Black educational agendas, freedman’s education became characterized by a struggle between Black literacy and white control (Butchart, 2007). Just as literacy was the “short-range” goal of Black education, “the long range purpose was the intellectual and moral development of a responsible leadership class that would organize the

masses and lead them to freedom and equality;” a goal that was in no way supported by desires to maintain social control of Black southerners (Anderson, p.31). As Black communities and educators sought to expand education, the southern aristocracy took every opportunity to guide this growth towards maintaining a racially and economically stratified social order.

Ideological divisions concerning the purpose and nature of education within the Black community were coopted by conservative social reformers who sought to maintain the social order of the South. Many Black educators and reformers viewed the southern planter’s sudden interest in educating ex-slaves as an opportunity for funding and support of Black schools. The Freedman’s Bureau, during its short tenure from 1865 to 1872, helped to establish historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) like Fisk, (Clark) Atlanta, Howard, and Hampton throughout the South (Du Bois, 1994/03). The Bureau’s “provisions for school buildings, supplies, and even teachers made it the midwife of much of the freedpeople’s own educational effort” (Cimbala & Miller, 1999, p. xxx). Yet, the Bureau’s dissolution in the early years of Reconstruction, at the behest of white southerners who opposed the Black “educational effort,” meant a reduction in assured financial and ideological support for established Black schools and expanding educational opportunities.

Educators in the South were not necessarily committed to the educational agenda of Black freedom, but were more interested in educating a newly freed people for the world (Butchart, 2010). White teachers from the North, who comprised about a third of the teaching force in Southern Black schools, mostly sought to maintain the social and cultural order, upholding notions of Black literacy as a moral “transgression” (Butchart, 2007). Perhaps because they existed outside of the southern racial order, white teachers from the North were

more likely to push racial boundaries, teaching curricula that emphasized a decided shift from the old slave/planter narrative. “Racial radicals,” those whites that openly opposed Black subordination, were few and far between, but also represent the handful of white teachers who dedicated their lives to emancipatory Black education (Butchart, 2010). Black teachers functioned as facilitators and gatekeepers in the context of freedman’s schools, leading the charge to “redraw social and cultural maps” through education (Butchart, 2007). Black communities lobbied for Black teachers because they believed white teachers could not fully understand or support their educational agenda.

Not all African American teachers promoted radical, emancipatory education. In fact, southern Blacks were more accommodating to the preservation of southern racial order than northern whites, and thus were more favorable to southern lawmakers (Fairclough, 2007). Notable Black educators and reformers, such as Booker T. Washington, sought industrial and normal educational programs to build on the agricultural history of the former slave population (Anderson, 1988). Though Washington envisioned his educational program as preparation for ownership, whereby former slaves could become self-subsisting farmers and planters, his accommodationist strategy was nonetheless a favorite of the Southern white elite. Washington’s philosophy was vehemently opposed by Black intellectuals, like W.E.B DuBois, who accused Washington of “seeking to preach the Negro back to present peonage of the soil” through his program of industrial education (DuBois, 1903, p.20). DuBois openly criticized Washington’s partnership with the white elite, which he saw as a subversion of Black civil and political rights in favor of “triumphant commercialism” and “material prosperity” (ibid, p. 25-26). In many respects, Washington won this ideological struggle. White philanthropists, industrialists, and

like-minded African Americans supported his “Hampton-Tuskegee Idea,” because it was “a program of interracial harmony predicated on a social foundation of political disenfranchisement, civil inequality, racial segregation, and the training of black youth for a certain racially prescribed economic positions” (Anderson, 1988, p. 273). By the 1930s, the strategy of industrial education had so effectively maintained “the political powerlessness of black southerners,” that few students went into any occupation but teaching, farming or other service industries (Fairclough, 2007). While the first few generations of free, Black education were foundational to the establishment of a more literate population, they also solidified African Americans’ status as second-class citizens in a growing and diversifying nation.

The public debate between DuBois and Washington has come to symbolize divergent philosophies about the purpose and function of Black education since the end of slavery. However, this divergence is often oversimplified as ideological dichotomy, a fundamental polarity in their ideas about the aim and scope of Black education. Representative of historical and present agendas to minimize the role of Black people in their own education, this oversimplification undermines the common struggle shared by DuBois and Washington, a struggle for Black freedom and personhood. Both honoring and critiquing Washington in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1994/03), DuBois writes:

So far as Mr. Washington preaches Thrift, Patience, and Industrial Training for the masses, we must hold up his hands and strive with him, rejoicing in his honors and glorifying in the strength of this Joshua called of God and of man to lead the headless host. But so far as Washington apologizes for injustice, North or South, does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds, - so far as he, the South, or the Nation, does this, - we must unceasingly and firmly oppose them. (DuBois, 1903, p. 35)

This declaration makes plain that DuBois valued Washington’s motivation and even his

program. Like others, DuBois was unwilling to pay the price demanded by white investors, who represented an antiquated ideology that reinforced “peonage” as the ontological position of Black people.

While segregation preserved Black oppression in the South, education in the North developed in the context of a growing population of African Americans and European immigrants in city centers, local laws that prevented segregation, and informal policies that prevented integration. As freedpeople and their children diffused from the rural South to the urban North, their quest for freedom through education would be routinely challenged by the ideological tension represented by the Washington-DuBois debate. Despite representing the most educated Africans Americans in the south, Black migrants who resettled in the North were greeted by a white northern population that had little knowledge about the social dynamics of slavery or freedom in the lives of Black people, nor an interest in understanding it. As Black southerners attempted to integrate into the ethnically and linguistically diverse North, they were met with resistance and, ultimately, abandonment. Schools played a unique role in the racial politics of transition, shaping new dynamics for a theoretically integrated public institution, and solidifying antiblackness as an unofficial policy of containment and control in education.

Educational Oppression in the “Integrated” North

The Southern Negro has pushed the Chicago Negro out of his home, and the Chicago Negro in seeking a new home is opposed by whites. What is to happen? The whites are prejudiced against the whole Negro group. The Chicago Negro is prejudiced against the southern Negro. Surely it makes a difficult decision for the Southern Negro. No wonder he meets the world with a blow. All this comes into the school more or less. Interview, public school teacher, 1919, (Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 1922, p. 241)

While the segregated social order of the South, in a long, historical affair with slavery, is often upheld as a penultimate example of racism’s sinful root, antiblackness was refined in the

North, where a proclaimed commitment to racial integration was tested by the arrival of Black Americans, numbering in the millions. Prior to Emancipation, the Black population in the North was small in proportion to whites, and somewhat contained, even in cities that had long-lived, integrated public institutions. In Boston, where Benjamin Roberts filed suit against the city to oppose segregated schooling in 1850, the Black population had only just surpassed one percent by the start of the Civil War (Hall, 2008). My own great, great-grandparents, who arrived sometime between 1866 and 1870, doubled the number of Black families on their block in what was considered an ethnically diverse neighborhood (U.S. Census, 1870). Like other northern cities, Boston had seen an increase in petitions for segregated schools around 1820, reflecting a national trend (Moss, 2009). However, many northern municipalities did away with legally segregated schools in the decade before the Civil War, during the same era when the South was increasing penalties for Black literacy and fugitive slaves. Just as anti-slavery sentiment grew on the heels of abolitionist newspapers like Douglass' (1847) *North Star* and books like Stowe's (1852) *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, northerners' commitment to integration faltered as the region's cities and towns became more racially diverse.

Chicago, a northern city that began growing exponentially after the Civil War, reflects the wavering sentiments and shifting policies on integration that characterized the post-war north. Between 1910 and 1920, Chicago's Black population increased from 44,103 to 109,594, a rate of 148 percent (Chicago Commission on Race Relations (CCRR), 1922). By 1940, the Black population grew by at least 190,000 people, most of whom were concentrated into a small neighborhood known as the "Black Belt," stretching South from Roosevelt Avenue to 39th Street, and West from the Rock Island Railroad to State Street (CCRR, 1922; Homel, 1984). While

white Chicagoans attempted to maintain exclusive residency of surrounding neighborhoods, Black Belt tenements literally burst at the seams of neighborhood boundaries. The practice of overcrowding was secured by members of the Chicago Real Estate Board, who emphasized confining Black residency to blocks already inhabited by Black people, and avoiding, whenever possible, the expansion of the population to blocks inhabited by white people (Homel, 1972). Additionally, property owners' associations protected white communities by actively fighting residential integration and "resist[ing] black intrusion into mostly white schools" (Homel, 1972, p. 48).

The Chicago Commission on Race Relations, formed after a 1919 race riot that was spurred by the drowning of a Black teenage boy, issued a report that detailed the conditions of Black life in Chicago and revealed the extent of white terrorism on the growing African American community. *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (CCRR, 1922), revealed the extreme measures that white Chicagoans were taking to maintain the status quo. Between 1917 and 1921 alone, the slow movement of African Americans into the neighborhoods adjacent to the Black Belt was protested by fifty-eight bombings, thirty-two of which were exploded between 41st and 60th streets, and Cottage Grove and State Street (CCRR, 1922, p. 123). This amounts to about one bombing every twenty days for over three years in a concentrated area of about three square miles. In an account of one particular bombing, the commission asserted that the neighborhood had lived in a sort of silent tension around integration for several years, but that it has also been characterized by the "open objection of Negro children in the streets" (CCRR, 1922, p. 124). City authorities' "apathy" towards the bombings (CCRR, 1922, p. 132), reflects an informal policy of aggression towards incoming Black residents,

foreshadowing the development of schools for Black children that were under-supported by a district which refused to recognize race.

Although Chicago Public Schools kept no official records on racial demographics, individual school records and small sociological studies give a fuller picture of how schools became segregated during the Great Migration (Homel, 1984). The emphasis on *becoming* segregated is significant, for most historical accounts of Chicago Public Schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century indicate that Black students largely attended integrated schools (Homel, 1972; Homel, 1984; Jackson, 1947; Neckerman, 2007). This was, in part, because the African American population of Chicago was smaller and less aggregated before 1915. Even by 1920, Black students accounted for only 2.7 percent of total student enrollment (Homel, 1984). The proportion of Black students increased during the Great Migration and white residents began to transfer their children out of Black Belt schools (Homel, 1972; Homel, 1984, Spear, 1967). These integrated schools were often no more than thirty percent Black but were perceived by white Chicagoans as “Black schools.” The Board of Education President, Otto Schneider, responded to the transfer frenzy by declaring that, “The parents of some of the negro children are a far better class than the parents of some of the white pupils...If white pupils do not care to associate with the negro boys and girls...they should move out of those school districts” (Homel, 1984, p. 20, from *Inter-Ocean* and *Chicago Record Herald*, 1908). However, most transfer requests made by upper middle-class whites, who lived just to the east of the Black Belt in Hyde Park, were granted (Homel, 1972). By refusing transfer requests from working-class white immigrants and Black residents, CPS became informally committed to *de facto* school segregation.

Segregated public schools in Black neighborhoods were chronically under-resourced, especially as the population grew. Frequently, school facilities were “inadequate...old and overcrowded,” and students only attended in “double-shifts,” or half-days, of instruction well into the 1960s (CCRR, 1922, p. 137; Herrick, 1971). White refusal to integrate schools meant that Black children often had to travel farther to get to schools, echoing Boston’s policies during the same era. Civic organizations like the Chicago and Northern District Association of Colored Women and the Chicago Council of Negro Organizations advocated for the rights of all Black children to attend good schools in their own neighborhoods, but often to no avail (Homel, 1982).

The structural impact of racial segregation was compounded by consistent marginalization of Black migrant’s children in already under-resourced schools. The CCRR estimated that Southern children in CPS were two to three years behind, on average, “due to the short term in southern rural schools, distance from school, and inadequacy of teaching force and school equipment” (p. 239). On a national scale, Black children labeled as “retarded,” meaning academically-behind, were predominantly over age, significantly poorer than their classmates, and received little educational support at home (Doran, 1936; Rogers, 1925; Thompson, 1939). The placement of southern migrants in remedial classes was often rationalized by teachers as the only solution to the “difficult situation” presented by the introduction of undereducated children into CPS (CCRR, p. 239). Black teachers in Chicago, largely northern born and native to Illinois, showed considerable class bias towards Southern students. Homel (1984) asserted that, “Most Negro teachers and administrators emulated white values, including color prejudice. Few were disposed to criticize the system which had provided them with honored and secure positions” (p.

263). Black teachers' employment was hard-won, with a decreasing amount of full-time positions offered to Black teachers by the 1920s, and a CPS policy of assigning them only to Black schools (Danns, 2009). Influential Black teachers like Maudelle Brown Bousfield, who became the district's first African American principal, were rare advocates for Black students. A member of the "black elite" (Danns, 2009, p. 3), Bousfield would become an advocate for educational reform, driven largely by the distinct class disadvantage of new Black Chicagoans and the district's unwillingness to provide adequate resources for the growing population.

While Black teachers seemed to draw class distinctions between northern and southern Black students, white teachers' assessments of Black students became race-focused appraisals. In a *Chicago Defender* article, a white veteran teacher in a Black school was quoted saying that Black children "Don't learn very quickly...It's hard to get anything done with children like that. They simply don't respond" (Oct 4, 1924, sec. 1, p. 16). Homel (1984) noted that CPS' "heavily Irish-American, white," "predominantly middle and lower class" teaching force carried distinctly racist attitudes towards Black students, characterizing them as "immoral, socially aggressive, and untrustworthy" (p. 142). As within-school segregation of remedial students occurred more frequently along racial lines and in conjunction with drastic Black population growth, Black students overrepresentation in remedial courses became conflated with white teachers' perspectives of Black students as inferior. A Black Phillips High School student remarked that, "These young white teachers don't understand teaching colored children; they think we should be dogged at or talked to like some animal" (Homel, 1984, p. 173).

By the 1930s, the Black community in Chicago was actively opposing unfair treatment of students in CPS, with an increasing focus on discriminatory policies and teacher behavior. A

Black teacher, interviewed by a CCRR (1922) researcher shortly after the 1919 race riot, noted that racial tension in the community contributed directly to the school environment.

The Southern Negro has pushed the Chicago Negro out of his home, and the Chicago Negro in seeking a new home is opposed by whites. What is to happen? The whites are prejudiced against the whole Negro group. The Chicago Negro is prejudiced against the southern Negro. Surely it makes a difficult decision for the Southern Negro. No wonder he meets the world with a blow. All this comes into the school more or less. (p. 241)

While this educator's statement is perhaps an oversimplification of the Great Migration and the complex racial dynamics of the time, it does reflect the racial ideologies that were playing out in the assessment, categorization, and treatment of Black students in the classroom. Within-school segregation of Black students from white, and often northern from southern, was compounded by teachers' discriminatory attitudes towards Black students. The *Chicago Defender*, a Black-owned newspaper in Chicago, published a series of articles between 1930 and 1934 that covered "incidents involv[ing] physical mistreatment of pupils, discrimination in placement, and unfair classroom evaluations" (Homel, 1972, pg. 144). One student described her Englewood school as a "hate center," where she was ignored by teachers, while Hyde Park student noted, "While at high school I always knew I wasn't wanted. There was lots of discrimination. The teachers get it out by giving low marks" (Homel, 1972, p. 144). Local and national studies also noted an increase in identification of Black students, boys in particular, as "juvenile delinquents" (Moses, 1936; Pechstein, 1929; Thompson, 1939). The identification of "problem boys" (Daniel, 1932), coincided with an increase compulsory education laws and punitive truancy policies; none of which was supported by CPS' continued neglect of predominantly Black schools.

Chicago was not drastically different than many northern school districts, in that antiblackness became institutionalized through policies that formally ignored race. Pre-*Brown*,

Chicago compiled no racial data about students or teachers, did not assign schools based on race, and did not recognize the role of race in segregating students within or between schools (Danns, 2008; Homel, 1984). In 1933, the Board of Education eliminated several schools, jobs, and instructional programs, drastically impacting African American teachers, students, and families. The Black community continued to press the district to build and improve existing school facilities, recognize de facto segregation and integrate schools, and allow African American representation on the Board of Education (Homel, 1976). Midian Bousfield, husband of Maudelle Brown Bousfield, was elected to the School Board in 1939 but proved to be a moderate, doing little to radically improve the conditions of Black Education in Chicago. In a shift that was occurring throughout districts in the North, Black Chicagoans turned to political influence, legal action, and protest, often in partnership with white people, to build a strong opposition to antiblackness in education (Herrick, 1971; Homel, 1976).

The tactical shift towards political and legal action culminated in a push for integration, led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1954, Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP effectively argued and won *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which the Supreme Court declared racial segregation unconstitutional. *Brown II* (1955) solidified the nation's legal commitment to desegregation by outlining the implementation of the 1954 decision in districts throughout the country. Progress was slow and few districts yielded "with all deliberate speed" to the mandate for integration. The NAACP's case for *Brown* was built on a series of lawsuits from southern districts, where segregation was widely legalized, while the North, where segregation had become commonplace, was largely ignored until after the Supreme Court's ruling. On the eve of the decision, William Ming, Jr.

(1952), NAACP attorney and member of the *Brown* legal team, noted, “Nowhere is there even a reasonably accurate collection of detailed information as to the extent to which racial segregation is practiced in the public schools of Northern states” (p. 266). While the process of desegregation was a clear, if not slow, path of enacting the legal decision in the South, after the passage of *Brown* (1954) the NAACP turned its efforts towards fighting de facto segregation in the North (Danns, 2008; Orfield, 1978). However, de facto segregation in the North, a decades-long fact by the 1950s, had helped to institutionalize antiblackness in a manner that did not require race-based law or policy.

In an indictment of the integrationist strategy, legal scholar Derrick Bell (1994/1971) argued that, “the basic evil of segregated schools would survive and flourish” because the “racial balance precedents” and “compensatory education theories” on which *Brown* was argued, had not and would not produce higher quality education for Black students. “Even in those systems where racially balanced schools can be achieved,” Bell argued, “Low academic performance and large numbers of disciplinary and expulsion cases are only two of the predictable outcomes in integrated schools where the racial subordination of blacks is reasserted in, if anything, a more damaging form.” Bell’s indictment invokes the exact challenges faced by African Americans in Northern districts since before the Civil War and confirms a theme of antiblackness in educational policy and practice, regardless of legal arrangement. In Bell’s (1994/1971) estimation, dedication to “racial balance as a symbol...of the nation’s commitment to equal opportunity,” had and would produce more inequality in the educational experiences and outcomes of Black students.

“The price we paid for *Brown*” (Ladson-Billings, 2004), has become the subject of recent

and continued debate in conversations surrounding racial equity and equality in education. Despite the hope that *Brown* instilled in the national conversation about civil rights and racial equality, Bell's (1980) assertion that the case was a "convergence of interests," demonstrated how it was made possible by serving "White interests – improving the national image, quelling racial unrest, and stimulating the economy – as well as Black interests – improving the education of Black children and promoting social mobility" (Ladson-Billings, 2004). The consequences of the landmark decision have ultimately built on, rather than mitigated, the structuralized racism that emerged in the construction of public education since the mid-nineteenth century. While legal segregation in the South caused major gaps in the quality of educational facilities and instructional materials for Black students, the collective gains made in literacy, teacher education, and matriculation were dismantled as Black schools closed, Black teachers lost their jobs, and Black students were forced to integrate into white institutions (Fairclough, 2004; Walker, 1996). In the North, legally integrated institutions were challenged to face de facto segregation, and the litany of racialized educational opportunities and outcomes cited by Bell (1994/1971), that already plagued schools and districts. In effect, the national conversation about racial equity in education became an extension of the Northern struggle for Black education pre-dating *Brown*. As integration became a mainstay of public education, whether in policy if not practice, the presence, ability, achievement, and success of Black students emerged as an enduring feature of public discourse.

As districts navigated why, whether, and how they would pursue integration, researchers began to investigate the landscape of integrated schools. Early studies indicated that white teachers perceived Black students as "lazy" or "rebellious," while Black teachers perceived the

same students as “energetic” and “ambitious” (Gottlieb, 1964). Experimental psychological studies, often referring to Gottlieb (1964), tested these biases in lab environments (Coates, 1972; Feldman & Donohoe, 1978; Feldman & Orchowsky, 1979; Rubovits & Maehr, 1973; Weitz, 1972; Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974), concluding, in general, that “white teachers gave less attention to blacks, less encouragement, less praise, and more criticism” (Irvine, 1985). Still more studies investigated white teacher perceptions of Black students, focusing largely on academic potential, ability, achievement, and personal qualities, the findings of which reinforced the notion that Black students were viewed less capable than white counterparts, especially in integrated settings (Aloia, Maxwell & Aloia, 1981; Beady & Hansell, 1981; Datta, Schaefer & Davis, 1968; Eaves, 1975; Leacock, 1969; Lietz & Gregory, 1978; Yee, 1968). Despite a wealth of data confirming the discriminatory experiences of Black students, particularly in the “integrated” North, Irvine (1985) remarked, “These studies are useful but leave unanswered questions as to how these attitudes and beliefs influence teacher-student interactions in the classroom” (p. 339).

In the context of increasingly disparate outcomes for Black students, the mechanisms of oppression and liberation in the classroom are not just more imperative, but increasingly researched. As has been the case since Du Bois (1903; 1920), Black scholars have contributed to our expanding knowledge of liberatory experiences for Black students in the classroom, particularly with regards to pedagogy and practice. Importantly, much of this foundational work has engaged with cross-racial and intra-racial teaching, focusing on teaching “other people’s children” (Delpit, 1995), “good” teachers of Black students and culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2009), and teachers’ role in the academic success of Black students (Howard,

2008). The body of research that has risen up as a result of these landmark studies continues the legacy of the quest for freedom through education, and confirms the reality of education in the lives of Black students: sixty years after *Brown*, the oppression of Black students is still an active, functional element of education policy and practice.

Teachers as Intermediaries: Oppression of Black Students in Policy and Practice

As institutional intermediaries, teachers occupy unique space between schools, as institutions, and students, as members of society. In the historical context of Black education, teachers navigated institutional policies that regulated and controlled education in Black communities. After *Brown*, the social context of teaching shifted, but race did not become irrelevant. The emergence of race-neutral policies in public education, much like historical precedents in Northern cities like Chicago, reinforced the normalization of whiteness and the problematization of blackness in educational settings. On an institutional level, race-based policies have diminished, but racialized consequences have not. These consequences are extensions of antiblackness that track with the trajectory of education, particularly in regards to academic evaluation and disciplinary action, as Black oppression. Research on teacher-student interactions echoes the historical emergence of antiblackness in the classroom, making way for new inquiries into the interpersonal aspects of Black oppression.

Within schools, the privileging of whiteness continues to operate as a major factor in differential interpretation and enforcement of policies, as well as engagement and interaction between teachers, parents and students (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Whiteness is folded into these policies and practices, so that what appears to be race-neutral is, in reality, white-normative. Teachers' racialized perceptions of behavior and achievement (Murray, Waas, & Murray, 2008;

Rong, 1996; Sturgess, 2011; Takei & Shouse, 2008) coincide with students' experiences of alienation and invisibility in the classroom. One salient example is the prevalence of racial microaggressions (Sue et al, 2009), "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults" (p. 273). In the classroom, racial microaggressions manifest in teachers' mispronunciation or unwillingness to learn students' names (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012), or in the "invisibility and differential treatment" of Black students in the classroom (Allen, 2010). These experiences of othering can impact "mental health and well-being, ascribed intelligence and perceived deviance, and self-concept and racial identity development," for Black boys (Allen, Scott & Lewis, 2013), and based on research by Wun (2016a), girls as well. Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock (2017), Howard (2013), and others have highlighted the lack of attention that interpersonal antiblackness, such as microaggressions, have received in educational research, despite the reality that classroom-level "micropolitical evaluative processes" (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999) through which teachers assess the potential of students, mirror the racialized reality of school-level policies and practices.

Problematization of blackness also manifests in teachers' "differential selection" and disproportionate discipline of Black students for behavioral infractions (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Overwhelmingly, Black students, boys in particular, are reported more frequently and disciplined more harshly than their white counterparts (Anderson, 2009; Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015; Sturgess, 2011; United States Government Accountability Office, 2018). The perception of Black boys as more deviant results in punishment of both [good] "schoolboys" and [bad] "troublemakers," leading to a pivotal point in a student's school life and

identity (Ferguson, 2000). The increased levels of suspicion, surveillance, and punishment experienced by Black boys, in particular, teach them the significance of Black identity in the educational context (Jenkins, 2017). Black girls, too, experience heightened levels of identification and referral for behavioral issues in comparison with white counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Like Black boys, Black girls are more likely to experience surveillance, suspension, and expulsion than other girls, and are more likely to be punished for “disobedience” and “defiance” (Morris, 2016). Wun (2016a) argues that Black girls are held as “captive objects” by school discipline polices because they are denied “access to agency, autonomy, and self-defense against multiple forms of violence” including teacher perception and punishment (p. 171). While much of the research on school discipline focuses on Black boys, rather than Black girls, taken as a whole disproportionate discipline demonstrates the particular relationship between antiblackness, institutional policy, and teachers’ agency.

Teachers’ antiblackness may also be explored in the context of recent research on psychosocial aspects of racism, which calls into question how teachers’ racial attitudes may influence their behavior towards students. In fact, the call for research on race and education increasingly centers on the need for further investigation of the role of implicit bias in the perpetuation of racial inequality (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo & Pollock, 2017; Mayfield, 2017; Warikoo, Sinclair, Fei & Jacoby-Senghor, 2016; Staats, 2016). Unlike explicit attitudes, which frequently correspond to consciously controlled behaviors, implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that can influence perceptions, behaviors, and decision-making (Trachock, 2015; Staats & Patton, 2013). Implicit racial bias, first explored by Devine (1989) and Greenwald & Banaji (1995), incorporates the stereotypes and attitudes that we hold about

racial groups, which impacts our interaction with members of different racial groups. As collective understanding of implicit racial bias has increased, its application to racial disproportionality in educational settings has become increasingly interesting to educators and researchers. In fact, research demonstrates that implicit racial bias impacts how teachers perceive, interact with, and evaluate students of different races, with particular implications for Black students.

Implicit racial bias & oppression of Black students. Much of the research on implicit racial bias has revealed that teachers' ideas about students are strongly correlated with racial stereotypes. Similar to the word association studies in the post-Jim Crow era (see Irvine, 1985), numerous contemporary studies have demonstrated that teachers often associate negative words with Black students and positive words with white students. Much of this research utilizes photos of Black and White people to prime participants while asking them to associate faces with qualities. Often, participants more quickly associate Black faces with negative qualities than white ones (Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2005) and demonstrate a stronger threat response to Black faces (Richeson & Trawalter, 2008; Trawalter, Todd, Baird & Richeson, 2008). Teachers have not been shown to react differently. In fact, when asked to categorize "threatening" and "nonthreatening" objects and words, white teachers completed the task more quickly and decisively after being primed by Black faces, regardless of age (Todd, Thiem & Neel, 2016). In this study, there was no significant difference in the response time of teachers after being shown the face of a Black adult man or a five-year-old Black boy. Simply "seeing faces" of young Black boys facilitated the identification of threatening stimuli (p. 384).

In the context of educational practice, the perception of Black boys as a threat is

particularly troubling. New research by Yale scholars Gilliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti and Shic (2016), confirms that that even preschool teachers believe that Black boys present more “challenging behaviors.” In other words, teachers expect misbehavior from Black students more than White students and, as such, their “gaze” is constantly directed towards Black students (p. 12). During the study, a group of early childhood educators were asked to view short video clips of four children – a white girl, a Black girl, a Black boy and a white boy – playing in a preschool classroom. When prompted to identify which child they would watch for potential behavior issues, 42 percent selected the Black boy. Perhaps more significantly, the teachers spent more time actually watching the Black boy than any other child. These findings indicate that disproportionate discipline of Black male students is tightly bound to teacher’s racialized perceptions of students.

Additional research on implicit bias in the context of racial disproportionality of school discipline and special education referrals echoes these findings. Unsurprisingly, explicit racial attitudes correlate with high referral rates for special education assessment (Martin, 2014), reflecting significantly higher rates of behavioral and emotionally related special education services and discipline referrals for Black students overall since the early 1990s (Bahr, Fuchs, Stecker & Fuchs, 1991; Xie, 2015). Even when the correlation between teachers’ implicit bias and frequency of special education referral is not confirmed, findings demonstrate that Black students’ behaviors are often viewed as more inappropriate or egregious, echoing the Yale study (Casteel, 1998; Cullinan & Kaufman, 2005; Simpson & Erikson, 1983). Girvan and colleagues (2017) found that substantially more variance in disproportionality is attributable to racial disparities in office referrals that required the subjective opinion of teachers and administrators

(i.e. whether behavior was appropriate) than objective criteria (i.e. truancy issues). In fact, Black students are more likely to receive office referrals for subjectively evaluated criteria than any other racial group (Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016). Teachers' privileging of white students continues to undermine academic and social gains for Black and Latinx students (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007) and is reflected in their racial attitudes, whether explicitly or implicitly expressed (Van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten & Holland, 2010).

What remains largely unexplored in studies of education and implicit bias are the mechanics of these implicitly held racialized attitudes and beliefs in the social processes of the classroom. Studies that have evaluated the mechanics of teachers' bias outside of the classroom (Gilliam, et al, 2016; Todd, Thiem & Neel, 2016), reveal the ways in which teachers' hyper-surveillance of Black students may transfer into over-identification of these same students for behavioral issues, for example. Likewise, studies of racial disproportionality in school discipline (Bahr, Fuchs, Stecker & Fuchs, 1991; Casteel, 1998; Cullinan & Kaufman, 2005; Martin, 2014; Simpson & Erikson, 1983; Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, & Horner, 2016; Xie, 2015), confirm that teachers' subjective opinions of Black students and their behavior may be the root cause of inflated referrals and harsh consequences for Black students in the disciplinary process. Yet, it is precisely these processes – these manifestations of implicit antiblackness – that are largely unexplored.

Studies on implicit bias in education show promise for decoding these contradictions of teacher desire and practice by demonstrating that educational disparities, like disproportionality of discipline, are clearly aligned with implicit expectations or associations of students based on

race (Gilliam et al, 2016). Accordingly, researchers have identified that deeper understanding is needed of the operational aspects of implicit bias in the educational environment. Classroom-based research, while necessary for understanding the how teachers' implicit bias translates into behavior, is not yet well represented in this body of work. In the tradition of psychological research, these studies explore implicit bias in hypothetical situations, such as soliciting teachers at a conference on early childhood education and tracking eye movement during a video of interracial classroom interactions (Gilliam, et al, for example), and analyzing teachers' results on an Implicit Association Test (IAT), followed by their reactions to a "vignette" about a white or Black students (Martin, 2014, for example). While these studies validate important hypotheses about the role of implicit bias in educational settings, they do not interrogate the classroom, which is where teacher-student interactions actually take place.

Additionally, tools such as the IAT, developed by Greenwald in 1994, have served as the main evaluative tools to measure implicit bias, but are not the only possibilities for interrogating how implicit bias informs verbal and nonverbal behaviors. A small study by Trachock (2015) concluded that qualitative methods, including interviews analyzed for emergent themes, were able to identify implicit bias in teachers, with the potential to allow participants to actively reflect on their own bias in pedagogy and practice. Additionally, combining observed verbal and non-verbal behaviors of teachers, with their perceptions of these behaviors, has the potential to reveal connections between the connection of implicit biases and interpersonal behavior (Dovidio, Kawakami & Gaertner, 2002). As a result, qualitative studies that focus on behavior of teachers in the classroom, particularly in their interactions with students, may provide insight into how implicit ideas and associations reinforce institutional antiblackness. As we look towards future

directions for research, qualitative methodologies make possible “a more robust understanding of why and when” implicit bias impacts teacher-student interaction, “as well as potential means of reducing [its] effects” (Warikoo et al, 2016).

Conclusion

Educational institutions in the United States reflect the encoding of antiblackness, through the laws, policies, and practices that structure teaching and learning. Antiblackness is manifested through the ways in which students experience differential expectations, treatment, and outcomes based on Black racial identity. On an interpersonal level, antiblackness can be experienced by students in the form of teacher surveillance, suspicion, or neglect; features of a dehumanizing educational practice (Freire, 2000/1970). However, these racially marginalizing behaviors are often intertwined with teachers’ desires to, “change the injustices that pervade urban schools” (Matias, 2016, p. 9). “Despite the best intentions” (Lewis & Diamond, 2015), teachers, administrators, and policymakers can underestimate the “the increasingly covert nature of racial discourse and racial practices” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 33). Even when teachers want to enable racial equity, they doubt or dismiss the power of racial ideology, and antiblackness specifically, to shape their understandings of and approaches to working with Black students and other students of color.

In a commentary regarding racial disproportionality in discipline, Carter et al (2017), noted that, “closing racial discipline gaps will almost certainly require interventions and programs that are in some way *race-conscious* – that is, conscious of overall race dynamics in student educator relationship and interaction” (224). Race consciousness requires more than treating race as a variable that can be isolated, but rather centering race as a key, organizing

category in our current social world. Taking that further, I argue that research concerning the continued problematization, alienation, and criminalization of Black students must center antiblackness as a foundational element and enduring feature of educational policy and practice in the United States. With a firm grasp on the ways in which antiblackness has been encoded into law and policy, we must turn attention to the manifestation of antiblackness in teacher behavior, and its impact on the mitigation of Black freedom.

Historically, education represented a literal and figurative pathway out of slavery and towards freedom, which helped to define Black efforts to build and grow educational opportunities after the Civil War and into the twenty-first century. These efforts were grounded in a shared belief in the liberatory power of education. While DuBois and Washington saw divergent paths to true freedom for Black Americans, they shared a conviction in education as the only clear path forward. Paradoxically, education has also been a principle vehicle for the socialization, subjugation, and oppression of Black Americans, helping to coopt and restrict Black communities in their search for freedom. This legacy of oppression is woven into the structure of schools, where the systematic racialization of educational opportunities, processes, and policies leads to disparate educational outcomes, for Black students in particular (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). This legacy necessitates a clear theoretical pathway for understanding the ways in which antiblackness manifests in the classroom, connecting historical legacy with present reality. In the following section, I detail how Black Critical Theory serves as an appropriate theoretical framework for the exploration of antiblackness in pedagogy and practice.

Theoretical Framework—Black Critical Theory

At its root, this project is an exploration of humanity and an interrogation of the ways in

which Black humanity is contested through education policy and practice. As the review of literature has explored, education is both a legacy of freedom and a legacy of oppression in the lives of Black Americans. The current marginalization of Black students in schools is not disconnected from the larger sociohistorical processes that shaped the arrival and enslavement of Africans in America or the development of public education during a period when most Black Americans were still in bondage. The subsequent integration of African Americans into systems of public education has been entangled with the legacy of slavery and remains inseparable from the continued *de facto* dehumanization of Black people through policy and practice. In order to understand how antiblackness functions at the classroom level, I engage Black Critical Theory as a framework that actively seeks to theorize antiblackness in institutional structures, to engage the liberatory strain within Black efforts for education, and to search for conditions that reinforce Black humanity.

Black Critical Theory, or BlackCrit (Dumas & Ross, 2016), is positioned as a theoretical scaffolding to contend with

the specificity of *antiblackness*, as a social construction, as an embodied lived experience of social suffering and resistance, and perhaps, most importantly, as an antagonism, in which the Black is a despised thing-in-itself (but not person for herself or himself), in opposition to all that is pure, human(e), and White (Gordon, 1997; Wilderson, 2010). (p. 417)

Dumas & Ross (2016) propose that BlackCrit embodies the anti-Black or Black-White paradigmatic underpinnings of the broader Critical Race Theory, developed by scholars Derrick Bell, Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier & Kimberle Crenshaw, as part of “a long tradition of resistance to the unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial and gendered lines in America, and across the globe, with the support

and legitimacy of the legal system” (Taylor, 2009). An extension of critical legal studies, CRT effectively demonstrated the racialized contradiction of law and practice, which frequently centers whiteness and engages equity and equality only when it serves the interests of whites, despite the fact that it is people of color who remain disproportionately regulated and prosecuted under the law (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2013). CRT’s entrée into the field of education was “a decidedly *Black* theorization of race” (Dumas & Ross, 2016), as scholars thoroughly engaged its capacity for understanding the workings of anti-Black racism in institutional policy and practice (Billings & Tate, 1995). However, precisely because CRT is a theory of institutionalized racism and not antiblackness, its use to explore “the Black-white binary” was both limited by the theoretical tenets and limiting because other people of color were inherently excluded from these foundational analyses (Dumas & Ross, 2016). The resulting “crits” – LatCrit, AsianCrit, and Tribal Crit – emerged to explore the nuances of racism in institutional structures that impact the lives of Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Indigenous people (Brayboy, 2005; Chang, 1993; Hernandez-Truyol, 1997), and Dumas and Ross (2016) suggest that BlackCrit be more actively theorized as a way to directly engage antiblackness in education.

This project is supported by BlackCrit’s focus on antiblackness as “endemic...and central to how all of us make sense of the social, economic, historical, and cultural dimensions of human life” (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 429). The proposed exploration of antiblackness in the classroom is grounded in the paradox of freedom through education and oppression through education that has defined that historical development education by and for Black people in the United States. While Black people have always and continue to assert their freedom, the historical reality and

social legacy of “slavery as the ontological position of Black people,” (Dumas, 2016, 13), continues to define an “antagonistic relationship between blackness and (the possibility of) humanity” (Dumas & Ross, 2016, p. 429). Rooted in Afro-pessimism, antiblackness is inseparable from the simultaneous definition of humanity and slavery, what Wilderson (2010) describes as “the political ontology of Humanity and the social death of Blacks” (p. 21), where the Black-white binary exists because of (white) freedom and (Black) slavery (Patterson, 1982). The interconnectedness of antiblackness and Black slavery renders current manifestations of Black oppression and Black freedom as “the afterlife of slavery” (Hartman, 2007), in which “Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago” (p. 6). Wun (2016a; 2016b), for example, draws clear connections between the afterlife of slavery and the disproportionate discipline of Black girls in school, in which she theorizes that these unjust practices are manifestations of a centuries long fetishization, subjugation, and “captivity” of Black female bodies (2016b, p. 178). Wun also draws on Sexton’s (2010) assertion that these historical roots are not part of some salacious “fiction” but are actually part of the “mundane and quotidian” ways in which antiblackness manifests in daily life (Hartman, 1997, p. 4). As such, the classroom, a place in which the small, daily interactions make up the whole of educational practice and experience, is a key component in transmission and reproduction of antiblackness.

Secondly, Dumas & Ross (2016) propose that BlackCrit must contend with tension that exists between “blackness” and the “neoliberal-multicultural imagination” (p. 430). This idea is at the root of CRT’s segmentation into other “crits” that moved away from blackness to engage more fully with other racial identities, ideologies, and the relation of both to white supremacy. In

addition, the development of multicultural education, diversity, and inclusion imperatives in schools, has conflated with notions of colorblindness and post-racial agendas, leading to a doubling-down on race neutral policy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Dumas (2016) and Sexton (2008) argue that “multiculturalism and diversity....are often positioned against the lives of Black people,” such that blackness is viewed as a barrier to progress in a “multicultural future” (Dumas & Ross, 2016, 430).

This tension between (anti)blackness and multiculturalism is aligned with teachers’ conflicting notions about the theory and practice of socially-just, anti-racist pedagogy. Like my coworker, Lorraine, who could not reconcile her childhood grief over Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination with the reality that she was segregating and mistreating her Black students, white teachers, in particular, struggle to recognize antiblackness in teaching practice. In her work with white teacher candidates, Matias (2016a) found “disgust” at the root of teachers’ caring for students, rather than justice or love. “White emotionality” emerged, in varying forms, as teachers engaged with ideas about white supremacy, whiteness, and racism, “rehumanizing” teachers, revealing “distancing” emotions, like “disgust,” which undermined work with students of color (Matias, 2016a, 2016b). Indeed, explorations of white supremacy and white identity, which seems to be aligned with teachers’ desires to teach in “diverse” classrooms (Watson, 2011), reinforce the limited knowledge of white teachers about white privilege and the ways in which whiteness impacts their pedagogy and practice (Landsman, 2001; Matias, 2013; Pennington, Brock, Ndura, 2012). Yoon (2012) theorizes “whiteness-at-work,” noting teachers’ tendencies to “de-race” conversations that are explicitly racial, avoiding critique (p. 607). Similarly, the desire to be a “savior” continues to emerge as teachers are encouraged to explore their motivations for

working with students of color (Brown, 2013). The absence of and aversion to blackness in these explorations reinforces the continued perception of blackness as oppositional to ideas of multiculturalism, diversity, and, especially, whiteness.

Theoretical approaches to understanding teacher behavior towards and interaction with Black students cannot skirt around blackness as an idea or a reality. Instead, BlackCrit positions antiblackness as fundamental to the design and practice of education, “allow(ing) one to more precisely identify and respond to racism in education discourse and in the formation and implementation of education policy” (Dumas, 2016, p. 12). Further, Dumas asserts that “Teachers....should create opportunities to engage in honest and very specific conversations about Black bodies, blackness, and Black historical memories in and of the school community,” towards understanding “what it means to educate a group of people who were never meant to be educated and, in fact, were never meant to be, to exist as humans,” in this country (p. 17).

Finally, and perhaps the reason that this project is heart work for me, as a Black woman, educator, and researcher, is that Black freedom and Black humanity must be at the center of *all* inquiries about Black students and Black education. Drawing from a rich discourse of resistance is Black education, art, and expression, Dumas & Ross (2016) “offer that BlackCrit should create space for Black liberatory fantasy, and resist a revisionist history” that de-racializes systems of oppression and dispossesses white people of their complicity in the terrorization and subjugation of people of color” (p. 431). “Glimpses of freedom” in Black liberatory fantasy, instead, often invoke violence against white people, as manifestations of dismantling social structures that oppress Black people (Dumas & Ross, 2016), clear invocations of the “social disorder” required to dismantle colonialism (Fanon, 1963). I would also contend that this call for liberation, “to

make space for the notion of chants becoming battle cries, tears becoming stones in clenched fists” (Dumas & Ross, p. 431), must also invoke Haartman’s (2007) idea of the “mundane and quotidian” *for Black liberation*. Just as afro-futurism, through the work of Black writers like Octavia Butler, my personal favorite, theorized a technological world in which Black people could be fully free, fully human, BlackCrit must engage “liberatory fantasy” as the idea that “a new politics, a new practice of education, committed to Black – and therefore human – emancipation” (Dumas, 2016, p. 17) is possible. The intersectionality of afro-futurism, in which people were written to be Black *and* woman, Black *and* queer, Black *and* human, is necessary for a visioning of education that transgresses an oppressive social order, a radical reality proposed by Black feminists like Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) and bell hooks (1994). Invoking the Black legacy of freedom, hooks (1994), envisions “education as the practice of freedom,” through resistance to dehumanization in theoretical and real terms, and assertion of all aspects of our humanity through the process of teaching and learning. Even as we seek to disrupt and dismantle oppression, we must always be in a creative process of humanization, of continuing to center freedom and humanity at the core of theory, inquiry, and practice.

I embrace BlackCrit as a theoretical framework for understanding manifestations of antiblackness in the classroom because it centers the historical and current relevance of antiblackness in the social world; it allows for the paradox of Black freedom and Black oppression, and recognizes the antagonistic relationship between (anti)blackness and conceptualizations of multiculturalism; and, finally, it demands a focus on black liberation that makes space for the destruction of oppressive systems and frameworks, and emphasizes the necessity of Black humanization in the theory, research, and practice of education. Work that

focuses on the tension between antiblackness and Black students, especially where white teachers and racially diverse classrooms are concerned, must directly engage teaching and learning as a process of racialization, where the “everyday” making and negotiating of race, and blackness, specifically, contribute to a legacy of oppression (Lewis, 2003; Essed, 1991; DuBois & Eaton, 1899). As such, research that analyzes teacher behavior and interactions with Black students, must actively engage with antiblackness as a social construct and a social reality that actively dehumanizes students. In effect, recognizing antiblackness makes space for blackness and the radical notion that Black people are human, centering the humanity of Black students as the organizing principle of teacher-student interactions, and the standard by which teacher behavior can be analyzed. As such, this study is poised to ask, How do teachers’ ideas and beliefs about race manifest in their behavior toward and interaction with students?

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study is to explore how Black humanity is shaped in the classroom through the manifestation of teachers' ideas and beliefs about race in their behavior toward and interaction with students. This study is built on a foundation for qualitative inquiry in education based on the early work of Black scholars to “theorize race and use it as an analytical tool for understanding school inequity” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48). BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016) expands this frame by centering antiblackness in examinations of race, and further, proposing that research on “inequity” must contend with the particularities of antiblackness in the social context. As such, a primary goal for this study is to expand our working knowledge of racial inequalities in education by centering antiblackness in institutional and interpersonal processes. This study interrogates understandings of race in the classroom by focusing on teachers as intermediaries that bridge institutional and interpersonal domains and examines their role in manifesting antiblackness in their work with students.

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to answer the research question, How do teacher ideas and beliefs about race manifest in teacher behavior toward and interactions with students? I begin by exploring critical collaborative case study as a method that is well-suited to both interrogate race in teaching and to support teachers as active participants in research that explores their own practice. I provide a statement of epistemology and positionality that situates me in relation to this work. I then lay out the study's site, participant selection and

description, and data collection. Finally, I describe the data analysis methods.

Critical Collaborative Case Study

I conducted a critical collaborative case study to interrogate the how racial “inequalities are sustained and promoted” through the manifestation of teacher ideas and beliefs about race in teacher-student interactions (Battacharya, 2017, p. 117). Yin (2014) notes power of exploratory case studies to explore phenomena that are not yet well understood, such as the connections between teacher ideas and beliefs about race and their interactions with students in the classroom. Critical collaborative case study is a hybrid approach to research that brings together critical theoretical frameworks with the well-established methodological tradition of case study. As a methodology, case study focuses on current issues by “target[ing]... information-rich sources for in-depth understanding and can also be used to inform policies or to uncover contributing reasons for cause-and-effect relationships” (Battacharya, 2017, p. 109). As an exploration of “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context,” case study is particularly useful “when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p.16). Merriam & Tisdell (2016) note that “the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study: the case,” which serves as the “heart” of the study (p. 38). In an examination of race and teacher-student interaction, a well-explored but complex issue, a focus on racial ideology and social cognition as the “heart” of the study delimits an underexplored phenomenon in schooling as the unit of analysis.

As “reports of alternative paradigm inquiries” (Lincoln & Guba, 2002), case studies lend themselves to interrogation of power relationships and complex systems. Due to its specificity, case study is heavily influenced by the theoretical approach taken by the researcher. Battacharya

(2017) argues that, “theoretical influences inform how one conceptualizes case study research” (p. 109). In this study, the influence of a critical theoretical framework, BlackCrit, informs my decision to take a collaborative approach to case study. Drawing from the tradition of critical ethnography, which places “value [on] the relationship built with the participant,” this study will “interrogate the various ways inequities in our society are sustained and promoted” (Battacharya, 2017, p. 117). The engagement of teachers as active participants and collaborators is integral to analysis that rejects notions of researcher neutrality and seeks to inform societal change. In ethnographic research, critical collaborative ethnography (Nicolazzo, 2017) is a departure from more traditional ethnography because it seeks to engage participants in the work of the research. Similar to the ways in which ethnography has been adapted by critical and collaborative researchers, this iteration of critical collaborative case study is so-named in efforts to make plain the perspectives and goals of the researcher, while centering the value of collaboration in methodologies of resistance. Rather than the researcher solely observing, collecting, and reflecting, this study will intentionally request participants to explore collected observations and data individually and as a group, furthering the justice-based orientation of this work.

An additional consideration for this methodology is the focus on observing antiblackness in the teacher behaviors toward and interactions with students. The idea of operationalization of antiblackness raises a subtle, but significant, distinction between the focus on teacher behavior and the concept of implicit racial bias (Devine, 1989). While the idea of implicit racial bias, which focuses on the racial attitudes and stereotypes that impact social behavior, remains a grounding feature of this exploration, the measurement of implicit bias traditionally employs psychological research methods like tracking eye movement and timing participant responses to

questions about racial bias. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) has served as the key analytical tool for research on implicit racial bias. Developed by Greenwald in 1994 (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), the test allowed for extensive studies of implicit racial bias, a relatively new conceptual idea at the time (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Most studies of implicit bias in the fields of psychology and education, among others, have relied upon the IAT as a benchmarking tool to assess participants' racial biases. Coupled with vignettes and even large data sets, the IAT has provided an important measure of a difficult-to-measure, psychological construct.

The function of implicit bias as a social phenomenon points us to qualitative methods of inquiry, to further understand how peoples' racial attitudes and stereotypes influence their behavior and, in this case, operationalize antiblackness. Recently, qualitative researchers have explored other ways of measuring implicit racial bias, focusing on its social function. Ethnographic approaches, including interview and observation, have produced rich data and emergent themes that demonstrate teachers' explicit and implicit racial biases (Trachock, 2015). Just as observation allows for the researcher to record live behavioral interactions and communication, interviews can help to decode participants' "decision-making" regarding students' dispositions, achievement and potential (Fletcher, 2014). The stereotypes and racial attitudes that inform implicit biases emerge through the calculated pairing of interviews and observations in research design.

Additionally, research on bias and interaction theorizes that, "overt forms of evaluation may also reflect implicit biases more than explicit influences" (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002). Rigorous analysis of verbal and nonverbal behavior (McConnell & Leibold, 2001) can reveal how implicit attitudes manifest in social interaction. A focus on teacher behavior, both

verbal and nonverbal, allows for racial bias in general, and antiblackness, specifically, to be observed in the natural context of social interaction and analyzed in the context of teacher narratives, interviews, and focus group data. While I believe the IAT is an effective tool (which I have used), I believe that qualitative measures can help us understand how implicit racial bias or antiblackness actually manifests in human behavior. By directing participants to pair faces of different racial backgrounds with both positive and negative words, the tool is used to elicit racial attitudes and preferences based on participants' impulsive responses. This is extremely important for understanding what implicit racial biases an individual may have. However, the interpersonal aspects of antiblackness play out in communication and decision-making in the classroom. Asking participants to take the IAT before or during the research may prime them to alter their behaviors in the classroom and their communication with students (Smolkowski et al, 2016; Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009). Moreover, the IAT does not account for the complex social context that has shaped antiblackness, nor does it allow for an exploration of that context in the assessment of implicit racial associations. While a qualitative case study may not be able to assess racial bias or antiblackness on an implicit level, it allows for examination of behavior as social interaction, which is the field where implicit bias manifests, and most importantly, where it matters.

Epistemology

My epistemology is aligned with my theoretical framework, BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016). As a critical researcher of race and education in the twenty-first century, I believe that antiblackness is inextricably embedded within institutional and social processes. The development of education systems in the United States is synchronous with the deepening of our

nation's commitment to racial inequality, via legal and extralegal processes. Black people and blackness occupy a theoretical and material space in the national consciousness that reinforces a "racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago," through colonialism and slavery (Hartman, 2007). To understand how racial ideas and beliefs connect to behaviors and interactions, we have to contend with the presence of antiblackness in the social processes of institutional life.

In addition to the goal of this study to "critique and challenge" the social world, critical epistemologies also emphasize the goal of critical inquiry to "transform and empower" (Merriam, 2009). My Black critical epistemology asks the researcher to interrogate antiblackness while simultaneously nurturing "the ability to hold blackness gently in one's arms" (Dumas & ross, 2016). Black critical epistemology is a call to struggle "from a place of love" (Dumas & ross, 2016) because the historical and contemporary reality of blackness in the United States necessitates struggle and love.

Site Selection & Description

This study of race and teaching was conducted at Robinson Elementary, one school in a large school district in the greater metropolitan area of a large Midwestern city. At the request of the school district, the identity of the school and the district are not revealed in this study. Like many schools of its size and location in proximity to a large urban district, Robinson has been shaped by a paradoxical relationship between the freedom and oppression in the educational lives and experiences of Black people in the North. The historical development of Robinson is deeply embedded in the racial demography and politics of the city, which remains a diverse, but segregated community. Elementary schools in the community range between roughly 10 and 30

percent Black, while white students represent as much as 60 percent in some schools.

Additionally, while Black students graduate high school and attend college at higher rates than many neighboring school districts, Black students are suspended and expelled at higher rates than their white counterparts. The current social context is arguably anti-Black and, by teacher participants' estimation, Robinson is certainly not equally or equitably educating all of its students.

When I began discussions with the district about conducting my dissertation research, Robinson was a name that came up multiple times. I was told that the teachers might be receptive to my study and that the student population reflected the racial diversity of the district. When I was approved to conduct my study in the district, I took a closer look at each elementary school in the district to determine schools that might be a good fit. I was interested in a school where white and Black students were represented in comparable numbers and where standardized test scores were also comparable between white and Black students. Research has shown that most racial disparities in regard to academic, behavioral and disciplinary outcomes widen drastically beginning in 3rd grade (Gozali-Lee & Mueller, 2013). The achievement of Black students in each school, as evidenced by the standardized exam scores, helped to provide a general idea of how Black students are succeeding in each school environment. I collected and organized demographic data for the 2017-2018 school year on each of the elementary schools in the district. I looked for schools that had a proximate number of Black and white students, as well as comparable achievement between Black and white students on standardized tests. I ranked each school based on those criteria and reached out to principals at the schools that met at least two of those criteria. Robinson was one of the schools that met the criteria and was also the only school

where the principal responded and agreed to meet with me to discuss my district approved research study and plan to recruit teacher participants.

Robinson is a unique school site in that it offers multiple district magnet programs that focus on race, culture, and language. These programs are not enrichment opportunities outside of the school day. Rather, the magnet programs operate like organizational units, or schools within schools, in which students spend most of their day. These programs are voluntary and students are enrolled through the district office. Diaspora is a program that focuses on the African and African American experience. Escuela is bilingual Spanish-English program. Minimal descriptive information is provided here to preserve confidentiality. There is no racial, ethnic, or linguistic eligibility for programs – a student of any race, ethnicity, or first language can enroll in any program. However, Diaspora is predominantly Black and Escuela is predominantly Latinx, though these proportions vary year to year. Robinson also has open enrollment policy for the neighborhood attendance area. Students who enroll through the neighborhood attendance area function in their own operational unit. Neighborhood classrooms reflect the overall diversity of the school, with enrollment that is 1/3 Black, 1/3 Latinx, and 1/3 white. Each program has a classroom for each grade level, K-5, and all students have a corresponding classroom teacher that is housed in that program. In the building, programs are somewhat segregated, with the Diaspora and Escuela classrooms in the same wing. Fine arts classes are intentionally integrated across programs.

Participant Recruitment & Selection

Teacher participants for this study were recruited through direct contact with principal at Robinson, Mr. Weeks. Once I confirmed the school site, I worked Mr. Weeks to explore teacher

partnerships. He invited me to attend a staff meeting in the spring of 2019, where I could present my research proposal to teachers. At the meeting, I explained that I was interested in forming a teacher collaborative at Robinson that would allow teachers the opportunity to explore race and teaching in their own practice. My numerous interactions with veteran teachers and teacher candidates have indicated that many teachers are interested in interrogating their own practice. Culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2007) and multicultural education (Kailin, 2002) have become hallmark aspects of teacher education programs in recent decades, requiring that teacher candidates establish a basic understanding of concepts like “whiteness,” “diversity,” “multiculturalism,” and “cultural competence” (Sleeter, 2001; McIntyre, 1997). Explorations of in-service teachers have demonstrated varying outcomes regarding the impact of these teacher education programs (Whipp, 2013), and cite a need for increased “self-reflection” and “relational reflection” with regard to “race, culture and power” (Zippay, 2010). I relied on this research during my presentation to teachers and I offered them a Teacher Recruitment Letter (Appendix A), which explained the scope of the project and their participation, and a Teacher Interest Form (Appendix B), which they could return to me if they were committed to or interested in participating in the study.

Additionally, I told teachers that I did not have many restrictions on the type of teacher who participated. While it may seem important to define race or gender specifications in the teacher sample, the evidence that racial bias exists across teacher racial and gender identity (Gilliam et al, 2016) confirms the wide scope of the sample. I told them that my only requirement was that teachers be in-service (i.e. actively teaching) during the time of the study so that sufficient observational data could be collected. As such, teachers were not be excluded

from the study based on race, gender, or years of teaching, though these identities were explored more fully through the data collection and analysis processes, since intersectionality is crucial to critical qualitative approaches (Bhattacharya, 2017). However, per the district’s requirements, I agreed that no more than ten teachers would be recruited for the study.

As a result of these recruitment efforts, a total of six Robinson teachers agreed to be part of the teacher collaborative. No teachers who expressed interest in participating were excluded. Below is a table that summarizes teacher identities, grade levels, and self-identified race.

Table 1. Robinson Elementary Teacher Participants.

| Teacher | Grade Level | Self-Identified Race |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ms. Garcia | K | Latino/Hispanic |
| Mr. Hernández | K-5 | Latinx |
| Ms. Kent | K-3 | Mixed Race/Brown |
| Ms. Tocci | K-5 | White |
| Mr. Vidal | K-2 | Hispanic |
| Ms. Walsh | K | White |

District Context: Definitions of Race and Training for Race-Consciousness

All teachers at Robinson participated in district-mandated professional development training about race before becoming participants in the teacher collaborative. These trainings are created by an independent agency that develops curriculum and creates resources to fit organizational needs. The trainings were led by district-affiliated facilitators, including some administrators, and were required for all district staff and faculty. Primary goals of these professional development sessions, which occurred over the course of two full workdays, was to develop a common vocabulary around race throughout the district, to encourage individual reflection about race and racial bias, to examine whiteness as a concept and a status, and to encourage a more sincere, operationalized approach to race equity. When my research proposal

was approved, district administrators asked that I participate in the training so that I could learn the vocabulary that teachers were learning and go through the same process of self-examination. I obliged and completed the training prior to recruiting teachers. No teacher participants were present in my training session.

Though all teachers who participated in the training came to it with different understandings of race and degrees of racial consciousness, the common vocabulary established a baseline of shared knowledge that informs this study. Since all data was collected after teacher participants completed the training, I knew that they had at least been introduced to these foundational ideas about race prior to writing their teaching statements or participating in interviews. As I coded and analyzed this data, I was increasingly curious about how teachers' expressed beliefs and ideas about race reflected this shared vocabulary. As I sought to understand what their individual and collective narratives revealed, I referred back to the training materials to reflect on teachers articulated beliefs and ideas about race. I provide the following list of vocabulary words as context for district expectations about teacher racial consciousness. All terms and definitions are from materials provided during the training.

Race: skin color; the amount of melanin in your skin; a social construct

Racial: (adjective); pervasive social significance of meaning that gets attached to skin color

Racism: the practice of enacting and/or enforcing a hierarchy based on the belief that one race is superior to others

Racist: (noun or adjective); the action of racism; position of authority related to power – white; people of color cannot be racist, but can have racial prejudice

The following terms are specific to racial consciousness and reflect a continuum from “unconscious” to “conscious.”

Unconscious (“innocence/ignorance”): I don’t know, I don’t know

Dys-conscious: I don’t know, but I think I do

Semi-conscious: I know, I don’t know

Conscious: I know, I know

The inclusion of these terms is not meant to function as definitions for this study or analysis. These definitions are central to understanding how teacher participants are being encouraged to understand race and racism in the context of the school district in which they work. As I explore teacher ideas and beliefs about race, I consider how these definitions show up or remain unengaged by teacher participants, and how these definitions connect to the larger theoretical and practical discourse around race and education.

Data Collection

Data collection methods for this study were specifically designed to capture two major features of race in schooling. The first, teacher ideas and beliefs about race, is documented through written teacher narratives, interviews, and group study. The second, teacher behavior toward and interaction with students, is documented through observation. Second round interviews served as an opportunity for teachers to reflect on this observational data, and thus, on their documented behavior toward and interaction with students. This data collection methods draw strongly from critical methodologies such as critical ethnography, which emphasizes the dialogical relationship between theory and method, whereby research is “critical theory in action” (Kinchloe & McLaren, 2000). With BlackCrit as the theoretical guide for inquiry, the

method necessitates data collection that can capture how antiblackness is operationalized through teacher behavior and interaction with students.

Data collection methods were chosen in alignment with the tradition of qualitative case study, but also with a focus on capturing the manifestation of antiblackness in the classroom. Each method of collection serves as an opportunity to expand the field of data and create a multilayered dataset to reflect the multiple domains of antiblackness in the social world of the classroom. This critical collaborative case study utilized data collection methods that reflected the strong traditions of ethnography and case study in qualitative research. Primary data collection occurred through observation and interview. Subsequent data collection occurred through narratives and group study, which bolstered collaborative opportunities for participants to reflect on what they *say* and what they *do* in the classroom.

Narratives

Drawing on the tradition of personal narrative in ethnographic interviewing, written narratives served as an orienting mechanism, to understand teachers' beliefs and values about their work. In critical methodologies in education, narratives allow teachers to articulate their own pedagogical frame, which establishes a foundation for rapport and recognition of their professional expertise (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Before the first interview or observation, I asked teachers to write a 200-500 word Teaching Statement (Appendix C) that explained their approach to pedagogy and student engagement. This statement served as an additional source of data articulated specifically by participants outside of conversation with the researcher.

Interviews

Another foundational aspect of critical ethnographic research that I utilized is the

interview, which is grounded in the idea that teachers (participants) are not “objects(s), but rather... subject(s) with agency, history, and his or her own idiosyncratic command of a story” (Madison, 2012, p. 25). In a study that focuses on teacher practice, it is important to understand how they view their own practice, and how they interpret observations. Interviews served as an opportunity for “partnership and dialogue... [to] construct memory, meaning, and experience,” with teacher participants (Madison, 2012, p. 25). Interviews also served to construct teachers’ understanding of their own behavior. The goal of these interviews was not to change teacher behavior, but to understand how they process those behaviors, especially when presented from an observer’s perspective.

I interviewed each teacher participant twice. The goal of the first interview (Appendix D) was to establish basic information about each participant, during which they were also asked to talk about their Teaching Statements (described in the *Narratives* section). This first interview focused on “personal narrative,” which allowed them the opportunity to express their approach to teaching and student engagement from their point of view and experience (Madison, p. 26). In an in-depth open-ended format, the first interview focused on understanding teachers’ perspectives on teaching, their orientation towards ideas of antiblackness, multiculturalism, and humanity, and general information about their personal and professional identity.

The second interview (Appendix E) was conducted after at least two observations were completed and usually after all observations were completed for a teacher participant. For these interviews, I focused specifically on classroom observations, giving teachers an opportunity to hear, discuss, and process data that was collected about their behavior and interaction with students. Interview questions sought to engage teachers in conversations about racialized

behaviors. I looked for teachers' answers to questions that probe for "opinion and value," as well as "feeling" (Madison, 2012, p. 27). This speaks to teachers' understanding and interpretation of their behavior, while giving them an opportunity to process data in a safe space. The goal of this interview will be to gain a fuller picture of teachers' behavior over the course of the year and to understand how teacher ideas and beliefs about race connect to their behavior in the classroom.

Observation

Participant observation is a key data collection method for critical collaborative case study. The "participant" aspect of observation denotes the reciprocal relationship necessary to "gain access" and the understanding that the researcher may be actively involved in the environment, to varying degrees (Bhattacharya, 2016; Madison, 2012). In elementary classrooms this participation can occur in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of the teacher (Lewis, 2003). During teacher recruitment, I shared my background in school social work and youth development in elementary schools to help me gain interest from teachers and to position myself as a professional resource.

I conducted four classroom observations for each teacher participant, each about an hour in length. The goal of observations was to collect data regarding the interactions of teachers with students. During the first observation, I focused on the classroom environment, so that I can create a "map" of the classroom, focusing on the physical and social components (Bhattacharya, 2017). In the following observations, I focused on social behavior in the classroom, with an emphasis on nonverbal, verbal and interactional behavior between teachers and students. Attention was paid specifically to frequency of positive and negative reinforcement, as well as the context and quality of interactions. As a qualitative researcher, I place less emphasis on

measuring behavior to quantify it, and more focus on looking for patterns, processes, and connections in the social world. In connection with BlackCrit framework, I documented teacher behavior over time, with an eye towards behaviors that demonstrate antiblackness, reinforce the tension between blackness and multiculturalism, and uphold Black humanity (Dumas & ross, 2016).

After most observations, I wrote memos to capture my initial thoughts about an observation. All field notes were transcribed into observation narratives for each observation, totaling four observation narratives for each teacher. I often recounted vignettes, or short stories, to help document interactions between teachers and students that play out over the course of time. For example, as behavioral patterns began to form, I documented how a teacher's verbal and nonverbal behavior toward a student or a group of students evolved over the course of a single observation and over the course of the year. These vignettes helped to create a fuller picture of social behavior in the classroom and created a foundation for later analysis.

Group Study

The goal of group study (Appendix F) was to help establish a community of practice between participants as they engage in reflective pedagogical work. Importantly, this centers “authenticity and reality of the teachers’ experiences,” which facilitates consultation, reflection, and potentially, action (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 180). Group study is not to be confused with a focus group model because the collective nature of the group study model is designed to be in service to participants themselves, not in service of evaluating another subject or object. Group study served as an analytical tool, helping the researcher and the participants to work through raw data, and the main collaborative aspect of this ethnographic work.

One group study occurred about halfway through the data collection period. The goal of this group study was to encourage conversation between teachers about their experiences reflecting on observational data. Using an informal open-ended method, I offered conversational prompts to encourage conversation between the teachers. During the group study, we discussed preliminary findings, focused largely on teacher ideas and beliefs about race, as well as shared concerns that emerged during preliminary interviews concerning their work with students at Robinson.

Data Analysis

Critical qualitative methodologies rely on rich data collection and a dialogical approach to data analysis. In order to account for these challenges, an inductive and comparative analytical method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used to work through the data set. The BlackCrit framework served as a theoretical foundation for analysis, grounding the research in ideas of antiblackness, the tension between blackness and multiculturalism, and Black humanity. These theoretical ideas were engaged as the sociopolitical context of the field and served as a starting point for analyzing themes in the data. Using the framework, I constructed a primary list of codes that were applied to observations, interviews, narratives, and group study.

Table 2. Thematic Codes and Definitions.

| Code | Definition |
|-----------------------|--|
| Race | Mentions of race, as a concept or identity |
| Racial ideas/beliefs | Teacher ideas and beliefs about race |
| Diversity | Mentions of diversity |
| Racial/ethnic culture | Mentions of cultural norms or practices of racial or ethnic groups |
| Racial bias | Mentions of racial bias or explicit racial bias in teachers' speaking/writing about students or racial communities |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Cultural connection | Importance of cultural connection in regards to racial/ethnic identity |
| Immigrant identity | Mentions of immigrant status in regard to racial/ethnic identity |
| Teacher education on race | Teacher experience with race in teacher education programs; presence or absence of race in teacher ed curriculum |

Through application of these codes to collected data, emergent patterns and themes produced inductive codes. I considered these patterns and themes within classrooms, within schools, and across classrooms and schools, and added codes that drew connections between the macrosocial and microsocial processes identified by teachers and observed in the classroom. The table below is a shortened list of inductive codes.

Table 3. Inductive Codes and Definitions.

| Code | Definition |
|----------------------------|--|
| Student/Teaching Qualities | As described by teachers |
| Persistence/Hard work | Student's dedication to academic work |
| Self-discipline | Student's ability to focus, self-correct |
| Academic ability | Student intelligence |
| Academic growth | Student progress in skill mastery |
| Participation | Focus on student contributions to class, not skill mastery |
| Teaching philosophy | Teachers' expressions of approach to and reasons behind teaching pedagogy |
| Humanity | Focus on all students as humans |
| Safety/Comfort | Environment where students feel safe to be/learn |
| Belonging | Environment where students feel a sense of belonging |
| Classroom management | Teachers' approach to classroom management/discipline |
| School-level factors | Social context of school environment |
| Administration | Mentions of administration (role, policy) in effect on teaching |
| Policy | Mentions of school/district/federal policy |
| Diversity/Race Training | Mentions of diversity trainings |
| Competition | Programs and teachers feeling/being pitted against one another for resources |
| School financial resources | Mentions of school funding or lack of school funding |

Fatigue/Burnout

Teacher expressions of fatigue or burnout related to work

This kind of inductive analysis, “systematically coding, sorting, categorizing, building some organizational structure, visualizing...data, [and] constructing themes” (Bhattacharya, 2016), lends itself to studies of the social world in a complex sociohistorical context.

In addition to inductive analysis, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) served as an important method for analyzing teacher behavior towards and interactions with students, as well as their narrative and verbal processing of this data. Critical discourse analysis holds that communication is a “form of social practice” that is dialogically related to the social context in which it takes place (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). Discourse cannot be separated from ideologies that inform social understanding or behavior, and can thus be analyzed “to uncover relationships between aspects of social life—such as power, ideology, gender, class, and race—that language encodes (Chase, 1996; Quinn, 2005)” (Watson, 2012, p. 989). For this analysis, I considered nonverbal behavior to be part of communication and language, or discourse. Taken together, written, verbal, and nonverbal discourse make up “text” for analysis (Barker & Galasinski, 2001). To analyze the text, I considered the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions of text in the classroom (Halliday, 1994; Hasan, 1985). The ideational function of discourse aligns with the idea of implicit racial attitudes, ideas, and beliefs that underlie behavior. The interpersonal function of discourse refers to the verbal and nonverbal communication between teachers and students. Finally, the textual function of language refers to those aspects of communication that “makes it intelligible to the addressee precisely as text that makes sense within itself and within the context of appearance” (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 66). As I worked through data, critical

discourse analysis helped to decode written, verbal, and, especially, behavioral communication in the context of the classroom and the larger social context of antiblackness.

Using these strategies together, I developed a coding schema that was applied across narratives, interviews, observations, and group study. Analysis of narratives and interviews helped to develop emergent codes about teacher ideas and beliefs about race. Subsequent analysis of observations expanded this list to include specific coding of teacher behavior toward and interaction with students. As summarized in the table, I coded behavioral and interactional data with an emphasis on the quality and function of teacher-student interaction.

Table 4. Schema for Teacher Behavior and Interaction with Students

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Affirmative | Denotes overall positive behavior towards a student of specific race and gender identity; includes praise, confirmation, recognition. |
| Corrective | Denotes behaviors that are not affirmative or punitive, but rather respond to student behaviors without an explicitly negative or positive connotation; instructive; specific to race and gender identity. |
| Disciplinary | Denotes behaviors that are disciplinary in nature towards students of specific race & gender identity; includes threats, discipline, punishment. |
| Negligent | Ignoring or refusing students; can refer to lack of interaction with a student or open refusal/rejection of student (from teacher table, for example). |

As noted in the definitions, I took care to note the race and gender identity of students in the classification of teacher behavior. This allowed me to look for trends in teacher behavior along intersectional lines and to pay close attention to the presence of race in my analysis.

Positionality & Reflexivity

I come to this work as a person who feels called to do research in service to the legacy of my ancestors who were enslaved in this country and those who enslaved. As a multiracial Black woman in the United States, my positionality is reflective of a complex historical relationship to oppression and a spirit of enduring struggle for freedom. I seek to bring these seemingly

disparate relations together, as my father writes, toward “a little bit of redemption...and if not redemption, a quiet relief as the separate strings are better positioned to become a rope....something we can hold onto” (Rice, 2018).

My own experience of racial oppression has been limited by my proximity to whiteness. As a white-passing Black person, I am routinely afforded the privileges of whiteness, functioning as an “honorary white” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). I have never tried to “pass” for white. Particularly as a person who is descended from many generations of proud, but light-skinned, Black people, the idea of passing is considered taboo. Even as proximity to whiteness, through light skin, often grants racial privilege, blackness has never been something to set aside or distance oneself from, at least in my family. I was at least eight-years-old before I realized that my blackness wasn’t the same as my father’s, or my grandfather’s. Yet, as a Black person with blond hair and blue eyes, I understand what it means to be Black less through interpersonal experiences of racism and more through family, culture, and legacy.

In the context of my professional work in schools, being a white-passing, multiracial Black woman means that I occupy a strange racial space. I am a racial queer (Chang, 2010) in that I don’t fit the racial schema that people expect. I can wear my t-shirt that reads, “lightly melanated, hella Black,” and white teachers will still make racist remarks when they talk to me about students. They may know that I’m Black, but they don’t see that I’m Black. For some, this racial space positions me as an unusual representative of Black critical epistemology in educational space. However, as an active, proud member of the Black diaspora in the United States, my positionality is as political as it is a personal “love song to and for Black people” (Dumas & ross, 2016).

I take a collaborative approach to research as an active tool for addressing reflexivity. In this study, the recruitment of participants to be members of a “teacher collaborative” was designed to allow feedback and reflection throughout the data collection and analysis process. I was open with teachers about my racial identity as an offering of transparency and partnership in the research process. By engaging participants as collaborators, I was able to partner with them to analyze observational and interview data. This allowed them to interpret and respond to my preliminary data analysis and to understand how I approached analysis of race and teaching.

CHAPTER FOUR
TEACHERS' IDEAS AND BELIEFS ABOUT RACE

Findings Overview

Teacher beliefs about race showed consensus about racism as an enduring feature of educational institutions and the particular marginalization of Black students. These large-scale beliefs were contextualized in their explanations of pedagogy and practice, which were largely focused on understanding the role of race in teaching and the ways in which these ideas translated to their work with students. While teachers' inclusion of race as a conceptual part of their teaching philosophy varied, multiple teachers recognized the importance of searching for and implementing curricular tools that reflected the racial identity, ethnicity, and language of students (e.g. children's literature and music). Teachers cited the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy, which they saw as intricately connected to race and identity of students. Teachers expressed a belief that to recognize their own racial identity and positionality (i.e. privilege) was an important feature of their work. They also expressed challenges to teacher solidarity in work toward racial equity. This often manifested in the form of competition for resources, such as classroom space, teachers, and administrative support. This competition occurred particularly between Diaspora and Escuela, the magnet programs specifically targeted towards Black and Latinx students. Just as teachers expounded on their love for the racially and ethnically diverse Robinson community, they believed diversity was a major challenge in the context of institutional racism.

Teacher ideas about race and teaching were complicated by the notion of interpersonal connection with students. Each teacher explained their approach to teacher-student connection and classroom community-building as function of communication, clear expectations, and empathy. Multiple teachers believed that racial bias was not a feature of their interaction with students. Others expressed a concern for gender bias or socioeconomic bias, which they often connected to their perception or knowledge of parents, caregivers, and home situations. While teachers acknowledged the possibility that racial bias could influence their interactions with students, few could recount instances where this occurred, and some teachers were uncomfortable acknowledging that they had questions or concerns about bias in their own work. Just as they had acknowledged the importance of acknowledging and addressing the legacy of institutional racism, and antiblackness, in schools, their teaching philosophies and interviews did not reveal abundant awareness about connections to student-teacher interactions.

In contrast to teachers' written statements about teaching philosophy and verbal statements during interviews, classroom observations revealed antiblackness at work. Teacher interactions with and behavior towards students reflected a range of interpersonal styles and approaches to classroom management that affirmed, corrected, and disciplined students. Though each classroom varied in racial composition, grade level, and curricular focus, Black students were overwhelmingly the recipients of disciplinary teacher behavior. Disciplinary action was still most frequently exercised with Black students and occurred only in racially integrated classrooms. Likewise, notions of race-based, culturally-relevant pedagogy expressed during teacher interviews sometimes showed up problematically in practice. Themes of hypervisibility, invisibility, and negligence also emerged as features of racialized teacher behavior, and provided

insight into variations along lines of ethnicity, gender, and language.

Classroom observations also revealed the degree to which affirmation and correction were utilized in a holistic manner that seemed to support and uplift the learning experience of Black students. These humanizing experiences were made more apparent by the observation of students across classrooms – that is, observations of multiple teachers that included one or more children seen in other classes (e.g. Reading class and then drama; or special education Diaspora K-2 class and then music). Teachers that discussed their own bias openly in interviews more frequently demonstrated active approaches to mitigating these biases in the classroom, resulting in affirmation and support. These humanizing experiences also extended to teachers' work in bilingual, all-Latinx classes, which included discourses of racial and gender equality through curriculum. The stories of teacher and students help to exemplify the themes of antiblackness and humanization that coexisted in teacher practice.

The findings are presented in two chapters. The first chapter, presented here, explores teacher ideas and beliefs about race as expressed through their written statements and interviews. In effect, this first chapter captures what teachers *think and say* about the intersection of race and teaching. The second chapter explores how race manifested in teacher behavior toward and interaction with students. This second chapter puts classroom interactions in conversation with ideas and beliefs, revealing the complexity of race in teaching.

Understanding Social Context: Ideas About Race in Society and Community

In writing and speaking about race, teachers often reflected an understanding that race “is an endemic part of American life,” that manifests on a community and societal level (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Mr. Vidal, who became a teacher after immigrating from Spain, noted, “Race plays

a role in this country in every single aspect of life.” Likewise, Ms. Kent expressed the centrality of race in her first interview: “I think race impacts everything. It’s the first thing.” Importantly, these statements focused on race itself, apart from racism, and reflected a large consensus among teachers that the social construct of race is inseparable from institutional and community life.

In my first interview with Mr. Hernández, he was very eager to discuss the larger social dynamics of the community in which Robinson Elementary is situated. He expressed the tension between communal race-consciousness and practices of institutional and interpersonal exclusion. “Yeah, so [this] is essentially a town where it's like, ‘Black lives matter!’ ‘Amazing, but just not on my block.’ Keep them there, anywhere else, don't bring my property value down. And it's very clear within the schools.” Mr. Hernández’ views reflected the shared understanding among teachers that the position and experience of Black students is tied to the larger, sociohistorical processes of exclusion that shaped the community and continue to be practiced on multiple levels. Ms. Tocci connected this to school district and Robinson specifically, citing the “reinvigorating” turn towards race equity work across the district. As a teacher will more than a decade in the school, Ms. Tocci had experienced several iterations of professional development related to “diversity” that produced little overall progress.

My assumption, and I’m trying to assume positive intent in all of this, is, well, if you’re choosing to stay here in [this school district], then you’re choosing to jump on this train and ride it to the end. So, if you’re not interested in equity work, if you’re not interested in, you know, the complications that come with a racially diverse school community, then you shouldn’t be here.

Ms. Tocci’s reflection hinted at some of the nuanced ideas about race, equity, and teaching that emerged as I talked more with teachers over time. While they expressed the belief that racism is a central feature of American society that needed to be addressed, they also explored the

challenges of teaching in racially diverse schools.

Teaching for Diversity: Racial Tensions Within and Between Programs

Teachers' expression of race as an omnipresent challenge extended to the social context of Robinson as a school community. Robinson is uniquely comprised of a racially diverse school body that is largely segregated along racial lines through students' placement in neighborhood, Escuela, or Diaspora programs. During our interviews, teachers articulated the complexity of operating coexisting programs that worked to function as one school, serving racially diverse, and often segregated, groups of students. Just as each program was designed to enhance the cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds of students and families in the Robinson community, teachers constantly navigated the disparities in human resources, funding, and even building space. Teachers' ideas about race emerged in interviews as they explored the tension between Escuela and Diaspora, and the responsibility of school-wide programs to bridge this segregated gap.

Fine Arts courses were one of the few opportunities for Robinson students to engage with each other in racially diverse contexts. During my first interview with Mr. Hernández, he explained the rationale behind this intentional integration.

Within those three generalized programs there's a lot of us against them and it feels, you know, from the outside perspective - like, I'm not a homeroom teacher when in those programs, I'm the Fine Arts teacher who sees every kid in this building within one week. It really does feel like there's a disconnect, almost segregation-based, whether it's intended or not intended. So, we use this color group system to kind of counteract that, that notion, that feeling.

The "us against them" mentality described by Mr. Hernández referenced the perception of competition between Escuela and Diaspora, the two programs that focused on Black and Latinx history, culture, and experience. What emerged through my conversations with teachers

was a tension that reflected a struggle for resources and support between teachers in these programs. In my first interview with Mr. Vidal, a special education teacher in the Escuela program, I noticed that his classroom was actually half of a classroom, divided and shared with another teacher. As we began to talk about the intersection of race and education, Mr. Vidal expressed frustration with his teaching conditions that was rooted in a sense of competition with Diaspora teachers.

Mr. Vidal: In every setting I was teaching, there was only one group, ethnic group. I only have Hispanic students. [At Robinson] you have half of the students Anglo-Saxons, White Americans, um, Hispanics. There are very few African Americans, very few in this school. [Hispanic] students are invisible for the administration many times even when they have the best intentions. In many decisions that, who are taking, you can see for example, you can see that I don't have a full classroom.

BG: Right. And you're self-contained, right? Wow. So, what is on the other side of the divide?

Mr. Vidal: It's, uh, really a specialist. It's a reading specialist.

BG: Wow.

Mr. Vidal: This class used to be an entire class for the other colleague who was also a self-contained for general ed. And, yeah. These things maybe ... I don't know. It's something that makes me think about that. I don't know, maybe it could happen with the other teacher, but it's like a, "Hum."

BG: Yeah.

Mr. Vidal: Or for example, when we need a resource teacher ... A resource teacher is like a teacher who do push in, pull out, all these things. We don't have a bilingual one.

During this exchange, I noticed how Mr. Vidal's perceptions of the student population were skewed, perhaps because he spent all of his time with all Latinx students. His estimation that "there are very few African Americans in this school," was drastically inaccurate. In fact, Black students make up about a third of students at Robinson, a slightly larger proportion than Latinx

students. I noticed how this inaccurate assessment connected to his feeling that his Latinx students were “invisible” in decision-making about resource allocation. It wasn’t just that Latinx students were not receiving equal resources in terms of space and teacher specialists, it seemed that Mr. Vidal felt Black students were receiving a disproportionate amount of resources, as exemplified by the Black woman reading specialist with whom he shared limited space.

This perception of competition between *Diaspora* and *Escuela* also showed up in interviews with other teachers. Ms. Tocci identified the ways in which racial tensions that were rooted in resource allocation extended to the experience of Latinx students and families. As one of the longest tenured teachers at Robinson, Ms. Tocci offered a brief history of the conflict between “Black and brown” students and families.

Like we have a large proportion of Black and brown students. But the brown students specifically maybe aren't getting the kinds of support necessary and the brown families who send their students to Robinson. My second principal here was bilingual, Cuban. So African American, but also a Spanish speaker which helped. [...] But our administrators have, in the 15 years that I've been involved with Robinson School, have not been Latinx at all. And so, you have a high proportion of Latinx students and families here, but they don't see that reflected in the school as far as leadership.

The idea that “brown students specifically maybe aren’t getting the kinds of support necessary,” was also reflected by Ms. Garcia as she described the challenges of teaching at a diverse school with multiple programs. Like Mr. Vidal, Ms. Garcia expressed feeling directly in competition with a program serving Black students and was concerned not only with fairness in terms of resource allocation, but also in terms of teacher expectations.

Ms. Garcia: You know, like, if it was just one program and you can just concentrate on one and give your all to one program, I think the results would be different. But trying to do three at the same time, it's tricky. And that's something that I noticed even from my first year. It's not impossible to make it work, but I do notice that it's challenging.

BG: Yeah. What about it is challenging from a teacher's perspective?

Ms. Garcia: [...] [Escuela] usually has the biggest numbers. So, when you're comparing me doing the work with 21 students and comparing someone else with 10 students...I have double the size. So, for sometimes to have the same expectations and not having the same size, like, class size...It could be challenging.

In this exchange, Ms. Garcia was referring to the Diaspora kindergarten classroom, taught by Ms. Walsh. She estimated that, due to lower enrollment in the Diaspora kindergarten that year (it doubled during the next school year), she should not be expected to produce the same results, perceivably in terms of student learning.

The tension between Escuela and Diaspora manifested as a competition for spatial and human resources and was articulated by White and Latinx/Hispanic teachers exclusively serving students in Escuela and the neighborhood program. The perception that Black students, teachers, and programs were receiving an unfair amount of school resources was consistently positioned in the larger understanding that the school's racial diversity was "good," and that anti-Black racism was an important feature of American society. The dissonance between school diversity and societal antiblackness reflected the idea that "multiculturalism and diversity...are often positioned against the lives of Black people" (Dumas, 2016; Sexton, 2008), translating at Robinson into a minimization of the Black student population and the equal importance of Diaspora to Escuela as a program that focuses on racially, culturally, and linguistically specific curricula. This erasure seemed ironic, in that these same teachers expressed the invisibility of Latinx students, despite their long-standing history with the school and community. Yet, Escuela teachers were not completely ignorant of particular antiblackness in education systems, or even in their perspectives. Mr. Vidal shared an understanding that the school "reproduce[s] in some way what is happening in the rest of the country in a big scale." He continues,

Especially, I think, all of us, we should be, should understand...that [the] African American population traditionally has suffered many more things than other groups, even when the other groups of course they are very attacked but it's a contradiction, I mean, because in some way I am telling that, but on the other way I see the invisibility of the Hispanics, and for me it's also like we should push more in order to be [in] solidarity with [the] African American community but at the same time we want visibility as a Hispanic. And it seems like we are eating each other[‘s], piece of the cake.

Mr. Vidal expressed a desire for solidarity with Black teachers, and Black people as a community, but couldn't help but feel that only one group would really receive support by the administration.

The racial tensions of teaching in a racially diverse school seemed to manifest in teachers' conversations about the larger social context of race, yet, did not always translate to their conceptualizations of teaching. In the next section, I explore how teachers express different ideas about race in their teaching philosophy and in their approach to curriculum.

“What Do You Teach?”: Ideas About Race in Philosophy and Curriculum

Teachers' ideas about race on a societal and school level were not always present in their conversations about teaching. When asked to talk about teaching, in fact, race was not always addressed. In this section, I explore how race surfaced in articulation of teaching philosophy, via the narrative Teaching Statements, which varied largely according to teacher's affiliation with school-wide, Escuela, or Diaspora programs. Additionally, I explore how teachers articulated ideas about the role of race in teaching centered around curriculum, rather than philosophical approach.

Teaching Statements were the first opportunity for teachers to articulate their ideas about race and teaching in our work together. I did not prompt teachers to talk about race in their teaching statements, but rather asked, “What is your teaching philosophy?” As a whole, teachers

did not talk much about race, but interesting patterns emerged, particularly between cohorts of teachers by program. For example, teachers who taught across all three programs did not talk about race at all. This was most noted by Ms. Tocci's opening statement: Often folks ask, "Oh, you're a teacher?! What do you teach?" My response is usually "humans." These teachers focused mostly on pedagogical strategies, content knowledge, and the relational aspects of teaching, apart from race.

Escuela teachers did not talk explicitly about race in their Teaching Statements, but more generally about diversity. Ms. Garcia shared, "Most of my teaching career I have worked with diverse communities and families. As an English language learner and immigrant myself, I believe it is important to work with families from different backgrounds and communities to build bridges together." Ms. Garcia's addition of "English language learner and immigrant" identities implies race as intersecting with ethnicity, nationality, language, and culture. Mr. Vidal reflected similar ideas, specifically about socioeconomic status, into his teaching statement.

I advocate for a good education for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status. While I am aware of the impact of poverty on education, I want my students to be exposed to an enriching and challenging environment as much as I can. This is because I think things would be worse if we lose our faith in them. I always keep in mind that although my students do not belong to a privileged class, this does not mean that they do not deserve high-quality instruction. Therefore, I avoid condescending attitudes towards my students and their families.

It is worth noting that while Ms. Garcia's classes racially mixed, with a majority Latinx students, Mr. Vidal's class was all Latinx during both school years that I worked with him. Mr. Vidal recognized a distinct correlation between socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and immigrant identity, and talked in more depth in our interviews about his belief in a culture of poverty that didn't always value education, displaying the condescending attitude that he tried to avoid.

And, also, I observe, for example, when some parents came during the parent teacher conferences and you know what they are doing for a living and then you see the kid, um, how understand things. And they get concepts very quickly. I say, "Okay. Now I understand why, because you are working whatever." Or you are second generation and you are, I don't know, even working in an office or you are a paralegal or something like this. Yeah. There is a big difference when for example other parents is just, uh, I don't know, working like, uh ... How do you say? Landscaping or these things.

Mr. Vidal and Ms. Garcia both emphasized the important role that families, particularly Latinx immigrant families, played in the preparation of children for school, and focused on culture as a vehicle for connection with parents. Without explicitly naming it, Escuela teachers ideas reflected a value in culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

In contrast, Diaspora teachers explicitly talked about race in their Teaching Statements, with a specific focus on Black identity. For example, Ms. Kent talked about how she prepared a welcoming space for students, in part by displaying materials that reflected value for Black lives. "I also have visual displays of inclusivity on our door: a rainbow flag, trans-affirming and black lives matters posters." Ms. Kent's approach was intentionally intersectional, focused on seeing students as whole human beings with multiple identities. Ms. Walsh shared similar support of Black identity in her teaching statement, with an explicitly justice-oriented focus. "Social justice concepts and race are definitely a daily part of our classroom; although this year I have been less multicultural and more focused on the Black/African American experience and achievements." As a first-year teacher in the Diaspora program, Ms. Walsh translated what was described as a "multicultural" approach to teaching and learning about diversity, to an explicit focus on Black identity and experience. She also cited culturally-relevant pedagogy as part of her approach and a foundational element to building relationships with students, "I believe that children learn best by doing (constructivism) in a safe, structured, and culturally responsive environment." For Ms.

Kent and Ms. Walsh, race was an explicit part of their teaching philosophy, in large part, to build connection with students.

Curriculum was another area where teachers' ideas about race and teaching emerged. Ms. Walsh continued the ideas from her teaching statement about centering Black identity in our first interview. "The focus is really getting these kids to see, like, people that look like you have been doing these amazing things all throughout history and continue to do them. So, it's really about building them up." During this first year I observed Ms. Walsh, her class was all Black, which put some emphasis behind her desire to really make her implementation of the Diaspora curriculum focused on the particular experiences of Black people.

So, we've had a lot of really amazing books that we've read together this year. We've talked about racism and we've talked about race. They know what that means. Like, they know what those things are. I want them to be able to name that and if something happens to them, to be able to say, "That, that was racism," or, you know, "They were judging me because of this." So, but not just in that negative way. In, also, that positive way. Like what are the benefits to having brown skin and melanin? We've talked about the science behind it. I feel like it's just a daily, it's just a daily part of what we do.

In his work with racially diverse groups of students, Mr. Hernández talked about the struggle to find suitable curricular materials because of the lack of representation and outright racism and bias in available offerings.

We're using a lot of imagination. We're using a lot of storytelling. And the style of telling a story to the children, for me, is mostly word of mouth. I try very rarely to use pictures because, let's be very honest, a lot of the pictures are not going to be characters of color. A lot of the characters of color might be super stereotypical and borderline racist.

Mr. Hernández talked about the need to intentionally look for and create curriculum that reflected student identity. "When I'm with the younger grades, using picture books, I quite literally try so hard to get picture books that are of animals and creatures, try really hard to find

ones with students of color.” He also talked about sacrificing some aspects of identity to tell stories that “are too good not to tell.” Handing me a book during our interview, he said, “You know this story?” I didn’t. “So, this is about a little boy. His entire family is, like, a hockey family. ‘We’re a hockey family, Henry! We don’t do figure skating!’ But the kid just has a passion for figure skating. And I hate that’s it’s a white kid but, it’s a story about what is masculinity and toxic masculinity.” While Mr. Hernández was frustrated with the over-representation of white faces in curricular materials, he felt that he could pull important lessons about other identities that intersected across racial identities.

Teachers viewed the use of curriculum as a tool for education about race, racism, and intersectionality as a tangible way that teaching engaged race. For some teachers, this was expressed as a part of a culturally-relevant approach to teaching that engaged student identity in the context of the larger social world. As teachers explored the intersection of race and teaching, they also spoke to the relational aspects of teaching, where building community with students engaged culture, race, and interpersonal connection.

Relational Aspects of Teaching:

Unpacking Teachers’ Ideas About Race, Culture, and Connection

Ms. Garcia: I think there's always a connection with race and culture. And I think sometimes we don't understand, and I'm not talking, like, culture, like in general, but like, your home culture. It might be different because of your race. And you don't get to see it or really understand some families until you actually have to communicate with them.

Teachers’ ideas about race and teaching were intimately connected to their understanding of culture as a challenge to student-teacher relationships and, conversely, a bridge to connecting with students of different racial backgrounds. Ms. Garcia’s comments about race and family culture were part of a larger conversation around cultural differences along racial lines, and she

expressed concern about her ability to build a “connection” with, particularly, Black parents and students. It was rare to have a Black student in her class and Ms. Garcia seemed to feel that her difficulty connecting to one of two Black students in her class during the first year I observed, was due to cultural differences based on race. Shared language and culture that she felt with many Latino students was not present with Black and white students, and a was consequently viewed as a barrier to building relationships.

Other teachers viewed culture as a means to connect to students of different racial backgrounds. When I spoke with Ms. Tocci for the first time, she shared a story about her first years teaching at Robinson.

Ms. Tocci: So here's a funny story. Ms. Jones was the matriarch of Robinson school for many years, and she was the kindergarten teacher for Diaspora when it all got started. And she was one of the senior members of the staff when I was hired on. And since it was kindergarten, I always put a very high stake in kindergarten, and like, take from the teacher like, when the kindergarten teacher says, "This is my class and this is how we do things," I like glom onto that. And so, what happened to me with Ms. Jones was she had her class... she'll say, "Come." They'd line up. "Get in your line. What are you doing? This is school. Come on, let's go." You know, and she would have this, and then, "Miss Tocci my students are ready." And she would send them in and they would be quiet as mice you know, they'd be so quiet, and they'd sit down and they'd look at me all doe eyed you know, like kindergartners do and then, I would say (*speaks almost a whisper*), "Okay boys and girls, this is the music room. Welcome, my names Miss Tocci." And then they would start like-

BG: Going all over the place?

Ms. Tocci: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, and then Miss- Miss Jones would walk in and be like, and all she'd have to do is look at em, and then she'd walk out and I'd be like, "What's this magic?" (*laughs*). Like, "What's this that she has?" And as a musician, specifically as a vocalist, and knowing all the linguist dialect language courses that I had to take for no credit in college, I picked up on her speech patterns, her tone and I essentially became Miss Jones.

In Ms. Tocci's appraisal of Ms. Jones, a Black teacher teaching mostly Black children, language

served as a tool for commanding respect and attention from students. Though she never talked much about controlling students, Ms. Tocci did feel strongly about creating a “safe” environment where students felt ready and able to engage with music. This “code switching,” as she identified it, enabled her to connect to “all students” and, ultimately, get them to listen to her. In hearing her story, I was struck by the degree to which Ms. Tocci took pride in having unlocked a key to relating to Black students that she found in the Black “matriarch” of Ms. Jones. As she imitated Ms. Jones’ voice, I indeed heard code switching into what I believe Ms. Tocci thought was a Black vernacular. She explains this process further.

Actually, what that did though, is it opened my eyes to like, everyone needs something different and the way I do things might not work for kids who don't share my background, for kids who don't share my culture, for kids who don't share my lived experience. [...] It opened my eyes to be like, "Okay so," just in my tone and my inflection of my voice in my vocabulary to make students feel comfortable.

Interestingly, the history of code switching in teachers’ work has been thoroughly explored through the work of Black teachers and the experiences of Black students navigating predominantly white educational spaces (Delpit, 2002). Ms. Tocci’s description of this skill implied that she felt it was good, culturally-relevant practice, especially as a white teacher of Black students. Yet, while Ms. Tocci thought she was making students “feel comfortable” by mimicking a “Black” speech pattern, it had the opposite effect on me as a Black woman hearing her story of cultural appropriation. This highlights the misappropriation of concepts like culturally-relevant pedagogy, when teachers mistake cultural appropriation for cultural competence, often because they are struggling with their own sociopolitical awareness. Acting “Black” is not a prerequisite to being a good teacher of Black students.

In addition to the linguistic factors of teaching, teachers also cited the importance of

interaction with students that noted physical contact. Mr. Vidal described his approach to working with students as inherently influenced by his own cultural background.

This is also something that my cultural background affects – how I'm interacting with students. I realized when I observe other teachers from here that interact in a different way, and I said, "Uh-oh. I am doing something completely different." My approach is very personal. I ... It's difficult to explain. Sometimes, uh, I put a hand on the shoulders and I touch them or (*laughs*) poke the nose. I can, I play this kind of jokes that is something not considered appropriate or normal in more Anglo-Saxon structured White relationship. Sometimes I am envious when I see my neighbors, teachers, how they address because first, they use a lot of language, everything is very structured when they talk to them and it's almost like sending instructions to the brain of the student in a very clear way. However, in my case it's like a more, there are more corporal expressions, there are more facial, face expressions. For example (*looking me directly in the eyes*), "Stop. Don't do that."

Mr. Vidal drew distinctions between White teachers' approaches to connection with students and his own. He didn't discredit White teachers' language-focused approaches because he saw it work for them. However, he viewed his own practice as derived from his experiences growing up in Spain and, though all of his students' Latino, he believed his approach worked due to shared culture. I noted, in Mr. Vidal's demonstration of his approach, how he was direct, but not angry or too firm. His tone suggested to me that correction, when necessary, did not have to be hard or punitive.

Teachers also spoke abundantly about the desire to connect with students in a holistic way that allowed them, as Ms. Kent shared, "to be safe and feel loved and learn." Just as Mr. Vidal cited physical connection and direct communication, Ms. Kent shared her approach to building relationships with students.

I do this thing now like, "How would you like to be greeted when you enter the resource room?" And one of my kids who was adverse to physical affection, all she wants to do is give me a hug everyday. So, I'm really tall, she's really little so I sink down to the floor and give her a big hug because I feel like she's one of eight, this might be the only place where she gets a hug and she gets to feel like she's the one. So I try to make those quick

little personal connections whenever possible.

For Ms. Kent, this approach to connection was inherently about being a “person of color” who didn’t have many “teachers of color” as a student. In fact, she shared that it wasn’t until 6th grade when she had an assistant principal of color and she only saw her when she “got in trouble.” By asking kids, “how would you like to be greeted,” she makes connection about what they need “to be safe and feel loved and learn.”

As teachers navigated the idea of student connection, particularly with regard to family and community culture, they also explored their approaches to teaching through reflection on their personal racial identity. Teachers’ understood shared racial identity as a point of connection with students and also explored the challenges posed by having a different racial identity than their students. Non-Black teachers of color also expressed connection with Black students through shared relationships to whiteness. In the following section, I explore teachers beliefs about the ways that racial identity intersects with teaching, and how those beliefs are connected to their understanding of their own relationship with race and whiteness, in particular.

Teacher Identity: Examining the Importance of Race

Each teacher I spoke to recognized the importance of recognizing their own racial identity as part of their identity as a teacher. Like Ms. Kent shared, teachers of color often saw their racial identity as a point of connection with students. Mr. Hernández shared how he viewed his Latinx identity in relation to his students.

I think maybe brown helps. Like, I'm not black. And I get a feeling, sometimes, maybe some of my black colleagues would rather put me in the white category. Which, I, I, I refuse to live with. I'm not white, I'm not, I refuse to put white, you know? So, I think me being brown definitely helps. I shamelessly talk about stories about my upbringing. The faults and tribulations that my family have gone through, that I've been put through. I think through those stories, some students start to, like understand where I'm coming

from?

For Mr. Hernández, even though he didn't always share racial identity with his students, he believed that a shared experience of racism connected them, even though he felt that his Black colleagues didn't always recognize Latinx people as experiencing the same kind of racial oppression.

Escuela teachers Mr. Vidal and Ms. Garcia also saw identity as a point of connection but viewed this more as a function of ethnicity and language. Ms. Garcia shared her perception of Latinx peoples' approach to understanding racial identity. "At least for me in my experience, we don't really talk about or identify ourselves like, 'Oh, well, I'm... whatever, peach, brown, or whatever.' You go to, 'Oh, I'm Cuban.' 'I'm Mexican.' 'I'm...'" So, you go straight to ethnicity." Unlike Mr. Hernández, who identified as both "brown" and "Latinx," and viewed those as distinctly racial categories, Ms. Garcia was hesitant to describe her race because she didn't feel it identified her. A light-skinned, Mexican-American woman, she didn't identify as brown, but also didn't ever identify herself as white. Interestingly, Mr. Vidal, who immigrated to the U.S. from Spain identified as "Hispanic" because his experience told him that he was not viewed as white in the United States. In our first interview, when I asked him about his racial identity, he recounted a conversation with his husband, who is also from Spain.

This is a good question. This is an excellent question because I have this conversation with my husband. He's also from Spain. And then (laughs), he's super engaged with all the topic about race, he did this program SEED and SPROUT, and he's reading constantly about race. Sometimes we have conversations. I am not in this field. Very bad because we, I am living with him, all the time we are talking about that. He told me, "You are culturally appropriate another identity because you are White and maybe you shouldn't say that you are Hispanic because this is something." And I said to him, "Okay. This is maybe your perception, but the difference between you and me, your color skin is lighter. In my case, I am darker. This is about, this is race. I mean, this is all about that (laughs). I said to him, "No. My experiences are a little different from your experiences

even when we are all the time together."

As he continued to talk, Mr. Vidal shared that he did not know of any ancestry in his family that was not Spanish, not white, but that he was clearly not viewed as white in the U.S. With brown skin and black hair, he was consistently identified by white people as "Hispanic" or Latinx.

In this school I was working for four years. One of the teachers said to me, "Ha, so funny. You are copying the same way to speak than your husband." And I said, "What do you mean?" "Yes. You are speaking like a Spaniard." I go, "I am a Spaniard." Surprise (laughs). She was like, "No way." [...] And this person that, she was super nice, I mean it's nothing. All these years she thought, she assumed, I was from Mexico and I talked to her many times.

He shared another experience with a former principal at Robinson who assumed he was Colombian. "When he saw me, he assumed that I was a typical Hispanic, and it's the way I feel actually. I assume my identity. I don't consider myself like a white." While Mr. Vidal's desire to identify as something other than white is problematic, it also reflected his consistent experience of being in the United States. His husband, who had blond hair and blue eyes, was identified as white, while he was consistently identified as "Hispanic" or Latinx. Mr. Vidal struggled to accept an identity as a white person when no one ever thought he was white. This struggle emerged during the districtwide diversity training, as well. "We have this training at the beginning of the last year and the district provide this training... and you had to define yourself and then I said, 'No, I can't say I am White.'"

White teachers like Ms. Walsh, also explored the complexity of being a white teacher of Black children.

I went through that period of doubt. "Is this something I can do as a white female educator? Wouldn't they be better off with a teacher that looked like them?" But this is something that I'm passionate about, and I feel like I'm working through all of those layers of white supremacy and trying to be more reflective about that aspect of myself.

Ms. Walsh was the only kindergarten teacher in the Diaspora program and she was white. Like some of her colleagues, Ms. Walsh was in a continuous process of understanding her own racial identity and, in particular, what it meant to be a white teacher of Black children in a program focused on Black experience. She rejected the idea of being a “white savior,” best explained as a white teacher who views their role as saving Black students.

And, that's something lately I've been really, really thinking about that, and I know my why. I don't even know if I prefer to teach black students, I don't know. I've kind of been talking to my husband about this lately too. Because I'm not like, "I'm here to save the day."

During the same interview, though, Ms. Walsh also shared that she felt most useful as a teacher in a “diverse school.” “Not just diverse like racially diverse but ethnically diverse. Linguistically diverse. Socioeconomically diverse. Because I feel like... This is going to sound judgey, but I feel like anybody can teach in a low-poverty, dominant-culture school and be fine.” In Ms. Walsh’s experience, white schools were highly resourced institutions that valued their students. Teaching at Robinson, especially as a white teacher, was not something she took for granted, but she did view it as work that not “anybody” could do.

Teachers’ exploration of racial identity in the context of teaching revealed the degree to which their own experience of racially self-identifying and being identified was influenced by whiteness and white people. Hispanic/Latinx self-identified teachers openly discussed this process as both an internal and external one, while also reflecting the invisibility they expressed previously about feeling invisible in the Black-white paradigm of US racial politics. White teachers also explored the challenge of understanding the impact that their white racial identity had on teaching and on building relationships with students. As expressed by Ms. Kent, who identified as “mixed race” and “Brown,” racial identity seemed particularly salient at Robinson

because of the ways in which whiteness and white teachers shaped the practice of teaching, from curriculum to pedagogy. She, along with her white and Hispanic/Latinx counterparts, was interested in understanding how racial identity intersected with teaching. They further explored this concept during our first conversations about bias in teaching, which I explore in the following section.

Teacher Perceptions of Racial Bias in Teaching

Robinson teachers routinely talked about race in identity, curriculum, and student-teacher relationships but I was also interested in knowing if they believed that racial bias emerged in their interactions with students. Implicit racial bias is effectively unconscious bias, meaning that a person does not realize they have a particular attitude or belief about a racial group (Devine, 1989; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). By asking teachers if they thought they had bias, I was gauging their awareness of their own racial bias. I knew that implicitly held biases would not be revealed by this question, but their assessment of their own bias could also assist me in making sense of their behaviors and interactions with students in the classroom.

I approached questions about racial bias from the perspective that, as humans, we all have racial bias. I led by saying, “As a researcher, I often think about how bias has the potential to impact my work.” I then asked teachers if they ever thought about their own biases in the context of their work as teachers. White teachers, Ms. Tocci & Ms. Walsh, talked about the significance of race in their work, but saw their own biases playing out towards white students in affluent schools they had previously taught in. Their assumptions about the impact of wealth and “white dominant culture” on the positioning of students to be successful often led them to be surprised when students struggled in the classroom. Ms. Tocci, who talked at length about her bias towards

white students at another school, did not identify bias in her own work at Robinson. Ms. Walsh, the Diaspora kindergarten teacher responded confidently: “I don’t feel like I have any bias towards my students here.” Instead, she felt that her Black students were like her own children. “But in here, it’s like I love them. I treat them like they’re my children. [...] It’s not colorblind that’s like, ‘Oh I don’t even see them as Black children.’ I do. I see them as their whole selves.”

Other teachers were less confident in directly identifying their own bias, or lack of bias, in teaching but hinted toward a feeling that bias might show up in their work with students. Mr. Vidal pointed to the general lack of learning about race in his teacher education program as a barrier to understanding his own biases more. “I mean, there was some kind of guidelines about that, but in some ways when I finished my degree, my master, I even have some kind of bias or prejudice, about specific people because actually we didn’t have a real discussion about that.” In his all Latinx classroom, Mr. Vidal spoke to the value of Spanish as a connection point, even though many of his students were third generation Americans whose parents had enrolled them in Escuela so they could learn Spanish. He didn’t see racial bias in his work with his Latinx students, but he did acknowledge awareness of gender bias. “Something that scares me, that sometimes I connect in base of gender. [...] It’s kind of bias, but it’s true that I connect with a student because they are male and I am male. And sometimes I have more problems to connect with girls.” Like Mr. Vidal, Ms. Garcia echoed an awareness of her connection with Latino students, but also noted a general idea that bias could impact her teaching with a student from any racial background, especially in a racially integrated classroom.

I know that sometimes I have to catch myself and be like, “hey, wait, let’s think about this.” And not just with... it could be with my Latino students, my white students, or my Black students. I know I have to be aware of things that I wouldn’t have to be aware of if everyone was Latino. Or if everyone was white. Or if everyone was black. I think that

I'm aware until I have a situation and then I'm like, "Okay, let me step back and see it in a different way."

The idea of mitigating bias through teaching strategies was reflected in Mr. Hernández' interview, as well. When I asked about racial bias, Mr. Hernández said that he was aware of his own racial bias and felt that it used to impact his teaching much more, particularly with regard to student behavior. "The way I handle, you know, just defiance, has evolved. I think, at first, my understanding of defiance was like, 'ugh, this kid sucks.' Or, 'This kid must have a really bad family,' or, 'This kid must have blah, blah, blah.' And, yeah, eight out of ten times, those were kids of color." In his reflection, Mr. Hernández made clear connections between the way that racial bias plays out teachers' assessment of children, from their general attitude to their family situation. In order to mitigate these kinds of assessments based on racial bias, Mr. Hernández talked about focusing on bias in his pedagogy. "It's something that I try my very best to actively be aware of how I'm speaking to this child. Am I speaking to this child with an authoritarian tone, or I am speaking to this child with a very loving, and like, caring, 'Oh, that's great. Nice job.'" Like Mr. Hernández, Ms. Kent also expressed a concerted effort to be aware of racial bias in her own work and to actively work against that bias in the interest of her students.

I feel like I'm always working to be more consciously aware of my biases and how they seep into the work that I do. And just...I don't remember who, if it was Sprout...somebody was talking about how, you know, we see everything through this white lens. And so, when I'm thinking and making decisions, I'm like is this my white side coming through or is this true to who I need to be? So, I'm trying to be really conscious of that, especially when making decisions that are gonna impact kids of color.

Ms. Kent's reflection articulated an awareness of bias as part of the human condition, something that we all share, and something that can be actively addressed. Similar to Mr. Hernández, Ms. Kent both acknowledged that she had racial bias, that it could impact her work with students,

and, as a result, it was her job to “be more consciously aware” in her decision-making about teaching. As a group, Robinson teachers in the collective were interested in understanding more about racial bias in their work but came into the collaborative with different levels of awareness about their own racial bias. As I moved beyond simply learning teachers’ philosophies about teaching, and ideas and beliefs about race, I looked to understand the manifestation of race in the classroom, which is explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEACHERS' PRACTICE OF RACE IN THE CLASSROOM

In this chapter, I explore the manifestation of teacher ideas and beliefs about race in the classroom. I introduce these findings through the lens of my conversations with teachers about observational findings and I use their analytical responses to explore how teachers make sense of the dissonance between their ideas and beliefs about race and their practice. I begin with an anecdote about Ms. Tocci in the classroom, that explores how teacher ideas and beliefs about race can become complicated by a desire to connect with students. I follow this with a deeper analysis of the racialized treatment of students, with particular attention to variation between Black students and their Latinx and white counterparts. I explore how teacher behavior varies in racially integrated and racially homogenous classrooms and I consider how teacher identity and recognition of bias show up teacher-student interaction in these spaces. Finally, I consider how racial bias and affirmative treatment of students converge to form pedagogies of caring as antiracist practice.

While teachers may think that they believe in racial equity or that they understand how racism has created institutional barriers for Black students, the incongruence between teachers' perceived knowledge about race and their racialized practice in the classroom suggest that knowledge of race and racism does not ensure antiracist teacher practice. As this analysis demonstrates, teachers who were willing to acknowledge their racial bias, or even the possibility of implicit racial bias, were less likely to marginalize Black students in the classroom through

disciplinary and negligent behavior. These same teachers were more likely to support students through affirmative and corrective behavior, even when students were struggling with teacher expectations or the classroom environment. Conversely, teachers who did not believe that they held racial bias were more likely to marginalize Black students through misappropriation of culture and disciplinary actions toward students, even when they expressed concern for the impact of racism on Black students as a group.

Taken as a whole, the analysis that follows demonstrates that antiblackness in education is furthered by a lack of understanding about the connection between institutional racism and personal racial bias. I argue that antiblackness can only be disentangled from teacher pedagogy through intentional work to identify personal connections to systems of oppression and commitment to analyzing those connections in our teachers' own work. Moreover, I argue that liberatory, antiracist education is possible for Black students when teachers are actively committed to their humanity, in pedagogy and in practice.

“Now I’m Going to Talk Black”: Performing Race in the Classroom

The class transitions to a singing activity. Ms. Tocci prefaces the singing with rationale for the song choice. She notes that sometimes when you make artistic decisions, people don't understand. They might say things like, “You crazy!” or “You done lost your mind!” MB clearly falls into a Black vernacular here, which makes me uncomfortable. Students don't seem to think this is unusual and don't respond in any way. As students begin to sing, they move freely, but this doesn't hinder their participation. Ms. Tocci says, “I want you to *sang* it.” Again, using a Black vernacular. MB focuses on getting students to connect to the message of the song and uses her body to mimic the motion of the music.

During my first observation of Ms. Tocci, I was struck by the way that performance was a defining feature of her pedagogy. In music curriculum, performance is often a defining element of curriculum and student evaluation. It gives students a goal to work towards and is often a

place where they get to demonstrate progress or mastery. However, Ms. Tocci really embraced performance as part of the way she taught. As she shared in her first interview, performance allowed her to develop her pedagogy through observation of her Black colleague Ms. Jones. “As a musician, specifically as a vocalist, and knowing all the linguist dialect language courses that I had to take for no credit in college, I picked up on her speech patterns, her tone and I essentially became Ms. Jones.” During that interview, I had suspicions about what she meant by becoming Ms. Jones, but it wasn’t until my observations of Ms. Tocci began that I saw this performance of blackness in action.

Each time I observed Ms. Tocci, I saw more of what I call “Black vernacular,” in my observation narratives. The idea of Black vernacular, also known as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), or Ebonics, emerged to recognize the linguistic contributions of West African languages to English spoken by members of the African diaspora in the Americas. In 1992, the Oakland School Board formally recognized Ebonics as the primary language of Black students, which caused widespread backlash throughout the education and academic communities. There is, unequivocally, no one way to “talk Black,” as linguistic varieties are abundant throughout the African diaspora. Yet, Ms. Tocci’s performance of Blackness was decidedly linguistic. Another excerpt from my observations of her classroom demonstrates how she changed her pronunciation and tone and “became Ms. Jones.”

The introductory activity for the class is a circle cypher with a call-and-response function.

*My name is Ms. T (Wassap)
And I'm in third grade (Hey!)
And the color of my shirt is _____ (Woo!)*

The call and response pattern is projected on the screen. I notice that instead of writing, “What’s up,” Ms. Tocci has projected “Wassap” on the screen.

During this activity, Ms. Tocci, changes her voice as she leads the call-and-response. By making shifts in tone and phrasing, Ms. Tocci seems to be emulating a way of speaking, a Black vernacular, that is not her own. I asked Ms. Tocci about this when I spoke with her during our second interview. I wanted to understand more about how her performance was connected to becoming Ms. Jones.

I don't think I was as racially conscious back then, so I probably, if I'd have sat down and had a conversation like this about it would have clicked like "Talk black, oh colloquialism." Or, you know, that dialect or whatever you want to call it right? But I just saw it as, "Here's a master teacher who has been at this craft for longer than I've been alive, at that point, but the way she has connected to her..." She had them eating out of her hand. Just her mannerisms, and the way she presented herself, and the way she moved through the room, just she was a master teacher right? And so, as a young first couple of years teacher I'm sitting here thinking "Oh, okay, because that works." And I don't think I was consciously like "Okay, now I'm going to talk Black." I just kind of thought I think it was her magical mix of just the stern, matriarch, like "I am in charge." Bad Mamajama kind of situation that she had going on, with the fun loving, almost grandma like, like a nana, like a grandmother.

As I listened to Ms. Tocci further explain her rationale to "talk Black," I heard her focus on the relational aspects of teaching. What she saw in Ms. Jones' work with students was a grandmother-figure. "It was a more familial thing, family thing, than it was a race thing." Yet, as she continued to reflect, she noted that it wasn't until recently that she began to understand what exactly she was emulating.

As I've continued to learn and grow with being racially conscious in my work, it's like, "Oh, but the family structure within the African-American community is such a determining thing and part of their culture." So, it was like, "Oh, okay, so that makes sense. Seeing this teacher as almost like a family member.

This comment, which marked the end of our conversation about Ms. Jones, further revealed the performative nature of Ms. Tocci's strategy to relate to her students through racialized culture.

While she later began to consider the roots of Ms. Jones' approach as culturally and racially

specific, as a young teacher she saw an elder Black teacher being effective and decided that she should adopt her strategy to be effective in her own classroom.

Ms. Tocci's performance of blackness is revealing and, while not common at Robinson, representative of the ways in which ideas and beliefs about race become complicated and problematic in translation to teaching practice. First, I noticed that Ms. Tocci's overall style in class was direct, sometimes loud, and expressive. Some of these features seem to correspond to what she observed of Ms. Jones, such as a firm directness. However, Ms. Tocci's loud and expressive style often correlated to her expression of what I would call her interpretation of a Black vernacular. I have no idea if this is how Ms. Jones spoke, but it is certainly not representative of the way Ms. Tocci's Black students speak, nor of how Ms. Tocci regularly speaks in or out of the classroom. When I consider relational aspects of teaching, and particularly Ms. Tocci's description of Ms. Jones' relational approach, I don't see that present in Ms. Tocci's performance of blackness. I see someone performing an identity in hopes of connecting to students that are racially and culturally different from her.

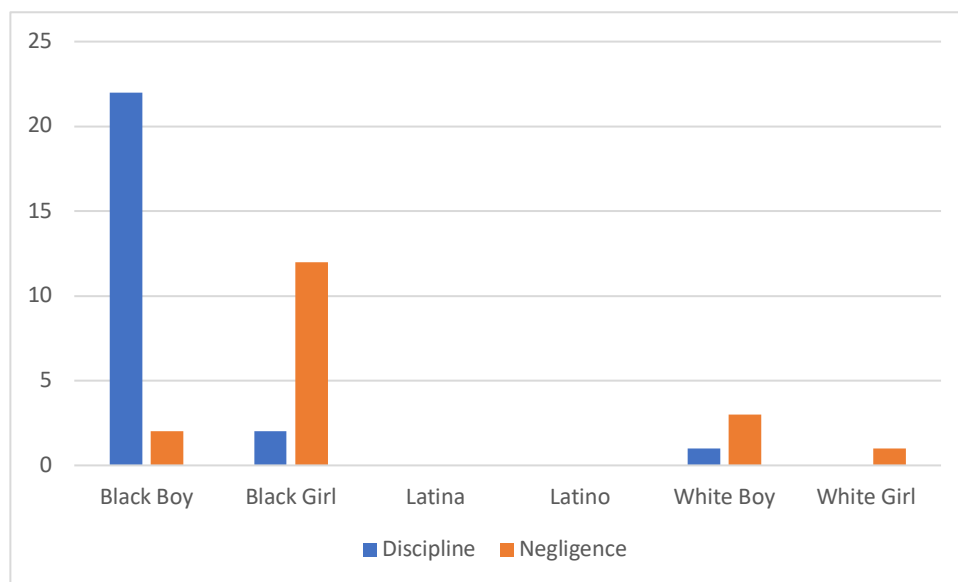
Secondly, Ms. Tocci's performance of blackness, which she determined to be a form of culturally-relevant pedagogy, did not correspond to her behavior toward or interactions with individual Black students. Instead, she routinely marginalized Black students, who routinely represented about one-third of each of her classes. Importantly, this does not mean that affirmative interactions were not present in Ms. Tocci's work with Black students. However, the emphasis on correction, discipline, and negligence of Black students emerged as defining features of Ms. Tocci's classroom practice. Like some of her fellow teachers, Ms. Tocci's ideas and beliefs about race, including perception of racial bias, were not always confirmed by

classroom observations. In the following section, I explore the racialized treatment of students across classrooms using relationships between teachers and students as a storytelling approach to analysis.

Antiblackness: On the Racialized Treatment of Students

I am not a huge fan of charts for representation of qualitative data because I think that it often misrepresents the story that the data tells. However, I begin this section on the racialized treatment of students with the chart above because it is the most accurate representation of the deep variation I observed in teacher behavior toward and interaction with students.

Figure 1. Discipline & Negligence by Race and Gender in Black-Integrated Classrooms



While discipline and negligence were less common than affirmation and correction, Black students were overwhelmingly represented in disciplinary and negligent teacher behaviors, particularly in integrated classrooms where Black students were present, as this chart shows. Moreover, Black boys accounted for the vast majority of disciplinary treatment in integrated classrooms, while Black girls were the most ignored. White students were rarely disciplined or

neglected, while Latinx students were not identified as disciplined or neglected in a dozen observations conducted in racially integrated classrooms. In the following section, I explore how racialized treatment of students varied across classrooms, with consideration of teachers' perception of racial bias in their teaching.

Discipline in Black-Integrated Classrooms

About half of classroom observations were conducted in racially integrated classrooms that included Black students. This category is distinct because it varied from teacher to teacher and academic year, and not all integrated classrooms included both Black and Latinx students. As fine arts teachers, all of Mr. Hernández' and Ms. Tocci's classes were Black-Latinx-white integrated. Ms. Garcia, the Escuela kindergarten teacher, had a Black-Latinx-white integrated classroom during the 2018-2019 school year. Ms. Walsh had a Black-white integrated classroom during the 2019-2020 school year. In 2018-2019, Ms. Walsh had only Black students and in 2019-2020, Ms. Garcia had only white and Latinx students, both of which will be explored in following sections.

Discipline was most common in Black-integrated classrooms and it was the site of the majority of disciplinary behaviors toward Black students. Out of 25 recorded disciplinary behaviors toward students in Black-integrated classrooms, 22 were directed toward Black boys and 2 were directed towards Black girls. One white boy was disciplined and no white girls or Latinx students were disciplined in Black integrated classrooms. All disciplinary actions toward Black boys occurred in Black-integrated classrooms.

Discipline of Black boys did not occur equally across Black-integrated classrooms. In fact, Mr. Hernández' behavior toward and interactions with Black boys, particularly in

challenging moments, was decidedly uncharacteristic of most Black-integrated classrooms. In contrast, Ms. Garcia's relationship with her Black student, Joseph, represents behavior toward and interactions with Black boys that I observed in Black-integrated classrooms. During my first observation of Ms. Garcia, I noticed how Joseph was isolated from other students.

When I walked into Ms. Garcia's class, they were sitting in circle time. All the children were seated, but moving and making noises as seemed developmentally appropriate for kindergartners. One student was speaking in English, telling a story. After a long bit of rambling, Ms. Garcia interrupted him, thanking him for his story by saying it was time to move on. The students began a lesson on the carpet. Ms. Garcia asked a few students to get supplies for the lesson – white boards, markers, and erasers. She turned to one Black boy and pulled out a chair for him, saying, "Because you are not ready for the carpet." Joseph is the only Black boy in the class of 15, mostly Latino students.

In this first observation, I didn't notice Joseph behaving differently than his peers. They were all moving and talking a bit during the lesson, so it surprised me that Joseph was singled out. As the class session moved from structured lessons to independent work, I noticed how Ms. Garcia continued to focus on Joseph.

When Joseph completes and turns in his work, Ms. Garcia calls him back to clean up his supplies. He grabs the glue and the scissors. I see him plop the glue stick on his table and watch him watch as it rolls to the edge of the table. He leaves it. He puts the scissors, upside down, into the proper container and goes over to a carpeted book nook in the middle of the room. He immediately takes out some flash cards with Spanish vocabulary words and pictures. From her chair, Ms. Garcia says to Joseph, "I'm going to trust you there. But if you don't do what you're supposed to do, I'm going to move you, Joseph." I think for a minute about whether this is a positive or negative communication. The word "trust" makes it seem positive, but the intonation suggests to me that she doesn't actually trust Joseph to do what he's "supposed to do." Joseph doesn't acknowledge her words, but keeps going through the vocab words. Occasionally he reads a word out loud, enthusiastically, as if he is sure that he knows it.

Unlike her interactions with other students, Ms. Garcia often corrected or threatened Joseph. As the class session continues, these behaviors escalate.

After five minutes, again from her seat, Ms. Garcia says, "Joseph, I'm a little confused, what are you supposed to be doing?" Joseph responds, "I'm sorting them out." As he

reads each card he tosses it in a pile to his side. Thirty seconds later, Ms. Garcia says, “If you keep throwing them you’re not going to be able to do it.” Joseph continues to read and sort the cards.

A minute later, Ms. Garcia walks over to Joseph, takes him by the wrist and leads him to the table. “No, we are going to do it together,” she says. Joseph sits at the table with his shirt pulled up over his face. “Fix it, Joseph.” Joseph remains seated, with his shirt over his face. Ms. Garcia leans in towards him and says, “Okay, I’m going to send a note to Mom.” Joseph says, “No!” He removes his shirt from his face. Ms. Garcia and Joseph begin reading a book at the table. Joseph reads out loud in Spanish. Since he is not a native Spanish speaker, I am surprised at how fluidly he reads. He pauses every few moments and Ms. Garcia helps him. All of a sudden, Ms. Garcia says, “I’m not playing with you. Every time I ask you to do something you aren’t doing it.” I didn’t see anything happen, so I’m not sure what her comment is about. I am struck by the fact that over the course of 10 minutes, Ms. Garcia has commented on, corrected, or reprimanded Joseph’s behavior 8 separate times.

During our second interview, I asked Ms. Garcia about her relationship with Joseph, since he seemed to be “a challenge,” for her. She was surprised by my observation. She felt that he took more attention, but that she handled it appropriately.

So, for William, and I love William. He has one of those faces you like ... It was really hard for him to just sit down and not be ... He was like this all day. He had to be touching other kids or touching something. Or just sitting on the rug, he could do it for like five minutes, and then we had to choose the chair for him. When he was working at his table, he was playing with the markers, playing with the pencils, or just doing something he wasn't supposed to. So most of the time he was either sitting at the table with me, or he had a specific spot for him, so he wouldn't get distracted.

While she acknowledged that she separated Joseph from other kids, she reasoned that he was often “just doing something he wasn’t supposed to do.” However, in comparison to other children, I didn’t see anything truly unusual or exceptional in his behavior. What seemed drastically different was her response to his behavior, compared to her response to other students in the class.

This kind of identification and isolation of Black boys showed up in Ms. Tocci’s relationship with Michael. During my third observation with Ms. Tocci, I noticed how she

focused a lot of disciplinary attention on Michael, though he seemed to no more disruptive than other students.

Through this process, which takes about 5-10 minutes, students continue to buzz. Ms. Tocci interjects: "Sorry, friends, I'm trying to hear this question, which might be something [you want to know, too]." Statements like this often quiet the class a little, but in general they chat quietly and wiggle around in their spaces on the carpet, which is generally tolerated. It doesn't appear to me that one student or another has a particularly difficult time staying still, but sometimes students get annoyed with their neighbors' movements. Ms. Tocci singles out Michael, a student who is sitting in the back row. "Michael, I noticed that I asked you to sit in your own space and now a classmate is asking you to change your actions, so you need to change, or I'll have to help you. One more chance."

After a short time, Ms. Tocci's interactions with Michael began to escalate. After a few rounds of singing a song together as a class, Ms. Tocci addresses Michael directly again.

After the song ends, Ms. Tocci explains that this is about teamwork, coming together from different classes to work as a group. As she is giving this lesson, Ms. Tocci abruptly stops and says to Michael quite impatiently, "Can you come here now?? You actually have to. Now. If you want to put your face in someone else's it will be mine. SIT DOWN." As she says these final words, she points him to a spot on the floor in the front of the carpet, near the wall. He is clearly unhappy about this interaction but does not object to her demands. He doesn't seem surprised that he was called to the front of the room. It seems like it has happened before. However, I am surprised. It didn't seem to me that Michael was moving more than any other student. The girl seated near him was telling everyone that moved to closely to her space to get back to their spot, so it didn't seem that Michael was the only student involved.

When I spoke to Ms. Tocci about this interaction with Michael during our second interview, she didn't remember it, but she said it seemed indicative of her approach with him and other students.

I'll give you a verbal reminder like "Can you keep it together for me? Are you all right? Okay. Good." And kids have their days. Okay, he was probably having a squirrely day. He's the kind of kid who can press buttons and he's got enough up here to know. He knows. He's very conscious of his decisions, and he can turn it on or turn it off depending on how he's feeling.

As we continued to talk, I noted how Michael tried to begin participating when he was moved to

the front of the room, but I noticed that she didn't look acknowledge him until the very end of class.

Ah, you can't have it both ways right? So, if you've decided you're not into it for today, and then you get in "trouble", quote/unquote, for not paying attention, or whatever, and then you realize, "Oops. That was an oops. That was a bad decision." Or, you're right, I wasn't paying attention. Now all of a sudden I'm the star student. You can't have it both ways.

In Ms. Tocci's comments, negligence was used as a follow-up to discipline. In this way, it seemed like affirmation had to be earned, particularly in the context of discipline. I explore the manifestation of negligence further as I look at the complex treatment of Black girls in Robinson classrooms.

Negligence: Ignoring Black Girls

When I interviewed Ms. Garcia for the second time, she mentioned Summer, the only Black girl who was in kindergarten class during the 2018-2019 school year. While I noticed her in class, I made note of how Ms. Garcia's interaction with her was limited. When Summer asked to go to the bathroom, Ms. Garcia let her go. When Summer raised her hand to answer a question, Ms. Garcia called on her. Summer always looked to be on task, and Ms. Garcia didn't seem to initiate any contact with her. However, when Ms. Garcia talked about Summer, she described a different child and a different student-teacher relationship.

She had various meltdowns. She used to cry and scream. And she used to be in the hallway screaming. And really not aggressive, but really mean to friends and I couldn't even talk to her. She was just ... There was a point I knew I lost her. I knew I had to either call the office, or I had to go with her to the hallway or something. There was always ... It didn't happen every single day, but it happened every single week. And I think for me, Summer was a little bit more a challenge than Joseph and Sam.

As Ms. Garcia continued to describe Summer and the toll that their relationship took on her desire to teach, it made me more curious about what I began to think of as negligence that I

observed while Summer was in the classroom. It seemed like ignoring Summer was a strategy.

Ms. Garcia felt that by interacting with her, she was going to trigger her. When I asked Ms.

Garcia if Summer started out the year that way, she said that she had, and she “ended it that

way.” More, she was puzzled that Summer, now a first-grader, seemed happy to see Ms. Garcia.

And now that I see her and she's giving me hugs and she's like, "How are you?" For me, it was surprising. Especially at the beginning of the year when I saw her. I didn't know you even, we had a relationship. It was hard for me. I tried when she was in the classroom and blah, blah, blah. But I didn't even know we had that because I never felt it. And I never knew she did. But I guess we did?

Often, negligence of Black girls showed up in Black-integrated classrooms, but not exclusively. Ms. Walsh, who had an all-Black class in 2018-2019 and a Black-integrated class in 2019-2020, seemed to use negligence as a strategy, as well. While she never described a Black girl in the ways that Ms. Garcia did, I noticed that her redirection strategies were often directed towards Black girls who approached her for assistance or just for attention. Particularly when a child spoke up during a time when it wasn't time for questions or if they approached her when she was working with a group of students at her table, Ms. Walsh would hold up her hand, shake her head, and say, “No, thank you.” I observed this happen several times, not always with Black girls, but often. When I asked her about this strategy, she noted that it didn't really seem like a “responsive classroom” approach, which she tries to employ.

So, if I've explained something to you, and you're confused, it's an “ask three before you ask me.” So, you can ask anybody else to help you, and it's part of that cooperative for Diaspora. They're supposed to be helping each other too, and sometimes it's hard because I have friends that I know are processing. So, I've been checking in and out with them, what are we doing, what are you supposed to do right now, can you go get started before we go? And, that's been cutting down on it, but then I have friends who are just needy. “I just need you to” ... and, I will tell them no thank you because then they know, and I've taught them because it's that group's time, right? So, when it's your time, you don't want us to keep getting interrupted because we only have a short period of time.

As someone who uses a lot of affirmation, particularly with Black girls, this characterization of students who ask for help or acknowledgement as “needy,” seemed misplaced. Ms. Foster often describes students as “needy” when they require a lot of attention to correct behavior or when they have documented needs due to trauma. It seemed that many of the students I observed her turning away were not her “needy” students, but Black girls that simply had a question or concern. They didn’t fall in the “needy” category, but still seemed to be routinely ignored by Ms. Walsh. In the context of a classroom where affirmation of Black girls was also routinely present, negligence still seemed to be a decisive strategy to address Black girls’ needs.

The relative overuse of negligence and discipline in teacher behavior toward and interaction with Black students, particularly in Black-integrated contexts, raises questions about the lack of negligence and discipline in teachers work with Latinx students. The next section looks at teacher behavior toward and interaction with Latinx students in racially integrated and homogenous contexts.

Beyond the Black-White Paradigm: Latinx Invisibility in the Classroom

When I observed Ms. Garcia during 2019-2020, I noticed that there were no Josephs or Summers in her class. Not only were there no Black children, there was also an absence of the discipline and negligence that I noticed the previous year. As a rule, Ms. Garcia never seemed to use much affirmation in her work with students. She enjoyed a quiet, controlled classroom, and this was still evident during our second year of observations. But I noticed a levity in her interactions that I didn’t observe the year before. During my last observation, I noticed how she joked and laughed with students while giving a lesson on illustrating weekend activities.

Ms. Garcia begins to draw her weekend activities on the projector. She draws what looks like a vacuum and green carpet. The students think this means she was cutting the grass.

Ms. Garcia laughs and changes the carpet to orange. I think that this is the first time I have heard her laugh in class. On seeing the orange carpet, one student says, “lava!” Ms. Garcia says, “Yes, this weekend Ms. Garcia was vacuuming lava.”

While I was pleased to see Ms. Garcia happy in the classroom, I also wondered how this year was so different than last. In our interview, she explained more about how difficult the last year had been for her.

So, I felt really relieved last year, that last school day. I was like, I like you. It was, thank you for the experience. Thank you for everything, but I cannot do this, a class like that again. If I had to do it all over again this year, I wouldn't do it. I think that would make me quit. I think last year was really bad. And I think if that would be my experience every single year teaching, I don't think I would continue.

Ms. Garcia’s descriptions of Summer sounded difficult, though I never witnessed them. Still, I couldn’t help but consider how her increased satisfaction with teaching occurred during a year when she had no Black children in her class. While she used corrective behaviors with students, she did not threaten students, or physically isolate students.

In the context of Black-integrated classrooms, such as Ms. Garcia’s 2018-2019 class, I didn’t record any instances of discipline or neglect of Latinx students. In those environments, Black boys were routinely disciplined, while Black girls were more often neglected. White boys and girls were occasionally addressed in a disciplinary manner, but only in a few instances. Relatively to their Black and white counterparts, Latinx students were invisible, an idea that Mr. Vidal and Ms. Garcia noted when discussing Escuela in the larger context of the school. While Latinx students make up about a third of the student population, and usually more in Escuela classrooms, their relatively invisibility in integrated classrooms also suggests that they are not viewed as problematic in the classroom.

The big picture of racialized treatment of students at Robinson demonstrates that teacher

behaviors toward and interactions with students reflect consistent marginalization of students of color. Discipline and negligence show up routinely in treatment of Black students, especially in Black-integrated contexts. In contrast, Latinx students, when present, are routinely invisible in terms of discipline. Importantly, each of the teachers that best reflected these trends, Ms. Garcia, Ms. Tocci, and Ms. Walsh, believed that they didn't show racial bias toward their students. In the final section of this chapter, I explore the intersection of teacher-identified racial bias with pedagogies of caring in the classroom, as exemplified in the work of Mr. Hernández, Ms. Kent, and Mr. Vidal.

Pedagogies of Caring: Toward Anti-Racist Teacher Practice

All Robinson teacher participants valued the idea that racism negatively impacted the structure and circumstances of education. However, only some teachers actively engaged this idea in their teaching, manifesting in anti-racist pedagogies of caring. These teachers largely recognized their own racial bias and actively engaged this knowledge in their work with children. Mr. Hernández and Ms. Kent demonstrated pedagogies of caring that approached Black children, in particular, with a balanced approach to classroom engagement. In their practice, disciplinary behaviors were rarely used, and correction was balanced with affirmation to create an environment where Black students were allowed to be fully human. Mr. Vidal, though his awareness of racial bias was not completely made clear in his interviews or narratives, practiced a similar pedagogy of caring in his work with his all Latinx class. Additionally, his approach included actively anti-racist tools that sought to fight antiblackness through curriculum and dialogue. Together, Mr. Hernández, Ms. Kent, and Mr. Vidal demonstrated a pedagogical approach that actively counteracted systemic antiblackness through affirmation of Black

students' humanity, whether they were present in the classroom or not.

Affirmation played a strong role in anti-racist pedagogies of caring, even during times where students were challenging or being challenged in the classroom. I noticed how Ms. Kent, who taught in an all-Black classroom, translated her philosophy of representation and inclusion in her direct interactions with students. In fact, Ms. Kent seemed to take every opportunity to affirm students' presence and participation in the classroom. For example, in my first observation, Ms. Kent was working with students on individual decks of flash cards, representing challenging words for each student. As they work, I noticed how Ms. Kent used lots of positive reinforcement like, "Thank you for getting right to work." When a student raised his hand to ask a question, Ms. Kent responded with, "I love that you are raising your hand!" This was reinforced by frequent affirmations from Ms. Kent as she interacted with students. For example, she often gave high-fives or says, "Yes!" when a student was on the right track with their work. During another class session, one student was struggling to stay engaged during the period and, as she often did, simply did not try to complete her work when she was challenged. When she dismissed the other students, Ms. Kent asked Kiara to stay for a few minutes to finish her work.

Ms. Kent says to Kiara, "I need you to stay to finish this." She references the reading words that Kiara was struggling with earlier in the hour. Kiara reads the words one by one, sounds them out. She is reading them in order and more confidently. Ms. Kent encourages her while she works to sound them out. She gets four out of five correct. Ms. Kent says, "Yes! Look at me." Kiara looks her in her face. "This is how I need you to read when we are doing this task ok? You got four out of five!" Kiara is as pleased as Ms. Kent.

This interaction is indicative of how Ms. Kent routinely handled a student who was being challenged and whose behavior became challenging as a result. Instead of inserting discipline into her interactions with students, she used these moments as opportunities to correct and

affirm.

This affirmative approach to challenging behaviors in Mr. Vidal's work with Latinx students in his Escuela classroom. Like Mr. Vidal described during our interviews, his teaching style was very interactive and expressive. He gave lots of affirmation with his face, motions, and words in response to students throughout the learning process. Often, this manifested as a head nod with eye contact or a verbal affirmation such as, "Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm." When students were challenged in the classroom, which often arose during group work, Mr. Vidal responded by encouraging students to work through the conflict, rather than disciplining them. During one frustrating partner-work session, Maria and Clemente struggled to work together on a textual analysis assignment.

Maria is turning the pages too fast for another student. He becomes frustrated and Mr. Vidal guides them through resolving the conflict. It takes Maria a few moments to acknowledge Mr. Vidal. She doesn't seem to want to slow down. A third student, Clemente, becomes upset because he is not keeping up with the page-turning, either. He begins to cry and places his head on the table. Mr. Vidal prompts Maria to pay attention to what is happening by saying her name and making eye contact. She asks Clemente what he "needs." Mr. Vidal says, "Respira, Clemente," or "Breathe, Clemente," in English which is repeated by the other students. Maria begins to go through the book slowly, page by page, but begins to do Santi's work for him by basically telling him what scene comes next before he can decide himself.

When the students seemed to continue to struggle to work as a pair, Mr. Vidal asked them, "How are you going to organize to work together to paste the pictures on the paper?" They decided not to work together and when Clemente went to get his own paper to complete the assignment, Maria gave him the book to finish the work on his own. In moments like these, I noticed that Mr. Vidal's gentle and direct manner with students seems to translate to peer interactions as well. During a one class session, a student abruptly said, loudly, "I'm done with you right now!" When I looked over toward the direction of the exclamation, another student had

gently placed a hand on the peer to whom the comment was directed. He said, "Please. Stop it."

The student obliged. Like Mr. Vidal, the student used direct and corrective language without escalating the situation.

In the context of anti-racist teacher practice, correction was utilized more often to address difficult student behaviors than discipline, and often in conjunction with affirmation. I was moved by an interaction I observed between Mr. Hernández and Jordan, a young kindergartner in the Diaspora program. Jordan, a Black boy, was smaller than many of his classmates, artistically inclined and imaginative, and he often moved about the classroom without much regard for his peers' personal space. When he was seated on the carpet during group time, he would sway side to side, bumping classmates or moving into their personal space. He seemed aware of what he was doing but unconcerned or malicious. I noticed that Mr. Hernández, who often encouraged body movement in class, allowed Jordan to move as he liked, unless it caused harm to himself or another student. During one class period, Mr. Hernández was singing the "Tickle Song," which encourages students to be silly and move around. I noticed that Jordan was moving around a little more than other students, bumping into some of them, even after the song ended. Mr. Hernández responded by saying, "But, Jordan, we're not being silly right now, so you are in control of your body." I noticed how this technique was different than the correction often used by Ms. Garcia, who often responded to such behavior by threatening students. Instead, Mr. Hernández reminds Jordan that he has the capacity to control his own body, rather than trying to control Jordan's body himself. As the class session continued, Jordan continued to show unwanted attention to other students, including touching a girl who was seated near him. Mr. Hernández responded by telling Jordan that he needed to find a new spot because he was "not

being safe anymore.” Jordan responded to this by moving toward Mr. Hernández and hitting him. Another student said, “That was calarious [sic]!” Mr. Hernández responded, “No, actually, it wasn’t hilarious because it wasn’t safe.”

When a student hits a teacher, even a kindergartner, it is within a teacher’s rights to respond by disciplining a student. In fact, the disproportionately high levels of discipline for Black preschoolers suggest that zero-tolerance policies are enacted more frequently for Black children of younger ages. So, while I was not expecting Mr. Hernández to respond with heavy-handed discipline considering his affirmative teaching style, I would not have been surprised if Jordan was removed from the class at this moment. However, Mr. Hernández response deescalated the situation completely. After hitting Mr. Hernández, Jordan simply stood next to him and Mr. Hernández responded by saying, calmly, “That’s your new spot.” I noticed that Mr. Hernández didn’t put Jordan on the “spot,” but rather allowed Jordan to simply sit down in the spot he chose. A little while later, Jordan is wiggling again, bumping into other students and Mr. Hernández says, “Okay, man. Come on. Take my hand and stand in front of me.” Mr. Hernández is seated and Jordan, standing, leans his body affectionately into Mr. Hernández, who says, “That’s okay if you lean on me if you want.” Immediately, Mr. Hernández pulls his body slightly away from Jordan and makes eye contact with him, saying, “Is that okay with you?” Jordan nods his head and leans into Mr. Hernández.

Mr. Hernández’s decision-making in the classroom was striking because it seemed so intentional. Just as Ms. Garcia intentionally disciplined Joseph because she felt that was the appropriate way to respond to his behavior, Mr. Hernández made a concerted effort to use correction and affirmation to address conflict in the classroom, even when he was within his

rights to take more disciplinary action. I asked Mr. Hernández about this incident during our second interview, noting how he handled the situation by reengaging students rather than disciplining them, and asked him to explain his decision-making with regard to classroom conflict. He first responded by saying, “Thank you for noticing that because it’s something I’ve been actively working on for the last two years specifically.” Citing his experience being raised in a very “dismissive, punitive” manner, he explained, “I have to really backtrack my emotion to something I want to react to. I have to really fine tune. [...] Instead of calling, ‘Hey you, stop doing...’ no, no no. ‘I’m feeling x, y, and z when you do that. Can we have a conversation about that?’” Even with younger students, like Jordan, Mr. Hernández insisted that relying on disciplinary measures doesn’t work because he tried to be more disciplinary when he first started teaching. “You can’t build a relationship when kids are afraid of you. [...] I’ve started to reflect...that I can choose how I talk to someone. I can choose how I react to something, regardless of what my initial feeling is.” Further, Mr. Hernández noted that being a disciplinarian in the classroom contributed to feelings of burnout. He didn’t think it was a sustainable way to teach. “...I think that’s one thing that a lot of people need to recognize for themselves in terms of self-preservation. That frustration, that anger, that stress, it will fucking kill you.”

Together, Mr. Hernández, Ms. Kent, and Mr. Vidal represented a counternarrative to classroom practices that marginalized Black and Latinx students. While discipline and negligence showed up in many classroom observations of other teachers, these three balanced correction and affirmation to respond to challenging student behaviors. In my last interview with Mr. Hernández, we reflected on the balanced approach that I observed in his racially integrated classroom.

I'm glad to hear you saying that. I've been wondering, and I was hoping that maybe one of these times you would specifically bring that up, because I actively, and this is maybe racist, I actively look to call out white kids, because I don't know what's happening in the other classrooms, but I do know historically black kids' names are constantly being called out. With that known experience in history in schools across America, I'm trying to say, "Hey, this white kid is doing the most right now, and this white kid is actually being super disrespectful. So are you by the way, but I'm calling this one out, and I'm going to call you out on just a couple seconds because you're also being disrespectful." I look at it like a dartboard and I'm trying to hit almost everyone if they're acting up. If not, then it's like, "Yo, great job so and so. Great job so and so."

As he indicates in his last statement, affirmation is at the core of his teaching practice toward all students. However, his attunement to the historical and current trends in student discipline also alert him to the reality that he must “actively look to call out white kids” in order to make sure that his approach is actually balanced. Importantly, this statement is not saying that Mr. Hernández singled out white kids. Instead, he simply tried to make sure that white kids were “called out” for challenging behavior in the same way that Black kids would most likely be called out and were called out in his earlier years of teaching. This kind of self-correction in teacher practice is the core of the counternarrative of anti-racist teacher practice. In the discussion that follows, I will highlight the importance of understanding the relationship between teacher ideas and beliefs about and their conscious efforts to integrate these ideas into their behavior toward and interaction with students.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The humanity of Black students is routinely contested in educational spaces. The legacy of slavery in the United States manifests as a paradox in the lives of Black people that is exemplified by education. Just as Black people have continuously fought for the recognition of their humanity and the manifestation of their freedom through education, so has education been used as a tool of control and oppression of Black humanity. As we strive to understand the power and limits of this paradox, we are called to center Black humanity as the vehicle and the goal.

Keep your eyes on the prize.

This project began as an effort to further interrogate education as a system of oppression and a tool of liberation in the lives of Black people. Specifically, this study sought to explore the mechanics of this paradox in the classroom as a function of the idea that education is relational act. The humanity of Black students and their experiences in the classroom are not separate from the institutional racism that has shaped and been shaped by educational systems, policies, and processes. Teachers play a powerful role in the way that students experience schooling, mediating or reifying the impact of institutional racism on the daily learning of students. Their own ideas and ideas and beliefs about race are shaped by a social world that consistently devalues Black lives, even as we attempt to embrace the idea of “education as the practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994). To understand how education continues to function as a tool of oppression in the lives of Black people, I considered the role that teachers play in the reification

of antiblackness in the classroom, asking, *how to teachers' ideas and beliefs about race manifest in their behavior toward and interaction with students?*

This resulting study on humanity in the classroom engaged six teachers in a critical collaborative case study of pedagogy and practice. All teachers worked at Robinson Elementary, a K-5 school in large Midwestern metropolitan area, and participated in this study through written narratives, interviews, group study, and observation. The discussion that follows explores the findings of the study in the context of our working knowledge about race and teaching and through active engagement of BlackCrit (Dumas & ross, 2016) as a theoretical framework that centers Black humanity in explorations of antiblackness. Additionally, I consider several implications for teacher education, teacher practice, research on race and racial bias, and collaborative methodologies to interrogate race in educational spaces.

Discussion

The work of the Robinson teacher collaborative reveals critical aspects of the transmission and reproduction of antiblackness in the classroom. Teachers' desires to be race-conscious and culturally relevant educators were supported by their shared understanding that antiblackness was an "endemic" feature of educational spaces (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 429). However, this knowledge and desire was complicated by the "mundane and quotidian ways" that antiblackness manifests in daily life (Hartman, 1997, p. 4). As teachers navigated the social life of the classroom, their practice demonstrated challenges to enacting antiracist practice and, instead, often reified the antiblackness they sought to understand and address in their pedagogy. Teachers' successful antiracist practice, or teaching "committed to Black – and therefore human – emancipation," was connected to their willingness to "engage in honest and very specific

conversations about Black bodies, blackness, and Black historical memories in and of the school community,” and specifically, the presence of antiblackness in their own racial bias (Dumas, 2016, p. 17). When teachers could not make clear connections between their knowledge of antiblackness as a sociopolitical reality, their teaching practice, and the possibility of racial bias in their interactions with and behavior toward Black students, antiblackness revealed itself more tangibly in the life of the classroom. This discussion considers these findings in the context of our current understanding of antiblackness in educational spaces and the “liberatory fantasy” (Dumas & ross, 2016, p. 431) of Black humanity in teachers’ work.

Teachers’ Understanding of Antiblackness as a Sociopolitical Reality

This study expands interdisciplinary knowledge of race and education by centering antiblackness as a point of inquiry and a theoretical construct for understanding how teachers contribute to racial inequality through their behavior toward and interaction with students. By shifting the narrative of inquiry away from deficit frameworks of students as a problem to be solved (Howard, 2013), this study repositions the problem within teachers’ ideas and beliefs about race and racialized classroom practices. This expands a large body of research that has documented and explored the “mechanisms” of racial inequality (Lewis & Diamond, 2015) at multiple levels of inquiry. Importantly, these studies helped to situate this current inquiry in by mapping the “differential selection” of Black and Latinx students across the institutional policies that regulate schools (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). For example, the labeling of Black boys as “troublemakers” follows them throughout their school life and has the potential to fast track them through the school-to-prison pipeline (Ferguson, 2001). Likewise, an emphasis on discipline and punishment keeps Black boys in “trouble” (Noguera, 2008), and often pushes Black girls out of

educational spaces that they need to survive (Morris, 2016). This work has helped to reveal that how we see Black children matters. This study centers that idea and demonstrates that how teachers see Black children is critical to how they are treated in classrooms and in educational institutions as a whole. In doing so, this study fundamentally disagrees with the idea that, “how and why this unfolds matters less than the fact that it does” (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, p. 62). In contrast, the findings from this study demonstrate that the “how and why,” or the reasons that a teacher allows bathroom access to white students more than others as in Lewis and Diamond’s analysis of racial inequality in schools, is just as integral to how we understand the manifestation of systemic racism on the regulation, control, and discipline of Black students. first, by exploring and documenting teachers’ ideas and beliefs about race. The “how and why” is a mechanism all its own that is fully fleshed out as the manifestation of antiblackness in the classroom.

This study first centers antiblackness in inquiry by exploring teachers’ ideas and beliefs about race, to better understand what informs their pedagogy and practice. Teacher beliefs about race showed consensus about the particular presence of antiblackness in education as an enduring feature of institutional racism. They were able to articulate the importance of understanding the reproduction of racial inequality through schools (Lewis & Diamond, 2015), and were committed to addressing the marginalization of Black and Latinx students and families through schooling. Similar to previous research, these ideas and beliefs reflected a desire to serve “needy” students (Watson, 2011) and to “give back to disadvantaged students of color” (Matias, 2016a), but they actively articulated resistance to the idea of being “saviors” for their students (Vera & Gordon, 2003; Brown, 2013). This active rejection of deficit frameworks helped to decenter notions of Black and Latinx students as “problems” (Ferguson, 2000; Howard, 2013;

Noguera, 2008). Instead, teachers understood students' marginalization by the policies and processes of schooling and repeatedly articulated their desire to learn more about race, racism, and inequality in order to be good teachers.

Robinson teachers also cited the importance of recognizing the role of whiteness in defining educational norms and understood "whiteness-at-work" (Yoon, 2012) to stand in fundamental opposition to the success of Black students. These large-scale beliefs were contextualized in their explanations of pedagogy and practice, which were largely focused on understanding the role of race in teaching and the ways which these ideas translated to their work with students. Teachers cited the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy (Ladson Billings, 2013), which they saw as intricately connected to the race and identity of students. Multiple teachers recognized the importance of searching for and implementing curricular tools that reflected the racial identity, ethnicity, and language of students (e.g. children's literature and music). True to the cultural and sociopolitical knowledge embedded in CRP, teachers expressed a belief that recognizing their own racial identity and positionality (i.e. privilege) was an important feature of their work.

Teachers' beliefs about race and teaching were complicated by the reality of racial and ethnic diversity in the Robinson community. Teachers identified tensions between blackness and diversity that emerged in program implementation and teacher practice. As argued by Dumas and Ross (2016), "multiculturalism and diversity...are often positioned against the lives of Black people," in such a way that the two cannot coexist in ideas and beliefs about education (p. 430). At Robinson, this was most evident in teachers' articulated challenges to solidarity with other teachers. They cited competition for resources, such as classroom space, teachers, and

administrative support, particularly between *Diaspora* and *Escuela*, as a barrier to school-wide progress. However, this was most often articulated as *Diaspora*, the program focused on Black history, identity, and culture, being the barrier to access, not the lack of overall resources as a larger systemic issue. Teachers' desires for visibility and support of Latinx students was a recurring and important theme, but all too often embedded in antiblackness. In conceptualizing a future for Robinson, teachers didn't disentangle their rejection of deficit frameworks about Black students as individuals from their conceptualization of "Black" programs as problematic, or even oppositional, to the community's success.

Teachers' Practice of Antiblackness & Practice for Black Humanity

This study also explored the complexity of teachers' awareness about racial bias, both as a concept and as a potential factor in their behavior toward and interaction with students. The recent literature that explores racial bias departs largely from earlier explorations of racial bias in teaching (see Irvine, 1985, for a comprehensive review on teachers' racial bias post-*Brown*), in that it focuses on "implicit bias," or the subconscious attitudes that inform social behavior (Greenwald & Banaji, 2017). Implicit racial bias is of particular interest to education researchers who are seeking to understand the persistence of racial inequalities in an era of race-neutral, or "color-blind," policy (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). As this study explored in the literature review, the examination of implicit racial bias in education has the potential to reveal the mechanics of institutional antiblackness by focusing on teachers as institutional intermediaries. As a qualitative case study approach to inquiry about antiblackness and education, this study sought to explore teachers' ideas and beliefs about race in conjunction with their behavior toward and interaction with students. Instead of evaluating teachers' implicit bias with tools like the IAT (Greenwald &

Banaji, 1995), I looked to field-based methods for exploring racial bias in practice. Specifically, I learned about teachers articulated racial attitudes through interviews and compared these attitudes to their behavior toward and interaction with students. In my analysis of that data, I looked to put teachers' beliefs in conversation with their actions, to create a fuller understanding of how antiblackness shows up in teacher practice, and how implicit bias might show up in the lack of congruence between beliefs and action.

Recent research on teachers' implicit racial bias suggests that lack of awareness or unwillingness to interrogate racial bias is undoubtedly harmful to Black students, in particular. When evaluated outside of the classroom, teachers' implicit racial bias manifests in disproportionate identification of Black students as threatening (Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016), and the idea that Black boys are more likely to exhibit challenging behavior (Gilliam et al, 2016). The findings of these recent studies present opportunities for deeper inquiry. Multiple teachers in the Robinson collaborative believed that racial bias was not a feature of their interaction with students. While Robinson teachers acknowledged the possibility that racial bias could influence their interactions with students, few could recount instances where this occurred, and most teachers believed that they did not have or show bias toward students in their classroom. Even as they had acknowledged the importance of addressing the legacy of institutional racism and antiblackness in schools, their teaching philosophies and interviews did not reveal abundant awareness about connections between systemic racism and student-teacher interactions. In other words, they did not believe that they practiced antiblackness toward students.

Robinson teachers' awareness or lack of awareness about the power and presence of implicit racial bias manifested as a critical aspect of their classroom practice. The power of

implicit racial bias to influence perceptions, behaviors, and decision-making (Trachock, 2015; Staats & Patton, 2013) means that teachers' understanding and recognition of their own racial biases can have tangible effects on their treatment of students in the classroom. Observations of teachers' behavior toward and interaction with students helped to reveal the mechanism by which teachers' racial ideas, beliefs, and potential biases, showed up as antiblackness in their work with students. In particular, teachers who did not recognize racial bias in their teaching focused disciplinary behavior toward Black students. This reflects research that demonstrates the correlation of implicit racial attitudes with teachers' over-identification of Black students' behaviors as problematic (Casteel, 1998; Cullinan & Kaufman, 2005; Simpson & Erikson, 1983). If teachers cannot identify their own racial biases, or are unaware of them, they will show up in their work with students. Importantly, research shows that teachers' subjective assessment of Black students results in more disciplinary office referrals (Girvan et al, 2017; Smolkowski et al, 2016), demonstrating the importance of teachers' ideas and beliefs about race in the classroom. Just as research confirms that Black boys are disproportionately referred and punished for disciplinary concerns, Robinson teachers focused discipline on Black boys in the classroom, especially when they did not believe they had racial bias toward their students.

In contrast, classroom observations also revealed the degree to which affirmation and correction were utilized in a holistic manner that was meant to support and uplift the learning experience of Black students. Importantly, these humanizing practices also respond to the research on implicit racial bias. Teachers that discussed their own bias openly in interviews demonstrated active approaches to mitigating these biases in the classroom, resulting in affirmation and support. Humanizing pedagogy was not an accident but rather a conscious effort

on the part of teachers to recognize their racial biases, understand them, and actively work against the manifestation of those biases in their work with Black students. These humanizing experiences were made more apparent by the observation of students across classrooms – that is, observations of multiple teachers that included one or more children seen in other classes (e.g. Reading class and then drama; or special education Diaspora K-2 class and then music). These humanizing experiences also extended to teachers’ work in bilingual, all-Latinx classes, which included discourses of racial and gender equality through curriculum.

Taken together, the findings of this study trace the paradox of education for freedom and education for oppression through the work of teachers. This work does not separate antiblackness from Black humanity; rather it confirms the many ways that antiblackness serves as an active barrier to Black humanity, specifically through teachers’ behavior toward and interaction with students. The interpersonal practice of antiblackness is not separate from the larger institutional policies and processes of racism in education. Rather, this study demonstrates the importance of the “how and why;” it parses out how teachers’ ideas and beliefs about race connect to their treatment of students in such a way that makes plain another component of the “mechanisms of racial inequality” that mitigate Black humanity in schools (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). If we are to really “contend with antiblackness” (Dumas & ross, 2016) in education, we cannot separate ourselves – the teachers – from the processes. Interrogation of antiblackness in educational spaces must include the most intimately held, implicit and explicit, ideas and beliefs as inseparable from the larger processes of policymaking, enforcement, and abolition.

Implications

This study draws important connections between multiple bodies of literature and

research on education, race, and social cognition, with implications for teacher practice, research on implicit bias and social cognition in educational spaces, and humanizing Black educational experiences. Most importantly, this study contributes to the field by establishing a link between racial ideology, teacher practice, and differential treatment of Black students in the classroom. Moreover, this study reveals clear pathways toward antiracist teacher practice and humanizing pedagogy through active engagement of race and racial bias in teacher education and professional development.

Antiblackness: Racial Ideology, Social Cognition & Teacher Practice

First, this project's findings about current teachers' ideas and beliefs about race call us to consider the role of cultivating teacher knowledge about race before and while they are in the classroom. In the literature review, I explored how teacher education research provides a base for understanding new and future teachers' racial attitudes, understanding of racial inequalities, and complex approaches to social justice in their work (Matias, 2016a; Matias, 2016b; Milner, 2006; Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul & Gordon, 2006). This project explicitly connects teacher ideas and beliefs about race with teacher practice by taking a case study approach to current teachers' work in a K-5 school. All teacher participants in this study articulated knowledge about the particular antiblackness of educational institutions and processes but varied in their ability to apply these concepts in relation to their own practice. Teachers' awareness of institutional racism and commitment to address it, did not always correlate to their awareness of racial bias in their own practice. The findings reveal a complex incongruence between ideas and practice, that helps to make sense of the way that unexamined implicit racial attitudes can contribute to the persistent racial inequality in schooling (Carter et al, 2017; Warikoo et al,

2016). These findings respond directly to existing research by reinforcing the link between educational institutions as part of the racialized social system (Bonilla-Silva, 2017) and teachers' practice of racism in the classroom. Confirming studies that demonstrate teachers' antiblackness in implicit racial attitudes (Gilliam et al, 2016; Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016), this study brings that research into the classroom, showing how implicit racial bias can potentially impact actual treatment of students. These findings specifically expand working knowledge of the degree to which teachers conceptualize and understand the specific antiblackness of educational inequality, while also contributing to the field through examination of antiblackness in the classroom.

The racialized treatment of students in the classroom helps us understand antiblackness at work, in the same way that Yoon (2012) conceptualizes "whiteness-at-work." One of the major challenges to combatting antiblackness in teaching is a lack of empirical evidence about the processes by which it is practiced in the classroom. Like many, if not most, other schools in the United States, Robinson's discipline rates and measures of academic achievement reflect disproportionate identification and punishment of Black students. Extensive research has been conducted to document the magnitude of racial disproportionality (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010; Skiba et al, 2011; Skiba et al, 2014) and explores teachers' roles in the perpetuation of racial inequalities (Bryan, 2017; DeMatthews, 2016; Thomas, et al, 2009; Welsh & Little, 2018). Additionally, research on teachers' ideas and beliefs about race has shown evidence that teachers' approaches to discipline in hypothetical scenarios are racially biased (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015) Further, teacher education research explores pre-service teachers racial ideas, providing evidence of the potential connections between systemic racism, teachers' racial bias, and disproportionate discipline of Black students (Matias, 2016a; Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019).

Despite this rich and persistent production of empirical research, there is little overlap between research on teachers' ideas and beliefs about race, including implicit and explicit racial bias, and their behavior toward and interaction with students. Robinson teachers helped to bridge this gap by openly exploring their own racial beliefs and by allowing those beliefs to be interrogated through observation of their classroom practice. The incongruence between teacher participants' articulated ideas and beliefs about race, and their racialized behavior toward and interaction with students, reveals the degree to which unidentified and unexamined racial ideas and beliefs can impact treatment of students in the classroom. Moreover, I would argue that this data also demonstrates the impact that teachers' unexamined antiblackness has on the explicit antiblackness of educational spaces.

This study's exploration of antiblackness also reveals the internal barriers that teachers may face when they want to practice socially-just, anti-racist teaching. Matias' (2013, 2016a, 2016b) consistent work on the emotionality of white teachers' practice speaks to what I observed early in my career as a school social worker with my colleague, Lorraine. In the face of antiblackness in classroom practice, Lorraine was incredulous, angry, and offended. Her firm resolve in her own dedication to racial equality made it too difficult for her to recognize that antiblackness was present in her teaching. Like Lorraine, Robinson teachers openly recognized the sociohistorical relevance of antiblackness and viewed it as a barrier to Black students' success in the classroom. However, also like Lorraine, most Robinson teachers struggled to identify antiblackness in their own pedagogy or practice, even when presented with clear evidence of it.

The co-existence of teachers' anti-racist ideas with racialized teaching practice reinforces

the paradox of education as a path to freedom and a tool of oppression in the lives of Black people. While teachers in this study believed in the importance of acknowledging institutional racism, their racialized practice in the classroom demonstrates that racial knowledge does not alone translate to antiracist teacher practice. That is to say, believing in racial equality, equity, or justice, does not negate the presence of antiblackness. In fact, this study helps to show that teachers who do not believe that they demonstrate racial bias in the classroom may focus discipline on Black students, as was the case with some teacher participants at Robinson. These findings draw connections between existing research on racial inequality in schools, teachers' racial bias, and racialized treatment of students in the classroom.

To further understand these connections, research must contend with antiblackness on multiple levels of social and institutional life. Schools remain a focus of our collective hope and insistent faith, with the possibility for nurturing Black humanity. However, this cannot be done without examining the process of antiblackness across all levels of the education system. An increased focus on examining implicit bias could lead us toward theorizing what I believe may be a collective, implicit antiblackness that serves as an active barrier to Black humanity. Implicit racial bias exists in all people and is not focused on only anti-Black bias. However, the United States' commitment to the legal and extralegal oppression of Black people has been so carefully crafted and remains embedded in our institutional and social life. Though many Americans, like many of the Robinson teachers, believe in racial equality as an idea, they may have yet to contend with the ways that their participation in institutional life reinforces antiblackness, even inadvertently. We must face the legacy of oppression head on and be willing to commit to anti-racism as more than idea; as action.

Humanizing Pedagogy or Education for Black Humanity

Finally, this study also reveals that teachers who articulated knowledge of their own racial bias and actively worked to address that bias in their teaching, consistently showed anti-racist practices in their classroom. The work of the Robinson teacher collaborative simultaneously reveals the power of unexamined antiblackness and the promise of addressing antiblackness to create humanizing educational spaces for Black students. The findings of this study reinforce the all-encompassing nature of race and racism, across teacher identity, and suggest that humanizing pedagogy has powerful implications for Black students' liberatory educational experiences. None of the six teacher participants in this study identified as Black and five of them taught Black students. Both white and Latinx teachers expressed desire and intentions for explicitly anti-racist pedagogy in their classrooms, but also did not believe that they held racial bias toward students. Two teachers, one who self-identified as "Brown" and another who identified as Latinx, explored their recognition of racial bias and the process of taking that into account in their teaching. These two teachers successfully created humanizing spaces for Black students by focusing on processes of affirmation and support, even in challenging moments with students. These teachers help bring into focus considerations for Black liberatory education, such as the idea of Black sovereign spaces, where Black teachers and students co-create humanizing, affirming learning communities (ross, 2016). This project adds to that conversation by showing that, just as antiblackness can be practiced by non-Black teachers of color, so can active, humanizing, anti-racist support of Black students. In extension, more active efforts to identify and explore the role of racial bias in conjunction with ideas about racism and race equity, may lead to more humanizing spaces for Black students. In a professional field

that continues to be dominated by white and increasing numbers of non-Black teachers of color, the emphasis on deconstructing antiblackness in the interpersonal aspects of the classroom context remains critically salient and, as this study demonstrates, ever more possible.

I believe this research demonstrates that there are two major pathways through which we can actively deconstruct antiblackness in teacher pedagogy and practice. The first is through what Brown (2012) calls “a humanizing critical approach to sociocultural knowledge” for teacher education (p. 4). Institutional antiblackness is reinforced by collective racial ignorance and “dysinformational [...] dominant sociocultural knowledge about Black students in schools” (Brown, 2012, p. 4). Teacher education must play an active role in humanizing Black students, not reinforcing deficit narratives. When teacher educators gloss over the radical sociopolitical foundation of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy, they miss opportunities to uproot antiblackness. Colorblind frameworks routinely show up in pre-service teachers’ approach to pedagogy, even in racially diverse school contexts (Bery, 2014; Milner, 2006; Ullucci & Battey, 2011; Watson et al, 2006). Critical frameworks and knowledge are necessary to upend race-gutted approaches to teacher education and to interrogate current approaches to education for social justice (Dyches & Boyd, 2018; Leland & Murtadha, 2011; Liu & Ball, 2019). Teacher education must contend with antiblackness in order to prepare teachers for radical solidarity in their work (Mayorga & Picower, 2018). Centering antiblackness in teacher education can impact the way that teachers see and respond to Black students, and change students’ experiences of antiblackness in schools (Coles & Powell, 2020). Teacher education has to be actively antiracist (Kendi, 2019), to prepare anti-racist teachers.

Secondly, practicing teachers hold immense power to reveal and uproot antiblackness

through collaborative research. This project was not about catching teachers being racist in the classroom. With humanizing pedagogy at its core, this project sought to engage teachers through humanizing collective and self-exploration of race and teacher practice. In *Teaching to Transgress*, Hooks (1994) writes, “Seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the livelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community” (8). When I was in community with the Robinson teachers, their collective exploration of racial ideas, beliefs, and classroom practice allowed them to interrogate systemic inequalities as a group. The competition that made solidarity difficult did not go unidentified, but the collective effort moved them through that barrier, rather than upholding it. The liberatory power of education for Black people is bound, inextricably, to teachers’ commitment to humanizing pedagogy. Collective efforts to explore implicit antiblackness in teachers’ work are critical to the creation of educational spaces that allow Black people to live in their full humanity. Without a commitment to Black humanity, first, we are forever limited in our capacity to be free.

Limitations

This study was limited by a few structural barriers that made collaborative inquiry of racial inequalities a challenge. First, school districts were hesitant to sign on for a research study that asked teachers to interrogate racial bias in their own teaching practice. By 2018, when I first began seeking research sites, school districts throughout the Midwest were scrambling to get on the “equity” bandwagon. Many school district leaders were beginning to recognize that equity was necessary to increase educational opportunities for students of color, not just access, and to close racial achievement gaps, not just make progress. With increasing racial segregation and decreasing success for low-income students of color, districts were looking for new strategies for

“racial equity” (Noguera, Pierce & Ahrm, 2015; Orfield, Siegel-Hawley, Kucsera, 2014; Frankenburg, Siegal-Hawley & Wang, 2011). However, I was rejected by large urban districts that were looking to do research for racial equity in-house, rather than via university-backed, doctoral student-led research study.

My second limitation concerns the generalizability of case study research. This aspect of my study repeatedly emerged in the form of feedback from district research review boards that were concerned about generalizability of a study that was small in scope and size. Sociological research values generalizability and it is often limited in case study designs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, case studies thrive on the “force of a single example,” and the power that “narrative” gives to explorations of human phenomena (Merriam, 2009, p. 53). My project was intentionally designed as a site-based, teacher research collaborative that would engage a community of teachers at one school in examination of their own practice. The results of a study with a sample size of six teachers are not generalizable, in the quantitative sense of the term. However, qualitative collaborative approaches allow for the rich inquiry necessary to a study of the social world. Sustainable solutions to systemic inequities require sustainable research design. My intention for this study was not to scale up this kind of inquiry over time, but rather to create a foundation for collaborative study that can be continued by teachers and school communities in perpetuity. The Robinson teacher collaborative serves as a seed for continued efforts, across the district, state, and region, to examine antiblackness as it manifests in varied educational contexts.

A third limitation is connected to the challenges of critical collaborative inquiry in the larger context of teaching and learning. Robinson’s school district, as well as the other districts I approached, were concerned with the collaborative model’s potential to disrupt instructional

hours. As such, what began as a study design that called for a more ethnographic approach to inquiry was scaled down to accommodate the concerns of school districts. In order to collect rich classroom data, I was looking to observe classrooms weekly, but ended up being able to observe each teacher quarterly. This was supplemented by two interviews and a group study session. However, I believe that more opportunities for data collection would have ensured increasingly authentic observations of teacher behavior and interaction with students over time.

Fourth, a key limitation is a concern for measurement of antiblackness in relation to implicit bias. As previously discussed, the IAT has been used as the principal tool for measuring implicit bias. This study sought to bring inquiry about implicit bias into the field, in the tradition of sociological inquiry. True to the nature of implicit social cognition, this study connected teachers' articulated ideas and beliefs about race with their behavior toward and interaction with students in the classroom, thereby revealing implicit ideas and beliefs that informed their actions. I recognize that, from an implicit social cognition perspective, this design is imperfect. The messiness of the social world, exemplified by the K-5 classroom, make measurement of implicit bias more difficult in the field. However, the aim of this design was not to pinpoint each teachers' specific implicit biases. But, rather, to begin a dialogue and a line of inquiry concerning the manifestation of teachers' racial ideas and beliefs in their work with students.

Finally, the key voices missing from this project are those of students. While this is a project specifically focused on teachers' ideas, beliefs, and behaviors, the experience of students is an integral indicator of how intent matches with impact. I developed a schema to analyze teacher behavior that accounted for actions that were affirmative, corrective, disciplinary, or negligent. This schema focused on my perception of impact on students, but did not integrate

students' ideas, experiences, or feedback. A clear extension and complement to the current study would integrate the perspective of students as key stakeholders in processes of teaching and learning. In order for humanizing pedagogy to be successful, we must understand whether students feel fully human in the classroom.

Conclusion

I began this study in search of understanding. My personal and professional experiences in schools helped me know that my own humanity had been protected and preserved by teachers and colleagues who thought I was white or believed I was white enough to earn white privilege. This was a source of shame and resentment in me for a long time. I was sure of who I was as a Black woman but was increasingly less sure about the role I could play in work for Black humanity when my own humanity was routinely unquestioned. I recognized that it was a privilege to have this problem. It would, I imagine, have been worse to be questioned, contested, refused, and dehumanized at every turn.

I once intimated to a friend that it made my stomach churn when I realized that white colleagues would talk to me about race because I looked white. They knew I was Black, but it seemed that the blond hair and blue eyes were like a cloak. It made me white enough to tell them they were racist, and for them to hear it. At an academic conference, another Black woman academic told me that it was a superpower, this cloak of invisibility. I didn't even have to lie about who I was because people saw what they wanted to see. They would hear what they wanted to hear.

At the root of my conviction to make this a critical collaborative case study was the knowledge that I have no control over the optics. Whiteness is a monster I want no part of but

my skin makes it part of who I am. I knew that the most meaningful way to understand teachers' ideas and beliefs about race was to talk to them. Additionally, I knew that I would need to watch them teach in order to see if what they thought they believed matched up with how they treated students. Finally, I knew that I would need to talk to them again and, more importantly, I knew that my ascribed whiteness would allow me privilege in those conversations, even if I didn't want it.

It is perhaps because of my white privilege, because my right to and quest for freedom through education was uncontested, that I have always been unwavering in my commitment to our collective freedom. The power of "keep your eyes on the prize," is in its collective power. You keep your eyes on the prize, but your hands extended. You keep your eyes on the prize, so that your legs and feet and back can carry everyone with you. Any privilege that is mine, becomes ours. That is the only way we get the prize.

I just want to fight antiblackness until I die. Working with Robinson teachers reminded me that interracial collaborative efforts can be vehicles for antiracist work. In my work with white, Brown, and Latinx teachers, I understood more about the value of centering Black humanity in work with students. This study helped to bridge gaps in our understanding of the ways in which institutional and implicit antiblackness work to undermine desires for racial equity in educational spaces. This study also reaffirmed the power of creating educational spaces that center Black humanity by actively working against implicit antiblackness. These teachers helped me understand that ideas and beliefs will always be insufficient to solve racial inequalities. Action is necessary to work against antiblackness and to work for education that values the lives, experiences, and humanity of Black students.

APPENDIX A
TEACHER RECRUITMENT LETTER

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION
PROJECT TITLE: Humanity in the Classroom

RESEARCHER INFORMATION

My name is Briellen Griffin and I am a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago. My professional background is in youth development and school social work. Aside from my current graduate studies, I hold a Master of Social Work and a B.A. in English Language and Literature.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project is a classroom-based case study about race and humanity in teaching. More specifically, this project is focused on developing a deeper understanding of the role that race plays in teacher-student relationships. I am interested in understanding how teachers think about race, and how these ideas influence their teaching and relationship building in the classroom. I am particularly interested in how teachers affirm the humanity of their students in the current social climate. Most importantly, I want to work *with* teachers individually and as a collective, as we make meaning of patterns in pedagogy and practice.

RESEARCHER ROLE

I will be observing classrooms and interviewing teacher participants during the 2018-2019 school year.

PARTICIPANT COLLABORATION

As a critical collaborative case study, this is a successful project when teacher participants are active collaborators. Along with other teachers in your school, you will become part of an in-school research collaborative, through which you will have the opportunity to write, think, and talk about your work with your peer teachers. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Allow the researcher to conduct four (4) observations in your classroom throughout the 2018-2019 school year.
- Write one (1) Teaching Statement about your teaching philosophy, at the beginning of the study, and one (1) Reflection Statement about your experience in the research study, at the end of the study.
- Participate in two (2) interviews with the researcher, lasting approximately sixty (60) minutes. The researcher will ask your permission to be audio recorded, but recording is not mandatory.
- Participate in two (2) focus groups with other teacher participants in your school during the 2018-2019 school year. Participation in the focus group is optional.

All information that you share, including your name and school, will be completely confidential.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are interested in having a more in-depth conversation about my research, please feel free to contact me via phone or email, and I would be happy to talk further with you.

Researcher

Briellen (Brie) Griffin
Phone: (651) 263-0010
Email: bgriffin3@luc.edu

Faculty Sponsor

Kate Phillippo
Email: kphillippo@luc.edu

APPENDIX B
TEACHER INTEREST FORM

PROJECT TITLE: Humanity in the Classroom

Teacher Interest Form

School Site: _____

Teacher Name: _____

Grade Level: _____

Preferred Contact Information: _____

Race (please indicate your racial identity): _____

Researcher

Briellen (Brie) Griffin

Phone: (651) 263-0010

Email: bgriffin3@luc.edu

Faculty Sponsor

Kate Phillippo

Email: kphillippo@luc.edu

APPENDIX C
TEACHING STATEMENT

Teaching Statement

Please write approximately 200-500 words concerning the following question: what is your teaching philosophy?

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 1

Teaching Background

Tell me about your road to becoming a teacher at ABC school.

How long have you been teaching at ABC school?

What are the biggest challenges about teaching at ABC school?

Teacher Education

I would like to ask a few questions about your teacher education program, to understand more about how your education prepared you to work in a diverse school.

What kind of teacher preparation program did you attend?

How did your program engage race in the coursework?

Were you able to take any courses that specifically focused on race and pedagogy?

Teaching Statement Follow-up

Thank you for writing a teaching statement. It gave me an opportunity to learn about how you approach your work as a teacher. I'd like to ask a few follow-up questions to your statement.

(Questions about teaching statements will be derived from the statements. Questions will focus on clarifying teacher's self-stated pedagogical approaches and inclusion or omission of race-related terminology, such as *diversity*, *inclusion*, and *culture*.)

Race & Pedagogy

Since this research is about race and pedagogy, I am curious if you have thought about how race intersects with teaching? In what way? (Conversely, why not?)

Do think race impacts your interactions with students?

Teacher-Student Relationships

How do you connect with your students?

Are there qualities in students that make bonding easier? More difficult?

How would you describe an ideal relationship with a student?

How do you know if you have a good relationship with a student?

Are there any barriers to building relationships with students?

Do you think racial identity plays a role in your connection with students?

Bias

As a researcher, I often think about how bias has the potential to impact my work. Do you ever think about your own biases in the context of your work?

Can you recall a time when you encountered your own biases while working with a student?

Do you take any active measures to mitigate or minimize bias in your teaching?

Research Questions

Do you have any questions or concerns about the research process?

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research.

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL 2

Before we begin, I just want to remind you that any identifying information that you share about yourself or students, including your name or school, is completely confidential. If you discuss specific names of staff or students in response to these questions, each will be given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. I want to encourage you to share your thoughts, beliefs, and ideas about race and teaching.

Mid-Semester Check In

How is the semester going so far?

What are your biggest challenges this year?

Observations

I have had the opportunity to observe your class a few times so far this year. Do you have any initial feedback about the observations?

During one of my observations, I noticed an interaction between you and one of your students. (Details of observation will be inserted into the question). That interaction stuck out to me because it seemed uncharacteristic of your interactions with students in general. Do you recall this interaction?

Was this characteristic of your interaction with this student?

How would you describe your relationship with this student?

Are there challenges to working with this student? Can you describe them?

Pedagogy & Relationships

Observing your class reminded me of something you said about your approach to teaching. (Quote excerpt from *Teaching Statement* or *Interview 1*). Do you ever find tension between your teaching philosophy and teaching as a practice?

How does your pedagogical approach help you build relationships with your students?

Is there a particular student(s) with whom you have built a strong relationship? Why have you connected with that student?

Student Racial Identity

During our last interview, we talked about the intersections of race and teaching. Today, I want to ask you a few questions about student racial identity and teaching, with a particular focus on Black students.

What does it mean to be a teacher of Black students?

Do you think that Black students encounter challenges to equal education in the classroom? How do you counteract that?

Does a students' racial identity influence how you build relationships with them? How?

Prompt 1: Please introduce yourselves by sharing your name and the grade you teach.

Prompt 2: I have copies of your *Teaching Statements*. Please take a moment to re-read yours.

Prompt 3: How does your *Teaching Statement* inform your work in this new school year, with a new group of students?

Prompt 4: What are your expectations of this research experience?

Prompt 5: Do you have any questions or concerns about the research project or your participation?

APPENDIX F
GROUP STUDY PROTOCOL

Prompt 1: Please introduce yourselves by sharing your name and the grade you teach.

Prompt 2: I have copies of your *Teaching Statements*. Please take a moment to re-read yours.

Prompt 3: How does your *Teaching Statement* inform your work in this new school year, with a new group of students?

Prompt 4: What are your expectations of this research experience?

Prompt 5: Do you have any questions or concerns about the research project or your participation?

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VITA

Dr. Griffin is a scholar-practitioner in teacher education with a focus on creating liberating, humanizing spaces for BIPOC teachers and BIPOC students in every classroom. She has authored multiple peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and non-academic pieces, mostly in partnership with other committed educators. Dr. Griffin had the opportunity to serve as an editor for the *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* and she is an active member of multiple education and sociological research organizations, including the American Educational Research Association, Sociology of Education Association, Midwest Sociological Society, and the National Council of Black Studies.

Dr. Griffin is currently the Director of Professional Development for Grow Your Own Illinois, a state-legislated organization that recruits and supports BIPOC teacher candidates in public schools statewide. Before beginning her graduate work, Dr. Griffin was an elementary school social worker. Dr. Griffin believes in community partnerships for equity in public schools. She has served as an elected member of the Local School Council at Swift Elementary for Chicago Public Schools and is currently on the Community Committee for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Francis W. Parker School in Chicago.

Dr. Griffin completed her doctoral work in Cultural & Educational Policy Studies at Loyola University Chicago, where she was also an Arthur J. Schmitt Dissertation Fellow in Leadership and Service, and a recipient of the President's Medallion. Dr. Griffin received her BA and MSW from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.