PROGRESS IN THE TIME OF M.A.G.A.: NEGOTIATING NARRATIVES ABOUT RACE AND RACISM IN TWO URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

By

Eliana Altagracia Castro

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment for the requirements
for the degree of

Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education—Doctor of Philosophy

2020

ABSTRACT

PROGRESS IN THE TIME OF M.A.G.A.: NEGOTIATING NARRATIVES ABOUT RACE AND RACISM IN TWO URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

By

Eliana Altagracia Castro

This dissertation links theories of classroom pedagogy, sociocultural learning and racial identity formation, and racial literacy to analyze how a history teacher engaged students with issues of race and racism, and how students constructed meaning about historical and contemporary race and racism in the United States. Three related manuscripts draw on two empirical studies to examine (1) how a Black teacher leveraged cultural asset pedagogies to encourage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students to explore historical topics related to their racial/ethnic identities; (2) how a Black student constructed a historical narrative, potentially as a way to negotiate his own racialized identities; and (3) how five youth (mostly BIPOC) sustained a racially literate dialogue about the nature of race and racism in the past and present. Findings point to (1) the challenges of enacting cultural asset pedagogies toward racial consciousness while also honoring students' agency; (2) the persistence of rigidly racialized narratives and their effect on students' ability to negotiate intersectional racialized identities; and (3) the potential for youth to develop racial literacy skills that advance understandings of race and racism beyond the interpersonal to the structural/institutional level. These analyses suggest P-12—in this instance, secondary—educators and students require sustained support and guidance engaging in racial analysis. Each manuscript considers how researchers, teacher educators, and P-12 educators can trouble curricula to disrupt the silence on race and racism and to facilitate students' racial identity formation, racial literacy development, and historical content knowledge.

To my Mamá, Doña Eduviges Bermúdez de Castro. Thank you for embodying wisdom, connecting me to the past, and modeling love without limits for so many generations.

To my daughter, Adelaide Grace Galloway. May you always know in your heart who you are, live your truth boldly, and never cease to thirst for understanding of yourself and others.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would have been impossible without all the students, teachers, and administrators involved in the studies that constituted this project. I was humbled by your hospitality and candor. Many moments we spent together could have been dissertations unto themselves, and I hope I can share them in the future. I pray this dissertation does you justice.

I am eternally grateful to the City of Lawrence, a place I have called home since arriving in this country. I owe an immeasurable debt to my former teachers, students, parents, and colleagues at Lawrence High School. You taught me so much about myself and were gracious when I floundered. The youth of the city have always given me hope, and I can wish nothing more beautiful for future teachers than a career that both challenges and fulfills like mine did.

Many thanks to everyone who sowed the seed of doctoral study in my head or provided assistance as I applied to programs. From the Institute for the Recruitment of Teachers to faculty at my beloved Brown University, I am fortunate to have your support at every step of the way.

I have amassed a diverse and widespread community of other mothers and fictive kin at Michigan State. As an Afro-Latina, both the Black and Latinx presence were major components of my surviving and thriving. I may not have ended up at MSU had it not been for Drs. Marini Lee, Sandra Crespo, Sonya Gunnings-Moton, Dorinda Carter Andrews (DCA), Terry Flennaugh, Django Paris, and Chezare Warren. Our exchanges when I was still a prospective student were instrumental in my decision. Adrianna Crossing, Alounso Gilzene, and Dr. Courtney Mauldin—you all were my first friends at MSU and remained steadfast supports. Stephanie Aguilar-Smith, Dr. Molade Osibodu, and Dr. Missy Cosby—I am so thankful that we met early on and had time to make fond memories. The Rueda Latin@ space carved out by Drs. Bernadette Castillo, Dali

Martinez, and others has sustained Latinx and other BIPOC graduate students beyond the College of Education, leaving a remarkable legacy. I'm grateful for the unflagging devotion of colegas like Drs. Gerardo Aponte-Safe and Elizabeth Gil, who check on me regularly from afar. The Chicanx/Latinx Studies Program also reinvigorated me, fed me (literally and figuratively), and hooked it up with information and other resources. Drs. Delia Fernández, Yomaira Figueroa Vásquez, and Maribel Santiago—you inspire me to hold onto my raíces as I grow stronger and reach higher, and you showed me how that looked for you while encouraging me to carve out my own path. It was an honor to witness Black Girl Magic when I presented and/or published with Drs. Tashal Brown, Effat Id-Deen, Cierra Presberry, and Kayon Hall, under the tutelage of Drs. Carter Andrews and Venzant Chambers. I look forward to future collaborations. The mentorship I received allowed me to share my process—messy and imperfect as it was—with sisters coming up behind me, including Jasmin Patrón, Dianey Leal, Amanda Flores, Olivia Furman, Christa Robinson, Renee Wilmot, and Esther Ayers. I know you will all continue lifting as you climb.

Navigating the College of Education and this predominantly white institution was smoother and far more enjoyable thanks to other individuals who were in my corner. I was sharpened by the intellect and moved by the generosity of time of so many individuals. Terry Edwards, you are a unique resource and a beautiful soul; the Department of Teacher Education is a more inviting place because of you. Dr. Anne-Lise Halvorsen, I appreciate finding someone else who laughs as easily and heartily as I do. Thank you for the quality time we spent in "Quant Appreciation" class, driving to Bloomington, on our Detroit/Dearborn field trip, on the elementary social studies search committee, and at conferences. Dr. Matthew Deroo, I am heartened by the enthusiasm with which you connected with people while at MSU, even after

graduating; thank you for lending a critical eye on the first draft of Article Three. Dr. Amanda McGowan, our trips to Europe together qualify you as my second-favorite travel buddy. Now we know they don't speak French in *that* part of Belgium (facepalm)! Your work ethic astounds me.

I am blessed to belong to several beautiful friend groups. To the Sunday Night Crew—Drs. Benjamin and Hannah Espinoza, Dave and Dr. Elise Dixon, and Dr. Kate Firestone—our potlucks were next-level and sacred on our family calendar; they forced me to slow down to enjoy laughter and togetherness. To my CITE writing partners, Christina Ponzio and Dr. Ashley Moore, I cannot stress enough how much of my emotional and academic development evolved from our weekly conversations over the past four years. We have been through more together than I ever thought a "writing group" was intended for, but I can think of no other way I would have rather stumbled through the rocky parts of this road.

Outside of MSU, I thrived through the encouragement of a great many others across the country: the 2019 cohort of Graduate Student and Faculty Fellows in the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, the Graduate Student Executive Committee of AERA Division G, and the CUFA Graduate Forum and Scholars of Color Forum. Several academics and activists have compelled me to ask the questions that matter to me and that can impact the communities about which I care so deeply. I value the brotherhood of Dr. Christopher Busey, the sole scholar centering Afro-Latinidad in social studies when I entered the field. Thank you for taking time to listen, advise, brainstorm, read drafts, offer feedback and models, share literature, and pave the way through your own scholarship. To Dr. LaGarrett King, I look forward to many years of your thought-provoking publications and of you pulling me aside to counsel me and bring me into conversation with the brilliant minds in your networks. A mi querida Lorena

Germán—I have been blessed by your friendship this past decade, and I look forward to observing how you lead teachers, students, family, and community of faith to disrupt injustice in classrooms. To Helen Lee, though we didn't end up at MSU together, our bond crosses many state lines and goes beyond grad school, into marriage and motherhood. I'm honored to share this journey with you.

To my rockstar committee (in alphabetical order)—Drs. Dorinda Carter Andrews, Glenn Chambers, Alyssa Dunn, Linda Levstik, and Maribel Santiago—thank you so much for accepting the invitation to guide me through the single greatest milestone of this journey to the PhD. Every one of you has left an indelible mark on your respective fields, and I feel incredibly privileged that you have dedicated so much time to reading my work, thinking critically about my ideas, and providing constructive and insightful feedback. I always looked forward to our time together because I knew our discussion would leave me feeling both affirmed and motivated to go one step further in my work. Glenn, my interest in your research is deeply personal, and I appreciate your joining this team even as my research took me in a different direction from what we had originally discussed. Alyssa, thank you for spending the better part of *two* summers abroad with me and for coaching me on how to survive campus visits with early pregnancy symptoms. Linda, you came out of retirement to be on this committee because you're still so invested in the future of social studies education, and I do not take that lightly. To my co-chairs, both of you have been major influences in my life since I stepped foot on the MSU campus, and I hope that we continue celebrating one another's wins for the rest of our careers and lives. I have enjoyed your company, your counsel, and your countless hours of one-on-one support without knowing how to properly thank you. DCA, the way you maneuver your roles as a Black mother-

scholar, wife, community advocate, minister, and organizational leader is no small feat, but they are all clearly integral parts of who you are. Maribel, even before you officially became my advisor, you pushed me in everything from my coursework and teaching practice to research logistics, scholarly writing, time management, and navigating institutional babosadas. Thank you for being unapologetically straightforward, apprenticing me into the professoriate, and setting me up to succeed.

I also want to thank the families in my life. I appreciate the Jason family—Matt, Corie, and the boys—for providing a home-away-from-home for our beloved Toby (R.I.P.), and then a home for James and me (and Taffy) while you lived abroad. A Lupita Borbón Yocupicio, Amador Aldama, y los muchachos—gracias por ser los mejores vecinos del mundo y nuestros más preciados amigos en Lansing. To Erik and Monique Bailey, thank you for your tender, loving care. You made our visits home possible by opening up your home for our extended stays and making us feel completely at ease there. To Sandy, Scott, Crystal, Andy, Nicholas, Michael, and Krystal—thank you from the bottom of my heart for bringing me into your fold and for backing James's decision to leave home to accompany me to Michigan. I have seen few families function like yours does, and I'm lucky to join as a later-in-life addition. Spending every birthday and holiday with the extended Berube families warms my heart and keeps me on my toes. I can't wait to raise our little plátano among this wild bunch!

A mi primera familia, mi sangre—los Castro. Los quiero con todo mi corazón, y espero siempre poder hacerlos sentir orgullosos de mis logros, los cuales también son suyos, y de quien soy fuera de mi carrera. Gracias por su apoyo incondicional y sus oraciones. Mami, nunca sabré lo que usted tuvo que sacrificar para venir a este país y solo vernos un par de veces al año.

Sus esfuerzos para brindarnos las oportunidades de vivir aquí no fueron en vano. Siempre haré todo lo que esté a mi alcance para que podamos disfrutar juntos los frutos de ese y todo su empeño. Adriana, thanks for being my first and oldest friend, for balancing out my exuberant personality, and for all the stuff I stole and borrowed from when we were younger. Jeffrey, thank you for being my first student at home. You never cease to amaze me with all the things you teach yourself and how committed you are when you set your mind to something. Felix, I'm proud of you for chasing your dreams. Since the moment I first held you in my arms, I have wanted nothing more than to help you learn and grow in whatever direction you chose. I love you all!

To James, my partner in absolutely everything, how could I possibly fit on this page all the ways I love you? You have stepped in and showed up for me unconditionally, often before even *I* knew what I needed. Your unfailing devotion in my highest of highs and lowest of lows did not go unnoticed by anyone, even though in your sincerity and modesty, you never made a show of how perfect you are for me. Thank you for seeing me through my struggles without enabling me and for putting a smile on my face *every single day* (even making me laugh to the point of an asthma attack). These past five years with you are proof that love really is friendship set to music. You were the perfect companion for the final stretch of this Ph.D., when I found myself stuck at home during a global pandemic, balancing the excitement and anxieties of pregnancy, and trying to will myself to finish this dissertation in the midst of constant reminders of the vile racism that exists in the world. I am in awe of the fact that over the course of four days we got married, I defended this dissertation, and Adelaide was born. If I ever had any doubt that I want to spend the rest of my life with you, they have vanished without a trace.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

FOREWORD

It is by no means an overstatement that racism is a trademark of the United States, a cornerstone of every major institution that comprises this nation-state. Chattel slavery forced African bodies to work the Indigenous lands stolen through settler colonialism, and the wealth generated financed the colonization of Mexican territories and eventually U.S. imperialism on other shores (Dunbar-Ortíz, 2014; Kendi, 2017; Loewen, 2008; Takaki, 2008; Zinn, 2003. This growing empire also drew millions of migrants, most of whom were exploited and excluded in some of the most dehumanizing ways possible (González, 2001; Takaki, 1998). At no point along this timeline did these realities completely vanish. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have always sought to expose and dismantle all forms of racism and white supremacy.

Activists in the U.S. have staged resistance for hundreds of years, with varying results, and the present moment is no different. Children and youth living in the year 2020 will almost inevitably be exposed to the public outcry for justice proclaimed by BIPOC communities and their white accomplices and co-conspirators. P-12 education has a solemn duty to lift up BIPOC's experiences of suffering and survivance to help students put current events—including their own experiences—into context and awaken a social justice orientation among them.

Though federal, state, and local policy are implicated in the consciousness-raising work mentioned above, this dissertation is concerned with the granular, classroom- and individual-level processes of teaching and learning about race and racism. It focuses on the strengths, needs, and opportunities that teachers and students alike possess in the fight against racial injustice. More specifically, it centers the work and words of a BIPOC teacher and BIPOC students as they bring their lived experiences and embodied knowledges to bear in school spaces, whether through history/social studies curriculum and instruction or through less formal avenues.

In the pages that ensue, you will meet a Black teacher (Manuscript One), a Black student in his class (Manuscript Two), and a BIPOC-majority focus group (Manuscript Three) at another school. The papers center teacher attempts to foreground race and racism; students' historical narrative construction, youth racial/ethnic identity negotiation and reframing; and their retellings of their lived experiences to reconcile them with ideas about race and/or racism.

These articles are loosely joined by a geographical thread; Manuscripts One and Two unfolded from data generated in the same urban high school history classroom, while Manuscript Three introduces students from a nearby school district. I entered into conversation with the teacher, Mr. Davidson, and his students through history/social studies, but our exploration was not restricted to disciplinary or academic learning. When Mr. Davidson left the classroom to pursue a district leadership role, I seized the opportunity to expand my inquiry to another local community. However, these papers' relevance to one another also lies in more abstract concepts. Their juxtaposition is not comparative, but intended to examine teaching and learning about race and racism from various perspectives—those of an educator, a student working independently, and a group of youth in dialogue.

Manuscript One ("I Don't Want to Impose That On Them") highlights Mr. Davidson, a novice educator determined to hearten his BIPOC students to capitalize on a course assignment to delve into the histories of the respective racial/ethnic groups with which they identify. He does so while remaining mindful not to—in his words—"impose" on them the challenges of topics as complex as race, racism, and white supremacy. This case study also poses questions about culturally *responsive* teaching, culturally *relevant* pedagogy, and culturally *sustaining* pedagogy, and it analyzes the extent to which they were simultaneously evident in Mr. Davidson's practice.

Manuscript Two ("How Every Black Man Should Be") spotlights Kareem, an 11th-grade student in Mr. Davidson's class who constructed a compelling historical narrative about NBA legend Bill Russell and his contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. In the process, Kareem presented Russell as a paragon of Blackness and manhood—two of Kareem's identities—and civil rights leadership. However, Kareem had other racialized identities that he and Russell do not share, including his Muslimhood. I explore the possibility that the cultural tools available to Kareem did not equip him with a Black Muslim man schema to reimagine Black Muslim men in U.S. history as anything other than his notion of Malcolm X—"aggressive," as Kareem put it.

Manuscript Three considers a focus group session in which five 10th-graders— four of them BIPOC—discuss what racism is, their own or others' experiences with it, whether it is permanent or can be eliminated, and what it would require for racism to meet a definitive end. This student-led conversation underscores their sophisticated ideas about race and racism and their existing racial literacy skills, even as it also uncovers the need for the youth to better grapple with racism as structural and institutional, not only interpersonal or individual.

Together, these three manuscripts address distinct dynamics about the teaching and learning of race and racism that can inform curriculum and instruction research, teacher education, and P-12 history/social studies education. In other words, there are stark differences between how a teacher nudges students to explore their racial/ethnic identities, how one of those students works out the complexities of his intersectionally racialized identities, and how a group of peers talk to one another about race and racism. All of them are worth investigating. Each manuscript also offers interpretations of BIPOC teacher and student thinking that highlight their admirable capacity for lay theorizing and the significance of their racialized identities for their day-to-day experiences in formal learning spaces, with implications for life beyond school walls.

The dissertation as a whole is titled "Progress in the Time of M.A.G.A" for two reasons. For one, there was a persistent tendency among the young people I encountered to fit a linear progress narrative arc onto their explanations of race/racism and their retellings of racialized narratives. When this pattern resulted in the flattening of issues that are multidimensional, apparent progress became almost as pernicious as the racist calls to "Make America Great Again." I borrow from the novel *El amor en los tiempos del cólera/Love in the Time of Cholera* (García Márquez, 1985) to juxtapose the illusion of racial progress with the nostalgia of the racist and xenophobic shibboleth used by the conservative right wing of current U.S. politics. However, as the project evolved, I was also reminded that youth care deeply about matters of injustice and that they are convicted about the need and potential for change, each in their own way. Even when they grappled with the cognitive dissonance of seeing a way out for a country seemingly enveloped in confusion and reliving painful patterns, in the end they were optimistic and confident. In this alternative rendering of the project's title, then, there is progress indeed. That progress lies within children, teenagers, and young adults. It can persevere—despite the *Geist* behind the M.A.G.A. rallying cry—if research, theory, and practice hold space for them.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Dunbar-Ortíz, R. (2014). *An Indigenous peoples' history of the United States* (Vol. 3). Beacon Press.

García Márquez, G. (1985). *El amor en los tiempos del cólera.* Vintage Español.

González, J. (2001). *Harvest of empire: A history of Latinos in America*. Penguin Group.

Kendi, I. X. (2017). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. Random House.

Loewen, J. W. (2008). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong*. The New Press.

Takaki, R. (1998). *Strangers from a different shore: A history of Asian Americans* (updated and revised edition). University of California Press.

Takaki, R. (2008). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America* (revised edition). Back Bay Books.

Zinn, H. (2003). *A people's history of the United States.* Harper Perennial.

MANUSCRIPT ONE: "I DON'T WANT TO IMPOSE THAT ON THEM": TENSIONS OF PRACTICE IN A BLACK TEACHER'S SECONDARY HISTORY CLASSROOM

Abstract

In this paper, I analyze the pedagogical practice of a Black history teacher (pseudonym Mr. Davidson). I ask (1) How did Mr. Davidson select historical content for instruction? (2) What instructional moves did he make to support students' understanding and exploration of race and/or racism? (3) How did he navigate students' reactions to his instruction and support? This case illustrates how even in a "best-case scenario"—wherein a BIPOC teacher intentionally created space for students to explore their racial/ethnic and other racialized identities—BIPOC students did not always engage race and/or racism when given the chance to do so. I analyze several tensions of practice, how Mr. Davidson navigated them, and his reflections on honoring students' agency while encouraging the development of their sociopolitical consciousness. I argue that he navigated these tensions by simultaneously implementing strategies consistent with culturally *responsive* teaching, culturally *relevant* pedagogy, and culturally *sustaining* pedagogy in different areas of his craft. In so doing, I consider potential challenges unique to a Black man in Mr. Davidson's circumstances. I also explore the questions of whether and to what extent these cultural asset pedagogical paradigms differ, given their varied usage in scholarship and in teacher preparation contexts. I conclude with some loving critiques of how cultural asset pedagogies are taken up and potential implications of this study for research and practice on teaching and learning about race/racism.

Keywords: culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, Black teacher, race, racism, secondary

In the United States, hardly a week ever passes in which news and social media are not inundated with details of some form of violence visited upon Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)[1] individuals and communities. In early 2020, there were countless instances of Black children and youth being forcefully restrained in schools and in their neighborhoods (e.g., Besanvalle, 2020), barred from sporting their natural hair (e.g., Griffith, 2020), and murdered by police officers or vigilantes (Bates, 2020; Fausset, 2020). Sovereign Indigenous nations continue to fight against the appropriation of their ancestral and contemporary lands for mining or other destructive capitalist projects while the disappearances of their women and girls go uninvestigated (Smith-Morris, 2020) and the novel coronavirus ravages reservations (Kristof, 2020). Along the U.S.-Mexico border, Latin American migrant children of all ages are separated from their families, confined to cages, deprived of basic hygiene and other facilities, and sexually abused (Gonzales, 2019), sometimes resulting in death (Pompa, 2019) while in the custody of Immigration & Customs Enforcement. When the COVID-19 outbreak became a global pandemic, misinformation and the intentional scapegoating of Chinese nationals erupted in a wave of assaults on Asian/Asian American people nationwide (Loffman, 2020). These incidents illustrate how anti-Blackness, settler colonialism, racist nativism (Huber et al., 2008), and xenophobia are alive and well. Young people are exposed to it and keenly aware of it.

Educators working with all grade levels and in every content area have a unique role to play in helping their students process the senseless violence of these and other ongoing issues. They can teach the children and youth before them to recognize these events as consequences of

[1] I employ the phrase Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) throughout the paper for two reasons: first, to dislodge the use of "people of color" as a comfortable catch-all term for naming the inequities that afflict *specific* racial/ethnic, particularly Black, communities. The second is to acknowledge that Indigenous can be a political identity beyond race, especially for sovereign nations within the territory known as the United States.

widespread racism and white[2] supremacy. They can also validate students' feelings of concern, fear, and confusion; teach their white students to identify their unmarked privilege and oppose everyday racism; and affirm BIPOC students by actively lifting up their diverse experiences, perspectives, and ways of being despite their erasure in most curriculum.

In this paper, I analyze the pedagogical practice of a Black[3] history teacher—Mr. Davidson[4]—in a multiethnic urban high school history classroom. I asked the following questions: (1) How did Mr. Davidson select historical content for instruction? (2) What instructional moves did he make to support students' understanding and exploration of race and/or racism? (3) How did he navigate students' reactions to his instruction and support?

This case illustrates how even in a "best-case scenario"—wherein a Black teacher intentionally created space for students to explore their racial/ethnic and other racialized identities—BIPOC students did not always engage race and/or racism[5] when given the chance to do so. Mr. Davidson made explicit and consistent efforts to validate, affirm, and sustain his BIPOC students' heritages, histories, and cultural practices. However, his push for them to interrogate the power structures that uphold the construction of race/racism and white supremacy was sometimes met with reticence. I analyze these tensions of practice, how Mr. Davidson navigated them, and his reflections on honoring students' agency while encouraging the development of their sociopolitical consciousness.

---

[2] While I capitalize words for racial, ethnic, and national identifiers (e.g., Black, Latinx, or Cuban), I do not capitalize the term white, as it does not denote a shared identity, culture (language, religion, etc.), or history.
[3] Throughout the paper I use the term *Black* for persons who identifies racially with the African Diaspora. I reserve the ethnic identifier *African American* specifically for individuals who self-identified as such or were classified that way on official reports. My intent is inclusion, not to homogenize Blackness or Black communities.
[4] The names of all people and places are pseudonyms.
[5] Throughout this manuscript I combine the words race and racism (as race/racism) because of how intimately the social construct and the enactment of prejudice and discrimination based on race are entwined, not to conflate them.

I weave together the scholarly threads that converge in this study by reviewing theoretical and empirical literature about cultural asset pedagogies, Black teachers, and targeted instruction about race/racism. By not separating theoretical and empirical work, I intentionally blur the divide between *theories* of teaching and learning, *research* on the same, and *practice* in P-12 settings. I then describe the methodological procedures I followed to glean an understanding of Mr. Davidson's instructional process. The findings section tells the story of Mr. Davidson through vignettes that exemplify three tensions of pedagogical practice. I argue that he navigated them by simultaneously implementing strategies consistent with culturally *responsive* teaching, culturally *relevant* pedagogy, and culturally *sustaining* pedagogy in different areas of his craft. I conclude with some loving critiques of how cultural asset pedagogies are taken up and potential implications of this study for research and practice on teaching and learning about race/racism.

Theoretical and Empirical Influences

This manuscript is primarily concerned with how a Black high school history teacher sought to cultivate a learning environment in which his BIPOC students could delve into issues of race/racism relevant to their own racialized identities. Given this focus, the relevant literature is that which considers 1) cultural asset pedagogical approaches; 2) Black teachers' praxis; and 3) P-12 instruction on race/racism, particularly in history/social studies education. At the time of writing, no empirical work existed that investigated the nexus of all three areas, but analyzing how BIPOC educators attend to the needs of their BIPOC students is indispensable during a moment of heightened attention on race/racism and white supremacy in the United States.

Cultural Asset Pedagogies

Education scholars have defined and refined several pedagogical approaches that seek to disrupt the deficit-oriented perspectives with which historically marginalized groups are framed

in research, theory, and practice. Among the most prominent and longstanding asset-based theories are *culturally responsive teaching* (Cazden & Leggett, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Gay, 2000) and *culturally relevant pedagogy* ([CRP], Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995).

Culturally responsive teaching. This paradigm dates back decades. Per Gay (2000):

> Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. (p. 249)

Its proponents envisaged it—then and now—as validating, affirming, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, and emancipatory (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive teachers are supportive and facilitative, using rituals and routines to promote cooperative learning, choice and authenticity, and a critical orientation. They empower students to seize the power of the personal as a legitimate source of knowledge (Gay, 2000).

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Rejecting the impetus to "fit" students into existing educational structures that reproduce inequity, Ladson-Billings (1995) proposed a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). She billed CRP as "a next step for positing effective pedagogical practice... a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities" (p. 469). CRP seeks to bolster students' academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical critique. While teachers can meet the core CRP criteria through a multitude of methods, they must share certain theoretical underpinnings regarding their conception of self and others, their conceptions of knowledge, and how they structure social

relationships. Ultimately, CRP is concerned with problematizing "the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483).

Culturally sustaining pedagogy. Acknowledging the challenges that previous formulations faced and seeking to complicate the purpose of schooling in a pluralistic society, scholars (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017) proposed a change in stance and terminology among these asset frameworks. The theory of culturally *sustaining* pedagogy (CSP) recognized how earlier resource pedagogies pioneered the endeavor of attending to students' academic, cultural, and sociopolitical realities in schooling. It also raised concerns about their underlying assumptions and implementation, including how the work done under the banner of CRP and the term "relevant" itself can, at times, fall short of Ladson-Billings's original goals. CSP thus advances a dynamic conception of transformative education that embraces shifting cultural ways of being and knowing, and it urges critical reflexivity. It frames culture as fluid, communities as whole (not pathological or broken), and cultural strengths as more than a means to achieve white middle-class norms. It resolves to help youth thrive beyond the white gaze (Morrison, 1998) to disrupt anti-Black, anti-Brown, anti-Indigenous, model minority mindsets, and other political projects of whiteness (Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017).

Contested convergence. None of these frameworks propose a proscribed set of specific strategies that constitute "doing it right," but authors in these traditions offer snapshots of what it may look like in some contexts. The interchangeable, disambiguated use of the terms 'responsive' and 'relevant' (and more recently 'relevant' and 'sustaining') may indicate a lack of clarity about whether and how to distinguish and enact these approaches. Gay (2000) states that,

> Although called by many different names, including culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive,

> *the ideas about why it is important* to make classroom instruction more consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students, a*nd how this can be done, are virtually identical.* (p. 29, italics added for emphasis)

By this reasoning, the rationale behind these pedagogies and the strategies through which teachers achieve them are not altogether distinct. Yet, other scholars have attempted to set the two frameworks apart. For instance, in their literature review, Aronson & Laughter (2016) make the distinction that culturally responsive teaching focuses on teachers' practice, while CRP takes up educators' posture and paradigm more broadly. But not everyone would fully endorse this compartmentalization. In formulating CRP, Ladson-Billings's 1994 book, *Dreamkeepers,* detailed the pedagogical strategies of eight exemplary teachers of African American students, and the accompanying 1995 article, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," outlined the underlying criteria and propositions that comprised said pedagogy. CRP thus leverages theory as a means for enhancing practice and vice versa.

In this paper, I do not assume a firm stance on whether these terms are interchangeable. Because these three paradigms—like any other—can and do shift, it is challenging to distinguish them in definitive ways. They have all been refined over time to address critiques and the shifting needs of education in the pluralistic context of education in the United States. My analysis of the data discussed in this manuscript functions on the premise that a single teacher can simultaneously espouse and embody specific components of the three pedagogies. I *am* therefore implying that there is considerable similarity among them and that one may be able to forego the presumption of mutual exclusivity between them.

Further, despite their invaluable contributions to the field, culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy have been misconstrued (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Royal & Gibson,

2017; Sleeter, 2012). Sleeter (2012) points to three potential reasons: "(a) a persistence of faulty and simplistic conceptions of what culturally responsive pedagogy is, (b) too little research connecting its use with student achievement, and (c) elite and white fear of losing national and global hegemony" (p. 568). Educators are especially prone to neglect the CRP mandate regarding sociopolitical consciousness (Howard, 2003; Young, 2010).

By addressing "culture" broadly, these cultural asset pedagogies can make connections across race, socioeconomic class, language, religion, national identity, immigrant and refugee experience, generational status, and other identities. CSP names these markers outright and embraces this ambiguity to expose intersecting forms of injustice. However, the term "culture" can obscure a focus on race when it is, in fact, precisely the topic at hand. Using *culture* as code for race can make it seem as though discussing race/racism is impolite or taboo, inhibiting the necessary and often uncomfortable dialogue required to expose and dismantle white supremacy.

Operationalizing cultural asset pedagogies. I leverage these three perspectives to examine how Mr. Davidson invited—but did not pressure—his BIPOC students to confront the nature of race/racism and its personal connection to their own identities. I focus on one aspect of each pedagogical orientation that was personified in his practice over the course of the study. This tactic is borne out of the interconnected quality of these constructs and can serve as evidence that an educator need not be confined to a single label of how they execute their craft, particularly as scholarship evolves and is "remixed" (Ladson-Billings, 2014) to accommodate a changing society. In my assessment, Mr. Davidson exhibited CSP in selecting curriculum content that circumvented the white gaze and prompted critical reflexivity, CRP in redirecting racialized historical narratives toward sociopolitical consciousness, and a culturally responsive approach to supporting students' choice of research topics for a major course assignment.

History/social studies scholars have explored how CRP may enhance teaching and learning about race/racism in P-12 spaces (Choi, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2001, 2003; Milner, 2014), and especially in the secondary classroom (Epstein et al., 2011; Martell, 2013, 2018). They have found that students respond positively to culturally relevant curriculum and instruction, even as the means for achieving an authentic culturally relevant practice differ widely across settings. One study (Martell, 2018) analyzed the beliefs and practices of three self-identified culturally relevant social studies teachers related to their teaching of U.S. history at a racially/ ethnically diverse urban high school. They exemplified CRP through either an *exchanging, discovering,* or *challenging* model, wherein exchanging connotes facilitating discussion to help students make sense of race/racism, discovering refers to exposing students to multiple perspectives of the past and present, and challenging means applying different analytical lenses for questioning the world. Martell's (2018) analysis thus underscores the multifaceted nature of culturally relevant pedagogy in action.

To date only one empirical study (Martell & Stevens, 2019) aims to consider what CSP looks like in a P-12 history/social studies setting. Similar to Martell (2018), this study examined the practices of ten self-identified culturally sustaining pedagogues and mapped them onto Martell's tripartite exchanging-discovering-challenging model. They found that, aside from subscribing to the tenets of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness, the teachers all shared two other characteristics: they centered culture and connected content to the students' local communities. Further, there were marked differences by school context and students' racial backgrounds. In the two predominantly white schools the teachers used cultural "mirrors" to help students understand their whiteness and white privilege, while in the two predominantly Black/Latinx schools the teachers used cultural "windows" to teach students

about how people in power (usually white people) frame and see the world. In both cases, the teachers effectively centered the white experience, somewhat contrary to CSP's intention to de-center the white gaze and undermine the political projects of whiteness (Paris & Alim, 2017). The remaining few schools were racially/ethnically diverse, and teachers sought to balance perspectives by integrating students' personal experiences and those of various groups.

The present study is about how a teacher, Mr. Davidson, endeavored to take up race/racism in his classroom to validate, affirm, and sustain the racial identities and histories of his BIPOC students. While he did not explicitly align *himself* with one particular cultural asset pedagogical orientation, I assert that he drew from three—culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally sustaining pedagogy—in his daily practice. Moreover, this case raises the question of whether these paradigms can be viewed as accessible and available in the interest of meeting the needs of students living in our increasingly pluralistic world.

Black Teachers

In the 2015-2016 school year, only 7% of P-12 teachers in U.S. public schools identified as Black, a slight decrease from 1999-2000, when Black teachers made up only 8% of U.S. public school teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). It has been decades since a robust corpus of research like that of Foster and Walker laid bare and celebrated the singular experiences of Black teachers (see Foster, 1990, 1991, 1993 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1997, for an extensive catalogue of work on effective Black teachers. For in-depth historical accounts of Black educators in the segregated South, refer to Walker, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2009). Far from delivering magic solutions, this work has nonetheless left an indelible mark on the field, but it cannot account for developments in the intervening years.

Recent scholarship is holding space for the perspectives and experiences of Black teachers, but research on Black teachers implementing cultural asset approaches or engaging students in race talk is scattered. Several recent studies have interrogated the role of Black teachers' relationships with Black students and communities (Milner & Howard, 2004) and reiterated the value of cultural matches. Others have directed their attention to instruction, as seen in the application of racial literacy principles (Allen, 2019) and culturally responsive practices (Milner, 2016). They have confirmed the value of educators' lived experiences on their teaching styles. Studies investigating race talk in the curriculum (Davis, 2007) have typically found that students are receptive to these experiences (A. F. Brown et al., 2017).

Conspicuously scarce are studies of Black *men* educating children about race/racism, particularly across racial/ethnic lines. Black men's relationships with children and youth of all races/ethnicities is significant. Historically, Black men have been maligned in U.S. society, with misperceptions of their physical size and strength racialized and embellished (Johnson & Wilson, 2019). The spike in highly-publicized killings of unarmed Black men and boys since 2012 has made Black men a more visibly targeted demographic. Lastly, harmful stereotypes about Black men as absent fathers or negative role models must be debunked by highlighting the stories of Black men who assume leadership roles of all kinds in their communities, including as educators. The present study seeks to spotlight the work of a Black man in an urban classroom with youth from his own community, but without co-signing notions of respectability or that Black men must "prove themselves" deserving of dignity and respect.

The field of P-12 curriculum and instruction scholarship is also sorely lacking in empirical work centering the *discipline-specific* practice of BIPOC history/social studies teachers. While BIPOC teachers do make appearances in history/social studies scholarship, their racialized

identities tend to be treated as incidental information, and the impact of the same on their instruction is often barely a footnote. This oversight is significant, given the potential of social education to raise issues of race (Bolgatz, 2005), humanity (Barton & Levstik, 2004), and various forms of power and inequity (Crowley & King, 2018). BIPOC teachers do not possess innate skills in this area, but they may draw on their lived experiences in unique ways to bring critical themes to the fore. Nevertheless, history/social studies education remains predominantly white and male-identifying (Fitchett, 2010), so BIPOC social educators remain underrepresented, even though their racial/ethnic communities are enmeshed in the tribulations of U.S. history.

This paper centers a relatively novice Black educator teaching students of various races/ethnicities, the majority of whom are BIPOC, about race/racism in U.S. history at a diverse urban high school. The racial (and—although it is beyond the scope of this paper—racialized gender) identity of this teacher is significant because it has the potential to decenter the white gaze and re-center Black intellect, an underexplored realm in education scholarship (Grant, Brown, & Brown, 2015). Specifically, Mr. Davidson held funds of content, pedagogical, and pedagogical content knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Gudmundsdottir & Shulman, 1987); racial pedagogical content knowledge (Chandler & Hawley, 2017); and lived experiences that compelled and enabled him to adopt a cultural asset orientation to teaching. I explore Mr. Davidson's instruction on race/racism, how he urged students to explore these topics independently, and his response upon their hesitation to do so. As I explain in the section about methods, my analysis and interpretation of these data constantly hearkened back to the principles of culturally responsive teaching, CRP, and CSP, although Mr. Davidson did not attribute them to his own practice. I argue that they informed his curricular decisions, instructional moves in the classroom, and his efforts to elicit BIPOC students' engagement with race/racism.

Highlighting a Black teacher as a source of knowledge and a content-area specialist has the potential to counter perceptions of Black individuals as anti- or unintellectual (Cokley, 2015) or primarily possessing "soft" skills (Moss & Tilly, 1996). It moves beyond dichotomizing the invisible cognitive work of instructional design and the more observable work of providing psycho-emotional support. BIPOC educators are capable of performing both types of work simultaneously, since their lived experiences and epistemologies are not mutually exclusive.

My transparency about the emphasis of race in this paper does not automatically preclude the potential essentializing of Black educators. It is unreasonable to expect all Black (or any BIPOC) teachers to be innately inclined to confront racism and white supremacy or to espouse and enact critical pedagogy (Nieto, 2017). Because of the complex and contested nature of both race and teaching, cultivating sound cultural asset practices requires time and intentionality. Yet, the myth of the Black Superman suggests that, "Black male teachers are the key to helping students in urban schools develop skills to succeed in school by acting as role models" (Pabón, 2016, p. 915). This expectation places undue pressure on individuals who already occupy tenuous positions in society. Research demonstrates that BIPOC teachers are not necessarily better equipped to be more socio-politically conscious than their white peers (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019). They, too, have breathed the invisible smog of racism (Tatum, 2017) and need time to refine the craft of teaching. For these reasons, this paper commends Mr. Davidson's efforts to teach about race/racism as a powerful act of resistance unto itself, while also recognizing the tensions that accompany this endeavor, especially as a young Black man teaching across race/ethnicity, in a new content area, and with a new student age group.

Methods

I adopted an interpretive case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) approach for this inquiry, positioning history teacher Mr. Davidson as the unit of analysis. The case study design allows for an examination of elements like the "assumed purpose of communicating [and] the demographic qualities of participants" (p. 6). Case study methodology enabled me to capture "cultural practices" in the classroom that were central to comprehending how Mr. Davidson supported his students' cultural (i.e., racial) identities and how he endeavored to stimulate critical thinking regarding race/racism. With the classroom as the context, I included a range of Mr. Davidson's actions and interactions as part of the case; for instance, I considered his reasoning for including or excluding particular content, as well as the dynamics between him and specific students.

Research Questions

My analysis of the literature raised questions about how asset-oriented practices might enable Mr. Davidson to facilitate student learning about race/racism in his classes. Specifically, I asked:

1. How did Mr. Davidson select historical content for instruction?
2. What instructional moves did he make to support students' understanding and exploration of race and/or racism?
3. How did he navigate students' varying reactions to his instruction and support?

Context

School. Amistad High School is a grade 7-12 school in a small Midwestern city. I chose this setting because of its racial/ethnic and linguistic diversity, which I expected would allow me to observe how students with different racial/ethnic identities engage with race. According to the school's 2017-2018 data, its student body (N = 1,261) was 37.67% African/African American, 25.14% Hispanic/Latinx, 23.95% white, 8.08% two or more races,

3.89% Asian/Asian American, and 1.27% Native American. Families reported 26 home languages, 65% of students were considered "economically disadvantaged," and the four-year graduation rate was 80%.

Teacher. Mr. Davidson is a Black man in his late twenties and a native of the city in which Amistad is located. Although he majored in education and minored in history as an undergraduate, he taught middle school mathematics at a charter school in another state for three years through Teach for America. The 2017-2018 year was his first year teaching both high school and history. I entered the space through a mutual acquaintance, who told Mr. Davidson about our shared interests in the teaching and learning of race/racism in history education.

Students. Mr. Davidson's International Baccalaureate History of the Americas students (N = 21) appeared willing and comfortable discussing race/racism in my presence. The class was as racially/ethnically diverse as the school. According to school records, 10 students were African American, five white, three Hispanic/white, two of two/more races, and one Asian/Asian American.[6] When I joined the class, Mr. Davidson was preparing them for an assignment in which students would pose a historical inquiry question on a topic of their choosing; research relevant primary and secondary sources; and write an essay evaluating the sources, answering their question, and reflecting on the whole process. I anticipated that documenting how Mr. Davidson guided students through this project could elicit rich answers to my research questions.

[6] When describing the class overall, I use the racial designations assigned by the school because I did not ask all 21 students how they identified. When referring to *specific* students with whom I spoke extensively and/or whom I interviewed, I use their preferred racial/ethnic identifications. Here I use "racial/ethnic" to connote that some students self-identified along racial lines (e.g., Black), while others described themselves along ethnic lines (e.g., Hispanic/Latinx).

Data Generation

I observed 30 class periods (35-90 minutes each) to identify the racialized narratives circulating in the classroom space. I audio-recorded seven class periods in which the topic included race, racism, and/or BIPOC. I was not always aware of these moments in advance. I took detailed field notes (Emerson et al., 2011) about the procedures and outcomes of each lesson, such as the topic of the day, questions posed and responses offered, and non-verbal interactions between Mr. Davidson and his students or among students. For each observation, I gathered the corresponding instructional materials to identify written narratives about race. These artifacts included teacher-generated handouts, modified readings, reproductions of primary sources, and photocopied pages of the course companion textbook. Since not all 30 class periods involved race-related material, I accumulated 24 artifacts over the 19 days that did include race.

To contextualize my observations and the materials, I held a formal meeting with Mr. Davidson at the outset of the project and informal debrief sessions daily throughout the study. I also conducted a semi-structured interview with him (see Appendix A) at the end of the school year to elicit his reflections on the course. I audio-recorded, transcribed, and wrote an analytic memo (Saldaña, 2013) identifying racialized narratives and pedagogical themes in this interview.

Data Sources and Analysis

Though this paper is part of a larger study, its analysis, findings, and conclusion draw exclusively from the field notes, audio, memos, and artifacts from my observations; notes from my initial meeting with Mr. Davidson; and the audio, transcript, and memo of my interview with Mr. Davidson. This paper considers Mr. Davidson's pedagogical decisions and moves as well as student responses to them (but not student-derived data), as evidenced in their research projects.

Data analysis was ongoing and iterative. It began with drafting field notes (as described in Data Generation) during every observation and daily analytic memos before leaving the site. The memos summarized the narratives about race/racism and BIPOC in the lesson. I listened to the audio, if applicable, and wrote additional memos for data not captured in my notes. I conducted first-cycle descriptive coding of the field notes, memos, and artifacts (Saldaña, 2013), noting patterns of frequency or similarity across the data sources. For example, when the initial codes *activism as misunderstood* and *competing factions* surfaced repeatedly, I grouped them into the category *conflicting narratives*. There were a total of 25 observation and 10 artifact codes.

After classroom-based data collection, I collapsed the thematic categories into two: *race discourse* (for spoken data—direct instruction, conversations, and presentations) and *historical narratives* (for written data, such as classroom artifacts). I used the codes in the race discourse category—*structures of power, personal connections to race,* and *racial violence*—to recode the field notes, memos, and artifacts. I also used them to draft the teacher interview protocol and to narrow down the 24 classroom artifacts and 30 observations for closer analysis. I selected ten artifacts (see Appendix B) and one observation that best illustrated Mr. Davidson's pedagogical decisions and moves. The findings herein focus mostly on my observations and our interview.

Researcher Positionality

My connection to this study is manifold. Like Mr. Davidson, I was once a high school history teacher in the same city where I lived and had attended public school. I was also among the few BIPOC teachers in the school, although a plurality of students were BIPOC. I took an active interest in Mr. Davidson's practice because some of the challenges he faced—including teaching advanced content with scant materials that met BIPOC students' needs—were familiar. Perhaps because I identify as Afro-Latina, Mr. Davidson spoke freely to me and in my

presence about his concerns regarding race/racism in education. I recognize that my university affiliation granted me a degree of perceived expertise and authority, evident in Mr. Davidson's requests for feedback and recommendations. I assured him that my intent was to remain supportive but never be evaluative, and I was mindful about having my interactions with students reflect this dynamic. My intersecting positions and experiences—as a Black Latina, former urban high school teacher, and emerging teacher educator and researcher—granted me access in the school space and informed my interpretations of Mr. Davidson's practice. Not only do I empathize with him, but I am also motivated to explore the many and diverse ways that teachers contribute to racial justice and equity in their classrooms, schools, and communities.

Findings: Three Cultural Asset Pedagogies in Practice

Three themes were salient in Mr. Davidson's content selection, the instructional supports he provided for students, and the responses he encountered from them. Each of these thematic patterns offer possible answers to the three research questions at the heart of this study. Although he did not characterize them as such explicitly, I maintain that Mr. Davidson selected curriculum content that eschewed the white gaze and prompted critical reflexivity, consistent with CSP.

Regarding the instructional moves that supported students' exploration of race and racism, he exhibited CRP by redirecting racialized historical narratives toward sociopolitical consciousness. In navigating students' reactions to his instruction and support, he took a culturally responsive approach to supporting students' choice of research topics for a course assignment. Below, data snapshots from observations will reveal the breadth of content he selected and how it prompted students to shirk a white perspective while also encouraging critique of BIPOC (CSP). As exemplars of how he reframed racialized narratives, I draw on an instance of a structured learning activity and an episode in which Mr. Davidson recast an oversimplified racial

representation (CRP). Lastly, I illustrate Mr. Davidson's culturally responsive reaction to student reticence through his retelling of how five BIPOC students eluded his recommendation that they research topics related to their racial/ethnic or racial*ized* cultural identities.

Culturally Sustaining Curricular Content

Based on our interview and my classroom observations, Mr. Davidson was actively committed to upholding students' "languages, literacies, histories, and cultural ways of being" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2). Mr. Davidson was especially intent on generating opportunities for students to interrogate the structures behind race/racism. One challenge he faced was that the content of his curricular resources did not easily lend itself to critical and meaningful teaching about race/racism beyond the white gaze. About the IB curriculum, he said, "It is some heavy Eurocentric stuff…It's a very small window of things they actually want you to talk about" (Interview, June 6, 2018). As this was Mr. Davidson's first year teaching at the secondary level, in this content area, and with the IB curriculum, he was confronting multiple barriers.

Although Mr. Davidson deemed the curriculum an impediment to interrogating race/racism because of its overemphasis on Europe and the U.S., he sought additional curricular resources to broaden the scope of the course. He reorganized the syllabus, later reflecting:

> We started the year off with what I call Unit Zero, talking about Reconstruction and civil rights, which is not in the curriculum. We spent a good amount of time talking about and challenging a lot of like, narrative stuff about histories that could have been super white. (Interview, June 6, 2018)

From the outset of the academic year, Mr. Davidson demonstrated his commitment to teaching a pluralistic history in which all his students would be represented and dominant narratives disrupted. He set the tone by launching the course with a Black history unit of his own creation.

This unit—a ground zero, or starting point, for what would ensue—was meant to expose the resilience of the African American community and the failure of the U.S. federal government to ensure the success of Reconstruction-era reforms. Teaching about Reconstruction presents a powerful opportunity to highlight how the struggle for freedom by Black Americans was upended and sabotaged by white opposition, lest students come to believe that the U.S. Civil Rights Movement only began in 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education* or in 1955 with the Montgomery bus boycott (Alridge, 2006). Teaching Reconstruction thus supports a "long civil rights movement" (Hall, 2007) outlook. In so doing, Mr. Davidson dispels the common misconception that Black communities in the U.S. have only fought injustice in the recent past.

In the time I spent with his class, Mr. Davidson incorporated several other lessons on a range of historical BIPOC movements, from the significance and troubled legacy of the Haitian Revolution to detailed but relatively obscure accounts from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (e.g., the expulsion of Minnijean Brown from Little Rock's Central High School). In both cases, Mr. Davidson's materials (Artifacts 5 and 6c, respectively) offered plausible alternatives to common interpretations of violence in the Haitian revolt and about the schooling experiences of the Little Rock Nine post-desegregation. Specifically, he underscored the profoundly spiritual and philosophical foundations for the Haitian war of emancipation and independence, the white supremacist rationale for not extending France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen to the enslaved subjects in the colony of Saint-Domingue, and the debilitating effects of the post-war debt imposed on Haiti by the European powers and the U.S. This stance framed the sovereignty of the first Black republic as an admirable resistance movement thwarted by white hegemonic power. Similarly, Mr. Davidson used documents compiled by the Stanford History Education Group's Reading Like a Historian. He used these sources to question whether specific

incidents alone led to Minnijean Brown (one of the Little Rock Nine) being expelled, or if she had defied the expectations of submissive behavior that white adults and peers demanded of Black students in the newly desegregated school. As he put it, the Nine were chosen because they were "some of the good ones," but Minnijean was a proud Black girl, and she paid dearly for it. In both instances, Mr. Davidson leveraged the content he wove into the course to openly call out racist thoughts and actions by white individuals and communities. He thus named the white gaze.

Mr. Davidson applied this technique to the discussion of current events tied to race/racism. One lesson began with a nod to critical Black patriotism (Busey & Walker, 2017), using a warm-up (Artifact 4) that asked students what it means to be patriotic and included images of Colin Kaepernick and the Tuskegee Airmen (Observation, March 2, 2018). After a whole-class discussion of the question, students read about four different groups of "minorities" (as described on the handout) and their contributions to the U.S. World War II effort. The groups were the Tuskegee Airmen, Navajo Code Talkers, Japanese American (*nisei*) soldiers, and women entering the workforce to manufacture wartime munitions. Students were to choose one of the groups and present them with an award that included a "dope lyric"—a relevant verse from a song—in their brief presentation to the class. This lesson included a variety of racial/ethnic groups and women (though not necessarily BIPOC) to highlight the diversity of contributions to the U.S. war effort. Consistent with CSP's tenet of honoring shifting cultural expressions, it presented Kaepernick as an emblem of the changing ways in which patriotism can manifest. Thus, the lesson both acknowledged the dynamic nature of how BIPOC have resisted injustice and demonstrated that the work of challenging racial injustice is ongoing today, not confined to the past. In closing the lesson, Mr. Davidson also shared about the harsh treatment that these

groups faced despite their contributions and the lack of recognition for their hand in the Allies' success. These latter points counteract the narrative of racial progress that prevails in history education by emphasizing how BIPOC's patriotic deeds are not necessarily rewarded.

Part of Mr. Davidson's efforts to sustain his students' literacies and histories was to avoid textbooks. As he emphatically expressed in his interview, "I'm not about to give my kids textbooks. I'm shell-shocked from textbooks. I went to [a local school], and we were literally just silent, staring at textbook pages. I wasn't about to do that" (June 6, 2018). This aversion to textbooks is consistent with common perceptions of them as incomplete and distorted, particularly regarding BIPOC (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2012). Mr. Davidson found himself "spelunking" through IB and other textbooks. He purchased a curriculum from an online teacher lesson repository, which he paired with course companion texts and with the Stanford History Education Group's Reading Like a Historian documents. But even some of these supplemental resources displayed problematic deficit-oriented perspectives about key BIPOC figures, which he rejected. On one such resource, "a picture of Malcolm X pops up, and the slide says he's separatist, pro-segregationist, anti-white. I didn't teach that" (Interview, June 6, 2018).

To compensate for the dearth of culturally sustaining traditional curricular materials, Mr. Davidson infused the course with music, art, film, and sports to center Black voices. On one occasion, he played Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" while students read the lyrics on a handout (Artifact 7a). He provided context about the writing of the song (in the wake of Medgar Evers's murder) and conducted a close reading of the words. On a different day, his activator (Artifact 5) revived the controversial question of whether Kobe Bryant was a better player than LeBron James to illustrate how people use evidence to substantiate their claims. Through this effort he ensured that Black history occupied an estimated 50-60% of course content, mirroring

the racial demographics of the class. Although Black history represented the bulk of the course, Mr. Davidson also introduced Indigenous history (e.g., the Red Power Movement and American Indian Movement) and Latinx history (e.g., Brown Pride and Young Lords) in my time there.

As part of his culturally sustaining pedagogical practice, Mr. Davidson also problematized narratives about these communities. During a unit on BIPOC resistance movements, he screened the trailer for the biopic "César Chávez" before framing the daily lesson, which centered on the guiding question, "What do we need to add to our collective memory of César Chávez?" He prefaced his chosen reading selection (Artifact 15) with a disclaimer to the "Latina, Latino, Latinx brothers and sisters" in the room: his intent was not to disparage one of their best-known and beloved figures, but he did hope to nuance the "collective memory" of the United Farm Workers (UFW). Students read a news article that described the UFW as "fundamentally tragic" (Resnikoff, 2014). The author explained that the movement "failed to fulfill its promise" due to "the union's internal structure, which…allowed Chávez unchecked power" to be eccentric, dogmatic, and even abusive. Further, when the organization was understaffed, Chávez refused to relinquish power and delegate or take bureaucratic tasks on himself, yet he is credited with much of the UFW's success. The piece names former UFW members who cultivate solidarity across racial/ethnic and industry lines and expand the labor agenda "to push justice on a larger scale" (Resnikoff, 2014, n. p.). Mr. Davidson closed with the following exit ticket prompt:

> César Chávez and many who came before him are far too often deified, their stories told with a messianic quality. In the space below, identify what you believe students should be told about the life and legacy of César Chávez. (Instructional artifact, May 23, 2018)

This moment of insight came well into the unit, after students had read other accounts extolling the virtues of many leaders. In his guidelines for an in-class Civil Rights Movement project that

would culminate with brief student presentations, he listed expectations for content, and the words "criticism of key figures or institutions within the group" were bold and underlined. Mr. Davidson went out of his way to select course content that not only reflected the racial/ethnic identities of his students, but that also centered a BIPOC perspective, explicitly named and rejected the white gaze, and at times turned the critical eye inward to BIPOC.

Reframing Racialized Narratives for Sociopolitical Consciousness

Aside from choosing culturally sustaining curricular content, Mr. Davidson handled spontaneous race talk in the classroom with an orientation that fostered sociopolitical awareness among his students. Although fostering this critical consciousness is one of the principles of CSP, it was first a cornerstone of CRP. The following selection of discourse exemplifies Mr. Davidson's responses to classroom racial discourse that he could not have anticipated. This episode took place after the principal briefly visited the classroom and reified the Martin-Malcolm dichotomy (Alridge, 2006) that pervades teaching and learning about the Civil Rights Movement. In short, the principal told students that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was more successful than Malcolm X because he was a more palatable alternative to the radical views of the latter. Addressing the class after the principal departed, Mr. Davidson pulled up a photograph of Fred Hampton on the projector and passionately declared:

> One of the things I want to highlight is when we say militance, we're not saying that these groups were intentionally going out with guns to try to shoot up white people. Oftentimes, militance just meant, 'The F if I watch these police come and kill our kids again! I'm going to stand in my window when these racists come, and if they want smoke, I got my gun.' So oftentimes, what it meant was self-defense. [Pointing to the whiteboard] This brother right here is Fred Hampton. The police *literally* come in and kill

> him in his bed. This time period is *filled* with state-sponsored violence. Oftentimes, you get this rhetoric of, 'Violence begets violence,' or 'Crack killed the Black Panthers,' but what happened with the Black Panthers is you have government ops [operatives] getting in the Black Power Movement, causing division, getting people set up—person after person—literal state-sponsored violence… One of the things we have to wrestle with is, America is our home, and America has done a lot of things for our freedom, but a lot of these movements are oftentimes misunderstood by the mainstream… When we think about community watches, we often think about white communities, but the first community watches are happening in these communities of Color – watching out for themselves, keeping violence and those things down. (Observation, May 25, 2018)

In this uncharacteristic monologue, Mr. Davidson made a series of claims about the structural elements of how race/racism and power operated during the Civil Rights Movement and in the portrayal of key actors. He posited that militant groups did not merely harbor anti-white hatred but acted in self-defense against the onslaught of state-sponsored oppression and physical harm, a statement vindicating vilified BIPOC communities. He spoke of the state-sponsored violence to which activists were responding, such as the assassination of Illinois Black Panther Party (BPP) Chairman and Rainbow Coalition co-founder Fred Hampton (Haas, 2011), as well as FBI counterintelligence infiltration into the BPP to undermine their leadership and activism. Mr. Davidson explained that because such state-sponsored violence was covert and enjoyed active backing from institutions of official power, the dominant narrative has been manipulated, and militant activists have been largely "misunderstood" by the public.

Although Mr. Davidson's extended response was unique, it remained consistent with his ongoing efforts to present BIPOC perspectives to which his students might not otherwise be

introduced. His reframing of actors in the movement from violent aggressors to protectors of their communities also included mentions of Chicanxs in Los Angeles and Puerto Ricans in Chicago and New York City. This inclusion is significant because P-12 discussion of civil rights activism tends to focus primarily or exclusively on African American organizations and individuals, usually in the U.S. South. He ended by pointing out that BIPOC communities took collective action to sustain themselves through community watches (typically associated with white communities) and campaigns to feed, educate, or provide health and other services.

Here, Mr. Davidson made inroads to destabilize the dominant perspective by suggesting that the outlook of BIPOC activists as merely relishing unprovoked violence, was flawed at best and intentionally antagonistic at worst. He wanted students to empathize with the plight of working-class and racially minoritized people trying to thrive and survive against the white supremacist odds. I hesitate to advance this moment as an outright subversion of the white gaze—and therefore as evidence of CSP—because the original narrative that Mr. Davidson was challenging had been constructed by the principal, himself a Black man. And while it is possible and not uncommon for BIPOC to hold beliefs that are steeped in whiteness, ascribing the term white gaze seems accusatory and out of place. However, the mere fact that the scenario may be read that way further signals the ambiguity in trying to determine whether a pedagogical move qualifies as CRP, CSP, or both. What remains clear is the sociopolitical intent behind it.

As Ladson-Billings (1995) explained about CRP, Mr. Davidson could not have intervened in this moment to rectify what he deemed an unfair depiction had he not been aware of these forms of social inequity. Several other moments attested to Mr. Davidson's concern for culturally relevant consciousness-raising. When discussing with students how youth from Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, FL, were mobilizing in response to the

shooting on their campus, Mr. Davidson held them up as models of youth activism. At the same time, he posed thought-provoking questions as to why these particular young people had garnered such a platform concerning the issue of gun violence when BIPOC youth's pleas had long fallen on deaf ears (Classroom observation, February 28, 2018). Relatedly, when students made their closing statements regarding the matter of Minnijean Brown, many of them used direct quotations from the documents, which sometimes included the n-word. Before hearing students' remarks, Mr. Davidson issued the following caveat:

> I'm OK with you quoting what people said in the past, but what you must understand is that the n-word has power. It *reeks*. It feels like 400 years of oppression. And, for the record, I'm of the belief that ending it in an *'a'* changes nothing. *No one* should be using that word. It's not a Black-white thing; it's an American thing. We need to deal with it, all of us. (Classroom observation, March 23, 2018)

In these and other moments, Mr. Davidson alerted the students to the sociopolitical implications of current events, language use, and other pertinent topics. He broached these finer points to raise students' sociopolitical awareness. This objective was originally a tenet of CRP and was later incorporated into CSP. However, it is unclear from the literature how this element is distinct between the two paradigms, again inviting the question of whether they are interchangeable.

Culturally Responsive Support and Choice

Mr. Davidson was committed to raising issues of race/racism but took great care to grant students freedom to engage *if* and *when* they were willing and able. In this sense, his support demonstrated a culturally responsive approach. As Gay (2000) recounts of her own teaching:

> Students working on assignments often want to know, 'What exactly do you want us to do?' When I respond, 'I don't know other than for you to put forth genuine effort, do

> your best, and address all aspects of the assigned tasks…' they are puzzled… I do not have a single specific end-product in mind. (p. 184)

Mr. Davidson encouraged BIPOC students to select research topics for their final projects that were germane to their own racial/ethnic identities. Ultimately, however, most of them were hesitant to engage with structural issues of race/racism, even when they were interested in the narratives of BIPOC individuals and communities. Even with *carte blanche*, these BIPOC students did not analyze issues pertinent to their racial/ethnic identities. Additionally, most of the students whose research featured BIPOC did not analyze the persistent nature of race/racism or the underlying systems that impede true racial progress or anti-racism.

Below, I share the experiences of Evany (biracial Latinx and white); Kai (Asian American); and Muhammad, Yuusuf, and Kareem (African American Muslims). Their vignettes illustrate how some BIPOC students chose not to name race/racism as central to their topics and/or struggled to delve deeply into the operation of white supremacy in their narratives.

Evany. Evany, whose mother is Mexican American and whose father is white, wrote her essay about interracial marriages after *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). During our interview, Mr. Davidson recalled a conversation he had with her about the topic of her research project:

> I asked her, "How will your kids identify if you marry a white man and you don't take any interest in your history?" "They'll identify as white?" "So what happens to your grandpa's history?" "It gets lost." "So this is why you need to care. Let's see if we can find where your passions and your grandpa's passions meet up." (June 6, 2018)

Evany had become overwhelmed by the challenges of poring over legalese in reading for her research project. Mr. Davidson appealed to her personal history as the child of an interracial couple to motivate her to finish the assignment—not for the sake of compliance, but for the

preservation of her Mexican heritage. During a series of informal conversations, she also shared with me that she was contemplating switching her topic to focus on Dolores Huerta, an emblematic Mexican American labor leader. This change would have also been personally meaningful for her because of her maternal grandfather's experiences as an agricultural worker.

In the end, Evany decided to complete her historical investigation on the *Loving* case and legislative changes that ensued nationwide. Her paper cited Judge Bazile's "racially charged ruling defending Virginia's anti miscegenation laws," in which he stated that "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents… The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix" (Student work, May 7, 2018). However, Evany did not discuss the racist beliefs at the core of these statutes, namely the notion that Christianity provided the basis for racial segregation, to preserve the order and separation that God intended at creation. Further, none of the named minoritized groups were barred from marrying one another, only from marrying white individuals. Examining this rationale could have led Evany to the conclusions that (1) both the legal system and religious institutions were leveraged to uphold anti-miscegenation laws, and (2) that the statutes were only intended to preserve the "purity" of white ancestry and whiteness.

Kai. Kai, a student of Hmong descent, was also hesitant to choose a topic in which racial critique was front-and-center. In hindsight, Mr. Davidson mused:

> I would have liked to see—I felt him deliberating, trying to make that calculation. And I also don't want to impose that on them, what I feel they should go into. *If you don't want to explore a particular identity in this class, that's your prerogative*. He was talking about imperialism, so I suggested talking about the U.S. relations with the Philippines, and he said, "Meh. Maybe the Spanish-American War." *So I tried to steer him toward white*

> *supremacy as a justification for imperialism*, but he had a hard time navigating that. (Interview, June 6, 2018; italics added for emphasis)

The only Asian-origin student in the class, Kai seemed uncertain whether to pursue the topic of U.S. foreign policy in Asia as a racialized colonial project. Although Mr. Davidson broached some ideas that extrapolated course content on U.S interventionism in East and Southeast Asia, he sensed that Kai was holding back, "deliberating, trying to make that calculation." Mr. Davidson explained that the class had spent an entire week on white supremacy earlier in the year. He had been hopeful that students would refer back to those learning experiences but was disappointed that they were either uninterested or unprepared to do so.

Kai moved forward with a paper on imperialism, in which he briefly mentioned Rudyard Kipling's famous 1899 poem, "White Man's Burden," about colonial control of the Philippines. His essay did not openly discuss the white supremacist imperative of empire-building or the essentialist, paternalistic intimation that white culture could uplift BIPOC, namely Asians.

Muhammad, Yuusuf, and Kareem. Three students in Mr. Davidson's class identified as African American and Muslim. Leading up to the inquiry project, Mr. Davidson had hoped that at least one of them would write about Islam in any context, but he was most excited about the prospect of them exploring its role during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Instead, Muhammad wrote about dissent during the Vietnam War, Yuusuf about the impact of the Selma-Montgomery March on the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Kareem about basketball legend Bill Russell's role in the Civil Rights Movement. The topics that the boys chose reflected their personal interests and Mr. Davidson's enthusiasm for the Movement; Yuusuf was inspired by the film *Selma* (DuVernay & Webb, 2014), and Kareem was guided by his love of basketball. Mr.

Davidson did not attempt to sway these students by nominating other topics, especially since he was cognizant that he had already influenced their decisions through course content. He shared:

> I, as a teacher, have to be pretty in-the-know with what my students are gonna talk about in order to give them the kinds of feedback they need. I knew that I couldn't effectively give my students feedback unless they narrowed in. I gave them other options, but that's one of the reasons you saw a lot of them doing civil rights. (Interview, June 6, 2018)

Mr. Davidson did not press the boys to explore the intersection of race and religion if they were not so inclined, but his expertise with Black history did provide them with moderate direction.

Yuusuf and Kareem—whose parents migrated to the U.S. from Somalia—wrote about African American people. Kareem, for one, argued that Bill Russell was a key player in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Neither mentioned the role of Islam among African American activists, and Kareem had a particularly negative assessment of the sole Black Muslim we discussed– Malcolm X. In Manuscript Two of this dissertation, I discuss how Kareem's construction of Bill Russell as a civil rights leader and icon of Black manhood may constitute a project of negotiating Kareem's own racialized identity as a young Black man and sports aficionado. Though he talked about his identity as a practicing Muslim, Kareem did not frame his research project as an attempt to exonerate Islam of negative perceptions, as he appeared to do for Black men.

Mr. Davidson was still wrestling with these tensions when the schoolyear ended. He did not want to tell students what to think. He respected their agency, even as he wrestled with the desire to expose the tragedy and the trauma of racism and white supremacy in this nation's past. His strategy for raising issues of race/racism was to establish the existence of systemic oppression in historical context and then draw parallels to the present without making facile, oversimplified comparisons. He explained his method thus:

> I make it explicit that we're still navigating these things and they're still present, that these lay the foundation for now. I do tons with current events. What I try *not* to do is – I won't say, "Donald Trump is a racist," but I will point to his previous actions and ask, "What does that look like to you?" (Interview, June 6, 2018)

Mr. Davidson hesitated to make interpretations *for* students about discrete events and people. He preferred to shed light on individual and systematic patterns in historical context and then turn to current events to elucidate how those problems persist today.

In the end, Mr. Davidson was not convinced that he had transformed students' thinking about race/racism. When speaking about his week-long subunit on white supremacy, he shared:

> I'm naming the craziness that white people are doing, and everything I teach after that, I draw back to it. You can see that white people literally killed off the Native Americans and nothing has been done except give them casinos. But it doesn't *necessarily* mark a moment in my class when *pedagogically* I'm able to provide them with assignments to really make sense of these two competing narratives. (Interview, June 6, 2018)

Mr. Davidson sounded disappointed that students did not appear to master and/or appropriate (Wertsch, 1998a) the concept of white supremacy. It may not be possible to ascertain why this was the case, but Mr. Davidson took full responsibility for the outcome.

Discussion

This manuscript drew from classroom observations and artifacts, formal and informal meetings, and a semi-structured interview to analyze Mr. Davidson's curricular and instructional moves to advance students' understanding of race/racism and their willingness to engage with it on their own terms. My interpretation of his pedagogical practices suggest that he was simultaneously guided by the principles of culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant

pedagogy, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. He urged his BIPOC students to engage with race/racism throughout the content and structure of the course. His efforts to decenter whiteness and promote critical reflexivity (CSP) were evident in his curricular design, his attempts to promote sociopolitical consciousness (CRP) was best illustrated by his manner of reframing racialized narratives in the class, and his cultural responsiveness was evidenced in his support of BIPOC youths' right to choose their own learning pathways in their year-end research projects.

One reason for this piecemeal analytical approach is the apparent points of convergence between the three aforementioned cultural asset pedagogies. At their core, they are all concerned with the academic success and identity formation of traditionally minoritized and marginalized children and youth, especially BIPOC. Over time, they have also refined their objectives and clarified their core commitments to meet the changing needs and demands of schooling in the U.S. context. In fact, CSP was admittedly born out of the "remixing" of CRP and thus retains central tenets of its predecessor. Yet, we are remiss to conceptualize the emergence of these frameworks as a teleological progression of practice. In other words, just as we did not dismiss culturally responsive teaching as obsolete because CRP came after it, we did not abandon CRP at the advent of CSP. In similar fashion, I again pose the question of whether it is possible—and perhaps even desirable—for individual educators to exemplify more than one of these at once.

Classroom-based educators committed to equity and justice, like Mr. Davidson, work arduously to teach their students about themselves, the world around them, and how they fit into it. They carry out this work with heart and put their resources to use to humanize the children and youth before them. They may excel in some areas and struggle in others, but seldom are they preoccupied with whether their strategies fall under the category of culturally responsive,

relevant, or sustaining. Though they may have articulated a cohesive philosophy of teaching during their preparation or early in their careers, their main concern is with what they do in class.

Regardless of whether we can fit each instructional move into a category, eliciting his desired degree and kind of critical student questioning about race/racism proved to be challenging for this teacher. He wanted the BIPOC youth in his class to recognize and deplore the racial injustices that affect them and the racialized communities to which they belong, just as they have afflicted generations of BIPOC. This is no easy task for a first-year high school history teacher.

Mr. Davidson also achieved a great deal. His choice of historical content and the ways he tried to help students grapple with that history evince his capacity to enact the three cultural asset pedagogies. He thought quickly on his feet in class to redirect racialized narratives that distorted or omitted key BIPOC perspectives. He warmly encouraged students to take risks but acquiesced when they did not appear ready or interested. In the pages above, I call those successes by terms that Mr. Davidson himself never used in describing them, though he may approve and agree.

In the spirit of CSP, I build on his reflexivity to present some "loving critiques" (Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017). These humble recommendations are intended for teachers hoping to implement CSP in their classrooms, for researchers investigating cultural asset pedagogies, and for teacher educators working alongside pre- and in-service educators. The critiques involve the (1) curricular resources that facilitate the implementation of asset pedagogies, (2) contextual factors that modulate how asset pedagogies may be enacted, and (3) the intentionality and perseverance required to resist the political project of whiteness in P-12 schooling.

Curricular Resources

Mr. Davidson struggled to find curricular resources that affirmed and sustained BIPOC communities' languages, literacies, histories, and epistemologies. This dilemma is unsurprising,

since white European hegemonic ideals of being and knowing dominate P-12 curriculum (Apple, 2004; A. L. Brown et al., 2017). While some resources exist and are becoming more readily available, teachers require extensive research and preparation to deepen their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, as well as for designing purposeful instruction that engages diverse learners meaningfully. As a first-year high school IB history teacher and former Teach for America corps member at a charter school in another city, Mr. Davidson was undergoing a challenging professional transition. He was clued into the materials from myriad institutions (e.g., the Stanford History Education Group), but by his own admission was not utilizing resources like those available through Rethinking Schools, Teaching Tolerance, or Facing History and Ourselves because they provide fewer ready-made materials for immediate use. Mr. Davidson would have required much time and crafty curricular collaging to adapt social justice materials or academic publications and produce materials tailored to the demands of the course, the school, the IB curriculum, and students' learning needs or personal interests.

This observation points to P-12 teachers' dire need for guidance and support. This support may take the form of professional development workshops during the school year or off-site training during summer months. Many of these more intensive institutes are costly and inaccessible for cash-strapped school districts, or they may require that teachers travel far from their homes during the summer months when other obligations take precedence. Moreover, in the age of high-stakes testing, advocating for cultural resource pedagogies for their own sake can be an uphill battle. For these and other reasons, teachers like Mr. Davidson find themselves carving out these strategies for themselves. I contend that scholars and teacher educators, although rightfully wary of proscribing a set of one-size-fits-all "best" practices that undermine teachers' ability to think for themselves and the unique needs of each context, could offer more assistance

in this regard. When research is conducted in classrooms and other learning spaces, there is latent potential for the work to lead to distinct instructional strategies and corresponding materials. However, the publication expectations of academe—particularly the pressure to publish in "high-impact" journals—can discourage engagement with practitioner-oriented outlets, which may have immeasurable impact, but not in the manner required for tenure.

Context Matters

Another loving critique pertains to how asset pedagogies take on different forms depending on the circumstances. No two classrooms are identical. There are a host of identities that qualify as "cultures" to be responsive to, be relevant to, and sustain. The word 'culture' itself is highly contested because of how it glosses over specific markers of difference (Rothman, 2014). No resource pedagogy proposes individually tailored lessons or demands that educators summarily overhaul their entire curricula. But each unique configuration of cultures in a school context requires educators to identify who is part of their learning community and seek to learn about the identities and practices they will respond to, be relevant to, and sustain. Furthermore, student voices must be included in any conversation intended to uncover these needs and make these changes. Below, I discuss teachers' and students' racial/ethnic identities, recognizing that these are not the only contextual factors that impact cultural asset pedagogies.

Teacher racial/ethnic identity. Mr. Davidson's Blackness is a factor that—while certainly an asset on which he capitalized daily—may have posed challenges in such a multiracial setting. It is possible that having white students in the classroom (even though only five identified exclusively as white, but several other students were bi- or multiracial, all with a white parent) and an abundance of white teachers in the school made it impossible for Mr. Davidson to escape the white gaze. Even with a Black principal and assistant principal, he was nonetheless subject to

scrutiny from colleagues, students, parents, and others who may not have deemed his unabashed exposé of white supremacy acceptable for the classroom. The local politics of the city and state are inevitably a factor in his and other teachers' ability to fully exercise their professional autonomy, but his situation is especially tenuous as a novice Black teacher using content and language that others may deem controversial or divisive.

The question that this study ponders is not simply, "How does this Black history educator teach?" Of greater significance is, "How can teachers foreground race/racism in their classrooms in ways that foster a deep and genuine awareness of race, racial hierarchies, racism, whiteness, and white supremacy for students?" And yet, this case demonstrates great promise for the future of this teacher and his kindred spirits in the profession. As BIPOC living in an intractably racialized world, BIPOC teachers face unique challenges when teaching about race/ racism, especially with the white gaze continually upon them in their immediate environments and in society, writ large. BIPOC teachers can be both models to follow and in need of support from colleagues, school and district leaders, teacher educators, researchers, and policy makers.

Student racial/ethnic identity. Students' unique backgrounds are another key factor. Focusing on students' cultural assets involves not making assumptions about what they do or do not know, what is interesting or important to them, and the extent to which they wish to excavate their identities in school. For example, Mr. Davidson encouraged Kai, a Hmong-origin student, to delve into the particulars of how U.S. foreign policy in Asia emerged from white supremacist discourses. However, Hmong culture is highly complex and the Hmong people are geographically dispersed, transcending the boundaries of several nation-states in East and Southeast Asia. Four millennia of migration, isolation, exclusion, and persecution have resulted in both the preservation of Hmong customs and in the development of various modes of

resistance to assimilation attempts. During the Vietnam War, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency recruited and trained Hmong soldiers to combat the Communist regimes in the region, but when the U.S. abandoned the conflict, some Hmong military were extracted, but many more were left behind (Vang, 2010; Vang & Flores, 1999). After years of strife and staggering losses, the Hmong were granted status as political refugees and migrated to many countries, including the U.S., which is home to more than a quarter-million Hmong (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Because of the singular constellation of factors shaping the Hmong/ Hmong American experience, classroom dynamics, and Kai's personal preferences and perspectives, there is no surefire way to establish with certainty why he opted not to confront the white supremacist logics of U.S. imperialism in Asia. His choice could have been due to the absence of Hmong from P-12 curricular materials, the nebulous status of the Hmong as a political entity and accompanying lack of clarity on their relations with the U.S., Kai's definition of racism and perceptions of white supremacy's impact on Asians/ Asian Americans, or many other reasons. Scholars have found that due to the primacy of Black-white relations in scholarly and public discourse, as well as the misconception that Asians/ Asian Americans have achieved collective success in the U.S., the racial discrimination experiences of Asian American youth are often overlooked relative to their BIPOC peers (Gee et al., 2009; Liang et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2011). Further, Asian American youth are more likely to experience physical and verbal harassment from their peers (not adults), potentially because of teacher biases based on model minority stereotypes (Rosenbloom & Way, 2004) or because of being deemed either "too ethnic" or "too assimilated" (Pyke & Dang, 2003). This degree of detailed knowledge is difficult to achieve in multicultural contexts, and it requires a strong rapport between the teacher and student.

Teachers can control the curricular content they include and the instructional design of their lessons and units, but they cannot control students' responses to content. This axiom is especially true when the content reflects teachers' ideological commitments and vision according to the principles of culturally responsive teaching, CRP, CSP, or any other cultural asset framework. Mr. Davidson felt a sense of duty to make race/racism and white supremacy apparent to all students, particularly his BIPOC students. But his ability to engage them in race talk—whether in class or on paper—was hindered by the tension between wanting students to exercise their intellectual agency on the one hand, and looking to unseat uncritical and problematic thinking from past learning and socialization on the other. This is a tension to which every educator with a social justice agenda must attend. *How do I bring my students to and through challenging content that helps them see the mechanisms of injustice that may work against them and their communities when they do not seem interested, comfortable, or prepared?* Having taught for three years before arriving at Amistad, Mr. Davidson possessed pedagogical skills but was developing pedagogical *content* knowledge for secondary history instruction, as well as *racial* pedagogical content knowledge (King & Chandler, 2016) for uncovering white supremacy.

Resisting the Political Project of Whiteness

The most recent point dovetails into the third and final loving critique: try as individual teachers may, they cannot dismantle whiteness alone. Community-oriented BIPOC teachers like Mr. Davidson face seemingly insurmountable challenges when the hierarchical and individualistic culture of their schools isolates and marginalizes them, destabilizing their "connections, insights, and successes with students" (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016, p. 72). As one of only two Black men teaching at his school and a handful of Black teachers overall in 2017-2018, Mr. Davidson was in a precarious position. Though the focus of this paper is how he curated his

course and endeavored to impart confidence and curiosity on his BIPOC students, there were tangential mentions of navigating political landmines at the school in order to maintain his professional networks with white teachers. Many Black men in similar environments find themselves erecting social boundaries to manage their interactions with their colleagues (Bristol & Goings, 2019), and Mr. Davidson related taking a similar approach in political conversations with his peers at Amistad.

For decades, scholars have voiced concerns about the lack of Black educators in P-12 settings (e.g., Bryan & Milton Williams, 2017; King, 1993), explored possible reasons for the disparities (Madkins, 2011; Milner et al., 2016; Roberts & Carter Andrews, 2013), and offered recommendations to remedy it (e.g., Dillard, 1994). Roberts and Carter Andrews's (2013) critical race analysis of Black teachers as objects of gaslighting post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) implicates teacher education in the disproportionate recruitment and retention of Black teachers. They observed that ever since the *Brown* decision, Black educators have been the objects of racial gaslighting; dominant discourse would have the public believe that Black communities are not invested in education, and that this indifference explains the shortage of Black individuals in the teaching profession. These claims run counter to the extensive history of Black—particularly African American— efforts to secure educational access in the U.S. since slavery (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2001). The dialogue about how teacher education programs can diversify has emphasized, for instance, attending to the school-based experiences of BIPOC teachers (e.g., Bristol & Goings, 2019). The conversation has also led scholars to reissue a call to reframe the narrative about the *causes* of the dearth of BIPOC teachers (e.g., Carter Andrews et al., 2019). Despite their professed desires to recruit and retain racially BIPOC teacher candidates, these programs remain sites of trauma (Kohli, 2019) and exclusion (Vasquez, 2019) for BIPOC.

Ongoing research on the experiences of racially isolated BIPOC teachers can shed much-needed light on their experiences and how teacher education can cultivate a more racially diverse teacher workforce. However, BIPOC teachers are not the only ones that need to learn to counteract racism and white supremacy in their preparation and over the duration of their careers. The white educators who make up the bulk of the profession have a hand to play in whether or not youth feel entitled to explore their racial/ethnic identities and race/racism through disciplinary learning in the classroom. Having BIPOC teachers early and often can enrich students' learning experiences, but equally powerful is having white teachers who do not minimize students' needs to be seen, heard, and empowered. One year in a high school history class like Mr. Davidson's cannot undo the silence that many BIPOC youth endure in P-12.

Conclusions

This study carries broader implications for P-12 teachers and leaders, teacher educators, and researchers investigating P-12 pedagogy, particularly in history/social studies. For teachers and school/district leaders, this study may confirm what many already know; that curricular resources suitable for culturally responsive, relevant, and/or sustaining pedagogy—along with professional development on the strategies for using them—could prove beneficial. Additionally, it behooves educators committed to social and racial justice to get to know their students well enough to support their needs and interests, but they must not make assumptions about what students do or do not know and want to know.

Teacher educators would do well to reflect on how they present these cultural asset and other pedagogical frameworks to teacher candidates. A strong emphasis on aspiring educators' philosophical, ideological, and political commitments in teacher preparation allows practicing educators to think independently about the extent to which their curricular decisions and

instructional practices are effective. I am by no means suggesting that culturally responsive, relevant, and/or sustaining pedagogy be excised from teacher preparation curriculum. On the contrary, I recommend that they *all* be presented as complementary—not competing or mutually exclusive—means for achieving educational equity and justice. It is also possible that teacher educators introduce pre-service teachers to one and not the others in their courses.

Relatedly, researchers must continue to speak across the academic-practitioner divide to disseminate what they are learning from their scholarship to P-12 settings. Currently, teachers require paid memberships to access even many of the journals claiming a practitioner readership. Institutional websites and organizational pages, while free of charge, do not always offer—as Mr. Davidson called them—ready-made materials for quick use in the classroom. These barriers lead teachers to rely on lesson repositories like Teachers Pay Teachers, where the quality and criticality of the resources vary widely. Working alongside teachers in local school districts to gather, vet, and share reliable and functional materials collaboratively, as well as finding outlets to share the product of their investigations, researchers can enrich teaching and learning in their local communities. This opportunity is in special demand for history/social studies education researchers during this time of global pandemic and social upheaval over racial injustice.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Teacher Interview Protocol

Table 1. Teacher Interview Protocol – Mr. Davidson

Question type	Question
Writing Historical Investigation for the IB Internal Assessment	1. Tell me how you got into teaching. 2. How did you end up teaching history at "Amistad"? 3. Walk me through the Historical Investigation assignment. 4. How did students choose their topics/questions? 5. What was your role in that process? 6. How much freedom do you think Ss have to write what they really think?
RQ1. How people/ communities of color portrayed in materials	7. What, if anything, did you learn about your students in this process? 8. Think about the sources that students were using for their paper. What kind of perspectives did they usually take? 9. What racial group/s were represented in students' papers? 10. What racial group/s were represented in the curriculum? 11. Do you think any racial/ethnic groups are left out of the curriculum that should be included? 12. If you could change this course, how would you change it? Why? 13. How do you select the instructional materials for this class? Why?
Students' interview responses	14. I asked students why they thought you/ IB asked them to use only scholarly sources for their paper. Many of them said that scholarly sources are not biased. What do you think about that? 15. I asked the students, "What are some of Mr. [Davidson]'s take-away messages (or "Mr. D is all about _____"). What do you think they said? 16. The students I interviewed all said you look at both sides of everything. Why do you place such emphasis on that? a. How did you accomplish that? b. What are some of the challenges you've encountered in teaching with balance but also having your own views on race/racism? 17. What would you say is your emphasis/ focus in this course? 18. What do you do or say to communicate that?

Table 1 (cont'd)	
Conclusion	19. How do you identify racially and ethnically? 20. How do you think this influences the way your students learn from you? 21. What other people/sources do you have to help you learn about race/racism? 22. Was there anything else you wanted to say that I didn't ask? 23. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX B: Select Instructional Artifacts

Table 2. Select Instructional Artifacts

Title	Description	Comments
1. The birth of racial caste	Do Now: What was the biggest difference between African slavery and European slavery? Excerpt from Chapter 1 of *The New Jim Crow*	Presents indentured servitude as a common plight; class as central conflict Narrates how planter class drive a wedge between races and established a racial caste system
4. Minorities in WWII	Do Now: comparing Colin Kaepernick to Tuskegee Airmen One page on each "minority group"	 Includes: Navajo Code Talkers Rosie the Riveter The Tuskegee Airmen The American Nisei Regiments
5. Causes of Haitian Revolution	Do Now: comparing Kobe Bryant & Lebron James (using evidence to substantiate claim) Nine documents in Document-Based Question (DBQ) with the central question *What caused the Haitian Revolution?*	 Frames religion as resistance Explains ideas (re: violence, voodoo) used to justify not applying Declaration of Rights of Man to Haitian people Does not promote linear progress narrative
6c. Little Rock Nine DBQ	Four documents from Reading Like a Historian with central question *Why was Minnijean Brown expelled from Central High School?*	Explores various reasons for Minnijean's expulsion are contested; sources point in different directions, with some indicating she was not submissive enough.
6d. U.S. Civil Rights Movement reading	Section 2.1 in Case Study 2 in Oxford IB Diploma Plus Programme course companion, *Rights and Protest* (Rogers & Clinton, 2015, pp. 129-165)	Refers to "African American Civil Rights Movement Takes "long movement" approach Emphasizes white violence and community/grassroots activism
7a. Introduction to Freedom Summer	Lyrics to Mississippi Goddam and structured close reading Reading comprehension questions	Prompts reflection on song lyrics Connects independent reading to context from the song

Table 2 (cont'd)		
7b. Freedom Summer reading	Section 2.2 in Case Study 2 in Oxford IB Diploma Plus Programme course companion, *Rights and Protest* (Rogers & Clinton, 2015, pp. 166-191)	Highlights role of white allies in bringing attention to violence in response to voter registration Section on Malcolm X; features several women Emphasizes white violence and community/grassroots activism
12. Hispanic Civil Rights Movement reading	Section 8.4 of Mamaux, A., Smith, D., Rogers, M., Borgmann, M., Leggett, S., & Berliner, Y. (2015). *Oxford IB Diploma Programme: History of the Americas 1880-1981 Course Companion*. Oxford University Press.	Includes: Farm workers Militancy Puerto Rican civil rights Immigration reform
13a. Civil Rights Movement guidelines	Guidelines for presenting on Civil Rights Movement projects	Includes rights contested, means used, key figures and achievements, criticism, visuals, quotations, song lyrics, and how the struggle continues today
15. Challenging Chávez	"The real Cesar Chavez leaves behind a complicated legacy" (Resnikoff, 2014)	Tells personal account of fissures within the United Farm Workers organization Troubles perceptions of Chávez

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Allen, K. M. (2019). Transformative vision: Examining the racial literacy practices of a Black male teacher with his Black male students. *Journal for Multicultural Education, 13*(1), 82-93. https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-04-2017-0029.

Alridge, D. P. (2006). The limits of master narratives in history textbooks: An analysis of representations of Martin Luther King, Jr. *Teachers College Record, 108*(4), 662-686.

Anderson, J. D. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. University of North Carolina Press.

Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York: Routledge.

Aronson, B., & Laughter, J. (2016). The theory and practice of culturally relevant education: A synthesis of research across content areas. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(1), 163-206.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. New York: Routledge.

Bates, J. (2020, May 11). Indianapolis police officer shoots man in livestreamed killing. Here's what to know. *Time.* https://time.com/5833625/indianapolis-police-shooting-sean-reed/.

Besanvalle, J. (2020, February 26). "6-year-old black girl filmed being restrained and arrested for ' kicking' someone at school. *Indy100* from *Independent.* https://www.indy100.com/article/black-girl-arrested-school-video-body-cam-footage-9359706.

Bolgatz, J. (2005). Revolutionary talk: Elementary teacher and students discuss race in a social studies class. *The Social Studies, 96*(6), 259-264.

Bristol, T. J., & Goings, R. B. (2019). Exploring the boundary-heightening experiences of Black male teachers: Lessons for teacher education programs. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(1), 51-64.

Brown, A. F., Bloome, D., Morris, J. E., Power-Carter, S., & Willis, A. I. (2017). Classroom conversations in the study of race and the disruption of social and educational inequalities: A review of research. *Review of Research in Education, 41*(1), 453-476.

Brown, A. L., Brown, K. D., & Ward, A. (2017). Critical race theory meets culturally relevant pedagogy: Advancing a critical sociohistorical consciousness for teaching and curriculum. *Social Education, 81*(1), 23-27.

Brown v. Board of Education, No. 483 (U.S. 1954).

Bryan, N., & Milton Williams, T. (2017). We need more than just male bodies in classrooms: Recruiting and retaining culturally relevant Black male teachers in early childhood education. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 38*, 209-222.

Busey, C. L., & Walker, I. (2017). A dream and a bus: Black critical patriotism in elementary social studies standards. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 45*(4), 456-488.

Carter Andrews, D. J., Castro, E., Cho, C. L., Petchauer, E., Richmond, G., & Floden, R. (2019). Changing the narrative on diversifying the teaching workforce: A look at historical and contemporary factors that inform recruitment and retention of Teachers of Color. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(1), 6-12.

Cazden, C., & Leggett, E. (1981). Culturally responsive education: Recommendations for achieving *Lau* remedies II. In H. Trueba, G. Guthrie, & K. Au (Eds.), *Culture and the bilingual classroom: Studies in classroom ethnography,* (pp. 69-86). Rowley, MA: Newbury.

Chandler, P. T., & Hawley, T. S. (2017). (Eds.) (2017). *Race lessons: Using inquiry to teach about race in social studies*. Information Age Press.

Choi, Y. (2013). Teaching social studies for newcomer English language learners: Toward culturally relevant pedagogy. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *15*(1), 12-18.

Cokley, K. O. (2015). *The myth of Black anti-intellectualism: A true psychology of African American students.* Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Crowley, R. M., & King, L. J. (2018). Making inquiry critical: Examining power and inequity in the classroom. *Social Education*, *82*(1), 14-17.

Davis, J. R. (2007). Making a difference: How teachers can positively affect racial identity and acceptance in America. *The Social Studies, 98*(5), 209-216.

Dillard, C. (1994). Beyond supply and demand: Critical pedagogy, ethnicity, and empowerment in recruiting teachers of color. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *45*(1), 9-17.

DuVernay, A. (Director) & Webb, P. (Screenwriter). (2014). *Selma* [Motion Picture]. USA: Paramount Pictures.

Dyson, A. H., & Genishi, C. (2005). *On the case: Approaches to language and literacy research.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.

Epstein, T., Mayorga, E., & Nelson, J. (2011). Teaching about race in an urban history class: The effects of culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, *35*(1), 2-21.

Erickson, F., & Mohatt, G. (1982). Cultural organization of participation structures in two classrooms of Indian students. In G. Spindler (Ed.). *Doing the ethnography of schooling: Educational anthropology in action*, (pp. 132-174). Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Fausset, R. (2020, June 4). What we know about the shooting death of Ahmaud Arbery. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/article/ahmaud-arbery-shooting-georgia.html.

Fitchett, P. G. (2010). A profile of twenty-first century secondary social studies teachers. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 34(2), 229-265.

Foster, M. (1990). The politics of race: Through the eyes of African-American teachers. *Journal of Education*, *172*(3), 123-141.

Foster, M. (1991). Constancy, connectedness, and constraints in the lives of African-American teachers. *NWSA Journal*, *3*(2), 233-261.

Foster, M. (1993). Educating for competence in community and culture: Exploring the views of exemplary African-American teachers. *Urban Education*, *27*(4), 370-394.

Foster, M. (1994a). Effective Black teachers: A literature review. *Teaching diverse populations: Formulating a knowledge base*, 225-241.

Foster, M. (1994b). The role of community and culture in school reform efforts: Examining the views of African-American teachers. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*, *8*(2), 5.

Foster, M. (1995). African American teachers and culturally relevant pedagogy. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.). *Handbook of research on multicultural education.*

Foster, M. (1997). *Black teachers on teaching*. New Press.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, practice and research*. Teachers College Press.

Gee, G. C., Ro, A., Shariff-Marco, S., & Chae, D. (2009). Racial discrimination and health among Asian Americans: Evidence, assessment, and directions for future research. *Epidemiologic reviews*, *31*(1), 130-151.

Gonzales, R. (2019, February 26). Sexual assault of detained migrant children reported in the thousands since 2015. *National Public Radio.* https://www.npr.org/2019/02/26/698397631/sexual-assault-of-detained-migrant-children-reported-in-the-thousands-since-2015.

Grant, C. A., Brown, K. D., & Brown, A. L. (2015). *Black intellectual thought in education: The missing traditions of Anna Julia Cooper, Carter G. Woodson, and Alain LeRoy Locke.* Routledge.

Griffith, J. (2020, January 22). Black Texas teen told to cut his dreadlocks to walk at graduation. *NBC News.* https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/black-texas-teen-told-cut-his-dreadlocks-order-walk-graduation-n1120731.

Gudmundsdottir, S., & Shulman, L. (1987). Pedagogical content knowledge in social studies. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 31*(2), 59-70.

Haas, J. (2011). *The assassination of Fred Hampton: how the FBI and the Chicago police murdered a Black Panther*. Chicago Review Press.

Hall, J. D. (2007). The long civil rights movement and the political uses of the past. In *The Best American History Essays* (pp. 235-271). Palgrave Macmillan.

Howard, T. C. (2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy: Ingredients for critical teacher reflection. *Theory Into Practice, 42*(3), 195-202.

Huber, L. P., López, C. B., Malagón, M. C., Vélez, V., & Solórzano, D. G. (2008). Getting beyond the 'symptom,' acknowledging the 'disease': Theorizing racist nativism. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *11*(1), 39-51.

Jackson, I., & Knight-Manuel, M. (2019). "Color does not equal consciousness": Educators of color learning to enact a sociopolitical consciousness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *70*(1), 65-78.

Johnson, D. J., & Wilson, J. P. (2019). Racial bias in perceptions of size and strength: The impact of stereotypes and group differences. *Psychological Science, 30*(4), 553-562.

King, S. H. (1993). The limited presence of African-American teachers. *Review of Educational Research, 63*(2), 115-149.

King, L. J., & Chandler, P. T. (2016). From non-racism to anti-racism in social studies teacher education: Social studies and racial pedagogical content knowledge. In A. R. Crowe & A. Cuenca (Eds.). *Rethinking social studies teacher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 3-21). Springer.

Kohli, R. (2019, 25 January) Personal interview. *JTE Insider blog.* Accessible online at https://edwp.educ.msu.edu/jte-insider/2019/podcast-interview-rita-kohli/

Kohli, R., & Pizarro, M. (2016). Fighting to educate our own: Teachers of Color, relational accountability, and the struggle for racial justice. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 49,* 72-84.

Kristof, N. (2020). The top U.S. coronavirus hot spots are all Indian lands. *The New York Times.* Available online at https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/30/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-native-americans.html

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465-491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). Crafting a culturally relevant social studies approach. In E. W. Ross (Ed.). *The social studies curriculum: Purposes, problems, and possibilities* (pp. 201-215). SUNY Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). *Critical race theory perspectives on the social studies: The profession, policies, and curriculum*. Information Age Publishing.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 74-84.

Liang, C. T., Li, L. C., & Kim, B. S. (2004). The Asian American racism-related stress inventory: Development, factor analysis, reliability, and validity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *51*(1), 103.

Loffman, M. (2020, April 7). Asian Americans describe 'gut punch' of racist attacks during coronavirus pandemic. *Public Broadcasting Service.* https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/asian-americans-describe-gut-punch-of-racist-attacks-during-coronavirus-pandemic.

Loving v. Virginia, 388 U.S. 1 (1967).

Madkins, T. C. (2011). The Black teacher shortage: A literature review of historical and contemporary trends. *Journal of Negro Education, 80*(3), 417-427.

Martell, C. C. (2013). Race and histories: Examining culturally relevant teaching in the US history classroom. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 41*(1), 65-88.

Martell, C. C. (2018). Teaching Race in US History: Examining Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in a Multicultural Urban High School. *Journal of Education*, *198*(1), 63-77.

Martell, C. C., & Stevens, K. M. (2019). Culturally sustaining social studies teachers: Understanding models of practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 86,* 102897. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102897

Milner IV, H. R. (2014). Culturally relevant, purpose-driven learning & teaching in a middle school social studies classroom. *Multicultural Education, 21*(2), 9-17.

Milner IV, H. R. (2016). A Black male teacher's culturally responsive practices. *The Journal of Negro Education, 85*(4), 417-432.

Milner , H. R., & Howard, T. C. (2004). Black teachers, Black students, Black communities, and *Brown*: Perspectives and insights from experts. *Journal of Negro Education*, 285-297.

Milner, H. R., Delale-O'Connor, L. A., Murray, I. E., & Farinde, A. A. (2016). Reflections on "Brown" to understand "Milliken v. Bradley": What if we are focusing on the wrong policy questions? *Teachers College Record, 118*(3), 1-32.

Morrison, T. (1998, March). *Charlie Rose.* Public Broadcasting Service. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4vIGvKpT1c

Moss, P., & Tilly, C. (1996). "Soft" skills and race: An investigation of black men's employment problems. *Work and Occupations, 23*(3), 252-276.

National Center for Education Statistics (2020). Characteristics of public school teachers. Available online at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_clr.asp

Nieto, S. (2017). *Brooklyn dreams: My life in public education*. Harvard Education Press.

Pabón, A. (2016). Waiting for Black Superman: A look at a problematic assumption. *Urban Education, 51*(8), 915-939.

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational researcher, 41*(3), 93-97.

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review, 84*(1), 85-100.

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press.

Pompa, C. (2019, June 24). Immigrant kids keep dying in CBP detention centers, and DHS won't take accountability. *American Civil Liberties Union.* https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/immigrants-rights-and-detention/immigrant-kids-keep-dying-cbp-detention.

Pyke, K., & Dang, T. (2003). "FOB" and "whitewashed": Identity and internalized racism among second generation Asian Americans. *Qualitative Sociology, 26*(2), 147-172.

Resnikoff, N. (2014). The real Cesar Chavez leaves behind a complicated legacy. *MSNBC.* Available online at https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/cesar-chavezs-complicated-legacy-msna299346

Roberts, T., & Carter Andrews, D. J. (2013) A critical race analysis of the gaslighting against African American teachers: Considerations for recruitment and retention. In D. J. Carter Andrews, & F. Tuitt, F. (Eds.). *Contesting the myth of a 'post racial' era: The continued significance of race in U.S. education,* (pp. 69-94). Peter Lang.

Rosenbloom, S. R., & Way, N. (2004). Experiences of discrimination among African American, Asian American, and Latino adolescents in an urban high school. *Youth & Society, 35*(4), 420-451.

Rothman, J. (2014, 26 December). The meaning of "culture". *The New Yorker.* https://www.newyorker.com/books/joshua-rothman/meaning-culture

Royal, C., & Gibson, S. (2017). They schools: Culturally relevant pedagogy under siege. *Teachers College Record, 119*(1), 1-25.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.

Sleeter, C. E. (2012). Confronting the marginalization of culturally relevant pedagogy. *Urban Education, 47*(3), 562-584.

Smith-Morris, C. (2020, March 6). Addressing the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. *Cultural Survival.* https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/addressing-epidemic-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls.

Tatum, B. D. (2017). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?: And other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.

Thomas, E. E., & Warren, C. A. (2017). Making it relevant: How a Black male teacher sustained professional relationships through culturally responsive discourse. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 20,* 87-100.

United States Census Bureau (2012). The Asian Population:2010. Available online at https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf

Vang, C. Y. (2010). *Hmong America: Reconstructing community in diaspora* (Vol. 132). University of Illinois Press.

Vang, T., & Flores, J. (1999). The Hmong Americans: identity, conflict, and opportunity. *Multicultural Perspectives, 1*(4), 9-14.

Vasquez, R. (2019). Twenty-four white women and *me*": Controlling and managing men of color in teacher education. *Urban Education.* https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042085919842621

Vasquez Heilig, J., Brown, K. D., & Brown, A. L. (2012). The illusion of inclusion: A critical race theory textual analysis of race and standards. *Harvard Educational Review*, *82*(3), 403-424.

Walker, V. S. (1996). *Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated South*. University of North Carolina Press.

Walker, V. S. (2001). African American teaching in the South: 1940–1960. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(4), 751-779.

Walker, V. S. (2005). Organized resistance and Black educators' quest for school equality, 1878-1938. *Teachers College Record, 107*(3), 355-388.

Walker, V. S. (2009). *Hello professor: A Black principal and professional leadership in the segregated South*. University of North Carolina Press.

Wang, J., Siy, J. O., & Cheryan, S. (2011). Racial discrimination and mental health among Asian American youth. *Asian American and Pacific Islander children and mental health, 1*, 219-242.

Wertsch, J. V. (1998). *Mind as action*. Oxford University Press.

Young, E. (2010). Challenges to conceptualizing and actualizing culturally relevant pedagogy: How viable is the theory in classroom practice?. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(3), 248-260.

MANUSCRIPT TWO: "HOW EVERY BLACK MAN SHOULD BE": HISTORICAL NARRATIVE CONSTRUCTION AS IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

Abstract

This interpretive case study takes a sociocultural approach to examine how Kareem, an African American 11th grade student, constructed a historical narrative as way to reframe two of his own racialized identities. Throughout this *mediated action*, Kareem incorporated cultural tools from the classroom and his awareness of the racialization of African American men to support his thesis that NBA legend Bill Russell advanced the Civil Rights Movement. The academic cultural tools that Kareem privileged were the schematic narrative template of racial progress and the specific narrative of the Movement. Kareem's narrative sought to establish Bill Russell as a model Black man, an exceptional athlete and civil rights leader capable of defying negative stereotypes of Black men. Kareem acknowledged that being a Black Muslim man in the United States made him a member of several targeted groups, indicating that his construction process paralleled a personal project of racial identity negotiation. Data sources include field notes, an audio-recorded conversation, student work, and a student interview. The author ends by suggesting that students' experiences with racialization be considered as a cultural tool that can mediate disciplinary learning as much as the historical narratives presented in texts and promoted by figures of authority. Implications for promoting students' awareness about simplistic racialized in the history classroom are also explored.

Keywords: mediated action, historical narratives, racialization, identity

The need to include the experiences and perspectives of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)[7] and other historically marginalized communities in P-12 curriculum and instruction is far from a foregone conclusion. Despite over two decades of scholarship on culturally responsive and relevant pedagogies, students and educators alike continue to face challenges when navigating the teaching of race, racism, and race relations in schools (Epstein, 2010; Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Lewis, 2001, 2003; Pollock, 2009; Wills, 2001).

The ever-changing demographics of the U.S. population call for a continually evolving approach to affirming and sustaining the identities of children and youth in all learning environments. Racial/ethnic identities, as well as experiences being racialized and racializing others, are salient components of how youth see themselves in the world and choose to engage with it. Students' experiences being racialized inform their historical interpretations and narrative constructions (An, 2012; Epstein, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2010; Santiago, 2017; Terzian & Yeager, 2007). Additionally, the United States is a nation steeped in white supremacy since its inception (Kendi, 2017), with a history of oppressing individuals and communities not considered white.

Since they live in a highly racialized world, students' race/ethnicity are important components of their lived experience and developing sense of self. Therefore, all youth would benefit from learning opportunities that illuminate the social construction of race/ethnicity and how they permeate life in their given context. These encounters can take place in both formal and informal settings, including in and out of school. Regardless of the particulars, constructing an understanding of race/ethnicity, racial identity, and racialization is a complex endeavor. Research on this process can offer educators a better understanding of how to support students.

---

[7] I take up the term BIPOC to acknowledge that the phrase People of Color 1) can homogenize and render invisible the Black subject when the term "Black" seems unpalatable; and 2) fails to recognize that Native nations are sovereign entities, making Indigeneity a political identity.

This study seeks to understand how a student's classroom learning about individuals and/or communities with whom they identify can intersect with identity work. It combines sociocultural perspectives on mediated action and identity formation to examine a Black Muslim teenager's construction of a historical narrative to negotiate his identities as they are racialized in the United States. Asking the question of what a BIPOC student's historical narrative construction reveals about his racialized identities and experiences, I explore the possibility that formal curriculum-led history learning can facilitate a personal act of self-discovery and identity negotiation. I also consider potential limiting factors when youth engage in these processes.

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural perspectives consider mental activities to be inextricable from the cultural, institutional, and historical settings in which they take place (Wertsch, 1994, 1998a). Theorists in this camp consider how *agents'* interactions with language and other *cultural tools* in their environment *mediate* their actions (Feuerstein et al., 1985; Vygotsky, 1986; Wertsch, 1991). The concept of identity is as contextual, constructed, and contested as the cognitive functions typically analyzed through a sociocultural lens (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Thus, sociocultural perspectives can be instrumental in dissecting students' concurrent cognitive *and* psychosocial processes as they select what to include in the historical narratives and identities they construct. In this study, the sociocultural perspective will inform how I analyze both a cognitive task undertaken in the classroom and a process of identity negotiation that occurs simultaneously.

Mediated Action

Sociocultural scholars advocate maintaining a focus on mediated action as the unit of analysis to avoid the reductionist tendency of concentrating too narrowly on either the individual or the contexts through which they move. "The study of mediated action focuses on how humans

use *cultural tools* or *mediational means* (terms used interchangeably) when engaging in various forms action," (Wertsch, 1998b, p. 518; emphasis in original). Regardless of whether the action is carried out by an individual alone or in concert with others, it is considered socially, culturally, and historically situated. Most notably, mediated action is defined by the *interaction* between the cultural tools that mediate a mental action and the individuals or groups that take them up.

Cultural tools. Cultural tools are an indispensable component of mediated action. These tools are "cultural" because they are collectively generated and disseminated over time, making them available for multiple generations across contexts (Cole & Wertsch, 1996). Cognitive functions like constructing narratives are mediated by cultural tools, such as written texts or more symbolic and abstract systems. In the case of history education, students compose their own narratives by selecting some tools over others, extracting what they need, and arranging them as they deem fit, thus giving the tools new purpose and meaning. Tools and agents therefore shape and are shaped by one another in a dialogic manner (Wertsch, 1998a).

How students engage with cultural tools can depend on the extent to which they know how to use (*master*) them or make them their own (*appropriate*). Mastery and appropriation can, however, occur independently of one another (Wertsch, 1998a), as when students appropriate and defend a position before gathering and mastering evidence for it, or when they master and debate positions that they have not appropriated and do not genuinely espouse.

Specific narratives and schematic narrative templates. Narratives are one type of rhetorical cultural tool with which students interact to construct their interpretations (Wertsch, 2004, 2008) and generate narratives of their own. To disambiguate, "specific narratives are organized around specific dates, settings and actions, whereas schematic narrative templates are more generalized structures used to generate multiple specific narratives" (Wertsch, 2008, p.

140, emphasis in original). Specific narratives like that of the Civil Rights Movement[8] are akin to short stories in the schematic narrative template (SNT) about how groups overcome oppression.

In the United States, specific narratives constitute the bulk of the P-12 curriculum, but SNTs are ever-present; teachers and students unconsciously use SNTs to recognize and classify stories. Although SNTs are not universal archetypes (Wertsch, 2004), they guide the course of the specific narratives they encompass, at times helping students process new information but at other times limiting the complexity of narratives by promoting distortion, omission, or both. Because these narrative types are generated in social context and available to individuals across multiple generations, they can act as cultural tools in the act of narrative construction.

Racialization

The construction of race and its use for systemic subjugation are typically analyzed through race-specific frameworks, most prominently critical race theory (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). A sociocultural approach to the study of race/ethnicity can reframe it as a process, which is compatible with the characterization of race/ethnicity as neither fixed nor stable, but fluid and constructed (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Omi & Winant, 1994; Tatum, 2019). Tatum (2019) explains:

> Racialization can be understood as a process of "becoming"—a process of understanding one's own position (and being understood by others) in a racial hierarchy as the result of repeated social interactions over time and context, interactions which are nuanced not only by one's physical attributes (e.g., skin color, hair texture, facial features) but other characteristics, such as gender

[8] I capitalize the phrase Civil Rights Movement to denote the time period to which the specific narrative typically refers, as opposed the more *longue durée* civil rights movement that dates back to the 19th century and, arguably continues into the present day.

> expression, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, language, age, or ability. (p. 89)

This "becoming" requires negotiating one's racial position vis-á-vis structural elements, interpersonal interactions, and the interstices of various other identity and status markers.

Contrary to what the term "becoming" may suggest, the construction of racial/ethnic identities is not an exclusively internal process. Nasir (2011) employs the phrase *racialized identities* "to honor the idea that race (and thus racial identities) is not an inherent category but rather is *made racial* through social interaction, positioning, and discourse" (p. 5, emphasis in original). Since race/ethnicity is contextual, individuals can assume multiple racial/ethnic labels, and each is uniquely racialized across contexts.

Throughout this paper, I include Nasir's (2011) notion of "making racial" and Tatum's (2019) concept of "becoming" in the process of racialization. According to this definition, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and recreational activities can be racialized. People and practices can both be "made racial" by others and they can "become" racial from within. In educational contexts, one can "view learning and identity simultaneously as individual processes that involve agency and personal sense-making and as social processes deeply influenced by social context, norms, and interactions with others in learning settings" (Nasir, 2011, p. 2). This outlook on the reciprocal relationship between learning and identity formation informs my approach throughout the present study; I operationalize historical narrative construction and racial/ethnic identity formation as parallel, if not mutually reinforcing, processes.

Racialization as a mediated action. I contend that the process of racialization bears the properties of a mediated action; it draws on the cultural tools of a given sociocultural context and can vary by setting. The cultural tools of racialization may include societal messages (e.g., racial

stereotypes, popular media portrayals, and textbook depictions), the physical attributes and other characteristics that agents use to negotiate an individual's position in a racial hierarchy, and past experiences being racialized. Just as conventional forms of mediated action may result in diverse outcomes, the variegated process of racialization is one reason that individuals who self-identify similarly can have vastly different experiences with race and racism. To date, application of the mediated action framework above has been primarily cognitive. My conceptualization of racialization as a mediated action expands the possibilities for evaluating psychologically and sociologically complex mental functions, many of which take place regularly in classrooms.

By the time youth reach high school, they have typically witnessed countless instances of racialization, but it is in adolescence that the project of self-creation commonly begins in earnest for youth in Western societies (Tatum, 2019). "Adolescents' gains in metacognition, abstract thinking, and social cognition inform their exploration of racial identity and strengthen their ability to identify discrimination on an individual and structural level" (Anyiwo et al., 2018, p. 166). Even when these incidents happen unconsciously, the experience can leave an imprint on youths' notions of racial/ethnic groups as a whole, such as how members of said groups might look, think, or act. This exposure can shape their self-concept and views of their place in a racialized society, as well as their perceptions of how race operates in the world.

Relevant Literature

This study highlights how a BIPOC student constructed a historical narrative centering racial history and, in the process, addressed issues relevant to his racialized identities. I therefore draw from empirical literature that expounds on historical narrative construction as a mediated action, specifically through the use of schematic narrative templates and specific narratives as cultural tools. I also connect racial histories with students' racial/ethnic and

racialized identities. To mirror my context, I review this scholarship as it relates to history/social studies education.

Historical Narrative Construction as a Mediated Action

Students construct narratives that are congruent with the narratives they already know (Barton & Levstik, 1998; Epstein, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2010; Santiago, 2017). When asked to identify the most important people and events in U.S. history, adolescents in Barton & Levstik (1998) focused on the origin and development of the United States as a social and political entity, the creation and extension of freedoms and opportunities, and the nation's moral superiority and exceptionality. Specific narratives of dissent, racism, and sexism did not fit their narrative of expanding freedoms (Epstein, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2010). Thus, even when students identify specific historical moments that are incompatible with the overarching narrative, they may be ill-equipped to reconfigure or abandon their earlier, more simplistic notions. They may also omit nuanced and unique details to make an unfamiliar and complex narrative fit a familiar one (Santiago, 2017).

Racial Histories and Students' Identities

Research indicates that students' racial/ethnic identities and racialized experiences can mediate their historical interpretations to diverse ends (An, 2012; Epstein, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2010; Santiago, 2017, 2019; Terzian & Yeager, 2007). While some BIPOC youth draw on their racialized identities and experiences to acknowledge racism, the relatively privileged social status of others can result in their overlooking racial oppression. In Epstein (1998, 2000, 2001, 2010), white students were less likely than Black students to highlight the violence of slavery, the role of white actors in these injustices, resistance among Black communities, and the enduring nature of racial oppression. Similarly, English-language-dominant Mexican American students identified racial discrimination in the past but did not discern how language serves as a proxy for race among their

Emerging Bilingual contemporaries (Santiago, 2017). Language discrimination was incompatible with their notion of racial progress as exemplified by *Brown* or their privileged linguistic status.

Terzian & Yeager (2007) and An (2012) found that Cuban American and Korean American high school students, respectively, did not challenge the narrative of progress or the primacy of white European figures in them. In both studies, the mainstream historical narrative promoted in school did not clash with the students' privileged social statuses in their respective communities. Their racial/ethnic BIPOC identities were insufficient to result in critical stances on the Eurocentric curriculum. These findings evince how students' experiences with racialization can intersect with socioeconomic class, local demographics, linguistic or migratory status, and other contextual factors to modulate how BIPOC youth position their own and other BIPOC communities in history.

These scholars illustrate the variability in BIPOC students' thinking about narratives of race/ethnicity based on their experiences with racialization; students may or may not bring "outside" knowledge to bear in the classroom to make sense of narratives about race/ethnicity. Ultimately, just as all people experience racialization in countless way, students' analyses of the past take on numerous iterations, and no facile claims can be made about direct correlations between students' racial/ethnic identities and their historical interpretations. Thus, just as students experience racialization to varying degrees and in different ways, so their analyses of race and racism in the past and present may depend on the nature of their racialized experiences.

The field of social studies education is wanting in further examination of how students use their racialized experiences to interpret past and present narratives about race/ethnicity or racialization. Few curricula connect students' personal experiences with race/ethnicity to how they construct historical and contemporary narratives about racism. Much of what education scholars know about the influence of race/ethnicity in children's and youths' lives comes from

literature outside P-12 history/social studies education, primarily from scholarship using critical race theory (CRT) in other content areas and at the collegiate level. The application of CRT to education has proven generative for education scholars, but it must not be the sole framework through which the field can analyze the teaching and learning of race/ethnicity. Since mediated action theory has yet to be applied to the sociocultural framing of racialization and identity formation, this paper seeks to furnish new insights on the process whereby students construct historical narratives as a means for exploring and articulating their racialized identities.

While historical narrative construction *can* be about any topic, analyzing it through the lens of racialization can illuminate how students factor their entire— including their racialized— selves into their learning process. Specifically, how a student joins their lived racialized experiences to the textual and spoken narratives of the classroom context illuminates the potential for history education to help youth craft possible selves. This synergy of mediated action and racialization allows researchers to ask how students' racialized experiences inform their narrative construction. The sociocultural approach can reveal students' intellectual engagement with disciplinary learning alongside their lived experiences with racialization.

Specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement. To investigate the narratives that students construct about BIPOC communities, their accomplishments, and their impact on race relations, this study centered the Civil Rights Movement (the Movement), a topic in which race and discrimination are central. The specific narrative of the Movement portrays leaders as martyrs and/or messiahs, has a limited chronology, essentializes people and their struggle, frames women as peripheral, overstates its triumph, and depicts racism as aberrational (Alridge, 2006; Frost, 2012; Hall, 2005; Lawson & Payne, 2006; Woodson, 2016, 2017).

This specific narrative of the Movement conceals the compelling nuances. For one, the fixation on martyrs and messiahs occludes collective action and elevates a few heroes onto a pedestal that renders them inaccessible to modern-day youth (Alridge, 2006; Woodson, 2017). It credits individuals and institutions of official power as the levers of change (Alridge, 2006). Because these martyrs (e.g., Parks) and messiahs (e.g., King) are erroneously depicted as standalone community pillars and longsuffering advocates of non-violence, this trope racializes Movement leadership as peaceful and respectable, not as critical Black patriots (Busey & Walker, 2017). Secondly, essentialized depictions of the Movement gloss over internal disagreements, intra- and inter-ethnic differences (Woodson, 2017), and activism by Asian/Asian American, Indigenous, and Latinx communities. This essentializing component reinforces a Black-white racial binary (Perea, 1997) and racializes the Movement as an African American, male-dominated, Christian, middle-class monolith. Both these characteristics of the specific narrative—the martyr-messiah framing and the essentializing of its actors—represent widely-held beliefs that inform how students may construct narratives about the Movement.

Methods

This interpretive case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) is a part of a larger study about a high school history class. The case study approach was ideal for an examination of multiple data sources to reveal the otherwise unobservable cognitive processes pivotal to mediated action. Moreover, because the goal of this analysis is to highlight how historical narrative construction can provide new insights into how a BIPOC student's lived experiences with racialization can impact disciplinary learning, it was key to focus on an individual, rather than generalize across cases. Lastly, while case study methods may appear to isolate the individual from their context, "case studies focus on 'relation to environment,' that is, context" (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301).

Research Question

The literature theorizes and concretizes the complexities of how mediated mental tasks take place and how students construct historical narratives. At the same time, questions about the extent to which BIPOC students reflect on and draw from their own racialized experiences when they learn racial history, remain unanswered. Therefore, I posed the question, *What does a BIPOC student's use of cultural tools during historical narrative construction reveal about his racialized identities and experiences with racialization*?

Context

Focal student. Kareem is a basketball aficionado who identifies as both Black and African American (the child of Somali immigrants), and as Muslim. Kareem was eager to talk to me and proud of how the topic he chose for the final course assignment in his History of the Americas course (described in detail below). His topic—Bill Russell as a civil rights leader—integrated two components of interest to him: athletics and nonviolence. Our informal conversations often confirmed and extended trends in the literature, which piqued my interested. I identified the influence of the specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement in Kareem's vision of Russell and in his opinions on what levers effect change in race relations. I also welcomed the possibility of Kareem's faith surfacing in his discussion of the Movement, particularly since the Nation of Islam (NOI) has strong roots in the U.S. Midwest. Although the course was part of the selective International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Plus Programme at his school, I did not select Kareem because he was an academic outlier. He had consistent attendance and was neither outspoken during whole-class interactions, nor did he appear disengaged from the lessons I observed. My interest in his case was born out of our sustained dialogues.

Classroom. Kareem's history teacher, Mr. Davidson, was an African American man in his twenties, a native of the city, and in his first year teaching high school history. Out of Kareem's 21 peers, 10 self-identified as African American, three as biracial Latinx/white, one as Asian/Asian American, and seven as white. Kareem was preparing for a three-part assignment that required students to (1) evaluate the origin, purpose, content, values, and limitations of at least one primary and at least two scholarly secondary sources; (2) respond to a historical inquiry question of the students' choosing; and (3) reflect on what they learned through the historical inquiry process.

School. Kareem attends a grade 7-12 school, Amistad High, in a small Midwestern city. It enjoys high racial/ethnic and linguistic diversity. According to the school's 2017-2018 data, its student body (N = 1,261) was classified thus: 37.67% African/African American, 25.14% Hispanic/Latinx, 23.95% white, 8.08% two or more races, 3.89% Asian/Asian American, and 1.27% Native American. Families reported 26 home languages, 65% of students were considered "economically disadvantaged," and the four-year graduation rate was 80%.

Data Generation

I became acquainted with Kareem while I observed 30 periods (35-90 minutes each) in his history class. I took detailed field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) when speaking with him one-on-one and audio-recorded seven periods in which the topic was race, racism, or BIPOC. For each lesson, I gathered the corresponding instructional materials (teacher-generated handouts, reproductions of primary sources, and photocopied textbook pages).

I chose Kareem as my focal student because of the nuanced thread running through our conversations, his essays, and the interview. After students submitted their essays, I read the 14 papers that focused on race, racism, and/or BIPOC and identified seven students who attempted to construct narratives about race during the Movement. I interviewed these students for 25-30

minutes each about the research assignment, encouraging them to explain their topic choice, describe and critique their sources, and reflect on their papers (see Appendix for protocol). I audio-recorded, transcribed, and wrote analytic memos (Saldaña, 2013) for all seven interviews. I also retrieved the peer-reviewed article that Kareem cited heavily (Goudsouzian, 2006).

Data Analysis

This paper centers Kareem and his multilayered mediated action. I use five data sources to outline how he constructed his historical narrative: 1) field notes from a conversation we had during a class observation in the early stages of the project, 2) an audio-recorded conversation between the principal and Kareem's history class, 3) Kareem's three-part essay, 4) the scholarly article that Kareem cited extensively, and 5) the audio and transcript of our 30-minute interview.

Data analysis was ongoing and iterative. I took extensive field notes during each observation and wrote an analytic memo before leaving the site. I listened to the audio, if applicable, and wrote additional memos. I conducted first-cycle descriptive coding of the field notes, memos, and artifacts (Saldaña, 2013), noting patterns of frequency or similarity across the data sources.

After classroom-based data collection, I coded Kareem's essay and used the codes to both add questions unique to him to the interview protocol and to recode the data pertinent to him (field notes, memos, classroom artifacts, and the transcript of the focal classroom conversation). During the focal conversation, the principal of the school entered the classroom, inquired about the Red Power Movement slide projected onto the screen, and shared his personal insights about why Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been more successful than Malcolm X. Kareem repeated these remarks during his interview, making them a key source in his historical narrative. I used the themes that emerged from Kareem's narrative to code the Goudsouzian (2006) article and the principal's comments as sources that supported the academic cultural tools in the course. Two

major themes emerged: *academic cultural tools* and *identity-related cultural tools*. The academic tools included evidence of the schematic narrative template (SNT) of racial progress and the specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement; the identity-related tools refer to Kareem's mentions of his racialized identities and experiences.

Researcher Positionality

My ethno-racial identification as Afro-Latina and experiences being racialized as Black in some contexts, as Latina in others, and— on rare instances—as both, provided me ease of access to the school and classroom in this study. Although I did not inquire directly, it is possible that Kareem and other BIPOC students sought me out to discuss their topics related to race because of how they racialized me and because of my stated areas of interest and expertise.

As a university-affiliated researcher, I likely also benefited from students' perception of my authority. This status would have been heightened by the fact that it was first the teacher's decision to grant me access to the classroom space, a decision in which students had no input. Therefore, even though students were apprised of their right of non-consent, my presence in the classroom was imposed on them. I approached my student interactions with this factor in mind.

Kareem and I forged a strong, positive rapport over the course of several months. Though I often circulated the classroom during independent work, I sat beside Kareem consistently. When we spoke informally, I introduced additional information or presented alternatives to his points of view, especially when discussing his views on Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King. Kareem was often curious about how I would answer the questions that Mr. Davidson asked of his students, and I obliged. I reserved my thoughts during the formal interview, however. To preclude any undue influence on Kareem's articulation of his thoughts, I did not challenge his statements that reflected simplistic narratives of racial progress and about the Movement.

Historical Background: Bill Russell

William (Bill) Felton Russell joined the Boston Celtics in 1956 and led them to 11 national championships in 13 seasons. Starting in 1966, he doubled as player and coach, becoming the league's first Black coach. He publicly demonstrated a critical outlook on race relations, the media, and his role in society. He was outspoken about his experiences as a professional Black athlete and his political views, including mild support for the Nation of Islam. When Black Celtics players were refused entry to an establishment in Indiana, Russell led fellow players to complain to the mayor, who had presented the team with keys to the city. In 1963, he led a march from Roxbury to Boston Common and participated in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. During Freedom Summer, Russell led basketball clinics for Mississippi youth and publicized 12 unsolved murders in Mississippi. He was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1975 (Goudsouzian, 2006; Russell & Branch, 1979) and received a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011. He considers himself a civil rights activist; at the time of writing, it was the first descriptor listed on his Twitter profile, and during Black History Month 2019, he sported a Colin Kaepernick jersey in solidarity with the racial justice activist and former NFL quarterback.

Findings & Analysis

In the narrative that Kareem composed in speech and in writing, he constructed a historical narrative using a series of cultural tools that offered support for his claims. He drew on cultural tools related to narrative construction (the schematic narrative template of racial progress and the specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement) as well as cultural tools related to identity formation (awareness of how Black men and Muslims are racialized in the United States). Kareem's narrative served the dual purposes of highlighting who he considered to be a

lesser-known actor in the Movement and also of challenging racialized narratives about Black men. In effect, therefore, Kareem carried out two simultaneous mediated actions.

Cultural Tools to Construct a New Narrative

Kareem's narrative was consistent across our informal conversations during independent work time, in the three-part written course assignment, and in the interview that I conducted with him at the end of the project. The narrative claimed, with conviction, that "Bill Russell evolved the game of basketball and advanced the Civil Rights Movement" (Interview, May 31, 2018). In order to construct this narrative, Kareem drew on two common academic cultural tools that inform the formal learning of U.S. history. These tools were the schematic narrative template (SNT) of racial progress and the specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement (the Movement). While Kareem only alluded to the SNT of racial progress explicitly in some of his comments, a definitive tone was apparent throughout his account of how Bill Russell's success in the NBA and political action off the court moved the Movement forward.

The SNT of racial progress. Kareem's narrative had the markings of the SNT of racial progress. When I asked him why he chose to study the Movement, he responded:

> I think it's important to know where we came from, like what advances we have now, so that we don't take them for granted… Non-violence and how everything got done. That whole decade, the 60s. How everything got done, and it worked. We got our rights and everything. (Interview, May 31, 2018)

In Kareem's opinion, learning about the past helps students to appreciate how far "we" have come. Because he was referring to the Movement, I implied that these "advances" were related to race relations and that "we" may have referred to either people of the United States or to BIPOC. His concern about taking "advances…for granted" indicated a concern for current

perceptions of racial progress, though it was once again unclear among whom. He attributed this racial progress to non-violence and other trademark tactics of the Movement, which he equated with the 1960s. He made no mention of political action using measures other than non-violence. Most importantly, his takeaway was that in the end, "we got our rights and everything."

The specific narrative of the Movement. The specific narrative of the Movement was evident in all aspects of Kareem's narrative. For instance, because Bill Russell's NBA career spanned the years 1956 to 1969, the chronology of Kareem's narrative closely resembled the "Montgomery-to-Memphis" (Schulke et al., 1976) framework of the specific narrative. Additionally, although Kareem considered candidates other than Bill Russell as potential subjects of his research project, they were all Black men in sports. As I explain shortly, however, this comes as little surprise when one contemplates how Kareem's decisions throughout this academic project had deeply personal implications for his identities. For that reason, I focus on how two features of the specific narrative of the Movement—the martyr-messiah leadership and the Black-white binary—manifested in Kareem's narrative. These themes are integral to a narrative concerned with perceptions of Blackness and manhood.

Martyr-messiah leadership. In his essay, Kareem framed Bill Russell as a martyr *and* a messiah. Kareem recounted how Russell faced extreme personal hardship: having his home vandalized, receiving threating correspondence, and being barred from hotels and restaurants where his white teammates were welcomed. Kareem also conjectured that Russell "cost himself the 1964 MVP award with his comments" about what appeared to be a quota on the number of Black players that the NBA was willing to tolerate. Russell also, in Kareem's estimation, "personified the goals of the civil rights movement by integrating the NBA" (Student work). His essay echoed Goudsouzian's description of Russell as an ambassador who had "accepted a

responsibility to represent the entire African American race, project humble dignity and patriotic enthusiasm." Although Russell was not assassinated, Kareem saw him was a martyr because "he still got the Jim Crow treatment in the South," regardless of his remarkable success.

Kareem intended to corroborate his claim that Bill Russell was a messianic civil rights leader by citing secondary sources and "a speech delivered by Martin Luther King about how athletes were changing white people's minds in the 60s." Kareem employed the words of the Movement's quintessential figure, Dr. King, about athletes' capacity to win hearts and minds for the cause. Kareem wrote that, "Martin Luther King Jr. a leader in the civil rights movement told Russell and fellow athletes..." that their contributions were indispensable. However, a *TIME Magazine* archive indicates that King's words were not, in fact, directed at Bill Russell. Whether unintentionally or to give the appearance that King praised Russell, Kareem omitted the sentence in which King stated, "You [Don], Jackie [Robinson], and Roy [Campanella] will never know how easy you made it for me to do my job" ("Don Newcombe," 2007, n. p.). Kareem knew that the endorsement of the late King would buttress his laudatory portrayal of Bill Russell.

From the outset, Kareem also cast Russell as an unconventional activist who was neither passive nor "aggressive" like Malcolm X. Even unprompted, Kareem contrasted Russell with Malcolm X during our first informal conversation, saying that the assassinated leader "only saw things his way" (Field notes). Although Kareem was quick to clarify that Russell did not share Malcolm X's views or means, he struggled to provide details about Malcolm X's beliefs or strategies, nonetheless reiterating disapproval. Kareem condemned Malcolm X, instead positioning Russell closer to Dr. King to earn the athlete the designation of civil rights leader. Kareem's rhetoric confirmed the polarization of the Martin-Malcolm dichotomy within the martyr-messiah framing, and the principal's remarks to the class reified this stance.

Black-white binary. Another avenue through which the specific narrative of the Movement surfaced in Kareem's new narrative was in the treatment of race relations as an exclusively Black-white matter. From our first encounter to our last, Kareem's rationale for why athletes can improve race relations, irrespective of race, was that, "Athletes are role models for everybody. When you're a kid, you don't know racism. You just watch the sport, *whether you're white or Black*" (Interview, emphasis added). Kareem selected Russell for his research because Russell had proven himself worthy of the widespread admiration of white America. According to Kareem, "He [Russell] was an activist" who represented African Americans by "show[ing] white people that Black people were competitive, not only in their segregated leagues." In his opinion, then, Bill Russell was an emblem of Black—specifically African American—athletic excellence and an idol with mass appeal to white players, coaches, and fans.

Kareem also spoke of the Movement as a strictly African American development. The candidates for his investigation and those referenced in his essay or interview were African American. Kareem wrote that, "The civil rights movements accomplished the right for African Americans to vote…" and "In the media, African Americans demanded the basic rights of democratic participation" (Student work). There was no mention of other BIPOC communities making similar claims or staging resistance at the time. Further, the only individuals mentioned by name in his essay were African American men. These tendencies may be due to a combination of Kareem's identification as African American, the role of African Americans in professional basketball, and the prevalence of the racial binary in U.S. history education.

The binary paradigm exhibited in Kareem's narrative and in the specific narrative of the Movement is not merely Black and white, but African American-white. The complexity of

Black, Afro-Diasporic communities involved in the Movement is seldom recognized in the specific narrative of the period, making it highly unlikely that it would appear in Kareem's tale.

Privileging the specific narrative. Kareem mastered the specific narrative of the Movement, appropriated it, and incorporated it into his narrative, with the help of sources like Goudsouzian (2006) and the principal's comments. In his essay, a central source was the article "Bill Russell and the Basketball Revolution" (Goudsouzian, 2006). Kareem mentioned this source again and echoed the principal's comments in detail during our interview as well.

Kareem leaned on Goudsouzian (2006) and mimicked some of the article's claims in his essay and interview. In Kareem's understanding, Goudsouzian suggested that "without [athletes], the Civil Rights Movement wouldn't be going on. That's how he portrayed it" (Interview). According to Kareem's interview responses, Goudsouzian's article depicted Bill Russell "how every man should be — how every Black man should be. He was describing us, like 'Black men is great'." Goudsouzian represented Black men, including Kareem (given his use of the first-person pronoun), in a favorable light. Speaking about Goudsouzian's portrayal of Black athletes, Kareem replied, "I don't want to say Messiah, but sort of... Like a God figure... People who were advancing the movement, and they were a big helping hand. And without them, the Civil Rights Movement wouldn't be going on." Kareem took this source as proof of the messianic perception he held of Black athletes during the Movement, and Bill Russell in particular. When I asked whether he believed athletes help people gain legal rights, he responded that, "I'd say athletes start the movement… I feel like sports is that first block, the building block that supports everything." It is important to note that Goudsouzian centered Russell in his article but stopped short of calling him a civil rights leader. Kareem made that cognitive leap on his own, writing

that Russell " personified the goals" and "was advancing" the Movement among other generous claims. Kareem used sections from Goudsouzian's article to uphold this messianic narrative.

Kareem combined this reading of Goudsouzian with his principal's remarks. Amistad High School's principal, Mr. Culpepper, is an African American man in his fifties, an alum of the school, and a locally renowned former athlete and coach. During one class period, he spontaneously visited the classroom and shared his thoughts on the Movement. Kareem appropriated these remarks and wove them into his narrative, particularly during our interview. Mr. Culpepper associated Dr. King's success with Malcolm X's relative unpalatability. This outlook resonated with Kareem, who rehashed the narrative during his interview. He expressed the belief that "the government" chose "the peaceful one," Dr. King. Mr. Culpepper suggested that Dr. King needed Malcolm X to appear more favorable. He opined that, "In the 60s, they said, 'We don't want to deal with this Black folk here [Malcolm X], so we would much rather deal with that Black folk' [Dr. King]" (Observation, May 25, 2018). Kareem added this logic into his repertoire of reasons why the Movement was not advanced by proponents of violent measures, but by those whom he construed as pacifists: men like Dr. King and Bill Russell.

Kareem also found validation for his Black-white framing when the principal visited the class. Mr. Culpepper shifted the conversation from Indigenous civil rights efforts to African American actors. This synopsis reframed the Movement as a Black experience, despite the lesson's focus on complicating participation in the Movement. While "Black" may refer to Afro-descended people broadly, in the United States it is often shorthand for "African American." But before the principal visited the classroom, Kareem already framed the Movement around Black-white relations. Mr. Culpepper's take on the Movement may have been altogether new to Kareem, but it resonated with him, and he repeated it nearly verbatim during our interview. In

short, the sources that Kareem referenced most often were those that reinforced the specific narrative of the Movement, even if they required modification to fit Kareem's new narrative.

Cultural Tools to Challenge an Old Narrative

While Kareem's narrative hearkened back to the schematic narrative template (SNT) of racial progress and the specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement, it also reflected how Kareem drew on his identity and experiences as cultural tools. Three motivating factors arose during our interview when we discussed Kareem's identity, his thoughts on the research project, and themes of the Movement. These factors were (1) Kareem's *self-identification* as Black/ African American, as a Black man, and as Muslim; (2) his *awareness* of how Black men and Muslims are racialized; and (3) his *desire to challenge racialized narratives* about Black men. These considerations influenced how Kareem selected his topic and constructed his narrative to challenge racialized narratives about two of his identities (as Black and as a man). His narrative thus presented a portrait of Bill Russell that could redeem misperceptions of Black manhood.

"I'm a Black man living in America… and I'm Muslim, too". Throughout our interview, Kareem self-identified as both Black and African American interchangeably. To honor his self-identification, I will refer to him using both terms. After answering my question about his racial/ethnic identity and identifying as African American, Kareem followed up by stating, "and my family, we're from Somalia… and uh, Muslim." Although he is the child of African immigrants, Kareem elected an ethno-racial label that is often construed as indicating African ancestry in the United State through the system of chattel slavery. At the same, identifying as Black connects Kareem to people of African descent more broadly.

"There's a lot of people against us". When I asked Kareem during the interview how his identities influenced the topic he chose, he responded:

> I'm a Black man growing up in America… and I'm Muslim, too [chuckles], so it's like, a lot of people against us. I've never been threatened myself, but I see a lot of racist stuff. If you go online, you can see a lot of people activating their point of view. It might not be the best. They'll say, like, slurs or whatever.

Kareem provided his being "a Black man living in America" as a rationale for the topic he selected—the life of another Black man in America. Unlike Kareem, Bill Russell did face threats to his safety and personally encountered "a lot of racist stuff," but Kareem, unlike Russell, is Muslim. In broaching the fact that he is Muslim and adding that there are "a lot of people against us," Kareem was acknowledging that he belongs to more than one targeted social category.

Kareem demonstrated his awareness of how Black men and Muslims are racialized in U.S. history during another moment of the interview:

> *Researcher*: When you do learn about other Black/African American men or Muslims in history, how are they portrayed?
>
> *Kareem*: Malcolm X is a great example. He's Muslim, and they say that he's super aggressive…

Malcolm X was the only Black Muslim man that Kareem could name, and the word he used to describe him was one that carries a negative connotation. In light of this characterization of Malcolm X, Kareem's prior expressions of disapproval made sense. He chose to study Bill Russell because he loved basketball, and he chose the Movement because he admired what nonviolence was able to accomplish. Not only was Malcolm X neither an athlete nor a nonviolent activist, but he was considered "aggressive," a well-known figure who perhaps gave other Black men a bad reputation. Kareem echoed the principal, Mr. Culpepper, when elaborating about why Malcolm X had been unsuccessful during the Movement:

> It's like our principal, Mr. Culpepper, said in Mr. Davidson's class. Without Malcolm X, MLK—they were like, "Let's pick one of these guys," and they picked MLK.' Cuz MLK was the peaceful one, instead of Malcolm X. They said, "We can agree with MLK's peaceful way or we finna get Malcolm X's aggressive way." So the government had to pick one, and they chose MLK. And they got a peaceful movement.

Kareem explained that violence was not the way to attain one's objectives, later adding that, "you're not finna get a job done like that." Malcolm X was far from presenting a favorable image of Black men or Muslims or a desirable model of effective civil rights leadership.

"How every Black man should be". Malcolm X may not have met Kareem's qualifications for a role model, but Bill Russell did. Kareem used his Bill Russell narrative to challenge the racialization of Black men. He wanted to prove that Bill Russell was not only a basketball legend that forever changed the game, but also an activist and role model that merits the title of civil rights leader. He explained about athletes that,

> Kids looked up to them. They needed a role model at the time... If you're a kid in [Kareem's state], you'd look up to MLK during the 60s, but a sports icon, in my opinion, would be a better role model. You look up more to them.

Kareem suggested that Russell was as central a civil rights leader as King and Malcolm X, listing the three names together on multiple occasions. To Kareem, Russell was a larger-than-life figure that single-handedly politicized the NBA and changed the course of racial history.

One way Kareem made Russell remarkable was by juxtaposing his accomplishments with watershed events of the Movement to show that "Russell wasn't the only one breaking the color barrier" (Student work). His essay opened by setting the scene thus:

> The year of 1957 was a significant year for Bill Russell and the Civil Rights Movement. In 1957 Russell was the first African American athlete to win the Most Valuable Player award in the National Basketball Association. In September of the same year, the Civil Rights Movement took a big step forward by breaking the color barrier in schools.

Kareem later linked the athlete's success to the Montgomery Bus Boycott and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), again placing Russell adjacent to landmark moments of the Movement.

Politically, Kareem situated Russell between MLK and Malcolm X. He narrated how "Russell was always outspoken about anything even though many of his contemporaries preferred to remain silent and safe." His essay praised Russell for channeling his anger over racial injustice into productive and concrete nonviolent action, like investing in Black businesses or teaching basketball clinics during Freedom Summer. Kareem admired how "Russell loved his white teammates, but embraced his Blackness." He argued that Russell embodied the nobility of nonviolence without its complacency. On the other hand, Kareem was especially adamant that the leader he was advocating was nothing like Malcolm X, but an activist the white public could support. Bill Russell was the best of both worlds — a righteous man with convictions *and* action.

Discussion

Kareem presents a case of a young Black Muslim man articulating his identities and challenging how some of those identities are racialized through an academic exercise. First, Kareem illustrates how the academic can be personal for a BIPOC student learning racial history. In the process, he carried out two mediated actions: constructing an historical narrative using academic cultural tools and negotiating his racialized identities using cultural tools derived from personal experience. Secondly, Kareem's case raises questions about the racialization of non-racial/ethnic identities, such as religion and cultural recreational practices. Islam and basketball

serve as prime examples of how racialization involves "making racial" characteristics that are not strictly defined as such. Lastly, the persistence of the schematic narrative template of racial progress and the specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement in Kareem's process of narrative construction indicate that both narrative types are nestled in learning about the past.

The Academic is Personal

At the time of the study,[9] Kareem was keenly aware of the intersection of his identities as Black/African American, as a man, and as Muslim. This self-knowledge was accompanied by his awareness that Black men and Muslims are often negatively racialized. Therefore, in choosing Bill Russell as a paragon of Black manhood, Kareem was presenting a picture of who he and other Black men could aspire to be. He brought his personal concerns about societal perceptions of Black manhood into the research project assigned to him in his U.S. history course and underwent parallel mediated actions. Kareem likely relied so heavily on the Goudsouzian (2006) article, because he felt it portrayed Russell in good light—"how every Black man should be."

Kareem's case can remind educators and education scholars of the role that students' lived experiences can play in formal learning. Designing academically rigorous assignments that draw and build on students' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) can increase engagement (Brophy, 2008) and promote healthy hybrid identities (Gutiérrez, 2008). Thus, "identity work, and its construction in school settings and as part of the educational process, is intertwined with motivation, learning, and knowledge construction (Flum & Kaplan, 2012, p. 240). Researchers can tap into the vast potential to make this cognitive-psychosocial connection apparent.

---

[9] I wish to allow room for the possibility that while Kareem identified as a Black/ African American Muslim man at the time of the study (data collection took place in 2018), these identities may have since shifted.

Further, since the cultural tools involved in mediated action can include texts *and* students' lived experiences (including encounters with racialization), discipline-specific research in history/social studies education may benefit from blurring the divide between the intellectual and the visceral to interrogate how cultural tools in the classroom can complement cultural tools from students' lives outside school. For African American youth, for instance, a critical awareness of societal perceptions of their in-group facilitates the identification of and effective coping with instances of racial discrimination in their lives (Neville & Cross, 2017; Anyiwo et al., 2018; Seaton et al., 2009; Sellers et al., 2006). These pivotal psychological developments need not be considered taboo or as barriers in the classroom, but rather natural shifts as youth transition into adulthood. As such, they must be recognized in disciplinary learning through intentional engagement with the painful realities and complex nature of race and racism in the United States. Unfortunately, the literature indicates that even educators who recognize the importance of teaching multicultural (in this case, Black) history may not necessarily be doing so to the degree they deem ideal (King, 2017). Further, when curriculum and instruction aim for representation, coverage may suffer from an "illusion of inclusion" of race, racism, and BIPOC communities (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2012) from state content standards to classroom practice.

Lastly, because the academic is personal, students can—and likely often do—carry out two or more mediated actions at a given time, as I observed with Kareem. This multitasking is especially prevalent among teenagers, whose exposure to more numerous and complex contexts accompanies their maturation. The various generational, linguistic, recreational, geographic, and other subcultures that they inhabit often furnish unique beliefs, rituals, and resources with which to make sense of the world writ-large. These resources make up diverse cultural toolkits that can enrich the breadth of students' possible interpretations during the learning process, both in school

and beyond. The research on identity work in educational contexts makes it more probable than not that most adolescents engage in projects of identity formation in their schooling experiences (Faircloth, 2012; Flum & Kaplan, 2012; Kaplan & Flum 2012; Vågan, 2011). Scholars have therefore proposed ways that identity work can be actively taken up by educators in school settings (Kaplan et al., 2014; Schacter & Rich, 2011).

Racialization Beyond Race

To avoid static, outdated notions of race/ethnicity, identity-related work in schools should take a sociocultural, process-oriented approach that centers students' intersectionally racialized (Hurtado, 2019) identities and their experiences with racialization.

Kareem was cognizant of how Muslims have been maligned in the United States, but the narrative he constructed did not seek to rectify this racialized identity. While I have no evidence that Kareem possesses the cultural tools he would need to challenge the racialization of Muslims as a threat, it is worth noting that Islam is as racialized an identity as Kareem's Blackness.

Religion has been racialized, or "made racial," for centuries. In the Western world, religion predated race as the primary marker of difference between cultural groups (Omi & Winant, 1994). While Islamophobia has become more pronounced since September 11, 2011, and is inherent in U.S. Executive Order 13769 (also known as the Muslim Ban of 2017), many Christians historically perceived—or racialized—Muslims as outsiders, interlopers, and threats.

The Black-white binary that exists in race scholarship restricts U.S. discourse on race and racism, resulting in an omission of the experiences of myriad other cultural groups from racial analysis, including Muslims and Muslim Americans (Garner & Selod, 2015; Selod & Embrick, 2013). Educators committed to equity and social justice can expose and deconstruct Islamophobia—including via the internet (Chao, 2015)—the denial of citizenship to Muslim

immigrants and refugees (Selod, 2015), the commission of hate crimes and profiling in air travel (Considine, 2017), and global efforts to counter Islamophobia (De Koning, 2016).

Nestled Narratives

Kareem's case demonstrates how it is possible for an SNT and a specific narrative within it to permeate what may seem like an alternative narrative. The histories of BIPOC communities run the risk of being sanitized, despite the existence of cultural tools, such as students' racialized experiences, that can nuance the SNTs and specific narratives. Learning about the violence that BIPOC communities have endured in the struggle for social and civil liberties is one way to foster students' identity development and begin healing the wounds of racial trauma (Brown & Brown, 2010a, 2010b; Levins Morales, 1998).

Analyzing how students interpret SNTs and specific narratives involving racial histories has implications for teaching and learning about race and racism. Not only is the Movement oversimplified and celebratory (Alridge, 2006), but Chicanx/Latinx, Asian/Asian American, and Indigenous experiences are rendered nearly invisible in it (Delgado, 2004). Far from minimizing the legacy of African American civil rights activism, exposing how racism and white supremacy have been enacted against all BIPOC communities draws attention to the systemic operation of whiteness. For students articulating their identities by learning heritage histories (Levy, 2014, 2017), access to complex SNTs and specific narratives may allow them to construct nuanced narratives that grapple with timeless issues that continue to plague the United States in the present day. Since cultural psychologists have long proposed that identity construction is an act of generating a personal narrative (Cohler, 1982; Hammack, 2008; MacAdams, 1990), students' narrative construction is intimately connected to their ability to compose a secure sense of self.

Today's round-the-clock exposure to digital resources, including misrepresentations of BIPOC history on television (King & Womac, 2014), demands constant engagement with tools for evaluating information and constructing narratives. This need is especially pressing for students whose identities position them on the margins of society. In his analysis of how students misremembered American history, Wills (2011) reflected:

> The past made possible with [the given] template offers simple answers to the issues of race and inequality that they experience in their everyday lives, but students deserve the substantive knowledge and conceptual tools that will enable them to develop more sophisticated understandings of history and their place in the historical present. (p. 140)

Kareem and millions of students with minoritized identities deserve to develop an intellectual toolkit to interpret, challenge, and reframe how their communities are commonly represented.

Teaching anti-essentialist historical inquiry can help students develop sociopolitical awareness with historical content (Santiago, 2019; Santiago & Castro, 2019). Students would benefit, for instance, from learning the history of Mexican/ Mexican American segregation and the role of legal challenges in upending the practice. The erasure of racial histories beyond the Black-white binary precludes students' understanding of how racial/ethnic discrimination and oppression operate on a structural level against various groups and in ways that are specific to each BIPOC community (Santiago, 2017). These histories are often inserted into the curriculum without critical, transformative examinations of racism and white supremacy (Banks, 1989).

Conclusions

My analysis of the findings in this case study indicate that narratives—whether those we encounter or those we construct—are paramount in the learning of history. While SNTs can be useful learning devices, they can pose a challenge to the teaching and learning of complex

history when oversimplified. Even when students employ the cultural tools at their disposal beyond classroom learning (i.e., racialized experiences), the entrenchment SNTs and specific narratives in P-12 history education texts makes it difficult to disrupt erroneous and harmful representations of BIPOC individuals and communities. However, this need not be the case.

Encouraging students to challenge official history and assigning texts that present new and complex content must be accompanied by practice diagramming the metanarrative arc of history. Kareem's case illustrates the tendency to default to what is familiar and comfortable, but educators can cultivate critical consciousness in their students by scrutinizing texts, broadly defined, with students for patterns and for evidence of power structures.

One way to circumvent the feedback loop of unconsciously reinforcing color-evasive (Frankenberg, 1993) or racially illiterate (Stevenson, 2014) SNTs would be to distinguish specific narratives and SNTs in the classroom as a discipline-specific skill. Kareem's narrative construction process may have been inadvertently planned backwards, like a lesson; if he had a desired outcome from the outset (to vindicate Black men and to prove that athletes are civil rights leaders), it would follow that he arranged evidence to that end. Teachers can also plan instruction backwards around core misconceptions to create conceptual conflict (Barton, 2008) or to introduce alternative interpretations of historical and current events. Once students identify SNTs and the specific narratives of which they consist, they can analyze how narratives operate and approach historical inquiry with a problem to solve. Deconstructing narratives in this way does not require a complete curricular overhaul; for example, Kareem's course had a foundation for such an approach in the form of the IB criteria for the evaluation of sources (origin, purpose, content, values, limitations). The key is consistent application with a range of historical topics.

As education scholars integrate multiethnic, multicultural communities into theory and practice, we must also identify and actively resist SNTs and specific narratives that essentialize, glorify, dichotomize, and decontextualize historical developments relevant to race/ethnicity. The teaching and learning of the Civil Rights Movement is only one such example. Rigid SNTs and specific narratives about BIPOC organizations and movements are homogenized, rather than complicated. As the principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy point out, sustaining BIPOC communities means not cosigning "pervasive anti-Indigeneity, anti-Blackness…, anti-Brownness (from anti-*Latinidad* to Islamophobia) and model minority myths" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2), nor stories that obfuscate misogyny, xenophobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression.

APPENDIX

Table 3. Student Interview Protocol — Kareem

Question type	Question
Selecting topic and writing essay	1. Tell me about your research project. What was it about? 2. What interested you about this topic? 3. What do you think the assignment was asking you to do?
BIPOC representation in source	4. What types of sources did you use in your research? 5. Think about the article you used the most. Tell me about it. 6. What racial group/s does the author write about in that source? 7. What does s/he say about them? 8. What kind of picture does s/he paint of them? 9. If you had to use 2-3 words to describe Black athletes and Black men in general *according to this one source*, what would they be? Why? 10. Do you think any groups are left out that should have been included in this source? 11. Why do you think they might not be represented there? 12. If you could improve this source, how would you change it, and why? 13. I noticed in your paper that you wrote, "Bill Russell accepted a responsibility to represent the entire African American race, project humble dignity and patriotic enthusiasm." Tell me more about that. 14. How do you think it makes African Americans feel when they are represented the way Goudsouzian portrayed them? Why? 15. How *reliable/trustworthy* do you think this source is? Why? 16. How much do you agree with what this source says? Why?
Personal Connection	17. How do you identify racially and ethnically? 1. How did that influence the topic you chose? 18. When you do learn about other Black/African American or Muslim men in history, how are they typically portrayed? 1. How does that make you feel? 19. What people/sources do you have to help you learn about race and racism? 20. Was there anything else you wanted to share or anything you want to ask me?

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Alridge, D. P. (2006). The limits of master narratives in history textbooks: An analysis of representations of Martin Luther King, Jr. *Teachers College Record, 108*(4), 662-686.

An, S. (2012). Korean American high school students' perspectives on US history. *The Social Studies, 103*(1), 12-19.

Anyiwo, N., Bañales, J. Rowley, S. J., Watkins, D. C., Richards-Schuster, K. (2018). Sociocultural influences on the sociopolitical development of African American youth. *Child Development Perspectives, 12*(3), 165-170. DOI: 10.1111/cdep.12276

Banks, J. A. (1989). Approaches to multicultural curriculum reform. *Trotter Review, 3*(3), 5.

Barton, K. C. (2008). Narrative simplifications in elementary students' historical thinking. In L. S. Levstik & K. C. Barton (Eds.). *Researching history education: Theory, method, and context,* pp. 183-208. Routledge.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (1998). "It wasn't a good part of history": National identity and students' explanations of historical significance. *Teachers College Record, 99*(3), 478-513.

Brophy, J. (2008). Developing students' appreciation for what is taught in school. Educational psychologist, 43(3), 132-141.

Brown, A. L., & Brown, K. D. (2010a). Strange fruit indeed: Interrogating contemporary textbook representations of racial violence toward African Americans. *Teachers College Record, 112*(1), 31-67.

Brown, K. D., & Brown, A. L. (2010b). Silenced memories: An examination of the sociocultural knowledge on race and racial violence in official school curriculum. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 43*(2), 139-154.

Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 294 (1954).

Busey, C. L., & Walker, I. (2017). A dream and a bus: Black critical patriotism in elementary social studies standards. Theory & Research in Social Education, 45(4), 456-488.

Chao, E. C. (2015). The-Truth-About-Islam.Com: Ordinary theories of racism and cyber Islamophobia. Critical Sociology, 41(1), 57-75.

Cohler, B. J. (1982). Personal narrative and life course. In P. Baltes & O. G. Brim (Eds.), *Life span development and behavior* (Vol. 4, pp. 205-241). Academic Press.

Cole, M., & Wertsch, J. V. (1996). Beyond the individual-social antinomy in discussions of Piaget and Vygotsky. *Human Development, 39*(5)**,** 250-256.

Considine, C. (2017). The racialization of Islam in the United States: Islamophobia, hate crimes, and "flying while brown." *Religions, 8*(9), 165.

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. The New Press.

De Koning, M. (2016). "You need to present a counter-message": The racialisation of Dutch Muslims and anti-Islamophobia initiatives. *Journal of Muslims in Europe, 5*(2), 170-189.

Delgado, R. (2004). Locating Latinos in the field of civil rights: Assessing the neoliberal case for radical exclusion. *Texas Law Review, 83*. Retrieved from: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2102852

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction (Vol. 20)*. NYU Press.

"Don Newcombe" (2007). Society – Time Magazine. Retrieved from http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/article/0,28804,1609652_1609645_1609621,00.html#ixzz1BG8TFLdO

Dyson, A. H., & Genishi, C. (2005). *On the case: Approaches to language and literacy research*. Teachers College Press.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.

Epstein, T. (1998). Deconstructing differences in African-American and European-American adolescents' perspectives on US history. *Curriculum Inquiry, 28*(4), 397-423.

Epstein, T. (2000). Adolescents' perspectives on racial diversity in US history: Case studies from an urban classroom. *American Educational Research Journal, 37*(1), 185-214.

Epstein, T. (2001). Racial identity and young people's perspectives on social education. *Theory into Practice, 40*(1), 42-47.

Epstein, T. (2010). *Interpreting national history: Race, identity, and pedagogy in classrooms and communities*. Routledge.

Epstein, T., Mayorga, E., & Nelson, J. (2011). Teaching about race in an urban history class: The effects of culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Social Studies Research, 35*(1), 2.

Faircloth, B. S. (2012). "Wearing a mask" vs. connecting identity with learning. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 37*(3), 186-194.

Feuerstein, R., Hoffman, M. B., Rand, Y., Jensen, M. R., Tzuriel, D., & Hoffman, D. B. (1985). Learning to learn: Mediated learning experiences and instrumental enrichment. *Special Services in the Schools, 3*(1-2), 49-82.

Flum, H., & Kaplan, A. (2012). Identity formation in educational settings: A contextualized view of theory and research in practice. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 37*(3), 240-245.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research, 4th edition* (pp. 301-316). Sage.

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *The social construction of whiteness: White women, race matters*. Routledge.

Frost, J. (2012). Using "master narratives" to teach history: the case of the Civil Rights Movement. *The History Teacher, 45*(3), 437-446.

Garner, S., & Selod, S. (2015). The racialization of Muslims: Empirical studies of Islamophobia. *Critical Sociology, 41*(1), 9–19.

Goudsouzian, A. (2006). Bill Russell and the basketball revolution. *American Studies, 47*(3/4), 61-85.

Gutiérrez, K. D. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(2), 148-164.

Hall, J. D. (2005). The long civil rights movement and the political uses of the past. *The Journal of American History, 91*(4), 1233-1263.

Hammack, P. L. (2008). Narrative and the cultural psychology of identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 12*(3), 222-247.

Hurtado, A. (2019). "Race" in search of a discipline. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 52*(1), 75-88.

Kaplan, A., & Flum, H. (2012). Identity formation in educational settings: A critical focus for education in the 21st century. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 37*(3), 171-175.

Kaplan, A., Sinai, M., & Flum, H. (2014). Design-based interventions for promoting students' identity exploration within the school curriculum. *Motivational Interventions (Advances in Motivation and Achievement), 18,* 243-291.

Kendi, I. X. (2017). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. Random House.

King, L. J. (2017). Status of Black history in U.S. schools and society. *Social Education, 81*(1), 14-18.

King, L. J., & Womac, P. (2014). A bundle of silences: Examining the racial representation of Black founding fathers of the United States through Glenn Beck's Founders' Fridays. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 42*(1), 35-64.

Lawson, S. F., & Payne, C. M. (2006). *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1968*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Levins Morales, A. (1998). *Medicine stories: History, culture, and the politics of integrity*. South End Press.

Levy, S. A. (2014). Heritage, history, and identity. *Teachers College Record, 116*(6), 1-17.

Levy, S. A. (2017). How students navigate the construction of heritage narratives. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 45*(2), 157-188.

Lewis, A. E. (2001). There is no "race" in the schoolyard: Color-blind ideology in an (almost) all-white school. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(4), 781-811.

Lewis, A. E. (2003). Everyday race-making: Navigating racial boundaries in schools. *American Behavioral Scientist, 47*(3), 283-305.

MacAdams, D. P. (1990). Unity and purpose in human lives: The emergence of identity as a life story. In A. I. Rabin, R. A. Zucker, R. A. Emmons, & S. Frank (Eds.), *Studying persons and lives* (pp. 148-200). Springer.

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141.

Nasir, N. I. (2011). *Racialized identities: Race and achievement among African American youth*. Stanford University Press.

Neville, H. A., & Cross, W. E. J. (2017). Racial awakening: Epiphanies and encounters in Black racial identity. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 23,* 102–108. https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000105.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States*. Routledge.

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world.* Teachers College Press.

Penuel, W. R., & Wertsch, J. V. (1995). Vygotsky and identity formation: A sociocultural approach. *Educational Psychologist, 30*(2), 83-92.

Perea, J. F. (1997). The Black/white binary paradigm of race: The "normal science" of American racial thought. *California Law Review, 85*(5), 1213-1258.

Pollock, M. (2009). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton University Press.

Russell, W., & Branch, T. (1979). *Second wind: The memoirs of an opinionated man.* Random House.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Santiago, M. (2017). Erasing differences for the sake of inclusion: How Mexican/ Mexican American students construct historical narratives. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 45*(1), 43-74.

Santiago, M. (2019). Historical inquiry to challenge the narrative of racial progress. *Cognition and Instruction, 37*(1). DOI: 1080/07370008.2018.1539734.

Santiago, M., & Castro, E. (2019). Teaching anti-essentialist historical inquiry. *The Social Studies, 110*(4), 170-179.

Schachter, E. P., & Rich, Y. (2011). Identity education: A conceptual framework for educational researchers and practitioners. *Educational Psychologist, 46*(4), 222-238.

Schulke, F., McPhee, P., & King, M. L. (1976). *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A document… Montgomery to Memphis*. Norton.

Seaton, E. K., Yip, T., & Sellers, R. M. (2009). A longitudinal examination of racial identity and racial discrimination among African American adolescents. *Child Development, 80*, 406–417. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01268.x

Sellers, R. M., Copeland-Linder, N., Martin, P. P., & Lewis, R. L. (2006). Racial identity matters: The relationship between racial discrimination and psychological functioning in African American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 16*, 187–216. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2006.00128.x

Selod, S. (2015). Citizenship denied: The racialization of Muslim American men and women post-9/11. *Critical Sociology, 41*(1), 77-95.

Selod, S., & Embrick, D. G. (2013). Racialization and Muslims: Situating the Muslim experience in race scholarship. *Sociology Compass, 7/8*, 644–655. DOI: 10.1111/soc4.12057

Stevenson, H. C. (2014). *Promoting racial literacy in schools: Differences that make a difference*. Teachers College Press.

Tatum, B. D. (2019). In living color: Reflections on race, racialization, and identity. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 52*(1), 89-92.

Terzian, S. G., & Yeager, E. A. (2007). "That's when we became a nation:" Urban Latino adolescents and the designation of historical significance. *Urban Education, 42*(1), 52–81.

Vågan, A. (2011). Towards a sociocultural perspective on identity formation in education. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 18*(1), 43-57.

Vasquez Heilig, J., Brown, K., & Brown, A. (2012). The illusion of inclusion: A critical race theory textual analysis of race and standards. *Harvard Educational Review, 82*(3), 403-424.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language.* (Transl. by Kozulin, A.). MIT Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: Sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (1994). The primacy of mediated action in sociocultural studies. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 1*(4), 202-208.

Wertsch, J. V. (1998a). Mediated action. In W. Bechtel & G. Graham (Eds.). *A companion to cognitive science,* (pp. 518-525). Blackwell Publishers.

Wertsch, J. V. (1998b). *Mind as action*. Oxford University Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (2004). Specific narratives and schematic narrative templates. In P. Seixas, (Ed.). *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 49-62). University of Toronto Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (2008). Collective memory and narrative templates. *Social Research, 75(1),* 133-156.

Wills, J. S. (2001). Missing in interaction: Diversity, narrative, and critical multicultural social studies. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 29*(1), 43-64.

Wills, J. S. (2011). Misremembering as mediated action: Schematic narrative templates and elementary students' narration of the past. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 39*(1), 115-144.

Woodson, A. N. (2016). We're just ordinary people: Messianic master narratives and Black youths' civic agency. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 44*(2), 184-211.

Woodson, A. N. (2017). "There ain't no white people here": Master narratives of the Civil Rights Movement in the stories of urban youth. *Urban Education, 52*(3), 316-342.

MANUSCRIPT THREE: "DIFFERENT TOWARDS DIFFERENT SKINS": RECONSIDERING SECONDARY STUDENTS' RACIAL LITERACY

Abstract

In this paper, I examine what one focus group interview revealed about five high school-aged youths' sophisticated but still-developing racial literacy. I analyze potential answers to the questions: *How do five youth interpret incidents of racism in conversation with their peers? What can these interpretations reveal about their existing and potential racial literacies, individually and collectively?* The primary data source is one 45-minute focus group interview with tenth-grade students at a multicultural high school in the U.S. Midwest. The data indicate that the students (1) have heard about and studied how racism has changed and (2) have seen first- or second-hand how racism looks today but (3) struggled to articulate a schema of how racism operates beyond the individual level. These findings suggest that teenagers draw from learning experiences in and out of school to develop racial literacy, but that direct and explicit supports may be necessary for them to develop a complex and enduring understanding of structural and/or institutional racism. This focus group may also indicate the potential for BIPOC youth to express themselves openly and explore complex racial topics when they are in the numerical majority. I conclude with recommendations for education researchers, teacher educators, and practitioners who wish to promote critical consciousness about the structure and function of racism among secondary students. I place specific emphasis on the need to engage youth in dialogue to draw out their prior knowledge and lived experiences before designing instruction and interventions for teaching about race and/or racism.

Keywords: secondary students, racism, racial literacy

Living in the United States in the year 2020, one can hardly escape political discourse that calls into question who is deserving of particular rights, benefits, or opportunities. This often racialized rhetoric ranges from dog-whistle references to more overt criticism of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities.[10] It has emboldened flagrant racism, sexism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and other forms of bigotry and hate worldwide (Miller-Idriss, 2019). The sitting U.S. president garnered electoral support based on his racist nativist call to "Make America Great Again" (M.A.G.A.), a rallying cry that rests on a narrative of nostalgia that exalts white[11], upper- and middle-class heteropatriarchy. His remarks rely on and reinforce racist narratives about the histories, identities, and value of BIPOC the world over. During his tenure, the federal government has enacted policies that harm BIPOC, immigrants, refugees, Muslims, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other traditionally marginalized communities.

In the face of such fraught discourse, young people do not stand by idly. A 2016 video of a middle school in Royal Oak, Michigan, shows students chanting, "Build a wall!" in the school cafeteria (Dickson & Williams, 2016). A noose—a clear signifier of the lynching and racial terror that is a trademark of white supremacy—was later found at the same school (Higgins, 2016). In February 2020, four students at Michigan's Saline High School filed a federal lawsuit against the school district for violating their first-amendment rights by punishing their racist posts on the social media platform, Snapchat. At a community meeting about the incident, a white father asked a Latinx parent, "Why didn't you stay in Mexico?" (Hester & Slagter, 2020). These

---

[10] I employ the term Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) for two reasons: first, to dislodge the use of "people of color" as a comfortable catch-all term for naming the inequities that afflict *specific* racial/ethnic, particularly Black, communities. The second is to acknowledge that Indigenous can be a political identity beyond race/ethnicity, especially for members of sovereign nations within the United States.

[11] While I capitalize words for racial, ethnic, and national identifiers (e.g., Black, Latinx, or Cuban), I do not capitalize the term white, as it does not denote a shared identity, culture (language, religion, etc.), or history.

incidents demonstrate that not only are young people constantly exposed to adults' racist, xenophobic sentiments, they are also aware of and may adopt them into their lexicon. Racist rhetoric is thus weaponizing youth and children, and schools continue to be a racial battleground. While research in education has explored potential approaches for facilitating students' understanding of systems of oppression (including racism) in the classroom, it has not consistently examined P-12 students' thinking about race and racism, independent of instruction. I do not make this observation merely to point out a gap in the literature. More importantly, youth construct racial ideologies from a range of contexts in and out of school, and it behooves scholars to interrogate what those beliefs are in order to appreciate youths' agentive role in teaching and learning about race/ racism.[12] In this paper, I highlight five youths' perceptions and reasoning regarding the nature of racism. I follow these lines of inquiry: *How do youth interpret incidents of racism in conversation with their peers? What can these interpretations reveal about their existing and potential racial literacies?* My objective throughout this manuscript is to foreground youths' existing and burgeoning racial literacies, even when they lack the vocabulary (precise words) or grammar (grasp of structures) with which to articulate them.

Theoretical Framework: Racial Literacy

The concept of racial literacy was first articulated by critical legal scholar Lani Guinier (2003, 2004) as an alternative to the racial liberalism that dominated high-profile cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954, 1955). Guinier (2004) identified the notion of racism being pathological as a key pitfall of racial liberalism, illustrated in the Supreme Court's consideration of Jim Crow as a "function of individual prejudice" (p. 96). She defined racism as "the

[12] Throughout this manuscript, I often combine the words *race* and *racism* because of how intimately the social construct of race and the enactment of prejudice and discrimination based on race (racism) are entwined. Because they are not interchangeable, I do not intend to conflate them but rather to capture a range of topics related to both.

maintenance of, and acquiescence in, racialized hierarchies governing resource distribution… an artifact of geographic, political, and economic interests" (p. 98) at the core of the United States. In other words, racism is about power distribution, not merely a by-product of prejudice. Guinier defined racial literacy as "the ability to read race in conjunction with institutional and democratic structures" (2003, p. 120). Three defining characteristics of racial literacy are that it must (1) be "contextual rather than universal"; (2) read "race in its psychological, interpersonal, and structural dimensions"; and (3) interrogate "the dynamic relationship among race, class, geography, gender, and other explanatory variables" (Guinier, 2004, pp. 114-115). These essential criteria—that racial literacy is contextual, multidimensional, and intersectional—provide a framework with which scholars and practitioners can begin to analyze the presence, absence, and need to develop racial literacy in all aspects of their racialized society. I contend that racial literacy also exists in lay forms outside of academe, including among youth.

Guinier used the distinction between racial liberalism and racial literacy to expose how *Brown* "became distorted into an issue of mere separation rather than subjugation," (2004, p. 115), shortchanging its reach and legacy. Courts have since read *Brown* and other legal challenges to racial discrimination and to race-conscious policy in ways that curtail arguments for racial justice. Thus, racial literacy is necessary to move any reform beyond superficial assessments that overlook the complex and multifaceted nature and consequences of racism. Because of the pernicious effects of racism on access, opportunity, and experiences in education, the need for this critical perspective is as pressing in the classroom as it is in the courtroom.

Racial literacy seeks to lay bare the enormity of racism, its roots in white supremacy, and its prevalence in societal context. Since Guinier's (2003, 2004) incisive exposé of racial literacy, it has been applied in other disciplines, including psychology (Stevenson, 2014) and teacher

education (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011a; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015; Skerrett, 2011). Racial literacy affords us the possibility of analyzing how a range of texts—from lived experiences to historical documents—can be read as evidence of racism in the past and present. Since this paper is primarily concerned with secondary students' analyses of racism and the implications of the same for teaching and teacher education, I center applications of racial literacy to education.

Racial Literacy in Education

Beyond the legal sphere, racial literacy can be used to examine pedagogical practice. Sealey-Ruiz (2011b) defined racial literacy as:

> A skill and practice in which students *probe the existence of racism*, and *examine the effects of race and other social constructs and institutionalized systems* which affect their lived experiences and representation in U.S. society. Students with racial literacy are able to *discuss the implications of race and American racism* in edifying and constructive ways. A desired outcome of racial literacy in an outwardly racist society like America is for *members of the dominant racial category to adopt an anti-racist stance, and for persons of color to resist a victim stance*. (p. 25, italics added for emphasis)

As outlined above, racial literacy entails the ability to (1) probe racism and examine the effects of race and other constructs or systems, (2) discuss the implications of race/racism, and (3) either adopt an anti-racist stance or resist a victim stance, depending on one's racial/ethnic identities[13] (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011b). These skills and practices make up the core of racial literacy in education.

[13] I use the term race to refer to the "an autonomous field of social conflict, political organizations, and cultural/ideological meaning" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 48) and ethnicity as membership in a group with shared culture (including language, religion, and other features) and history. While they have distinct definitions, there are disagreements and inconsistencies in how these terms are taken up. I join them with a / to remain inclusive of both racial *and* ethnic self-identifications, not as an indicator of an interchangeable quality.

Sealey-Ruiz's (2011b) combination of interrogation, dialogue, and action outlines a range of possibilities for how racial literacy can operate in formal learning environments. I operationalize it in the present study as an analytical tool to examine how high school students articulate their understanding of the roots of racism, how it operates, and the direction of change in which it appears to be heading. Using this framework demands a shared vision of what it means to probe, discuss, or adopt a stance. While these do not currently exist, education has a robust and growing field of portraits describing what racial literacy may look like in action.

Distinguishing Forms of Racism

Guinier (2003, 2004) and Sealey-Ruiz (2011b) used the terms *structural* and *institutional* when referring to the forms of racism that racial literacy purports to uncover. Despite the absence of an articulated distinction between these words by these authors, it bears establishing definitions of both to anchor this discussion. According to scholars of race and public policy,

> Structural racism in the U.S. is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics—historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal—that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. It is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy—the preferential treatment, privilege and power for white people at the expense of Black, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Arab and other racially oppressed people… Structural Racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism—all other forms of racism (e.g. institutional, interpersonal, internalized, etc.) emerge from structural racism. (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004, p. 1)

Lawrence & Keleher (2004) also define *institutional* racism as "discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced and perpetuated by

institutions (schools, mass media, etc.)" (p. 1). Because it manifests in observable forms, the individual, interpersonal dimension of racism is easier to identify (Wills, 2019; Young, 2011), but it offers a limited understanding of the phenomenon. Further, experiencing or witnessing acts of racism does not automatically result in a genuine understanding of it—on the contrary, BIPOC may internalize the messages of racism and white supremacy (Harper, 2007; Huber et al., 2006).

Without a firm grounding in the intractable nature of racism, young people may have a limited awareness of the forms of resistance in which they may participate, but children as young as elementary school understand injustice and can learn from historical examples of activism against oppression (Halvorsen et al., 2018). Therefore, a nuanced understanding of structural and institutional racism is crucial for youth and children to make sense of and act upon the world they inhabit. I place youths' consciousness and articulation of these concepts as a primary end-goals of racial literacy as encapsulated in education.

Literature Review

Scholars have sought to recognize, complicate, and extend the perceptions that youth have of what racism is, how it operates, and why it persists. In this section, I describe how researchers have endeavored to elucidate youths' beliefs and ideas about race and racism. I then hone in on studies proposing racial literacy as a means for advancing critical conversations about race/racism toward anti-racist action. This literature demonstrates how racial literacy applies to the practice of teacher educators, pre-service teachers, and in-service teachers, but rarely has it centered adolescents' racial literacies. I place the current study in conversation with extant scholarship to explore the possibility that high school-aged students may, in fact, be developing forms of racial literacy that educators do not yet recognize, even if to a moderate extent.

Children and Youth Notions of Race/Racism

Some P-12 education scholarship has delved into what students know about race/racism and has discovered patterns of discomfort, uncertainty, and untapped potential (Blum, 2004; Epstein & Lipschultz, 2012; Flynn, 2012; Palmer & Jang, 2005). In Epstein & Lipschultz (2012), white and BIPOC fourth- and fifth-graders from three elementary schools participated in an after-school program. They discussed historical and contemporary issues of race and inequity but hesitated to name the systems of discrimination that shaped their own lives, even while relating experiences that attested to the same. Contrastingly, in Flynn (2012) white and BIPOC students in two eighth-grade classrooms studied racism, and the BIPOC students embraced the dialogic space to educate their white peers about their racial awakenings, sharing an array of personal experiences with exclusion. While a greater volume of research would provide a more robust portrait of how these skills develop, it is possible that as students get older, they become more comfortable discussing the connection between race/racism and their daily lives.

Research with Black and Latinx high school students (Blum, 2004) and with Korean-born Korean-American (KBKA) high school students (Palmer & Jang, 2005) found that many BIPOC students were most eager to discuss their personal experiences with racism when they were the numerical majority in the dialogic space. Over several years of teaching a course on race and racism in a multicultural high school, Blum (2004) engaged students in reading, writing, and discussion of the historical construction of race, personal racial incidents, and contemporary racial issues. Palmer discussed race-related social interactions with KBKA students at church, school, home, and in other spaces. Through these ethnographic engagements, the KBKA youth were encouraged by being able to study racism in-depth (as with Blum, 2004) or discuss their conceptions of it in small groups with a researcher of shared descent (Palmer & Jang, 2005).

Both studies centered students' encounters with racism, perhaps at the expense of unpacking the youths' understanding of race/ racism at the structural and/or institutional levels. They also coincide in suggesting that educators can address these issues by seeking to shed their own racial biases, again emphasizing the interpersonal dimension of racism.

In history education, the literature suggests that students of various races/ethnicities acknowledge racism but may lack a framework for situating racial injustice in the context of national history (Barton & Levstik, 2008; Epstein et al., 2011). In their interviews with 48 students in grades five through eight, Barton & Levstik (2008) found that many students ascribed historical significance to topics highlighting the origins, development (especially freedoms and opportunities), and ongoing progress of the United States. These students often also omitted people and events who did not fit neatly into the narrative of continuous progress. Epstein et al. (2011) found that African American and Latinx students possessed nuanced understandings of racism and racialization—seeing BIPOC as resilient and agentive, acknowledging the power of political movements, and incorporating the concept of dehumanization into their notions of racism—but overlooked other complexities, such as the danger associated with political movements. These youth were nonetheless far from being blank slates regarding racial issues.

History education scholarship has also demonstrated a relationship between youths' intersectionally racialized experiences and their historical interpretations (An, 2012; Epstein, 2001, 2010; Santiago, 2017; Terzian & Yeager, 2007). Students with dominant racial and/or socioeconomic statuses—including middle-class BIPOC high schoolers—struggled to perceive historical and contemporary injustices against non-dominant groups and instead subscribed more readily to the dominant, Eurocentric narrative of the United States (An, 2012; Epstein, 2001, 2010; Terzian & Yeager, 2007). English-language dominant Mexican American high school

students constructed nuanced narratives of how racial discrimination has varied across communities of color over time, but they did not seem to recognize how the segregation of their Emerging Bilingual peers could double as a proxy for racial discrimination (Santiago, 2017). Taken together, these studies may indicate that some youth do not readily identify or complicate racial injustices that do not directly affect them; they must be intentionally and regularly exposed to experiences beyond their own and to analyses of structural/institutional racism.

Other studies have interrogated how students make sense of race/racism outside of disciplinary learning. BIPOC students have been documented detailing negative racialization experiences in school spaces but without explicitly naming the system(s) of oppression that affect their everyday lives (Bell, 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2019; Joseph et al., 2016). When Bell (2020) interviewed 30 Black high school students who had received out-of-school suspensions and 30 Black parents of suspended students, he found that they unequivocally characterized the suspensions as a marginalization of students' voices and as punishment for their styles of dress, hair, and music preferences. In Carter Andrews et al. (2019) and Joseph et al. (2016), Black girls were keenly aware of how they were racialized in school compared to their white and male-identifying peers. All three studies centered interpersonal interactions, with the youth each juxtaposing their experiences with those of their non-Black peers to underscore the correlations they observed between race/ethnicity and school policies. However, these studies do not make explicit the connection between seemingly isolated incidents to the white supremacist systems designed to preserve a stratified power structure based on race.

None of these studies in history classrooms, school spaces, and after-school programs used racial literacy to inform their analyses, but they nonetheless targeted core understandings about the nature and consequences of racism as outlined in Guinier (2004) and Sealey-Ruiz

(2011b). Children and youth are experts in their own lives, often capable of narrating their racialized experiences in great detail and with sophisticated explanations of why these are unjust. As they mature, students develop skills for analyzing discrimination, stereotyping, and other forms of racism, but they require guidance and support to achieve nuanced and complex interpretations of racial injustices beyond their lived experiences. One way to advance this understanding is by developing racial literacy, which enables a person to identify, expose, and interrupt the operation of race/racism at all levels.

Racial Literacy and Schooling

In seeking to examine the mechanisms through which educators and students come to comprehend the complexities of race/racism, scholars have taken a racial literacy approach of reading the racialized world and acting on it. The existing literature offers glimpses of how developing racial literacy among pre- and in-service teachers can transform pedagogical practice.

Racial literacy among teachers. Acknowledging the need to cultivate racial literacy among prospective educators, researchers have designed, implemented, and refined interventions in teacher education curricula (Mosley, 2010; Mosley & Rogers, 2011; Rogers & Mosley, 2008; Sealey-Ruiz, 2011a; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). These approaches range from critiquing media representations of BIPOC youth (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015) to expanding teacher candidates' repertoires of pedagogical tools for racially literate classrooms to help dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011a). This expansive and growing body of knowledge is invaluable for preparing teachers to facilitate student engagement with the tenets of racial literacy. Sealey-Ruiz & Greene (2015) found that teacher education coursework can help expose and disrupt how depictions of Black boys inform preservice teachers' attitudes towards their Black male students. They proposed six avenues for fostering racial literacy development in

teacher education: engaging with critical texts, facilitating self-examination, holding teacher candidates accountable in the classroom, discussing and critiquing personal experiences with race/racism, exploring their own racial and class identities, and taking a stand against racist and other discriminatory practices. The implications of this and similar work take for granted that teachers can be catalysts and conduits for change, thus resting—perhaps too heavily—on the premise that *individuals* hold the keys that unlock solutions to structural/institutional racism.

Education scholars and teachers currently working in P-12 settings have also explored the challenges and possibilities of teaching with and for racial literacy (Blaisdell, 2016; Brown & Brown, 2011; Epstein & Gist, 2015; King, 2016; King et al., 2018; Mosley Wetzel & Rogers, 2015; Reisman et al., 2020; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Skerrett, 2011; Smith, 2014; Taylor et al., 2006). These studies amplify how the application of teachers' knowledge to practice can elicit responses from students. King and his colleagues (2018) suggested that much of the silence about race in the P-12 classroom stems from a lack of common language about the race/racism. This lack of consensus on racial literacy can be addressed by first defining race/racism, emphasizing the need for "the awareness that racism is not simply the product of individual discrimination but the result of institutional and structural factors" (p. 318), as articulated by critical race scholars and others. The authors posit that once a definition of racism is established:

> Racial literacy also involves taking that definition and (1) understanding the *intersections of power and race*, (2) being able to locate and *analyze racial systems*, (3) possessing the *grammar and vocabularies* associated with racial discourse, such as white supremacy, anti-Blackness, racialization, racial identity, and intersectionality, while (4) *differentiating among terms* such as ethnicity, nationality, discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping. A fifth element of racial literacy is the ability to *"read, recast, and resolve"*

> *racially stressful situations*. In other words, teachers and students need to learn how to see a racial moment, do something about it, and leave with a greater understanding of its complexity. (King et al., 2018, p. 318; italics added for emphasis)

To these ends, they advanced the LETS ACT framework (Love & Listen, Enlighten & Educate, Talk, Scribe, Analyze Systems, Conclude through Deliberation, Take Action) to improve teachers' and students' racial literacies, particularly in P-12 social studies classrooms. This conceptual article is therefore unique in its inclusion of students, its provision of a concrete definition of racism, and its model for racial literacy in formal P-12 school spaces.

Generally, the consensus among education scholars is that "a primary component of developing students' racial literacy [is] their teachers' ability to understand and discuss racism" (Kohli et al., 2017, p. 194). In other words, teachers' racial literacy and their ability to design and facilitate learning opportunities to deepen racial literacy among students plays a major role in promoting racial literacy skills in schools. An unintended consequence of the literature's emphasis on teacher knowledge and skill is the possible conclusion that students develop racial literacy only as a consequence of classroom instruction. This premise discounts the many and layered environments and exchanges through which youth encounter and evaluate messages about race/racism. Additionally, most studies underscore individuals' personal experiences with racism and with micro- or meso-level analyses of it. This tendency can perpetuate the focus on interpersonal racism to the detriment of deconstructing the roles of structures and institutions.

The dialogue around racial literacy in schooling also disproportionately highlights educators working in higher education settings (Grayson, 2017, 2018; Johnson, 2009; Marrun et al., 2019; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013a). This scope limits the conception of racial literacy development, because the entry point is adulthood. By the time U.S. students reach institutions of higher

education, they have typically lived approximately 18 years in a heavily racialized society and undergone roughly 12 or more years of schooling, both of which inform their thoughts and beliefs regarding race/racism. An exploration of students in the earlier stages of their lives and educational careers could shed much-needed light on the formation of racial literacy throughout the lifespan. In this way, P-12 curricular interventions for bolstering racial literacy can be devised beginning in childhood/elementary grades and reinforced throughout adolescence/middle and secondary grades, thus potentially reducing the need to "unlearn" harmful lessons later. Simply put, we must gauge what children and youth know if we are to meet them where they are.

Racial literacy among students. The scholarship amplifies a clarion call for racial literacy in teacher education and among educators. When they center students, empirical studies on racial literacy tend to take place at institutions of higher education, including two-year colleges (e.g., Sealey-Ruiz, 2013a) and in specific disciplines (e.g., Johnson, 2009). Scant scholarship from the past 15 years has addressed P-12 students' racial literacy (Husband, 2014; Nash et al., 2017; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor, 2014). These studies number few and tend to examine racial literacy development as a response to instruction, not as an active and complex phenomenon that takes shape over time and in an array of contexts.

Those who consider the existence and potential of racial literacy among P-12 students have pressed for its introduction in early childhood (Nash et al., 2017), elementary (Husband, 2014; Rogers & Mosley, 2006), and secondary education (Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor, 2014). They concur that P-12 classrooms are fertile ground for the exploration of race/racism and that racial literacy provides essential affordances for doing so effectively. In Husband (2014), the practitioner-researcher observed how, through a ten-lesson sequence on race/racism, her 28 first-grade students "constructed, communicated, and represented multiple, intersubjective meanings

and understandings of race and racism… relate[d] to the salience of race, the subjectivity of race, and the systemic nature of race injustice" (Husband, 2014, p. 31). Nash et al.'s (2017) five critical ethnographies of "children and the adults who teach and parent them" (p. 257) and Rogers & Mosley's (2006) teacher-researcher observations, journaling, and interviews similarly buttressed the claim that early childhood- and elementary-aged children exhibit emerging forms of racial literacy and benefit from guidance in refining it. Both studies draw on critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and critical racial literacy to demonstrate how children engage with racial discourses in school and at home. Since one of the studies synthesized in Nash et al. (2017) considered the dominant discourses that shaped how young *white* children constructed race and whiteness, and all the students in Rogers & Mosley (2006) identified as white, they also underscore the need for dialogue on race/racism with white children, not only their BIPOC peers.

The one inquiry focusing on secondary students (Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor, 2014) found that their capacity for racial literacy develops over time, even autonomously. Originating with the conviction that "students need more opportunities to learn how to respond to and counter forms of everyday racism" (p. 82), they investigated how a peer-led group dialogued about race/racism in an English Language Arts classroom—independent of adult supervision. As Vetter & Hungerford-Kressor (2014) defined it, being racially literate

> Means to hear and appreciate diverse and unfamiliar experiences, recognize how to ask questions, view racial issues through a critical lens that recognizes *current and institutional aspects of racism*, and engage in talk even when it is difficult or awkward. Thus, a racially literate person addresses race in ways that *recognize race as a structural rather than individual problem*… (p. 84; italics added for emphasis)

Although the students were not fully "fluent" in racial literacy, they engaged in three racially literate practices: "hearing and appreciating diverse and unfamiliar experiences, facilitating problem solving with the community, and creating opportunities to talk about race" (p. 89). All the students in the study identified as African American, Latinx, or both; this composition is significant, as it may have been a factor in the students' comfort level with these topics.

Thus, save for this handful of studies, the literature on P-12 students' racial literacy is incipient—a missed opportunity, given the evidence that youth are eager to discuss race (VanAusdale & Feagin, 2001), in need of frameworks for understanding race/racism (Barton & Levstik, 2008), and forming racial concepts and identities from a young age (Bolgatz, 2005). Beginning with what students know—and are able to undertake on their own—can allow educators to identify desired outcomes and enduring understandings about race as they design racial literacy instruction. The purpose of this paper is thus to explore how teenagers may be developing racial literacy competencies independent of formal instruction to make sense of race/racism in their everyday lives and the world, both in and out of school.

Methods

Since this project is invested in foregrounding how youth articulate their ideas about race/racism, I posed two questions concerned with how these youth engaged in dialogue about race/racism. Specifically, I wanted to discern how these youth exhibited varying degrees of racial literacy and to identify areas where these skills may be in need of supplementing.

Research Questions

To explore youths' racial literacy, I considered two research questions: *How do high-school aged youth interpret racism in conversation with their peers? What may this dialogue reveal about their existing racial literacies and their potential for future development?* These

questions center students' conceptions of racism to consider how the conclusions they drew may point to the racial literacy skills they have, are acquiring, or can hone with support.

To parse out students' interpretations of racism, I used qualitative inquiry methods of data generation and analysis. Specifically, this paper assumes a collective case study approach by drawing from one jointly-created data source to constitute the "case" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). A collective case study is but one way to zero in on the affordances and constraints of engaging students in group dialogue about racism to draw out their thoughts on the origins, current state, and direction of change they perceive regarding race/racism in the United States.

Context

Guerrero High School[14] is located in an unincorporated territory in the Midwest with a population of less than 25,000 residents. In the 2019-2020 school year, school records indicate that enrollment at Guerrero consisted of students who self-identified as white (34.25%), African American (31.59%), Hispanic/Latino (18.55%), two or more races (10.75%), Asian (4.28%), American Indian/Alaska Native (0.48%), or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.10%).

Data source. This paper concentrates on a focus group interview (Morgan, 2012; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011) with tenth-grade students at Guerrero. Specifically, it features a session that took place on January 30, 2020, with five students. For the focus group interviews, I drafted a semi-structured protocol (please see Appendix) to tease out beliefs and assumptions about racism (what it is, how it has changed in the past and may change in the future, and challenges to combatting it) and experiences with racism (first-hand or otherwise).

I recruited students to participate in focus groups via a series of announcements during their history class. To gather diverse perspectives, I did not bar any student from volunteering for

[14] The names of all places and people have been replaced with pseudonyms to preserve their confidentiality.

the dialogues. The sessions took place during a non-instructional period built into the students' school day in a vacant classroom at Guerrero. I aimed to include approximately three to five per session over four sessions—sufficient for an engaging discussion without the barriers to participation that may present when the group is too large (e.g., youth may feel less comfortable sharing or may have to vie for air time). There were three focus group sessions total, spanning from 26 to 45 minutes. At the outset of each session, I encouraged students to build on and respond to one another's ideas and ask for clarification when necessary. I was adamant that I was not seeking "right" answers, but that I wanted to understand their thoughts and experiences.

In two of the sessions, participation was imbalanced and stalled early. Despite my attempts to elicit responses from students from whom I had not heard or who had become reticent after a moment of discomfort (e.g., another person disagreed with them, and they withdrew from the conversation), these focus groups did not shed light on the students' thoughts about race/racism in robust ways. Students did not expound on their own answers or dovetail off peers' comments to deepen the conversation. There was one BIPOC student in each group.

The participants in the focal focus group conducted a generative conversation that required no redirection from my part to remain on topic. The group consisted of five youth: Gloria (of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban origin), Kim (Black, white, and Puerto Rican), May (white), David (Mexican and Asian), and Sunny (Black and white). My analysis of the findings of the larger study highlights their focus group for two reasons. For one, while groups were assembled based on individual availability, this group was the only one in which BIPOC youth represented the majority of participants, as indicated by their self-identifications above. This dynamic is significant, because research has found that BIPOC youth may be more comfortable speaking about their experiences with racism when they are in the numerical

majority (Blum, 2004; Palmer & Jang, 2005). The BIPOC youth shared extensively about their experiences with and knowledge of racism. Secondly, participation was distributed among the participants in this group, and the students sustained the conversation by responding to and building on one another's remarks. This minimal intervention on my part allowed for students' voices to take center-stage and for them to elaborate on their reasoning or make connections.

Data analysis. I transcribed the focus group interviews using my audio recordings from each session. I conducted descriptive initial coding (Saldaña, 2013) of the focal transcript, summarizing in short phrases the similarities and differences in how participants responded to my questions, points of agreement and divergence among the youth, moments of tension within individuals' responses, and the students' tendencies to speak to one another—not to me—and move the discussion forward with clarifying questions or elaboration. While I prioritized the substantive content of the focus group above the nature of the interactions between participants, I also noted moments of discomfort or disagreement among students to identify conceptual differences among them and to gauge participants' responses to unanticipated pushback.

I first generated 16 descriptive codes from the focus group data. They reflected the topics the youth raised (e.g., *racism takes different forms, dialogue as anti-racist intervention*, and *current president makes it worse*). During second-cycle coding, I grouped these codes into seven code families; for instance, the three descriptive codes *racism takes different forms, racism depends on a person's race/ethnicity*, and *racism changes with every generation* became *Racism is Fluid*. Two codes did not fit neatly into a single family: *Black-white binary* and *self-identificatio*n. References to the first appeared across several families, and the second contained the responses to my question about how the participants identified racially/ethnically. I collapsed

the code families into three themes: (1) how racism has changed, (2) how racism looks now, and (3) how racism operates. These themes structure the findings and analysis section that follows.

Spaces of Possibility in Reading Students' Racial Literacy

My analysis of the data revealed that these five youth had heard and read about how racism is ever-changing, and they were aware of how racism looks today, but they did not overtly connect this awareness to how racism operates at structural or institutional levels. The youth offered narrative evidence to illustrate these points, sometimes arguing that the changes in how racism shows up may mean that it is not permanent. At other times, the youth concluded that changing individuals' minds might prove insufficient to dismantle racism because universal consensus seems unlikely, positing that racism may, in fact, be a permanent fixture of life in the United States. The students described how racism looks in the present, including how they have been situated as native informants (hooks, 1994; Spivak, 1999) or racially stereotyped, with one mention of police brutality and several mentions of the role of the president of the United States in stoking the fires of racism. Despite these varied insights, they consistently struggled to extrapolate their understanding of individual racism to the structural and/or institutional levels.

How Racism Has Changed

The five tenth-grade students in the focal session referred early and often to the versatile nature of racism, discussing how it has changed over time by the mode of delivery and the focus of discrimination (e.g., accents or dialects), by the context of a person's racial/ethnic identity, and by a person's generational status. At times, while discussing the direction of change of racism, the students sounded hopeful that perhaps since racism appeared to decrease over time, it might eventually disappear. At other times, they teetered on the edge of saying—without ever stating—that racism's fluidity allows it to preserve itself by adapting to new contexts. These

conjectures could have led the group to question how racism has morphed and embedded itself in society at all levels, but the group remained focused on how it manifests among individuals.

Racism is fluid. May, the only white-identifying student in the group, was the first student to point out the chameleonic properties of racism. She led by stating, "I think it's stayed the same but just shows up in different ways now." This comment was met with broad agreement from her peers, who quickly elaborated with examples (developed below) of the distinct forms that racism can take, as well as how people with different racial/ethnic identities and from various generations enact it. In the subsection that ensues, I provide examples of these points and examine what they expose about these youths' grappling with the topic of racism.

Racism varies by mode. David (who identified as Asian and Mexican) distinguished between the overt racism of Jim Crow laws and the more covert—ostensibly colorevasive—means of the present. He offered:

> I think it's pretty much stayed the same. I just think now in some ways it's more hidden. So, since it's not the law that like, "whites this, Blacks this," now they've found other ways to do it, which can make people feel uncomfortable.

In David's assessment, contemporary racism is "pretty much… the same," only now instead of being codified in the law, racist acts—such as causing discomfort—are subtle. He alluded to the institutional element of racist legal codes in the past ("it's not in the law") and referenced the continuity of their legacy into the present ("they've found other ways to do it"). His comment may have reflected a Black-white binary paradigm (["whites this, Blacks this"], Perea, 1997), but his mention of the "more hidden" psychological dimensions of racism is supported by research that can apply uniquely to BIPOC of all races/ethnicities (e.g., Sue, 2010).

David's observation struck a nerve with other participants. Three of his peers recounted specific race-related discomfort experienced by a relative in the workplace or on the job market. Gloria (who identified as Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican) stated:

> My stepfather's from Mexico, and sometimes when he has job opportunities, and he tries to voice his opinion on stuff, people won't take him seriously because of his accent and because sometimes he doesn't have the right word choices, because English isn't his first language, so he struggles with that sometimes.

Kim (who identified as Black, white, and Puerto Rican) shared about a "dark-skinned" uncle with a "white-sounding name" who excelled at telephone interviews but did not secure a job after an in-person encounter. David spoke about his mother being laid off when BIPOC staff were replaced by white workers. These examples served as evidence of BIPOC's barriers to employment and workplace advancement, which can lead to a broader discussion about the role of race and racism in systemic socioeconomic stratification (underemployment, poverty, etc.).

Gloria's indignation over her stepfather's microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007b) ignited a conversation about linguistic racism. Sunny (who identified as Black and white) added:

> I know people that if other people start speaking Spanish, they'll take that as being disrespectful because "You're in front of me doing that," and they don't know what they're saying. I don't understand why people get mad about that. That's what they know! But then they don't like how people speak English either.

Here, Sunny identified a paradox: speakers of languages other than English can never seem to please the nativist listener but are also barred from or derided for speaking their heritage languages. It is unsurprising that Sunny used Spanish as an example, since raciolinguistic (Flores & Rosa, 2015) attacks are saliently lobbed against Latinxs in the U.S., but linguistic racism

affects other BIPOC (Baker-Bell, 2020). As Kim cried out, “We’re in America! We don’t have a set language! You can even make up your own language!” Her impassioned interjection conveyed that this was a topic about which she felt rather strongly, and she appeared exasperated with the outlook that Sunny had described. Worth noting is how Kim reclaimed the exclamation that “we’re in America,” a phrase often used to deride people choosing not to speak English and to demand that they do so, to suggest that the U.S. should be a place where linguistic diversity is not only tolerated, but embraced. With this statement, Kim showed that she was somewhat well-versed—even racially literate—in how to counter the racist and nativist monolingual mindset.

> Identifying a paradox linguistic racism and cultural appropriation, David commented: People make fun of how we speak, but they try to act like us, though. Or they wanna use racial slurs. Like white girls on Instagram trying to have big lips, or talking like Black girls, or trying to have their bodies.

Several of the other students groaned in exasperated agreement. Pointing out that these forms of cultural appropriation do not go unnoticed by BIPOC, Gloria brought up Black Twitter as a forum that calls out problematic behavior. The progression of this dialogue indicates these young people’s sophistication of thought. They linked seemingly disparate issues— the firing and not hiring of BIPOC; accent discrimination of non-native English speaking BIPOC; opposition to select languages other than English, namely those spoken by BIPOC; and the misappropriation of BIPOC ways of being, including speech. By stringing these topics together, the students collectively mapped out the contours of a sociolinguistic dimension of racism. However, consistent with the unmarked nature of structural and institutional racism, these young people alluded to troublesome ideologies as embodied and perpetuated only by individuals.

Racism varies by race/ethnicity and/or generation. Even when they were promising contributions to the group's collective understanding of racism, not all the topics discussed were generative. Gloria raised what she saw as inconsistent standards of acceptable student speech:

> There's some things I hear in class, that if I were to say them, then it would be racist, but if other people were to say it, it would be fine. Say that an African American student was saying something about a white student. If a white student said it *back*, it would be different. And if an African American said something to a Mexican and they said something back, it would be *way* different. It would be racist, like, *super* racist.

Gloria's assessment was that the degree to which a comment is racist depends on the racial/ethnic identity of the speaker. In her opinion, African American students are able to make problematic remarks with impunity, and they are sheltered from comments directed at them. She later attributed this disparity to the higher number of African American students in the school, not to differences in historical context or in how distinct BIPOC communities are racialized today. The opportunity came and went for the students to think aloud together about what makes a comment racist, or about why it may be that white people and BIPOC of different races/ethnicities are subject to specific types of scrutiny or restrictions on their speech.

Later in the session, the topic of generational differences briefly surfaced. Gloria broached the disapproval of interracial relations, which she relegated to the past:

> I've heard some of my older teachers talk about how their parents wouldn't allow them to get married to a person of a different race because it's not in their generation to date a different race other than theirself.

Perhaps because she is a multiethnic Latina in a group with three bi- or multi-racial students, Gloria implied that opposing interracial marriage is now obsolete. She intentionally attributed

this opposition to the parents of her "older teachers." These specific comments did not incite a response from Gloria's peers in the moment, but the notion of racial progress from one generation to the next did reemerged implicitly when I asked whether racism is permanent.

The permanence of racism. Despite aptly elucidating ways that racism is fluid, the students attributed those differences to individual actors and actions. This stance led them to conclude at times that racism is not permanent because individuals can change their race-related beliefs and behaviors. Kim was hopeful that, "it [racism] definitely could go away, because you're not born with the bias of, 'I'm not liking this color, I'm not liking that color'." Her rationale was simple: if bias is not innate, racism can be eradicated by interrupting bias before children internalize it and it ossifies. Other students concurred, suggesting (as seen below) that the most effective campaigns against racism are those that challenge individuals' racist ideas.

Once they had established the consensus that racism is not a permanent fixture of U.S. society, the focus group sought common ground about effective forms of combatting racism. Kim was optimistic about the power of dialogue to gradually transform people's thinking, even if the gains were incremental, as she felt they had always been:

> I think groups like this, like starting out with a little group and getting into bigger groups, would help a little bit, but I think that's all it's been for years—just helping a little bit. I don't know how to get rid of it completely, but it would be helpful if people had more chances to talk about it.

Kim was torn. On one hand, she proposed gradually scaling up small-group dialogue. On the other hand, she acknowledged that "just helping a little bit" at a time is how race relations have progressed for a long time. She sounded discouraged by the glacial pace of incremental change, acknowledging some skepticism that talking was enough to "get rid of it completely." This

dissatisfaction may have been associated with the limitations of case-by-case intervention rather than large-scale methods, but Kim did not vocalize that in her vacillating between optimism and skepticism. Nonetheless, her doubts about the efficacy of "groups like this" was not enough to dislodge a solution hinging on changing minds, one at a time. Kim's measured optimism about "groups like this" being transformational resembles critical hope (Cahill et al., 2010; Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Zembylas, 2007), a courageous belief in humanity's capacity for healing. There were traces of that hope as the group discussed what it might take to eliminate racism.

The conversation gathered momentum, with each successive contribution adding depth to Kim's initial suggestion. David perceived Kim's proposed strategy as an opportunity for youth to assume an active role in the process of social change. He added, excitedly:

> Maybe kids can get more active in it, because they don't let us vote really, so we should have a say in things. We can start, like Kim said, little groups get bigger and bigger, and kids will maybe start running things a little bit better, like telling our parents about our president and how we should change and everything.

Because youth cannot vote, David reasoned, these hypothetical dialogues could provide an avenue for them to "have a say," "start running things," and sharing what they know with their parents in the hopes of effecting change. Like Gloria, he referenced a generational divide (mentioning youth not having suffrage), and he noted specific concerns about the president that he felt need to be made known to adults who may be unaware. As I discuss in a later section, students repeatedly motioned to the 45th U.S. president as a contributor to racial tensions.

Kim and David's talk of the role of children and youth in stemming or reversing the tide of racism inspired Sunny to chime in:

> And starting younger. We don't really start talking about this stuff until maybe middle school or high school. But by then, parents—people—have already had time to drill in kids' heads, "You're not gonna like this color. This color's bad." So I understand maybe we're too young to have deep conversations like this, but I dunno. It doesn't make sense.

It was not lost on Sunny that the leadership role David described would require preparation that should begin in earlier grades. She advocated for "starting younger" and lamented how late the conversations about "this stuff" were taking place in school, well after influential adults have "drill[ed]" into children's heads who they should like or dislike, their inherent value or traits, and how to treat them. With this, Sunny unwittingly underwrote the scholarship calling for earlier engagement in difficult discussions in P-12 learning spaces (Brown & Brown, 2011; Carter Andrews & Montgomery, 2017; McBee, 1995; Zembylas & Kambani, 2012).

Greater education on race/racism and other social (in)justice issues became a recurring theme. May shared how her mother's views on LGBTQ+ issues softened after she went back to school and took psychology courses. She conjectured that, "People could do that for race too. Learn more psychology, surround yourself with different people." The keys to combatting racism, according to May, may lie in studying the human mind and in surrounding oneself with people who are different. She did not suggest history, law, or other types of courses as a means of learning about race/racism. Her emphasis remained on the interpersonal dimension of racism.

Other focus group participants expressed support for focus groups like the one I was conducting with them. They lauded the small-group format and the diversity of the participants as factors in the effectiveness of the strategy. David shared, "I really liked this, how we made a group. It was nice to talk about it just us, instead of in a big group." While he emphasized the importance of an intimate setting, Gloria prioritized the role of racial/ethnic diversity:

I feel like the fact that this group is diverse was good. Like, we have different skin colors and different cultures and stuff. So there's a lot more opinions. I feel like if it was all one race, there wouldn't be a lot of different opinions.

Gloria's remark was a reflection of her focus group experience, one in which she and her peers shared their viewpoints and personal experiences. She may have noticed that the lone white student in the group spoke the least, allowing her BIPOC peers to express themselves freely.

Although the students had presented the thesis that racism could be stamped out because they envisioned solutions for combatting it, they kept returning to the matter of whether their propositions were feasible. The following exchange occurred in response to my question about what it would take to eliminate racism and the barriers to meeting that objective. They replied:

David: There's always gonna be people that think differently. Not everyone's gonna think the same or want the same thing. People are gonna want different things, and then if another person doesn't want the same thing, they're gonna still end up bringing up the past.

Gloria: I feel like it's not gonna change—well, it's not gonna be eliminated, 'cuz we're human, and some people do talk without thinking. But even if they weren't talking, they're still thinking it. Like, everyone still has an opinion on certain subjects. So it's not automatically just gonna eliminate it. It would get *better* over time, like if something happened, but with our president right now, I feel like it's not gonna go away.

May: I think you can't eliminate it, but I feel like it can get better. It's just it's always still gonna be there because everyone has their own, like, opinions and stuff.

Kim: I think part of the problem is just humans don't adapt to change well, like with anything, even besides racism. So when you're trying to force change on someone who already doesn't like change, and then it's a big topic like racism, I just think it's really hard. And

> people have tried advocating and protesting and all that stuff, and it's went away, but in a way it hasn't went away.

In this exchange, the students were contending with two thorny questions: can there ever be a world in which racism does not exist, and what would be necessary for that to transpire? Despite previously asserting that racism is not inborn—and therefore preventable—and that dialogue can change minds, the students equivocated more and more as the conversation progressed.

When they conceded that it may be possible that racism is a more intractable problem than they had originally considered, the youth offered several reasons why eliminating racism is a dauting task. May, for example, speculated about the influence of family and childrearing:

> Maybe how you're raised or what you see can definitely affect racism, like add to it. Like if a boy grows up and his parents teach him that "This color is bad, this color does this. You can't be friends with people like that," they're gonna grow up thinking that's normal, that's OK. But if you change the way they grow up, which is kind of hard to do because everybody has their own ideas about different things, then it can get better.

In May's estimation, the key to unseating racism is to change "how you're raised," but she seemed stymied by the prospect of reconciling stark differences between individuals. She, like her peers, was at a loss for concrete ideas about how to address problems with "the way they [kids] grow up." May was describing the process of socializing children regarding race/racism. The literature on racial socialization tends to frame it as a buffer that Black families erect to protect and prepare their children and youth (e.g., Scott, 2003; Stevenson, 1994), but May suggested that *all* children's upbringing shaped racial attitudes (see Priest et al., 2014). Herself a white-identifying person, May acknowledged that the need for conversation and conscious socialization regarding race/racism is intrinsic to all families, not only those of BIPOC children.

The skepticism that the youth expressed echoes decades of race scholarship, most prominently in critical race theory (CRT). The young people's recognition that dialogue may prove insufficient for upending racist thinking altogether, that there will always be those who retain their racial ideologies, and that racism is simply not going to be eliminated is akin to Bell's racial realism. Bell (1992) postulated that abstract concepts like equality do not adequately capture the material realities of the racially minoritized. Therefore, racism is a permanent fixture of U.S. society because history has shown time and again that "…legal rights could do little more than bring about the cessation of one form of discriminatory conduct that soon appeared in a more subtle though no less discriminatory form" (Bell, 1992, p. 375). Bell doubted that equality—as defined by law—was attainable or that incrementalism was a viable route to the complete eradication of racism from the very institutions that preserved it. The students—while not speaking about the legal system—voiced a similar position in their own words. Their wavering between hope and realism demonstrated that the tenets of CRT are not so far removed from youths' thinking and that introducing CRT in P-12 spaces would not necessarily raise new issues but provide students with language and other tools for making sense of race/racism.

Taken together, this focus group demonstrated the youths' nuanced insights on racism. They pointed out that racism is versatile; it shows up in a multitude of ways and is more hidden today than in previous time periods. They acknowledged how racialized discourse wields different forms of power depending on the identity of the speaker, how preceding generations experienced racism differently, and how incremental change has been over time. They were enthusiastic about the potential for youth to lead constructive dialogue to dismantle racism, adamant that children should learn about race at a younger age, unconvinced that dialogue alone can altogether root out racism, and beginning to connect racism to other social justice issues

(e.g., monolingual mindset, and—to a lesser extent—homophobia and heterosexism). These views resonate with race and education scholarship about the fluidity of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), its permanence in the U.S. (Bell, 1992), the need for earlier P-12 instruction on it (Brown & Brown, 2011), and the manifestation of racism in forms of racialization—like raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa, 2015)—that extend across various BIPOC communities.

There was, however, one major omission: the adolescents largely overlooked the institutionalized systems that uphold racism. This absence was evident from the inception of the session, when I asked for a definition of racism. Almost every student offered an explanation:

Sunny: People that don't like colored people, or don't like somebody that's not their race.

David: Like, talking down on someone of a different color. Or, like, degrading them.

Kim: Having a judgement on someone before you get to know them.

Gloria: Thinking like a stereotype, that's what creates it. The way you feel a race is overall.

These definitions of racism all focused on interpersonal perspectives and dynamics—disliking BIPOC and members of any *other* race, being condescending or degrading, prejudging, and racial stereotyping. I opted not to offer a more comprehensive definition or challenge the youths' use of terms like "colored people" was deliberate. I had prefaced the discussion by telling students that there was no "right" answer, and I did not wish to betray their trust or contradict the tenor of the conversation by intervening to "correct" them. I waited to see whether students' answers to subsequent questions problematized racism or any of the language they used to describe it. When this did not occur explicitly, I later asked whether racism was only person-to-person or if it could exist on a larger scale. Kim responded:

> Everything. Like, it could happen [from] me to her [*pointing to Sunny*], or me to an entire class, or posting something to an entire website. Or sometimes, like political leaders can make statements that they don't even realize are racist.

Kim knew that racism does not only take place one-on-one, but her new examples were still instances of interpersonal racism, even if they involved a group or country or unfolded on a website. Even after my attempt to raise doubts about the simplistic schema the students had of racism, there was no recognition of its ubiquity, macro-level manifestations, or relation to power.

How Racism Looks Today

The youth in the focus group were in general agreement that racism has morphed but not necessarily diminished over time. In addition to the experiences of relatives, they drew on their own confrontations with racism to depict the contemporary variant. They mentioned being positioned by others as a "native informant" (hooks, 1994; Spivak, 1999)—asked to speak to an area of expertise by an observer unfamiliar with their culture—and being subject to racial stereotypes. Only briefly did they bring up current events beyond their immediate context, namely police brutality and national political rhetoric.

Native informant. Kim recalled how, when she attended school in a predominantly white district, she was singled out for her physical appearance and asked to explain it to others:

> I was the only person who had any bit of color in my grade. They'd always ask me why my hair was so big, so I only wore it in a bun. I didn't want them to ask me why my hair was so big or why my lips were so big. I felt embarrassed of who I was—which I'm not anymore. I wouldn't change my skin color if I could.

Despite her experiences being asked by her white peers to share her insider knowledge about being BIPOC, Kim triumphantly reflected on how she no longer experienced shame for who she

is and would not trade her racial/ethnic identity if she could. In this way, she resisted a victim stance—one component of racial literacy (Sealey-Ruiz, 2013b)—by recognizing that these interrogations were transgressions but did not define her. Other youth related comments about questions regarding physical features. Interestingly, none of them were from adults. This omission does not guarantee that it did not take place. One possibility is that peer transgressions were more easily perceived by the students. The silence on teachers' inequitable treatment was striking, given the recent research on the "new racism" in P-12 schools (Kohli et al., 2017), but it may have also been a function of our limited time together.

Racial stereotypes. David was the first student who talked about racial stereotypes that have been directed at him personally. He rattled off a litany of Asian stereotypes he has endured, inciting mild disagreement among the students, but one that they maneuvered with admirable honesty and maturity. Below is the transcription of this exchange:

David: I'm Asian, and people say I eat animals, like dogs and cats. They also think because I'm Asian, I'm short and my whole family's short. They say I can't see. Oh, and they always say I'm smart and use chopsticks.

Kim: You guys get good ones. It's always that you're smart, when you think about it.

David: But it's like…you shouldn't base it off race to give someone a compliment. I don't think it can be nice to just base it off their race. It's hard to make a good race compliment or something like that. 'Cuz still, people might think it's not a compliment, just think you're being racist, or… It's hard to explain.

Sunny: Or telling someone, "That looks good for a Black person doing it," or "Your hair looks good for a Black person," instead of just saying, "Your hair looks cute." The biggest

thing I hear is, “You’re really pretty for a Black girl.” Like, why can’t you just be pretty? They think that’s a compliment.

Gloria: Or that Mexicans are hardworking. A lot of my friends that are Mexican – they talk about how their parents are really hardworking, but to other people, they’re lazy, or they’re taking people’s jobs. But it’s *because* they’re hardworking that they’re doing your job. And it’s not even that they’re taking their jobs, because there’s hundreds of jobs that they could obviously have, but they’re just saying that *we’re* taking them.

This moment spontaneously generated some dissonance over whether some stereotypes are better than others. Kim overlooked four stereotypes about Asians and Asian Americans that David listed to focus on the “good one” reflecting the model minority myth. David took advantage of the opportunity to explicate why stereotypes that appear positive, are not. His effort to condemn Asian stereotypes resonated with Sunny and Gloria, who built on the idea that no compliment should be based solely on race. They contributed personal examples of racial microaggressions about Black girls’ attractiveness and Mexicans’ work ethic, which they saw as paralleling the point that David had first raised. Their collective analysis echoes the extensive work on racial microaggressions, including race-specific trends (Sue et al., 2007a, 2007b, 2008).

Kim did not respond to David’s objection or to the subsequent remarks, nor did she appear to disagree or withdraw from the conversation, and other students were compelled to engage. It was therefore a constructive moment that evidenced students’ ability to diffuse conflict, a skill that is not explicitly part of Sealey-Ruiz’s (2011b) racial literacy framework but that required that David and his classmates “ ‘read, recast, and resolve’ [a] racially stressful situation” (King et al., 2018, p. 318). In taking a closer look at how children and youth navigate conversations about race/racism among themselves, we may also come to appreciate that they are

members of subcultures with unique and mutable modes of communication. These modes need not depart dramatically from the discourses of educators and other adults but may offer models for speaking with and to young people or for teaching them to interrupt racism among peers.

While the group was on the topic of stereotypes, Kim objected to how perceptions of BIPOC can stem from the actions of an individual. She used a hypothetical situation to illustrate how one person's wrongdoing can erroneously reflect on all people of the same race:

> So like, a Black guy could rape a white girl, and now that whole white family don't like Black people at all. So now it's just one person messed up how the white family's gonna think the rest of their lives, and then they tell their kids, and now that's a whole nother generation that doesn't like a skin color, just because of one example. But then they fail to realize that white people can do that stuff too. And I'm not just trying to use white and Black, but that's just what we see most.

Perhaps unknowingly, Kim used the trope of a Black man assaulting a white woman's virtue to make her point that the actions of BIPOC are often projected onto all members of their racial/ethnic groups. Moreover, while Kim did point out that "white people can do that stuff too," the scenario situated the genesis of anti-Black racism within one Black individual's actions. In fact, there is a long-standing historical context of hysteria over the presumption of violent crime being committed by BIPOC. This moment was a chance for the youth to cast doubt on racist perceptions of BIPOC criminality, to question not only *how* law enforcement and civilians respond to alleged criminals but also *why* suspicion and legal consequences weigh more heavily on Black and Latinx communities. It did not materialize. The analysis lingered on the individual.

Racism in current events. In addition to addressing racism in their personal lives, the youth addressed two topics that did not pertain to them or their loved ones. Specifically, students

brought up police brutality as evidence that racism has not changed drastically over time, and they repeatedly referred to the current president as someone who stokes the fires of racism, although never once by name. They did not, however, speak about law enforcement, the criminal justice system, or the federal government as networked institutions subjugating BIPOC systemically—they remained focused on individual police officers and politicians.

The prime example of current events emerging in the conversation was David bringing up police brutality as evidence of how slowly racism has changed. He declared:

> I see stuff on the news, like police brutality, how they're different towards different skins. It's bringing it back to slavery. Like, they made a law to not have slavery no more, but people are still acting like we're different from each other… Sometimes they [legal changes] help, but not in a critical way. It's just like taking them [racist laws] away so they don't get hurt no more, but they still have police brutality, and they're still dying.

David did not explicitly name *how* police officers are "different towards different skins," or *which* groups are "still dying," but by comparing law enforcement tactics to enslavement, he could have been implying Black communities. He also highlighted how racist laws may have been reversed, but BIPOC are still discriminated against based on their race. To David, legal gains have not helped "in a critical way." Gloria corroborated, "Yeah, just 'cuz they're not lynching people or doing any of that, doesn't mean there isn't still people dying because of this." Both students emphasized that while slavery and lynching—the pinnacles of racist violence—are no longer practiced, equally deplorable forms of harm are inflicted on people. They did not specify which particular communities tend to be affected most or the larger ramifications of their disproportionate profiling and incarceration.

When I asked the students what they believed would help eliminate racism, the first responses were about the role of the U.S. president in race relations. Whenever someone raised the topic of current political discourse, students coincided that racism has become more overt and acceptable under the current administration than it was under President Barack Obama.

Gloria: I'm not saying our president *caused* racism—

Kim: —what you all have against our president? [Everyone laughs.] I'm just kidding!

Gloria: I feel like he didn't start it, but I feel like he definitely, uh, [*David*: made it worse] activated it, like made it… [*David*: worse]—yeah, way worse because he vocalized some opinions that some people were too scared to talk about, but since now their president is doing it, they feel like it's OK to speak their opinions, when they didn't used to do that. I'm not saying he started it because it was way before him, but he definitely *activated* it.

David: I feel like when we had a different president, it was a lot better, but ever since *he* came, he's been talking about building a border wall, and it started to get worse when it was *just* starting to get a little bit better, you know?

Sunny: Especially 'cuz we had an African American president, so everyone started to realize that the world was changing.

Kim: 'Cuz we had no option. Well, not me. *America* had no option. Like, "This is your president!"

May: To me it was like, I didn't used to think about it. I thought it was getting a lot better, but ever since *he* became president, it kinda got worse and it started coming up more.

All five students concurred on two fronts: under "a different president" conditions were getting better, and people "started to realize that the world was changing" because the nation was led by a (biracial) African American man. Now there is constant talk of a border wall, and racism is

either worse or has been exposed. Gloria believed that racism went underground or laid dormant during the Obama years but was "activated" by Trump's presidency, while others thought race relations had genuinely improved under Obama. These different outlooks are emblematic of how racial realism (Bell, 1992) and optimism can coexist within communities across the nation.

Together, these five youths collectively constructed meaning and exposed some areas in which they may need further guidance and instruction. They spoke about discrimination based on accents and languages, defending everyone's right to speak any language. They decried cultural appropriation, racial stereotypes, police brutality, and racist political rhetoric. They navigated a moment of disagreement with poise and insight. Yet, nuanced as their notions may be, they tended to focus on interpersonal racism while hovering on the cusp of exposing the role of institutionalized systems in upholding it. There was, for instance, a vague awareness that changing individual people's minds is insufficient to cure the societal malaise of racism and an implied sense that the legal, overt means of the past had given way to new variants of racism. In this way, their racial literacy approached but may not have fully arrived at Sealey-Ruiz's (2011b) desired outcomes for racially literate students.

These young people were stumped, and with good reason. When the individual is the unit of analysis for examining the prevalence of racism, the remedies entail harnessing individual beliefs and ideas. This mission may be accomplished incrementally, with every successive generation faring slightly better than the last. But by the students' own admission, racism has not exited the stage; it is merely donning a new disguise. Police brutality and profiling has replaced lynching. Workplace discrimination based on language or appearance has substituted legal segregation. Slavery may have ended, but racism lingers and hangs heavy in the air, permeating everything from BIPOC's speech to their very bodies. These high schoolers rendered a

commendable reading of racism, but their budding racial literacy had not yet prepared them to openly and critically "examine the institutionalized systems that uphold race and other social constructs" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011b). While these teens pieced together to the best of their ability what they had discussed, experienced, witnessed, and overheard about race/racism, the ideological shift to systems would have enhanced their discussion of the implications of racism.

Discussion

I approached this inquiry with two guiding questions: *How do youth interpret narratives of racism in conversation with their peers? What can these interpretations reveal about their existing and potential racial literacy?* As applied to educational settings, racial literacy skills equip students to (1) probe racism and examine the institutionalized systems that uphold race and other social constructs, (2) discuss the implications of race/racism, and (3) either adopt an anti-racist stance or resist a victim stance (Sealey-Ruiz, 2011b). The tenth-grade students who participated in the focus group at the core of this paper probed racism to the extent that was possible for them, discussed the implications of racism that were visible to them, and either adopted anti-racist stances *or* rejected victim positions inasmuch as they were cognizant of the need for them. They thus proved, to an admirable degree, racially literate in several regards.

But literacy is a continuum; it is possible for select layers of racism to be legible and not others. Though the students showed promise with regard to some competencies, they consistently glossed over the role of structural and institutional racism—"the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics… that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color," and the "discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced and perpetuated by institutions" (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004, p. 1). The youths' apparent lack of

awareness of these components of racism limited their insights to the interpersonal level during the focus group, though they may in fact be familiar with other dimensions that did not surface.

This pattern among student responses indicates that they may require further guidance to see racism as a *system* of oppression rooted in the distribution of power and to learn the language necessary to express the relationship between the micro-level experiences they perceive and the macro-level injustices they may not. Borrowing from literacy education, these words and ways of classifying related structures are the *vocabulary* and *grammar* of analyzing racism.

Yet, there is much for which the students should be applauded. Below, I examine three areas of racial literacy evident in the focus group. I posit that these understandings and skills are achievements, even as they beg a deeper interrogation of structural and institutional racism.

Personal Connections to Racism

The five students profiled above accomplished an admirable task. They drew on the stories of relatives, friends, and younger selves to make sense of the idiosyncrasies of racism. Making personal connections to the topic created a point of entry for each student. Their history course did not create space for such connections during my study, but research has shown the impact of engaging students with content in a personally meaningful way (e.g., Hansen, 2009).

To honor how vulnerable the students made themselves in the focus group, I opted to listen more than I spoke, even if that decision meant not disrupting comments or language that I deemed less than optimal for the circumstances. One example of this dilemma was the lack of specificity in students' remarks as they spoke of "different" people or used vague pronouns with implied antecedents. Another instance was the group's use of "skin" and "color" to mean race, the use of "race" to mean nationality, the use of "colored" to mean "of Color," and the use of "Mexican" possibly to mean all Latinxs. This tendency among the students may indicate that

some vocabulary for discussing race was not accessible to them at the time of the interview. In fact, students used "skin" six times, "race" 11 times, and "color" (excluding the phrase "people of color") 14 times. These were the words that the students felt comfortable using, and I allowed them to express themselves unencumbered by concerns about diction.

The above usage notwithstanding, the students grappled with complex matters that require structured learning opportunities to fully grasp. I argue that their tendency not to use the terminology deemed "appropriate" in this context is less significant than their silence on structural and institutional racism. Being able to identify the layers, or parts of speech, or how they interact in the societal syntax of racism constitutes a racial grammar to which these youth may never have been introduced or with which they were not yet comfortable during the study.

Interpersonal vs Institutional: A False Dichotomy?

My analysis of this focus group discussion led me to another question: is it possible that the students' observations about interpersonal racism are not altogether separate from neophyte understandings of structural and/or institutional racism? Researchers have long reified an artificial divide between micro-, meso-, and macro-level racial analysis, but it is possible to sustain a cross-level conversation about race (Saperstein et al., 2013), although students can resist making these connections when it implicates them (Flynn, 2015). With more time and recurring interactions structured to scaffold these revelations, the students could have begun to inquire about the sources of power behind individuals' racist behaviors or to interrogate the impact of multiple institutions acting in concert to uphold racism.

The students' existing understandings in this regard could have ushered in deeper meaning. For instance, David's reference to a psychological dimension of modern-day racism—how BIPOC are made to feel uncomfortable—could have incited a discussion about the material

consequences of such discomfort, such as exclusion from entire industries or being barred from workplace success. His insistence that no stereotype is a compliment could have segued into a discussion of the cumulative effect of racial microaggressions over extended periods of time (Sue et al., 2007a, 2007b, 2008). Gloria, Sunny, and Kim's discussion of raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017)—although not in so many words—could have opened the door to exploring assimilationist policies (e.g., English-only schooling) beset by monolingualism. With more time, they could have begun to probe why certain communities (Latinxs, Arabs, and hypervisible others) have long been racialized and become the targets of linguistic racism and movements in several states to make English their official language.

The strides these students have made are a point of departure for enhancing their racial literacy. While my observations of their history class did not provide evidence of instructional tools for dissecting power imbalances, it appears that these youths have begun to participate in critical discourse on race via other channels. We thus do students a disservice when we discount what they already know (whether that be intuitively or intellectually) in designing instruction.

Faith in the Power of Education

From P-12 to adult and lifelong learning, the students in this focus group made an appeal for education to assume responsibility for teaching about racism. They demanded that this instruction begin in the earlier years and that they be afforded the opportunity to help lead these conversations with adults, particularly since they are not yet of voting age. When advocating for courses to help people un-learn racism, they did not identify social studies courses as potential sources of learning that can move anti-racism forward; this work can be done in all content areas.

The only specific type of formal learning named as useful to providing the necessary knowledge to combat racism was a mention of psychology courses, which may reflect the

perception that racism is individual and interpersonal. It is unclear whether these youth see their core content courses, including history, as potential sites for disrupting racism. As critical race theorists have long affirmed, racism is endemic to U.S. society (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995); therefore, any course in which U.S. history makes an appearance is an opportunity to build racial literacy (King, 2016). A macro-level focus on racism could also have evoked mentions of sociology, political science, and other social studies courses, but these niche offerings are uncommon in many urban high schools.

The students' clamoring for more targeted instruction about matters of race/racism, as expressed most prominently by Sunny, is buttressed by a growing body of scholarship. It explores possible reasons why P-12 teachers seldom take up this topic (Cross, 2003; Pollock, 2009) and suggests strategies for teachers who choose to do so (Busey, 2017; Reisman et al., 2020; Shear, 2017; Villareal, 2017). Reisman et al. (2020), for example, underscores how three types of literacy—critical, historical, and racial—operate in a high school history classroom. Just as we stand to learn from teachers' brilliance and blunders, so too can we learn from students.

Youth in this focus group were eager to imagine how they might fit into the hypothetical campaign to educate the general public (including their parents) about race/racism. This enthusiasm, while not shared equally by all participants, points to a yearning that youth have to share what they know and to be heard by adults. Studies have cast much-needed light on marginalized young adults' sense of silencing on issues that have consequences for them (Fine & Weis, 2003; Huber & Malagón, 2006; Kappra & Vandrick, 2006), but seldom for P-12 students.

Conclusions

All the above points considered, the students in this focus group demonstrated a degree of racial literacy that exceeded the expectations I would have set based solely on my observations

of their history course. To support students moving forward in their critical understanding of race and racism, it behooves education researchers and practitioners to explore the acumen students bring to learning about topics as relevant to them and as rigorous as racism. Teacher educators and P-12 in-service teachers committed to advancing racial literacy can also pursue measures to augment their own racial literacy and support that of their students. Below, I discuss the main implications of the current study for research, teacher education, and P-12 pedagogical practice.

One way that researchers can advance the conversation about racial literacy is to gather and scrutinize evidence of what students know at various ages or grade levels before examining how they respond to instruction that contributes to their racial literacy development. Further, educators would benefit from clear criteria for what it means to "probe" and "examine" racism, "discuss" its implications, and "adopt an anti-racist stance" or "reject a victim position." To know whether their interventions are effective in provoking critical racial consciousness among students, P-12 teachers need to gauge what students know and require models of racial literacy. Currently, however, the education literature on racial literacy focuses rather heavily on higher education (Grayson, 2017, 2018; Johnson, 2009; Marrun et al., 2019; Sealey-Ruiz, 2013a).

A second potential contribution that education scholars can make in this area is to theorize how the field may broaden its conception of racial literacy. Coupled with greater specificity about the markers of racial literacy mentioned above, the collective understanding about racial literacy could be more inclusive. Firmer definitions of action verbs such as probe, examine, discuss, and adopt or resist need not narrow the field of possibilities for students. By reconceptualizing racial literacy as a shifting matrix of skills and practices, researchers can lift up the difficult intellectual work that many youth, especially BIPOC youth, have already begun. Some of those racial literacy skills and practices have been surveyed in the research (e.g.,

interpreting media portrayals of particular racialized communities and reflecting on their imp [Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015]), and others have yet to be theorized (e.g., explaining to a peer why something as apparently innocuous as "good" stereotypes may still be racist). The youth in the focus group referenced above exhibited an array of such underexplored competencies.

Teacher educators have the unique but challenging responsibility to guide and support prospective teachers in developing the content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge necessary to have a positive impact on their schools and classrooms. Admittedly, many teacher preparation programs already struggle to respond to the demands of nurturing teachers in a racially and otherwise diverse country. But all new teachers would benefit from professional development and learning communities that promote racial pedagogical content knowledge (King & Chandler, 2016), and not only in areas that serve racially and ethnically diverse student populations. The entire country is multicultural; all curriculum should reflect that reality.

As models of pedagogical practice in the teacher education classroom, it is also vital that teacher educators enact strategies to first establish what their teacher candidates know in order to tailor instruction. This way, they can be sure to dispel myths and misconceptions about race, racism, and anti-racism. Taking this initiative can also leave an impression on future teachers and provide tools for following suit in the P-12 classroom. This step is particularly important because children and youth belong to multiple overlapping communities from which they learn racialized narratives and racial ideologies that impact school learning (e.g., Byrd, 2015).

As the students in my focus group suggested, youth are often eager for and in need of earlier exposure to issues of power imbalance, social hierarchy, and race/racism. Because they likely encounter these conversations outside of school, but perhaps not in settings that prioritize

deep comprehension and/or complex analysis, schools do students a disservice by waiting until difficult conversations are deemed “developmentally appropriate” to introduce them into the curriculum. It is possible to use personal experiences as an entry point into content with potential relevance for life in the 21st century U.S. In this regard, students’ background knowledges and prior experiences can facilitate the edification of vital scaffolds for introducing the vocabulary and grammar of institutional and structural power disparities into students' lexicon.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX: Focus Group Interview Protocol

1. What is *racism*? Give me your best definition.
2. Have you or someone close to you had an experience with racism? If you feel comfortable, please share an example.
3. Do you think that racism is changing (getting better or worse), or staying the same? Explain.
4. Do you think that racism can ever be eliminated? Why or why not?
5. What would it take for racism to be eliminated?
6. What are the greatest barriers/challenges to eliminating racism?

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

An, S. (2012). Korean American high school students' perspectives on US history. *The Social Studies, 103*(1), 12-19.

Baker-Bell, A. (2020). Dismantling anti-black linguistic racism in English language arts classrooms: Toward an anti-racist black language pedagogy. *Theory into Practice, 59*(1), 8-21.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2008). "It wasn't a good part of history": National identity and students' explanations of historical significance. In L. S. Levstik & K. C. Barton (Eds.). *Researching history education: Theory, method, and context,* pp. 240-272. Routledge.

Bell, C. (2020). "Maybe if they let us tell the story I wouldn't have gotten suspended": Understanding Black students' and parents' perceptions of school discipline. *Children and Youth Services Review,* 104757.

Bell, D. (1992). Racial realism. *Connecticut Law Review, 24*(2), 363-380.

Blaisdell, B. (2016). Schools as racial spaces: Understanding and resisting structural racism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 29*(2), 248-272.

Blum, L. (2004). A high school class on race and racism. *The Radical Teacher*, (70), 4-10.

Bolgatz, J. (2005). Revolutionary talk: Elementary teacher and students discuss race in a social studies class. *The Social Studies, 96*(6), 259-264.

Brown, K. D. (2011). Breaking the cycle of Sisyphus: Social education and the acquisition of critical sociocultural knowledge about race and racism in the United States. *The Social Studies, 102*(6), 249-255.

Brown, K. D., & Brown, A. L. (2011). Teaching K-8 students about race: African Americans, racism, and the struggle for social justice in the US. *Multicultural Education, 19*(1), 9-13.

Brown v. Board of Education (1954), 347 U.S. 294.

Brown v. Board of Education (1955), 349 U.S. 294.

Busey, C. L. (2017). Toward a Latin@ Critical Race Theory: Examining race, racism, and Afro-Latinidad in world history and human geography. In P. T. Chandler & T. S. Hawley (Eds.). *Race lessons: Using inquiry to teach about race in social studies,* pp. 231-250. Information Age Publishing.

Byrd, C. M. (2015). The associations of intergroup interactions and school racial socialization with academic motivation. *The Journal of Educational Research, 108*(1), 10-21.

Cahill, C., Quijada Cerecer, D. A., & Bradley, M. (2010). ‘‘Dreaming of...’’: Reflections on participatory action research as a feminist praxis of critical hope. *Affilia*, *25*(4), 406-416.

Carter Andrews, D. J., Brown, T., Castro, E., & Id-Deen, E. (2019). The impossibility of being “perfect and White”: Black girls’ racialized and gendered schooling experiences. *American Educational Research Journal*, *56*(6), 2531-2572.

Carter Andrews, D. J., & Montgomery, G. M. (2017). The social justice reading group: Helping youth explore culture, difference, and (in) equity through children's literature. *Michigan Reading Journal*, *49*(3), 10.

Cross, B. E. (2003). Learning or unlearning racism: Transferring teacher education curriculum to classroom practices. *Theory into practice*, *42*(3), 203-209.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (Vol. 20). NYU Press.

Dickson, J. D., & Williams, C. (2016, Nov. 10). “Royal Oak Middle School students chant 'Build the wall'.” *The Detroit News*. Available online at: https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/oakland-county/2016/11/10/royal-oak-students-chant-build-wall-cafeteria/93581592/

Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(2), 181-194.

Epstein, S. E., & Lipschultz, J. (2012). Getting personal? Student talk about racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *15*(3), 379-404.

Epstein, T. (2000). Adolescents' perspectives on racial diversity in US history: Case studies from an urban classroom. *American Educational Research Journal*, *37*(1), 185-214.

Epstein, T. (2001). Racial identity and young people’s perspectives on social education. *Theory into practice*, *40*(1), 42-47.

Epstein, T. (2010). *Interpreting national history: Race, identity, and pedagogy in classrooms and communities.* New York: Routledge.

Epstein, T., & Gist, C. (2015). Teaching racial literacy in secondary humanities classrooms: Challenging adolescents of color's concepts of race and racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *18*(1), 40-60.

Epstein, T., Mayorga, E., & Nelson, J. (2011). Teaching about race in an urban history class: The effects of culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, *35*(1), 2.

Fine, M., & Weis, L. (2003). *Silenced voices and extraordinary conversations: Re-imagining schools*. Teachers College Press.

Flores, N. & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Education Review, 85*(2), 149-169. DOI: 10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149.

Flynn, Jr., J. E. (2012). Critical pedagogy with the oppressed and the oppressors: Middle school students discuss racism and white privilege. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, *7*(2).

Flynn, Jr., J. E. (2015). White fatigue: Naming the challenge in moving from an individual to a systemic understanding of racism. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *17*(3), 115-124.

Grayson, M. L. (2017). Race talk in the composition classroom: Narrative song lyrics as texts for racial literacy. *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, *45*(2), 143-167.

Grayson, M. L. (2018). *Teaching racial literacy: Reflective practices for critical writing*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Guinier, L. (2003). Admissions rituals as political acts: Guardians at the gates of our democratic ideals. *Harvard Law Review, 117*, 113.

Guinier, L. (2004). From racial liberalism to racial literacy: Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-divergence dilemma. *Journal of American History*, *91*(1), 92-118.

Halvorsen, A. L., Santiago, M., Castro, E., & Whitford, A. (2018). Civic life in the neighborhood: Leveraging historical context to teach injustice in the elementary grades. *Social Studies Journal, 38*(2), 2.

Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2017). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. Teachers College Press.

Hansen, J. (2009). Multiple literacies in the content classroom: High school students' connections to US history. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *52*(7), 597-606.

Harper, S. R. (2007). Peer support for African American male college achievement: Beyond internalized racism and the burden of "acting white". *The Journal of Men's Studies, 14*(3), 337-358.

Hester, N., & Slagter, M. (2020, Feb 3). " 'Why didn't you stay in Mexico?' School diversity and inclusion meeting turns volatile." *MLive*. Available online at: https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2020/02/why-didnt-you-stay-in-mexico-school-diversity-and-inclusion-meeting-turns-volatile.html

Higgins, L. (2016, Nov. 20). "Royal Oak Middle School student out over noose incident." *The Detroit Free Press*. Available online at:

https://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2016/11/20/royal-oak-middle-noose/94173500/

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom.* Routledge.

Huber, L. P., Johnson, R. N., & Kohli, R. (2006). Naming racism: A conceptual look at internalized racism in US schools. *Chicano-Latino Law Review, 26*, 183.

Huber, L. P., & Malagón, M. C. (2006). Silenced struggles: The experiences of Latina and Latino undocumented college students in California. *Nevada Law Journal*, *7*, 841.

Husband, T. (2014). Using drama pedagogy to develop critical racial literacy in an early childhood classroom. *Perspectives and Provocations*, *4*(1), 16-50.

Johnson, M. T. (2009). *Race(ing) around in rhetoric and composition circles: Racial literacy as the way out.* The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Press.

Joseph, N. M., Viesca, K. M., & Bianco, M. (2016). Black female adolescents and racism in schools: Experiences in a colorblind society. *The High School Journal*, *100*(1), 4-25.

Kappra, R., & Vandrick, S. (2006). Silenced voices speak: Queer ESL students recount their experiences. *CATESOL Journal*, *18*(1), 138-150.

King, L. J. (2016). Teaching black history as a racial literacy project. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *19*(6), 1303-1318.

King, L. J., & Chandler, P. T. (2016). From non-racism to anti-racism in social studies teacher education: Social studies and racial pedagogical content knowledge. In A.R. Crowe, A. Cuenca (Eds.). *Rethinking social studies teacher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 3-21). Springer International.

King, L. J., Vickery, A. E., & Caffrey, G. (2018). A pathway to racial literacy: Using the LETS ACT Framework to teach controversial issues. *Social Education, 82*(6), 316-322.

Kohli, R., Pizarro, M., & Nevárez, A. (2017). The "new racism" of K–12 schools: Centering critical research on racism. *Review of research in education, 41*(1), 182-202.

Ladson-Billings, G. J., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*(1), 47-68.

Lawrence, K., & Keleher, T. (2004). Structural racism. In *Race and Public Policy Conference, Berkeley. Available online at: http://www.intergroupresources.com/rc/Definitions% 20of% 20Racism. pdf.*

Marrun, N. A., Plachowski, T. J., & Clark, C. (2019). A critical race theory analysis of the 'demographic diversity' gap in schools: College Students of Color speak their truth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 22*(6), 836-857.

McBee, R. H. (1995). Can controversial issues be taught in the early grades? The answer is yes!. *Social Education, 60*(1), 38-41.

Miller-Idriss, C. (2019). The global rise of right-wing extremism. *American University*. Retrieved from https://www.american.edu/cas/news/global-rise-of-right-wing-extremism.cfm

Morgan, D. (2012). Focus groups and social interaction. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinney (Eds.). (2012). *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (pp. 161-176). Sage.

Mosley, M. (2010). 'That really hit me hard': moving beyond passive anti-racism to engage with critical race literacy pedagogy. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 13*(4), 449-471.

Mosley, M., & Rogers, R. (2011). Inhabiting the 'tragic gap': pre-service teachers practicing racial literacy. *Teaching Education, 22*(3), 303-324.

Mosley Wetzel, M., & Rogers, R. (2015). Constructing racial literacy through critical language awareness: A case study of a beginning literacy teacher. *Linguistics and Education, 32*, 27-40.

Nash, K., Howard, J., Miller, E., Boutte, G., Johnson, G., & Reid, L. (2017). Critical racial literacy in homes, schools, and communities: Propositions for early childhood contexts. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *19*(3), 256-273.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s* (2nd edition). Routledge.

Palmer, J. D., & Jang, E.-Y. (2005). Korean born, Korean-American high school students' entry into understanding race and racism through social interactions and conversations. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(3), 297-317.

Perea, J. F. (1997). The Black/white binary paradigm of race: The 'normal science' of American racial thought"(1997). *California Law Review*, *85*, 1213.

Pollock, M. (2009). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American school*. Princeton University Press.

Priest, N., Walton, J., White, F., Kowal, E., Baker, A., & Paradies, Y. (2014). Understanding the complexities of ethnic-racial socialization processes for both minority and majority groups: A 30-year systematic review. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *43*, 139-155.

Reisman, A., Enumah, L., & Jay, L. (2020). Interpretive frames for responding to racially stressful moments in history discussions. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 1-25.

Remler, D. K., & Van Ryzin, G. G. (2011). *Research methods in practice: Strategies for description and causation*. Sage.

Rogers, R., & Mosley, M. (2006). Racial literacy in a second-grade classroom: Critical race theory, whiteness studies, and literacy research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *41*(4), 462-495.

Rogers, R., & Mosley, M. (2008). A critical discourse analysis of racial literacy in teacher education. *Linguistics and Education*, *19*(2), 107-131.

Rosa, J. & Flores, N. (2017). Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective. *Language in Society, 46,* 621-647. DOI:10.1017/S0047404517000562.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.

Santiago, M. (2017). Erasing differences for the sake of inclusion: How Mexican/ Mexican American students construct historical narratives. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 45*(1), 43-74.

Saperstein, A., Penner, A. M., & Light, R. (2013). Racial formation in perspective: Connecting individuals, institutions, and power relations. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *39*.

Scott Jr, L. D. (2003). The relation of racial identity and racial socialization to coping with discrimination among African American adolescents. *Journal of Black Studies*, *33*(4), 520-538.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2011a). Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline through racial literacy development in teacher education. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, *8*(2), 116-120.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2011b). Learning to talk and write about race: Developing racial literacy in a college English classroom. *English Quarterly Canada (Online)*, *42*(1/2), 24.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2013a). Building racial literacy in first-year composition. *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, *40*(4), 384.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2013b). Using Urban Youth Culture to activate the racial literacy of Black and Latino male high school students. In A. Cohan & A. Honigsfeld (Eds.). *Breaking the mold of education: Innovative and successful practices for student engagement, empowerment, and motivation*, (pp. 3-10). Rowman & Littlefield.

Sealey-Ruiz, Y., & Greene, P. (2015). Popular visual images and the (mis) reading of Black male youth: A case for racial literacy in urban preservice teacher education. *Teaching Education*, *26*(1), 55-76.

Shear, S. B. (2017). Settler schooling: A TribalCrit approach to teaching boarding school histories in elementary social studies. In P. T. Chandler & T. S. Hawley (Eds.). *Race Lessons: Using inquiry to teach about race* (pp. 113-132). Information Age Publishing.

Skerrett, A. (2011). English teachers' racial literacy knowledge and practice. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *14*(3), 313-330.

Smith, W. L. (2014). Not stopping at first: Racial literacy and the teaching of Barack Obama. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *16*(2), 65-71.

Spivak, G. C. (1999). *A critique of postcolonial reason: Toward a history of the vanishing present*. Harvard University Press.

Stevenson, H. C. (1994). Validation of the scale of racial socialization for African American adolescents: Steps toward multidimensionality. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *20*(4), 445-468.

Stevenson, H. C. (2014). *Promoting racial literacy in schools: Differences that make a difference*. Teachers College Press.

Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sue, D. W., Bucceri, J., Lin, A. I., Nadal, K. L., & Torino, G. C. (2007a). Racial microaggressions and the Asian American experience. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *13*(1), 72.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, B. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A., Nadal, K. L., & Equilin, M. (2007b). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, *62*(4), 271.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., & Holder, A. (2008). Racial microaggressions in the life experience of Black Americans. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *39*(3), 329.

Taylor, M., Otinsky, G., Brigman, J., & Wood, K. (2006). Embarking on the road to authentic engagement: Investigating racism through interactive learning centers. *Voices from the Middle*, *14*(1), 38.

Terzian, S. G., & Yeager, E. A. (2007). "That's when we became a nation": Urban Latino adolescents and the designation of historical significance. *Urban Education*, *42*(1), 52-81.

Van Ausdale, D., & Feagin, J. R. (2001). *The first R: How children learn race and racism*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Vetter, A, & Hungerford-Kressor, H.. (2014). " We gotta change first": Racial literacy in a high school English classroom. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, *10*(1), 82-99.

Villareal, C. S. M. (2017). “Do you feel me?”: Affectively and effectively engaging racial pedagogical content knowledge in social studies classrooms. In P. T. Chandler & T. S. Hawley (Eds.). *Race lessons: Using inquiry to teach about race* (pp. 45-60). Information Age Publishing.

Wills, J. S. (2019). “Daniel was racist”: Individualizing racism when teaching about the Civil Rights Movement. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 47*(3), 396-425.

Young, E. Y. (2011). The four personae of racism: Educators’(mis) understanding of individual vs. systemic racism. *Urban Education, 46*(6), 1433-1460.

Zembylas, M. (2007). *Five pedagogies, a thousand possibilities: Struggling for hope and transformation in education*. Brill Sense.

Zembylas, M., & Kambani, F. (2012). The teaching of controversial issues during elementary-level history instruction: Greek-Cypriot teachers' perceptions and emotions. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *40*(2), 107-133.

AFTERWORD

The three manuscripts above presented distinct approaches to the question of how teaching and learning about race and racism can look for secondary teachers and students. Some of the finer details described are unique to Mr. Davidson; Kareem; and David, Gloria, Kim, May, and Sunny. These experiences—while far from universal and generalizable—depict possible challenges and opportunities faced in schools across the country. They hold several lessons for researchers, teacher educators, school leaders, and P-12 teachers across the content areas.

Manuscript One suggests that more curricular resources and guidance for refining culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, and culturally sustaining pedagogy would aid teachers in the thorough implementation of these oft-mentioned but sometimes misunderstood approaches. Researchers can help supply this demand by making the products of their scholarship readily available to teachers, and school leaders can address the specific needs of their schools through professional development and by following up these workshops with professional learning communities and by valuing these practices in teacher evaluations. If not already doing so, teacher educators can equip their pre-service teachers by framing cultural asset pedagogies as complimentary and not in competition, highlighting ways they may reinforce one another while also acknowledging the particular strengths they perceive in each one of them. Lastly, it bears repeating that these three—and all related pedagogical theories—disavow the checklist or use of proscribed strategies; it behooves every educator to learn their students well, especially the various and sometimes overlapping communities to which they belong. They must be wary of generalizations or assumptions about what students value, know, and want to know.

Manuscript Two reminds us of the power of narrative. It can be a tool for assimilating new information or a device for distilling complexity for easier digestion. As Kareem articulated

his identities as "a Black man living in America… and Muslim too," he also sought to challenge the racialization of two of those identities. In effect, he simultaneously executed two mediated actions: constructing a historical narrative with the academic tools at his disposal and negotiating the racialization of Black manhood with the cultural tools from his lived experiences. Despite Kareem's new narrative—one that sheds light on the process of "making racial" identities other than racial/ethnic identifiers—the schematic narrative template and specific narrative of the Civil Rights Movement persisted. Many actors have a role to play in combatting simplistic or rigid narratives that inhibit students' understanding of the past or their ability to imagine alternative futures. This caveat includes researchers and theorists interested in the processes of racial identity formation of youth like Kareem; they can illuminate how identities are intersectionally racialized. Relatedly, teachers can devise ways to apprentice students in recognizing—and, when necessary, challenging—specific narratives and schematic narrative templates (SNTs). One way to develop this skill could be to begin with an SNT, work backwards to identify its individual components, survey a series of specific narratives to adjudicate the extent to which they fit the SNT, and evaluate the properties of the SNT and its corresponding specific narratives.

Manuscript Three intervenes on behalf of youth voice. First and foremost, it commends five young people for their high-level explanations of a range of topics about race and racism. With that in mind, it calls for all who are committed to P-12 education to listen to young people. Researchers, teacher educators, and teachers can find out what they know and either want or need to know about race and racism to confront it as it shows up in their lives. This recommendation is by no means advocating a moratorium on developing racial literacy interventions, but it insists on youth-informed approaches. Thirdly and equally important is the ever-present need for all parties involved in P-12 education to develop their own racial literacy

skills and those they teach, supervise, and mentor. This continuous learning and growth can contribute to clearer definitions of words like “probe,” “examine,” “discuss,” and “adopt” or “reject” a stance and therefore to models of what these skills look like along a continuum and over a person’s educational lifespan. Fourth, theory on racial literacy and adjacent concepts could become more inclusive if they are conceptualized as dynamic matrices of skills and practices and expand to include youth modes. Fifth, teacher education programs should be unflagging in their promotion of racial literacy throughout the pathway to licensure, including designing field experiences in which racial literacy comes to life and is not disparaged by cooperating teachers as lofty or unattainable. It is possible that witnessing how racial literacy or any race and racism instruction looks in P-12, particularly among the younger grades, can encourage more prospective teachers to adopt these orientations in their own future classrooms.

These words do not constitute an exhaustive list of all the implications for teaching about race and racism, but it reflects some concerns that have shaped my doctoral study and that bear promise for future inquiry in the early years of my career. It would be impossible for me to explore all the lingering questions or test all the hypotheses above. Yet, the underlying preoccupation with the on-the-ground experience of BIPOC teachers and students is consistent.

The year 2020 has been a watershed moment for public discourse about race, racism, and the many faces of racial injustice. Justice-oriented educators all over the United States will seek to engage their students in difficult discussions about race and racism. Like Mr. Davidson, some of them will face challenges and experience disillusionment. Students will look for ways to make sense of what they see and hear around them, what they live firsthand, and who they are. Like Kareem, they may turn to what is familiar to interpret the strange while also reframing images on the margins of society’s “big picture.” They may vacillate like David, Gloria, Kim, May, and

Sunny—nuancing to the best of their ability despite not having all the ingredients and know-how necessary for the elaborate recipe. Whatever the case may be, teachers and students should not be left to their own devices in comprehending or responding to centuries-old racism. The joint efforts of researchers, teacher educators, school leaders, policy makers, and community members will be instrumental in setting up P-12 schools to succeed in this endeavor. To them all, onward!