CONSTRUCTTING "RACE" THROUGH TALK:
A MICRO-ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF DISCUSSIONS OF "RACE" AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN SECONDARY STUDENTS

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Interdisciplinary Studies: Language, Literacy, and Sociology

May 2008

Nashville, Tennessee

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I dedicate this work to my husband and best friend, Samuel and to

our precious gift, Zawadi.

No one person deserves the amount of limitless devotion and love you freely give.

I am blessed beyond the use of mere words to describe my walk with you.

I also dedicate this project to my mother-in-law, Shirley P. Brown and brother-in-law,

Terence A. Brown. You made this project happen, and I am eternally grateful.

"We who believe in freedom can not rest

We who believe in freedom can not rest until it comes."

"Ella's Song," Bernice Johnson Reagan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people who I would like to acknowledge for their contributions to this project. God has blessed my life with many people, opportunities, and inconveniences that proved to be pivotal to my personal and professional growth. I have not learned all things and am far from reaching my goals, but because of each of you, I am one step closer to being a better human being.

To the House, Anderson, William, and Brown families I am because you are. Thank you Grandma for reassuring me that "Chocolate People" have always been about the business of "getting it straight." You inspire me in so many ways. I thank you for instilling in three generations of women to "keep on keepin' on." I hope to pass on your life lessons to Zawadi. Lorraine, once again you allow me to lean on you knowing that you will be there to hold me up. You have always been a source of encouragement and my heart is full when I think about all you have given to me. Lisa, thank you for the shared conversations and dialogues about making it through this process. I can always count on you to light a path so I can make my own way without falling too hard. You are what "big sisters" ought to be. Mommy and Daddy your unquestionable support and ability to cheer me on even when you have "no idea of what I am talking about" soothes my anxieties. Thank you for your love, patience, and friendship. I am proud to be your daughter. One of the greatest lessons of the many you have taught me was how to be a good person. I will always work to achieve this of all things.

I believe God gives you opportunities to do your best. And should you fall short of your best along the way, His children will stand beside you to lift you up and push you on. I would like to thank my dissertation committee—David Bloome, Karen Campbell, Alfredo Artiles, Tina Chen, and Kevin Leander for standing beside me, pulling and pushing while demanding excellence. Your scholarship, friendship, and counsel have meant the world to me. In my uncertainty, you each reminded me that this project matters. This research at its best is a reflection of your leadership. Dave, you are simply irreplaceable. You have been on this journey since my first year of teaching at EMS and have never left my side. Your commitment to my development as an educator and your impeccable ability to challenge my thinking has always carried me through this thing we call "school." I seek your insight and wisdom knowing that you will guide me in the right direction. Karen, you stepped into this project and have invested your time and talent for my benefit. Thank you for making this happen. Alfredo, I am honored to have been able to work with and learn from you. I can't imagine moving forward in this profession without your guidance. Tina, I appreciate your time and candor in the midst of "everyday life." And Kevin, just when I think there is nothing left to smile about, you offer me one of yours. Your friendship and encouragement are uplifting even as you pose the hard questions.

There are several people at Vanderbilt University who have contributed to my journey in so many important ways. Dr. Tony Brown, Angela Saylor, Sandra Uti, JJ Street, Nancy Middleton, LaRashia Grafton and Janet Roberts, thank you. Special thanks to Cynthia H. Williams, Daneell Edwards, and Stephanie Power Carter for listening,

pushing, celebrating and crying along with me. You each have left an indelible mark on my heart.

I would also like to thank the faculty, staff, and students at Pearl-Cohn High School and East Middle School who taught me what real education is all about. To my family at Fifteenth Avenue Baptist Church and The Village Cultural Arts Center thank you for the peace and peace of mind.

My dearest friends, Mary Muse,
Jerome Morris, the Bloomekatz family, Laurie Katz, Terri Poore,
Phyliss & Michael Moore, Jackie Davis, Rhonda Belue, Thessely Pillow, and Kecha Kambe- I thank God for you.

The best of what life has to offer resides in the people who change your life. Omar Richmond, Duane Smalls, Teneka Ray, Wileatha Horton Brown, Calvin Brown, Abebi Davis Bain and Trina Kay Ita- you have offered me the very best of your friendship and love and put up with mine. You have known all of my struggles and this work is one aspect of how each of you have helped me lift my own veil in an effort to not "just be" but "to be with pride and love." I love you.

And finally, I would like to thank the students and teachers who allowed me to be a part of their everyday lives during this research period. Your honesty, enthusiasms for learning and willingness to challenge ideas were sources of encouragement. I know this research is meaningful because it belongs to you. Mr. Jackson, Mrs. Handley, and Mr. Montgomery I am proud to have known you and the work you do for and with our children.

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CHAPTER I

Overview and Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation research is to investigate discussions of "race" in schools settings. More specifically, I examine discussions of "race" among African American secondary students in and outside the classroom setting. There are several issues embedded in examining discussions of "race" among African American secondary students. Two of the fundamental issues in this dissertation are used in the title of this dissertation project: (1) constructing "race" and (2) talk. The process of examining discussions of "race" includes a deliberate process in understanding first, how is "race" constructed among African American secondary students and secondly, how are these constructions represented in "talk." Weis and Fine (2001) present the concept of *construction* as an active process where making sense of life happens in multiple contexts and in a multitude of ways. Constructing "race" is a deliberate process reflected in what we say, what we do, and what is implied in the absence of action. This research attempts to look at how students engage in a process of constructing "race" through talk and how these constructions interact with how they view themselves and the world.

First, the concept of "race" is a contentious topic and for some a controversial word. I distinguish conceptual use of "race" from other uses throughout this project. *Race* (*italicized*) is a reference to the term itself. "Race" (in quotes) represents the idea or concept of race. Race (without quotes) is used to represent the fixed sets of meanings

attributed to genetic distinctions made between groups of people signaled by phenotypical differences. I use this organization for the research to demonstrate the challenges in discussions of "race" as well as how "race" has been constituted in academic research as well as in discussions of "race" among people. Researching how "race" is being constructed in talk requires developing a process for distinguishing what is meant when the word *race* is being used from the concept of "race" and the identification of one's race. Clarifying these distinctions is central for this research and the ways to examines these constructions.

Discussions of "race" are complicated and occur for various reasons and purposes. For example, people may engage in discussions of "race" in relation to everyday social experiences. These discussions may be prompted by feelings of racial insensitivity enacted by a colleague, co-worker, or stranger. Other times, these discussions might be prompted by some form of discrimination personally experienced or made privy to via social or shared cultural relationships with others.[1] Other times, discussions of "race" are not based from a direct negative event but by humorous accounts of how different "race" groups interact with one another. "Race" discussions also occur as a means to provide support for one another particularly when events that appear to be racially motivated need to be processed. These discussions might be characterized as therapeutic and as a means to surround oneself around a community of supporters. In all of these examples, "race-talk" might be considered common, particularly among racial groups who have historically experienced racial oppression or

[1] This also includes "fictive kinship" (Ogbu, 1984) relationships where one does not personally "know" a victim of discrimination but shares in the experience because of a shared racial or cultural history. As a communal member of the "race," one might engage in community discussions of the event and take social or political action because of shared interest in social justice.

structural discrimination and are therefore accustomed to dialoguing about "race." African Americans, for example, are a group that has a history of long-term experiences with social and systemic forms of oppression. Their discussions of "race" have been a part of a public domain, and have contributed to how American society has rallied around social and political issues. In order for African Americans to begin addressing systemic oppression, they turned within their own communities to generate support and common cause. One of these community spaces that served African Americans was the church.

The Black[2] church is a historical and political space where discussions of "race" were of significant importance. Blacks organized and gathered strategically to develop plans of action against structural forms of racism. The Black church, especially in the South, was a frequent location for gatherings where "race" was centralized to combat social ills. In many ways, the church was a "safe house" for discussions as well as a spiritual and political refuge from institutional racism. Although spiritual edifices were not protected from racism (Black churches were often bombed), groups committed to anti-oppressive work understood the church to be an ideal "safe" space regardless of religious or spiritual ideologies. I emphasize the Black church in the South because the South is historically where large numbers of African Americans and poor Blacks lived in the United States (Broom & Glen, 1967; Gray, 1998). These concentrated areas were called "The Black Belt," where poverty, lack of educational resources, and racism collided in the everyday experiences of southern Blacks well into the 20th century. The period of industrialism shifted the proportions of Blacks from the southern portions of the

[2] I use the term "Black" in reference to any group of people of African decent as "White" will be used to mark any individual or group of European decent. These racial markers are capitalized following APA guidelines; however, I do not subscribe to the notion that Black and White represent a racial essence, contrary to their use within the general discourse of "race."

United States to the midwest and North. Cities like Chicago, Detroit, and New York became deposits for Blacks eager to escape Jim Crow, lynchings and poverty. However, for Blacks who remained in the South, the Black church remained a place of refuge and a source of spiritual, social, and political power, particularly in combating institutional racism.

Racial groups who have not experienced structural discrimination but who may have benefited from these structures may not engage in dialogues about "race" as openly or as comfortably. The absence of discussions of "race" for non-minorities, in many ways, is the result of White privilege (McIntosh, 1989). White privilege does not require most Whites to interrogate "race" in the context of their everyday lives. Critical race theorists describe the benefits of being racially neutral as one of the bi-products of racial liberalism (Gotanda, 1995; Peller, 1995). White liberals who do not acknowledge or recognize multiples forms of oppression oftentimes perpetuate the fundamentals of racism through conciliatory beliefs in the merit myth or individualism. As such, "race" is frequently not seen as an active factor in social interactions and therefore racism becomes minimized as a legitimate factor in everyday life. Consequently, discussions of "race" are avoided if not disregarded completely.

Research describes the tenuous reactions by Whites when discussing "race" and privilege, particularly among interracial groups (Delpit, 1988; Foster, 1990; Willis, 2003). Within whiteness research, these reactions are sometimes categorized as typical and a result of society's active choice to adopt color-blind ideologies (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Lewis, 2004). Part of the ease in ignoring "race," and therefore the difficulty in discussing "race," is related to whiteness not being a part of an everyday racial paradigm,

unlike blackness and brownness. Whiteness and blackness are often juxtaposed to one another in a broad context of "race," but whiteness is seldom critiqued with impacting racial meanings. It is often challenging for White people to refer to themselves in the context of "race" because society's framework for "race" is accomplished through the exotic "Other." I refer to this as the normalization of whiteness. As discussed by Morrison (1992) in the context of literature, whiteness is a normal status unquestioned and implicitly signified in all aspects of literature unless identified otherwise. I would extend this description of normalizing whiteness beyond literature and apply Morrison's notion to everyday life. Whiteness has an inherent value where all social life is portrayed and reflected in the eyes of Whites unless otherwise identified. For example, everyday concepts like Black History Month or Asian American Literature[3] certainly celebrate African American or Asian American life, art, history, and culture; however, they also signify how these racial communities are not White and are therefore separate from American history and literature, respectively. More plainly, whiteness is valued and does not require a racial disclaimer (e.g.,White History or White American Literature). It is implied that American life, art, and culture is closely associated with, if not inherently White. This type of value or power does not position Whites to identify "race" daily. Normalizing whiteness creates systems of power that do not require discussion or alternative considerations to how power is being distributed. In many ways, Whites are beneficiaries of racial constructs because there is a symbolic capital ascribed to them collectively despite their individual experiences with "race" or racism.

[3] I could substitute Latino, Indigenous American or Polynesian in these examples to illustrate the demarcation between American being regarded as inherently White and the exoticized 'other.'

One general complication in discussing "race" may be based on a lack of shared understanding of what one means by the term *race*. How does one clarify what is meant by r*ace* when its meaning is a highly contested one?

In turn, people are hesitant to discuss "race" in dominant discourse. There seems to be a general lack of assurance in introducing "race," by some, as well as a skepticism as to how to respond to "race" related topics when it's mentioned by others. Our national community ignores discussing "race" and consequently, negligects in attending to the needs of racialized communities especially in school settings. This incapacity to discuss "race" however, is contradictory to the cultural and historical foundation of education in the United States.

The inception of public schooling in the United States was founded on a racial premise of inherent *rights* to learning. These rights or privileges were established by "race" and gender. Additionally, there were clear and explicit governmental policies established for education that were founded on ethnocentrisms. Adams (1995) reports that several arguments were made to immerse Native American children into the common schools. There arguments were based on the challenges White settles were having with occupying territories inhabited by Indigenous people and riding them of them of their cultural practices that conflicted with White ideological views. The first argument posed for education was "that education would quicken the process of cultural evolution" (p. 18). This view encouraged the common school system to be the gateway for cultural immersion and the extinction of a Native American identity. Entrance into common schools for Indigenous people included changing of one's name, cutting one's hair and disassociating oneself from home language, spiritual practices, and in some cases familial

interactions. What is identified as a process for Native American education was an inexorable process of extinguishing social and cultural identity. Most devastating in this history of education for non-Whites and specifically Indigenous people was the considerations made by the government to either create an "education system" or kill them (Adams, 1995; Szasz, 1999). Economic proposals were presented to the United States government from philanthropists who believed the mission of "education" and "enlightenment from savagery" would help prosper the country and save the souls of man. These proposal itemized that costs to wage war against Indigenous people to gain control of land or the create a assimilation system to teach them the values and "ways of the white man." These economic proposals were "a throwback to Jefferson's idea that Indian ignorance of civilization retarded both white settlement and national prosperity" (Adams, 1995).

Contrarily, institutions like Hampton Institute, founded by General Armstrong would become both an institution for cultural assimilation for Indigenous people and one of the early Historically Black Colleges and Universities, where newly freed slaves sought education amidst the antebellum and post-antebellum South. The social and political aims for public education were vastly different for these two distinct racial groups. An education was encouraged for Indigenous people to inculcate them into American society as established by Whites; however, Africans and African Americans were legally denied education and any form of academic learning based on their racial designation. Douglass's narrative (2003) recounts profoundly the psychological torment he endured as he attempts to understand why he is denied learning to read. After being

given a rudimentary lesson on the alphabet, his mistress' husband reprimanded her in front of Douglass with these words that set the course for his insatiable desire to read.

> If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master- to do as he is told to do. Learning will spoil the best nigger in the world. …if you teach that nigger how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a greater deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy (p. 41).

Douglass describes his master's words as forever impacting him, and yet finding them to be true. He learns the ideology of racism that was carefully intertwined with religion. Encouraging slaves to embrace a warped presentation of Christianity while forbidding them to access all forms of knowledge through literacy, was a deliberate process enacted through education.

Comparing the educational experiences of Indigenous people and African Americans demonstrates the consistent role of schools and "race." Discussions of "race" by far controlled the national policies of education in the United States from reconstruction through industrialization. In an effort to dismiss the significance of "race" in the creation of school climate and education outcomes, there has been an explicit attempt to silence "race" and foreground other issues, like poverty. This does not suggest poverty is not a critical issue in the United States; however, it is irresponsible in education research to examine concentrations of poverty without also identifying the national patterns and trends that correlate to poverty. Unmistakably, poverty, low socioeconomic status, crime and struggling public schools systems are more prevalent in isolated minority communities than White (Orfield, 2001).

Present discussions of "race" in American education, has been encased in rhetorical idealisms. Much attention is given to what we desire in American schools without addressing the issues that are salient within them. As such, there is little accountability for institutional forms racism, particularly in school settings. This research focuses on discussions of "race" in school settings not because the topic is new, but because it is unresolved. American education was founded on identifying "race" as a factor for creating and denying education. This research examines some of the daily experiences of teachers and students in schools, and how they approach or respond to "race."

Research Problem

Research that focuses on "race-talk" has not yet raised questions about how "race" is constructed in these discussions. Existing research on "race" and talk emphasizes discussions about racism and its relationship to social justice and equality (Bolgatz, 2005) and the absence of earnest discussions of "race" as a result of coded – language that have racial meanings (Pollock, 2004). However, there seems to be conceptual limitations within this research in thinking about how language is functioning within these discussions. More importantly, existing research on "race-talk" in schools does not delve into the modes used for those discussions, notwithstanding the processes used to distinguish discussions of "race" from other types of talk. Additionally, existing research has not looked at the different ways varying racial communities, like African

American students, engage in discussions of "race" and for what purposes these discussions occur.

In my search for research conducted on discussions of racing using the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), there were 264 results that included the words phrase "discussions of 'race'." Of the 264 results, two focused on secondary students between 1998 through 2007. The two articles found included race in the implications for research as important to examine for future discussions.

I posit discussions of "race" are submerged under politically correct rhetoric or simply discouraged in many institutional settings. As such, I believe there are constructions of "race" manifested in people's use of language, particularly in discussions of everyday life. This research study examines the personal in order to raise questions about the theoretical aspects of discussions of "race," using the perspectives and experiences of African American secondary students in the South.

Theoretical Framework

This research is framed by sociolinguistic ethnography (Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1974) as a theoretical perspective and a methodological approach. As a means to address language use, constructions of "race through communication and speech communities, and uses of narrative in discussion of "race" in school setting, I use sociolinguistic ethnography to examine how African American secondary students and teachers engage in sociocultural ways of communicating to discuss issues related to social justice. How the students use language to construct "race" and dismantle stereotypes of "race"

simultaneously is a function of how language use is deliberate and reflects how communities make sense of their own racial experiences. The foundations of sociolinguistic ethnography have created transformative processes for looking at language in the context of social processes and social change. Ethnography has impacted cultural theory, literacy studies, and discourse analysis in ways that have transformed classroom practices. This research project focuses on use of language in sociocultural contexts, specifically, African American secondary students' discussions of "race" in school settings. I will discuss the theoretical framework at greater length in Chapter 3 as I discuss the methodology.

Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation research is to investigate discussions of "race" in schools settings. More specifically, I examine discussions of "race" among African American secondary students in and outside of the classroom setting. There are several issues embedded in examining discussions of "race" among African American secondary students. The research will examine the following questions within two domains (1) Defining "Race" Talk and (2) Constructing "Race" through Talk.

Defining "Race" Talk

1. What constitutes a discussion of "race" in school settings?
2. How is racial awareness represented in discussions of "race?"
3. What shared assumptions about "race" are represented in student discussions?

Constructing "Race" Through Talk

1. How do students construct "race" as a social "reality" through talk?
2. How might African American students' experiences with "race" contribute to their self-perception?
3. How is language difference represented as a construction of "race?

Significance of the Study

Although there is vast research across several disciplines related to "race," much of this research theorizes "race" outside of the experiences of "ordinary" people. Additionally, the research on "race" outside of education focuses on "race" as a variable against which several concepts are measured, for example poverty, education, socio-economic status. Therefore, the significance of this ethnographic study is that it focuses on how African American secondary students discuss "race" and analyzes three important aspects of these discussions. First, the research analyzes how "race" is simultaneously constructed in and by discussions of "race," notwithstanding other ways in which "race" is social constructed in everyday life (e.g.,, media). The distinction for this concept lies in how the participants challenge social constructions of "race" as they also construct "race" themselves within these discussions. Secondly, the research analyzes how the uses of narratives in these discussions of "race" demonstrate students' perception of self and perceptions of others as racial beings. And finally, how social

constructions of “race” can be examined more concretely through uses of narratives in discussions of “race.”

In Chapter 2, I synthesize key writings that inform this research project in three areas: (1) “race,” (2) racial consciousness, and (3) uses of narratives in discussions of “race.” I begin with “race” and how it has functioned in the United States because it largely informs why discussions of “race” are significant. I then discuss writings from Critical Race Theory that explores racial consciousness as a critical component for pursuing social justice. Finally, I present sociolinguistic perspectives of narrative as a way to examine the multifunctional and multimodal ways African American secondary students engage in discussions of “race.” I present eight uses of narrative in discussions of “race” as a complement to the extant research within sociolinguistics on narrative construction in school settings. In Chapter 3, I provide detail on the methodology for the research study, which includes a description of the study, research setting, data collection process, and methods for analysis. Chapter 4 focuses on the findings and discussion of the data, and finally the Conclusion in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

This chapter reviews the scholarship that has shaped theoretical and conceptual understanding in the areas of *race*. I organize this chapter according to three specific categories (1) Theories of *Race,* (2) Racial Awareness, and (3) Narrative.

A significant portion of examining discussions of "race" involves in-depth focus on the theories that have driven research on *race*. Additionally, in order to disentangle how "race" is constructed through talk, it requires understanding the history of racial thinking that has largely influenced the social, political, economic, and educational order. I present "race" and racial awareness to foreground the challenges in discussing "race" in schools partly because "race" in school settings, is generally not discussed from a perspective of power. "Race" is presented as an essential characteristic, rather than a construct that distributes social and cultural capital within schools. Activities, clubs, and even courses can reflect the racial demographic of a school setting, which reflects power and sometimes privilege. It is therefore important to unveil how "race" has come to be a complex yet simultaneously mythical topic for ordinary people in their everyday lives; particularly in the United States where there are those who claim there is a lessened significance for discussing "race" all while racism and oppression thrive everyday.

I focus particularly on narrative as a mode for discussing "race" because it is within the stories of ordinary people that we begin to see "race" functioning in different

ways. No longer are a priori assumptions about what "race" is sufficient in addressing social justice and educational reform. While the intentions of reformist and those committed to social justice seek to improve if not repair schools, these discussions are not framed by those most effected by "race." Listening and attending to the experiences of those who have been historically oppressed is critical because these contemporary narratives are also reflections of the past.

The research questions for this project are grounded in unveiling the mythical yet visible paradox of "race." I centralize "race" as a research topic to bring visibility to how students' experience and oftentimes associate racism with basic aspects of their lives. It is from the perspective of these students that I question how teachers and researchers might engage in meaningful dialogue about "race" in an effort to think and act in transformative ways.

Race

Definitions of *race* in everyday discussions vary and are often ambiguous and vague. The uncertainty, ambiguity, and variety of what is meant by the term *race* complicate how people understand one another and one another's stories. They may assume that they understand each other and that they share a common definition, when they do not; they may disagree but not understand or be able to interrogate their disagreement because of how they are variously defining *race*; or, the insights that might come from sharing narratives of experiences might be lost or remain at a surface level

because of the ambiguity and unacknowledged differences in how "race" is being defined. An example of race as an unquestioned and essentialized truth occurs frequently in television news media. Frequently, news media use broad racially based identifiers like "White" or "Black" to describe individuals. This is most noted in instances of crime where an image is shown in a news report and the individual is described by gender and an assumed common notion of "race."

Pollock (2004) notes:

> American race categories have become a social truth without ever having had a legitimately biological basis: created to organize slavery, retooled with waves of immigration, and naturalized over centuries by law, policy, and science, race categories are now everywhere, alternately proud building blocks of our nation's "diversity" and the shameful foundations of our most wrenching inequalities (p.7).

The assumption of *race* as an easily defined term, that is monolithic and essential to the human condition needs to be challenged. It is not just that *race* has a history in its definition but also that people use *race* with a broad range of definitions, and they use the term in many ways to accomplish a broad range of purposes. Although often unacknowledged, defining *race* is a complex, difficult, and problematic endeavor. In brief, *race* needs to be problematized and viewed as deriving its meaning from its historical, social, and situated contexts (Liebermann, 1968; Smedley, 1998). There are three constructs for "race" that have influenced research and how "race" has been defined and explored. These three constructs are (1) biological, (2) ethnic, and (3) race as a social construction.

Biological

The legacy of race and how it has functioned in the world's history has been one of the cornerstones of modern civilization. Goldberg (1993) contends that with modernity also comes the institutionalization of "race" and racism. He locates the inception of race during the 15th century where Europeans began the utilization of collective terminology like, "we" found in papal letters (letters relating to Catholicism or the Roman Catholic Church). The establishment of in-groups and out-groups signified in the word "we" initiated two domains for race. The first being that "race" was of a moral doctrine and the second that morality could be identified through genetic code.

West (2002) investigates the discursive formation of modern racism through an expository offering of scientific, classical, and anthropological epistemologies, which foreground *whiteness* to which all "others" are compared. This line of inquiry utilizes discourse as a means to chronicle the power of language as it directly and indirectly positions people of African descent as unintelligible, unattractive, and at best, diseased. West (2002) asserts that the very structure of modern discourse at its inception produced forms of rationality, science, and objectivity, which constituted the idea of White supremacy. West (2002) describes the linguistic code of race as having controlling metaphors, notions, and categories, which "produce and prohibit, develop and delimit, specific conceptions of truth and knowledge, beauty and character, so that certain ideas are rendered incomprehensible and unintelligible" (p.70). Some of these unintelligible ideas were directly connected to morality. Europeans created a standard for behaviors, spiritual practices, and appearance that defined what constituted morality and savagery.

These ways of thinking created a framework for how non-Whites were viewed in the world. Consequently, "race" became inextricably linked to morality and genetics.

Darwin attributed race differences to biology, where all species were ranked from lower to higher forms of life. Darwin's theories for order were commonly applied to human beings (Goldberg, 1993). Europeans were considered fully evolved *homo sapiens*, with greater intelligence, and Africans constituted as immature, where their looks and behavior were associated with apes and moneys. Eugenics was so popularized that one's "reality" of race was driven by the scientific community's compelling sense of the social and biological world. For example, in the History *of Jamaica*, Edward Long writes the following about the slaves from Guinea:

> Their hearing is remarkably quick; their faculties of smell and taste are truly bestial, nor less commerce with the other sex; in these acts they are libidinous and shameless as monkeys and baboons (qtd. from Yeboah, 1988, p. 56).

This quote represents the linkage of the African or anyone of African descent to animalistic characteristics. The cultural work done here allows the readership to see "dark people" as bestial therefore justifying the brash treatment they received. The constant juxtaposition of the racialized *other* generated a long-standing belief view of the world in relation to Europeans. By and large, in addition to European intelligence, Whites were established as inherently beautiful and closer to God, which was established through physical characteristics.

Goldberg (2002) writes:

> By the late eighteenth century, beauty was established in terms of racial properties: fair skin, straight hair, orgnathous jaw, skull shape and size, well-composed bodily proportions, and so on…Thus, natural qualities of beauty and perfection were supposed to be established on *a priori* grounds of racial membership. Aesthetic valued solidified into natural law, which in the eighteenth century was considered as compelling as the laws of nature, economics, and

> morality precisely because they were all deemed to derive from the same rational basis (p. 291)

The misapplied interpretations of Darwin's theory provided an affirmation of White superiority and founded a tradition of the science of "race." Embedded in this cultural work was the notion of "pure races," initiated by Mendel's genetic work (Outlaw, 1999). Racial types were defined by and through certain characteristics (e.g., skin color, hair type, anatomical features). These characteristics were transmitted genetically and created blueprints for race groups. Mendel's work in the early 19th century, along with the five racial categories of man, has sustained the meaning of "race." In referring back to the definition of race from the 1981 publication of Webster's Dictionary, fixed physical and behavioral characteristics are the primary ways in which race has been defined. Notions of racial purity consequently, make sense according to the Darwin and Mendel theories of "race."

Biological notions of "race" have permeated most facets of everyday life. From school systems organization of student demographics to the United States Census data collection, the fixed and prescribed racial descriptions pervade everyday life. One challenge in investigating discussions of "race" is making consideration for how racist ideologies have framed how "race" is discussed. Public discourse about "race" has been largely influenced by the social and social scientific thoughts of the time. The introduction of new ways to think about "race" challenges not only biased preconceived notions of "race," but also seeks to disprove centuries of scientific bias. Research within the social science community has worked to reject and challenge these biologically based

notions of "race" (Wade & Lewis, 2005). In 1998, the American Anthropology Association (AAA) issued the following statement:

> The racial world-view was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege and wealth. The tragedy in the US has been that the policies and practices stemming from this world view succeeded all too well in constructing unequal populations among Europeans, Indigenous people, and people of African descent. [It concludes] the present-day inequalities between so-called racial groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances (p.713).

In concert with an influential social science movement to think more deeply about the relationships made between genetics and "race," ethnicity-based theories emerged intellectualizing "race" from a biological framework to a sociohistorical framework.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity-based paradigm became a prevailing theory in the early 1900s as a means to challenge biologistic notions of race. Broadly, ethnicity included language, culture, customs that unified groups of people who share national origins (Blauner, 1972). In attempt to understand diversity in the context of a multicultural United States, ethnicity-based theories immediately addressed how difference exists within families, tribes, customs, and language rather than genetic make-up (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963). Embedded in the emerging understanding of ethnicity was cultural pluralism and assimilation, where deficit theories mediated public policy on how to help ethnic minorities adjust to American life (Mills, 1997; Omi & Winant, 1994). The desire for

new immigrants to have access to American life, materially also prompted a social and economic need for these groups to access America, ideologically. The American idea in the context of immigration included for some embracing the idea of the *melting pot*, where assimilation was the mode toward becoming American. Yet, defining what American was (is) did not include an explicit discourse of dominance that would affect European immigrants as it affects Africans, the indigenous peoples of North America, Latinos, and Asians. Some of these distinctions are minute, for all immigrants experience the acculturation of immigration and the struggle for ethnic and national identity; however, ethnicity-based theories do not take into account the homogenization of ethnic groups as a means to achieve racial categories.

Takaki (1993) discusses the impact of ideological dominance amongst ethnic groups and the homogenization of races. The categories of White, Black, Asian, Indian, American Indian, and Latino function to extinguish the significance and cultural importance of ethnicity. In the case of the United States, Whites no longer identify themselves in ethnic terms, except in the case of Jews and Muslims, where one's ethnicity and religion are directly connected and have historical meanings that guide daily living, social, and spiritual practices. Arguably, there are European ethnic groups that embrace their ethnic identities in custom and social practices at home. However, within the discourses of ethnicity in the United States, the term *ethnic* is often popularly reserved for non-Whites.

More broadly, the economic advantages of slavery among Whites in America eradicated the need to decipher Irish from Italian. Skin color (i.e. white skin versus black skin) became common sense language used to distinguish Africans from Europeans.

Whites seemingly chose to eliminate the use of ethnicity as a matter of convenience during slavery, where Blacks were forced into a homogenized racial status because of the institution of slavery.

Africans enslaved and brought to North America, the Caribbean, and South America were displaced ethnic groups. The language, customs, religion, and rites associated with tribes were made disparate through separating families and "mixing" ethnic groups, without regard tribunal commonalities. Ethnic group identity never existed for Africans in America during slavery or now because the ethnicities of Africans were stripped from them. The general attitude toward "Blacks" was then based on the conclusion that the group was *cultureless*. Blauner (1972) notes and critiques, "The view that Black people lack any characteristics of a distinctive nationality, that they are only Americans and nothing else, has become almost dogma of liberal social science." One of the insights he offers is that social science research has been governed by dominant ideologies. One of the challenges of social science research has been how to understand culture(s) and locate the authenticity and voices of these cultures without superimposing European standards of *appropriateness*. In that, social science research has historically neglected to understand the culture(s) of non-White communities; furthermore these communities have been dismissed as spaces of cultural development (Montagu, 1974).

Critiques of ethnicity based theories of race stem from the recognition that skin color eradicates ethnic background. One's skin color has taken the place of one's ethnic background. For African Americans, ethnic background is re-constructed through an American identity. Some argue African Americans are without an ethnic identity because of not having a unique language and culture from which to derive. Other

scholars in sociocultural theory would argue that there is a distinct language and culture among African Americans. Many of the traditions that have emerged from African American culture (e.g., language, food, music) have defined aspects of American culture. Additionally, "Blacks" in the broad sense have been denied the historical, social, and political rights of exploring their true ethnic identities as a result of the institution of slavery and the consequences of essentialized and prescribed racial categories. It is from this vantage point that ethnicity-based theories of "race" are incomplete in the broader discussion of "race." It does not account for everyday life and the set of events that frame one's experiences.

Race as a social concept

An attempt to understand race beyond biology or ethnicity based theories has been an agenda within social justice scholarship as well as social science research (Murj & Solomos, 2005; Frankenburg, 1993) In most cases this work has been done concomitant to creating new ways of understanding the power of racism. For some, racism is oversimplified in terms of how people treat one another. More broadly, racism is based on a set of ideologies or practices that guide structures or institutions. Du Bois (1903) wrote that the greatest problem of the 20th century would be that of the color line. This frequently cited and theorized concept of the color line is rooted in America's social engineering of "race." Du Bois presents the challenges faced daily (then and now) by African Americans and the lack of social progress for America in general because of the infestation of racism. Du Bois' foresight and philosophical foundation for social justice

issues helped support extant scholarship to follow years later. Montagu (1942) uses the phrasing "race as a social concept" in his scholarship on the impact of social science research on *non-White* subjects and communities. Part of the challenge was addressing how research has been historically skewed based on the ideologies of "race." Montagu posits:

> We may realize that a myth is a faulty explanation leading to social delusion and error, but we do not necessarily realize that we ourselves share in the mythmaking faculty with all people of all times and places, or that each of us has his own store of myths derived from the traditional stock of the society in which we live, and are always in ready supply (p. 41).

However, one consequence of proposing "race" as a myth is that the experiences of non-Whites in American society are often dismissed or diluted into an *idea*. Proposing race as socially constructed gave power to acts of racism, both explicit and implicit, to be regarded as overly sensitive delusions of non-Whites. Identifying race as a myth introduces the social construction of race, which demonstrate the power of ethnocentrism; however, it merely brings this construct to the surface without examining the process and power of social constructionism.

Racial formation is defined as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (Obach, 1999; Omi & Winant, 1986). By identifying racial formation as a process, race therefore becomes dynamic and interactive, yet historically situated. Omi and Winant (1986) describe race according to a set of *projects* where human bodies and social structures have meaning and are organized. Therefore, race is not only how one represents culture (ethnic, class, religious, gender, etc.) but is also and more importantly, co-constructed within social structure. They write:

> Racial projects connect what race *means* in a particular discursive practice and the ways in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially *organized*, based upon that meaning (1986, p. 56, 2nd Ed.).

One example of the power of racial projects that have defined American society in our recent history is the re-emergence of the narrative of White women allegedly being accosted Black men. Several fiction and non-fiction scripts, films, books, and documentaries have been based on the intersection of Black men, White women and crime. Some might argue that this historically situated narrative never truly dissipated from the larger narrative of race in America. Often referred to as "America's White lie," White women have used the idea of sexual assault by black men as an offensive weapon to securing their own sense of power and purity. Yet, in the later part of the 20th century, we have been reminded that society is keenly aware of the power of "race," which manifests itself most often in legal situations. The O.J. Simpson trial, the 1995 case of Susan Smith drowning her two sons, and most recently the Jennifer Wilbanks fiasco are all representatives of how ordinary people use "race" ultimately shaping how human life is valued and consequently socially interacting based on this sense of value (Entman and Rojecki, 2000). In short, "race" in America becomes a commodity, where greater and lesser values are determined by the power ascribed to it. The recognition of the power of "race," and racialization in this light, is how social constructionist theory has helped us rethink "race" (Mills, 1997; Sipress, 1997).

This research project hones in on how "race" functions in everyday life through the experiences African American students have in and out of classroom settings. It also centralizes the perspectives of these students as they discuss "race." Sometimes in these discussions they are constructing "race." In some cases these constructions are

reflections of their life experiences, in other cases they are active conversations used to make sense of experiences that appear to serve a racist paradigm. In any case, their social realities as they relate to "race" raise questions about social justice and equity in provocative ways. Other scholars have accomplished this work of investigating "race" beyond the metaphor of social constructionism as well. For additional reading, see Conley, 1999; Frakenburg, 1999; Lee, 2003; Leeman, 2004; Smaje, 1997; Wodack and Reisigl, 1999.

Racial Awareness

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) introduces racial awareness through the concept of *double-consciousness*. Double-consciousness speaks to the painful experience that frames the existence of African Americans in the United States. Du Bois posits African Americans live between dual identities that are polarized and is the source of internal psychological and emotional turmoil. The foundation of these tensions is first, in the awareness of being culturally and physically disconnected from African cultures and ways of life. Africa is a homeland only in name but cannot be truly embraced as home. And secondly, being continually regarded as less than equal to Whites in the United States. No access to education, socioeconomic mobility, or public prestige for an individual person of African descent changes the status of African Americans in the United States, at-large. Double-consciousness as Du Bois theorizes creates an unsettled temperament for Blacks in that they struggle internally to gain access and status in a land that has not afforded them a dignified existence. This consciousness causes African

Americans to be *aware* of the omnipresence of the power and privileges associated with "race"and the lack thereof for all African Americans.

Du Bois' notion of a double-consciousness has had a profound impact on academic scholarship that has influenced educational research in theory and in practice. Critical Race Theory, Whiteness Studies, and African American Identity are three particular areas that educational scholarship has looked toward to theorize racial disparities in educational processes and practices. Critical Race Theory specifically has redefined academic scholarship using "race" as an essential paradigm for interrogating social justice. Part of CRT's broad discussion of "race" has been a discussion of *racial consciousness* since its inception. Peller (1995) argues that an 'integrationist' ideology that was the result of the Civil Rights Movement created a suppression of White racism. One of the goals of the Civil Rights Movement was to address these systemic forms of racism through racial justice. Any outward expression of "race pride," including that of Black Nationalists was equated to White supremacist, despite the different aims and agendas of each group. Racial consciousness was marginalized and repudiated notwithstanding it being essential to social justice. He writes:

> Current mainstream race-reform discourse reflects the resolution of that conflict through a tacit, enlightened consensus that integrationism-understood as the replacement of prejudice and discrimination with reason and neutrality-is understood as the replacement of prejudice and discrimination with reason and neutrality-is the proper way to conceive of racial justice. And that was the price of then national commitment to suppress white supremacists would be the rejection of race-consciousness among African Americans…" (p. 127)

Within an integrationist framework, race-consciousness can be branded as *reverse racism* or as an ideology of radicalism wrought with violence and against the peace processes of civil rights. This absolutist reasoning gave rise to the work of Booker T. Washington

and W.E.B. Du Bois. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was pitted against Malcolm X. And more contemporarily, Rev. Jesse Jackson is positioned as being diametrically opposite to Minister Louis Farrakhan. Indeed, each of these individuals have different ideological stances on issues of "race," politics, interracial social interactions, etc.; however, they all use racial awareness or race consciousness as a tool to foreground achieving issues of equity for the oppressed.

This research includes an explicit process for identifying how students' racial consciousness, that is their awareness of "race," is a factor for how they interpret their own life experiences. I argue that the absence of racial awareness results in a silence about "race." The discussions of "race" among the students and the teachers in this study are made visible through how they each represent racial awareness in their use of language. I use racial awareness paradigmatically suggesting that as "race" is a social "reality" by which it functions outside of incidences and events that could easily be marked as racist or not. Racial awareness allows us to recognize the influence of "race" in the absence of racism. This paradigm of racial awareness I suggest is a key component to addressing social justice as an active process for a social change. One of the key questions in the research project is how is racial awareness represented in discussions of "race." This question seeks to examine how students' represent how they see "race" as a factor for the events they discuss. Racial awareness is used to determine how students construct "race" through talk and in what context.

There are several ways the students in the study engaged in discussions of "race." Some of these discussions were based on students' reactions to classroom events. Their dialogues were reflections of specific shared events. Other discussions of "race"

included uses of narratives. These narratives served several purposes as students shared personal experiences about encounters they associated with "race" on some level. I will present narratives as a particular feature in discussions of "race" in the research study in the section to follow; however, it is critical that I discuss the theoretical relationship between discussions of "race" and Critical Race Theory as an aim of social justice. This relationship is founded on the social, political and historical premise that liberation and oppression are intricately connected. Any discussion of liberation must include a discussion of oppression and the multiple experiences of oppressed communities. For the purpose of this work, oppression is identified as racially connected not in a series of historic events but a part of a present narrative of continued racialization and oppression. In accordance with the aims of Critical Race Theory, narratives are used as a semiotic too to articulate the impact of "race" in addition to transmitting information. Roithmayr (1999) writes:

> Critical Race Theory also provides the theoretical justification for taking seriously oppositional accounts of race- for example, counterstories that challenge the conventional take on integration as a universalizing move to equalize education for all races….For many outside the legal field, critical race theory has become synonymous with the idea of counter-storytelling-challenging the stock story on merit or academic tracking or standardized testing by redescribing an experience or social phenomenon from an outsider's perspective (p.5).

What Roithmayre describes in the notion of counterstories is providing space and opportunity for alternative scripts about everyday life to be validated as significant for understanding otherwise complex social systems, like education, through the framework of "race." These counterstories are powerful in that they represent a truth about how "race" functions in everyday life and the impact they have on ordinary people. This research builds on the notion that these narratives are important, particularly among

African American youth. Using narrative as a qualitative research tool creates opportunity to inform theories of "race" with the "realities" that oftentimes determine how African American students view themselves and the world.

Narrative

There are various definitions of narrative, largely derivative of different disciplines such as literature, philosophy, history, sociology, folklore, and anthropology, among other disciplines. Within these disciplines, there is a vast amount of research on narrative theory that reflects the framework of these areas. I use Ochs' (1997) definition of narrative as a "a simple chronicle of events or an account that contextualizes events, by attempting to explain them, and/or persuade others of their relevance." Toolan (1988) writes, "Narratives are everywhere, performing countless different functions in human interaction." In this section, I begin with Labov's (1972) work, which presents narrative from the perspective of structure and narrative features. I follow a discussion of Labov's work with a discussion of other research on the structure and features of narrative. Then, I shift to a discussion of narrative as a component of storytelling. I highlight the work of Bauman (1986) who theorizes storytelling as having three aspects: event, story, and performance. In brief, Bauman views story as a way of representing events and then focuses attention on the performance of story noting cultural variation in the performance of story. Bauman's discussion of the performance of story leads to a discussion of storytelling events and how storytelling events vary across cultures. Although I discuss cultural variation in storytelling events, I emphasize how each storytelling event is not

merely the enactment of cultural scripts but rather holds the potential for adaptation by the participants of those cultural scripts to create new and evolving storytelling events. I conclude this section discussing how the eight uses of narratives in discussions of "race" listed earlier may be applied to an understanding of narrative.

Narrative Structure.

Labov (1972) presents a general framework for the analysis of narrative using Black English Vernacular (BEV) speakers as subjects for capturing stories. A definition of narrative emerged from the analysis of this work on the oral features of BEV speakers (1972). According to Labov and Waletksy (1967) narrative is defined as "one method of recapitulating past experiences by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequences of events that actually occurred." Labov also adds that narratives can only exist if told in a temporal sequence. This means narrative is ordered. Meaning is conveyed and retained when there is a clearly defined sense of time that does not shift if clauses in the narrative are reversed.

The premise of Labov and Waletsky's research was based on the idea that understanding complex structures of narrative could not be done until a basic understanding of narrative could be analyzed and ultimately measured. They write:

> By examining the actual narratives of large numbers of unsophisticated speakers, it will be possible to relate the formal properties of narrative to their functions (Labov & Waletsky, 1967).

Through their work they proposed a set of components that defined what constitutes narrative. According to Labov (1972), fully formed narrative contains six dimensions:

1. Abstract can be described as a summary of narrative that occurs in one or two clauses. When looking for the abstract in a narrative, one should be able to tell what the narrative is about.
2. Orientation is the setting described in the orientation that tells information like time, place, participants in the narrative and in the situation.
3. The complicating action is the sets of details that extend the basic information of the narrative.
4. Evaluation refers to the means used by the storyteller to indicate the point of the story. The evaluation tells why the story is told, which is different than the abstract that focuses on what the story is about.
5. Result or resolution is the conclusion of the story expressed by the storyteller.
6. Coda is a signaling of the completion of the narrative.

These six dimensions are described as fundamental components of narrative; however, the complicating action is considered essential to recognizing narrative because this is where the details for the narrative are held.

Labov and Waletsky (1967) describe one additional structural aspect of narratives. They make a distinction between parts of the narrative that move the action forward and parts of the narrative that reveal commentary or reflection on that action. For example, consider the narrative:

(1) Yesterday, I went to the store and bought some milk.

(2) It was a good thing to do as I had an ulcer and milk soothes my stomach.

Line (1) describes the action. It moves the plot forward. Line (2) is a commentary on that action, ("It was a good thing") and it provides an explanation for that commentary ("soothes my stomach"). Labov and Waletsky (1967) label those parts of the narrative that move the action forward as "complicating actions"; they label the commentary on the action as "evaluations."

> Reviewing and expanding on Labov and Waletsky's (1972) work, Tolliver (1997) suggests that there should not be an overemphasis placed on "structural units." All of the early narratologists examined only written narrative fiction in their search for universals, and for the most part they limit their examination to male-authored, canonical European and North American prose fiction of the last two centuries (Tolliver, 1997).

Based on these texts, claims of "universal generalizability" were made despite the fact that the texts were not universal representations of narrative. Labov's assertion that a model for narrative must be born of "relatively simple conversational narratives" introduced a significance found in orality, which is not limited to "male-authored canonical European" literature. Labov's (1972) work not only introduces a sociolinguistic approach to analyzing narrative, he creates a paradigm shift for analysis using Black English Vernacular (BEV) speakers. His work does two things. First, Labov illuminates how narratology is racialized and secondly, by using BEV speakers whose narratives are largely oral recapitulations of life experiences, he challenges what other scholars have offered as different schemes for the components of a narrative. There are other ways in which narratives have been analyzed. I refer to these analyses as cultural because consideration to students sociocultural identities directly frame how they construct and participate in narrative events.

Cultural Analysis of Narrative

One of the issues concerned with what components constitute a narrative is the degree to which those components are derived from a particular culture's view of narrative. Michaels (1981) suggested that some African American kindergarten children during sharing time would render narratives that their teachers thought were incoherent. However, these children's narratives were not incoherent, but rather were structurally different than those of their White counterparts and significantly different in their structures than what their White teachers expected and were accustomed to. Michaels labeled the types of narratives the teachers were used to as "topic-centered" and labeled the narratives that some of the Black children told some of the time as "topic-associated" (Michaels, 1981). In addition, the author highlights the different ways intonation was used to signal cohesion. Part of what is key about Michaels' research is the acknowledgment that narratives are structured and their structural organizations vary across cultures.

In later research, Michaels (1981) describes what she calls the "dismantling of narratives" in schools. She contends that the process of acquiring academic discourse or school literacy practices creates a "suppression of a particular narrative style." Michaels' (1981) research investigating narrative structures of elementary aged students participating in "sharing time" or what others refer to as "show-and-tell" demonstrates how stories are taken up by teachers based on the narrative structures used by students. Over time, students are taught to model their own thought processes and storytelling after the narrative forms that have privileged status in schools. These types of narrative forms

are often in alignment with White middle-class culture, thereby rendering other narrative forms ineffective or in some cases inappropriate. Michaels' research seeks to investigate the ideological nature of schooling using oral and written texts of school-aged children, which widens "the complex interrelations between the individual, social, and textual" decreasing the "obstacles to understanding the development and deployment of oral and written discourse in school" (p. 305). Gee (1985) suggests that privileging "literate based" or "topic centered" narratives over "oral based" or "topic associative" narratives is not isolatory within school practices but reflects a greater ideology in place about language and culture.

Gee (1985) writes:

> Unfortunately, the oral style is often characterized negatively in terms of what it lacks that the literate style has. This only reflects, at the academic level, the literate bias of our culture and the negative attitude at the school level that translates into outright prejudice. (p.11).

Gee reminds us that in the earliest years of schools, student-centered activities, seemingly supportive of students' individuality, are insulated with ideologies. That is, student expression and modes of communication are continuously under scrutiny. This type of linguist and expressive monitoring falls short of "what is best for students" and may contribute to other socially and academically stigmatizing events.

Cultural variation in narrative structure has been documented by Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1981), Heath (1983), Phillips (1983), and Bloome, D., Champion, T., Katz, L., Morton, M., and Muldrow, R. (2001). Champion (2002) has similarly documented cultural variation in narrative structure. Champion extends previous research on cultural and linguistic variation in narrative. Unlike previous research that focused solely on the performative nature of African American children and storytelling,

Champion suggests that African American children do not rely on simply one structure in the production of narratives. She contends there is a repertoire employed by African American children, and these narratives are distinctly an amalgamation of the various cultural forms in which they have been socialized (European and African American). Student narrative responses tend to reflect a particular cultural form based on how the narrative is elicited. In short, the manner in which students are invited to share stories directly impacts and possibly models how students will share. In later research, Champion (2002) also suggests that this repertoire has distinctive links to West African culture that have been retained despite its physical and temporal distance from the United States of America. The retention of West African language and culture, she asserts, is socialized through pillars within the African American community, like churches. Smitherman (1999) and Moss (2001) have also conducted research on the relationship between African American Language (AAL) and the Black church. Much of this research attends to the linguistic codes and style of discourse found in the Black church, which are features of African American Language. One might argue that the Black church is one of the primary social and political institutions where slaves transposed African cultural norms into their spiritual practices. As such, the Black church is often seen as a place where African and African American culture is made visible through formal and informal social and spiritual practices. Champion (2003) identifies nine West African narrative strategies, which appear in the narratives of African American children in addition to the other narrative strategies they use. The nine strategies are as follows:

1. Repetition is described as when the narrator uses the same key phrases throughout the narrative.

2. Parallelism is the use of identical words that are transposed within the same or adjacent statements.
3. Piling and Association is when one heaps one detail onto another to build the narrative to a climax.
4. Tonality is the use of rising and falling tone through the narrative.
5. Ideophone is using sound to convey meaning.
6. Digression is described as a departure from the main theme of a narrative to address or comment to a person or object related to the theme of the narrative.
7. Imagery is defined as using words (similes and metaphors) to create images in the mind of the listener.
8. Allusion is the use of an image to convey meaning when the origin of the image is not verbally apparent.
9. Symbolism is defined as the use of a familiar image to convey lessons to the listener.

The particular nine strategies are not solely West African but are commonly used in West African narratives. Many of these very features may be found in other narrative styles as well representative of other cultures. Champion (2002) concludes that recognizing the repertoire of narrative structures dismantles the deficit model notion of African American children's narrative simply as performative and lacking structural complexity or literary prowess.

Sociolinguist Analysis of Narrative

Within sociolinguistics, there has been a shift in research that has altered narrative analysis from investigating the minimal clause to looking at the narrative event in addition to the narrative itself. Bauman (1986) frames narrative analysis by shifting the axiom from episodic events as ingredients used for the construction of narrative to "events as abstractions from narratives" (p. 5). Insofar as there are narratives that recount events, the participation in the retelling of the narrative is also an event. Bauman (1986) distinguishes *narrated events, narrative text* from *narrative events* through his use of the concept of performance. He writes:

> I understand performance as a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for display of communicative skill, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content (p.3).

In Bauman's view, the performance within the narrative event includes a relationship between audience and teller that shapes the narrated event itself. How the story is told, what information is included, the role of point of view, and role of teller as a participant in the narrated event or as an onlooker all contributes to the meaning conveyed in the narrative event.

Unlike Labov's (1972) analysis on narrative, Bauman suggests narrative performance is situated. The telling or retelling of an event is mediated by not simply the episodes within the event but the social context in which the retelling occurs.

The structure of performance events is a product of the systemic interplay of numerous situational factors, prominently including the following:

1. Participants' identities and roles

2. The expressive means employed in performance
3. Social interactional ground rules, norms, and strategies for performance and criteria for its interpretation and evaluation
4. The sequence of actions that make up the scenario of the events (Bauman, 1986).

Taking these factors into consideration, casual analysis of narrative limited our role as participants in narrative events as well as mediators of the retelling. For example, a teenager driving her parents' car might experience a car accident where she is not at fault. The retelling of the car accident to her best friend may be structurally different than the retelling to her parents. The temporal order of events may be the same in both retellings (Labov's orientation, complicating action, etc.); however, the performance of both stories may vary. As such, the narrative event is indivisible from narrative event in the analysis of the narrative text. In this sense, narrative analysis *in situ* does not isolate the narrative text but requires an ethnographic approach.

Within sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication, Bauman's (1986) work brought to fore a significant link between social interaction and narrative, which was also a transition from the structural analysis of narrative hallmarked by Labov (1972).) Bauman initiated an analysis of narratives as a set of events. These events he identifies as abstractions from narratives, where the participation in the telling is as significant as the telling itself. Bauman's conceptual mapping of a narrative event reconstitutes narrative by locating the interaction that occurs during the storytelling as a significant influence on the narrative itself.

Solsken and Bloome (1994) build on the work of Bauman distinguishing story from narrative and story-telling event. They describe a story as a chronology of events that are sequenced into story form. Experiences are not inherently ordered with beginnings, middles, and ends, but are structured this way to transform experiences into stories. The narrative is the text of the story. The text of the story is not bound to a sequence order of events and may include other features like Labov's (1972) orientation and or evaluation. Yet, narratives may only exist in storytelling events. Sharing stories is the creation of narratives in which the storytelling event involves an audience (a group or individual).

Ochs and Capps (2001) distinguishes telling a story *to* someone and telling a story *with* someone to allow for everyday encounters that may be recent, half remembered look like rough drafts, and lend themselves to reordering and restructuring unsure of where they will end. It is with this notion of living narratives and the value in everyday conversation that I frame the significance of uses of narratives in discussions of "race."

Bauman (1986) writes:

> Narrative here is not merely the reflection of culture, or the external charter of social institutions, or the cognitive arena for sorting out the logic of cultural codes, but is constitutive of social life in the act of storytelling. There is not much here- at least not yet – of literariness, or of performance as a special mode of communication, but there is a deep sense of context and of *social action that is essential to any conception of the literature as social practice* [*italics added for emphasis]* (p. 113).

Bauman's description of narrative and its relationship to social action suggests that communities are bound through storytelling and cultural codes. This inextricable link

between community action and the uses of narratives can be found in Matsuda's (1995) call for social justice. She writes:

> What is suggested here is not abstract consideration of the position of the least advantaged; the imagination of the academic philosopher cannot recreate the experience of life on the bottom. Instead we must look to what Gramsci called 'organic intellectuals,' grassroots philosophers who are uniquely able to relate theory to the concrete experience of oppression…When notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, are examined not from an abstract position but from the position of groups who have suffered through history, moral relativism recedes and identifiable normative priorities emerge (p. 63).

Matsuda reinserts the notion of "narrative as knowledge" through the voices and experiences of the "organic intellectual." The organic intellectual utilizes multimodalities in expressing her experiences and making sense of how those experiences connect with others. I defer to the concept of "uses" of narrative to illustrate the importance of storytelling for African American secondary students. In the context of the research, they represent the organic intellectuals as they share their experiences that reflect the challenges and complexities of "race" in everyday life.

"Uses" or "Use"

The concept of "uses" of narrative rather than "use" of narrative is borrowed from Halliday's (1975) approach to language emphasizes the notion of "functions of language," which there are multiple "uses" depends on the context for communication. He writes:

> By taking a functional viewpoint [framework] we can gain some idea of how it is that ordinary language, in its everyday uses, can so effectively transmit to the child [audience] the deepest patterns of the culture (p. 8).

Halliday's notion of "ordinary language, in its everyday uses," suggests first, there is no monolithic mode for communication signaled in the phrase "uses" rather than "use," and secondly, the transmission of culture(s) occurs through language in use. Viewing language as having several functions creates several assumptions. First, there is a relationship between speaker and audience that dictates *how* language functions. Another assumption within the functional approach to language is that the content or topic of communication also influences language in use. To this end, a functional approach to language includes social context as well as the socially constructed identities of the communication participants and the meanings attached to those identities.

Halliday uses the phrase "models of language" to describe the template from which he adapts language use. There are seven models of language, which are described as follows:

1. Instrumental- the simplest of the child's where language is used as a means to get things done.
2. Regulatory- use of language that regulates behavior. The reinforcement (positive or negative) of certain behaviors through language determined by the child's specific awareness of language as a means of behavioral control.
3. Interactional- the use of language in the interaction between the self and others.
4. Personal- awareness of language as a form of his own individuality. This includes self-expression but also includes "the presentation of self." How one communicates with others offers a public view of one's individuality; and this in turn reinforces and creates this individuality.

5. Heuristic- derived from his knowledge of how language has enabled him to explore his environment; language as a means of investigating reality.
6. Imaginative- the ability to create -"let's pretend." Language in the imaginative function may not be about anything. It may be a world of rhythmic sequences or pure sound, an edifice of words in which semantics has no part.
7. Representational-a means of communicating about something, of expressing propositions. He can convey a message in language, a message that has specific reference to the processes, persons, objects, abstractions, qualities, state and relations of the real world around him.

Halliday's model's of language provides a beginning for investigating uses of language in discussions of "race." However, sociolinguists and research in ethnography of communication extend what Halliday initiated by raising questions about how social communities are formed and maintained through discourse (Gumperz, 1971). This agenda utilizes ethnography to examine the everyday discourse practices and social interactions of communities to establish how language functions. Scholarship within early sociolinguistics looking at speech communities implicitly was tantamount to discussions of "race" (Au, 1980; Gumperz & Hernandez-Chavez, 1971; Heath, 1983; Philips, 1972). Each of these studies focused on what is identified anthropologically as "speech communities" but they are also communities bounded by racial designation. As such, it is plausible to assume "race" influences the social interactions within these speech communities as they negotiate how to interact with others. One might suggest designated speech communities recognize who is a member of that community not only because of language but also because of race. Arguably, the concept of speech

communities partially implies that groups are constituted by speakers of a language, rather than by social interactions and other aspects of networking. This argument does not consider the relationship between language use and social interaction. While speech communities are bounded, per se by shared language, it is reasonable to suggest that the use of language includes social and cultural interactions that define the community itself. I propose "race" constitutes how we interact intra and interracially while simultaneously our social interactions are partly constituted by "race" (as with class and gender). However, despite the seamless nature of "race" and social life, there is an explicit socially engineered system that makes "race" an avoided subject of discussion while it functions as a fundamental aspect of daily life. Therefore, discussions of "race" have characteristics that differ discursively as well as contextually.

Historically, there were national events that caused schools, politics, and "race" to collide in public ways. For example, the events in Little Rock Arkansas at Central High School, Ruby Bridges in Louisiana, and presently, the case of the "Jenna 6" in Jenna, Louisiana represent the national discord in discussing "race." In the context of each of these events, there were uses of language that surrounded the extent to which "race" would be used to question equity and social justice. In some cases, equity and social justice were never discussed at all as discussions of "race" focused more on disobedience and tolerance. In the public domain, the discourse of racial equality used by politicians, school officials, and the local community members reflected the social order. One of the most famous examples of this public discourse to maintain the social order was George Wallace's statement in 1963, "Segregation now, segregation forever." In this case, his

stance on integrating schools was framed by "states rights," yet the use of language within the context of his speech was discursively about White supremacy.

> Today I have stood, where once Jefferson Davis stood, and took an oath to my people. It is very appropriate then that from this Cradle of the Confederacy, this very heart of the Great Anglo-Saxon Southland, that today we sound the drum for freedom as have our generations of forebears before us done, time and time again through history. Let us rise to the call of freedom-loving blood that is in us and send our answer to the tyranny that clanks its chains upon the South. In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny . . . and I say . . . segregation today . ..segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever (Inaugural Speech, 1963).

There are several key words and phrases that speak to the speech community Wallace is addressing. These words combined with the social and political climate of Alabama in 1963 add to the meaning and the impact of this inaugural speech. First, he refers to prominent icons of the Confederacy, which contributes to establishing to the racial and speech community. Words and phrases like, "and took an oath to my people," "this very heart of the Great Anglo-Saxon Southland," "let us rise to the call of freedom-loving blood that is in us" are examples of a separatist racist agenda where "race" is woven into the public diatribe of states' rights. This speech speaks to a particular audience in one way and to an opposing community in another.

Consider this portion of a speech delivered by Malcolm X in 1965 as another example of speech communities and the intersectionality of "race."

> That's a shame. Because we get tricked into being nonviolent, and when somebody stands up and talks like I just did, they say, "Why, he's advocating violence!" Isn't that what they say? Every time you pick up your newspaper, you see where one of these things has written into it that I'm advocating violence. I have never advocated any violence. I've only said that Black people who are the victims of organized violence perpetrated upon us by the Klan, the Citizens' Council, and many other forms, we should defend ourselves. And when I say that we should defend ourselves against the violence of others, they use their press skillfully to make the world think that I'm calling on violence, period. I wouldn't call on anybody to be violent without a cause. But I think the Black man in this

> country, above and beyond people all over the world, will be more justified when he stands up and starts to protect himself, no matter how many necks he has to break and heads he has to crack (The Ford Auditorium, 1965).

Again, the social context of the time period alongside the use of language defines the speech community. Malcolm X boldly identifies "Black people" in connection with "we should defend ourselves against violence" in a direct manner. The discussion of "race" is about rights and safety but it speaks to a particular community of people who are bound by the experiences with racism. I use Wallace's and Malcolm X's speeches because they are both examples of the relationship between "race" functioning within a system of oppression, while the speech communities are identified and defined within the discussion. I contend that discussions of "race" in certain speech communities will have features and uses of language that represent the audiences and intent for the discussion itself.

Similar to Halliday's (1973) functions of language, I have identified eight uses of narrative in discussions of "race." There may be other uses that I have not identified, and the uses I have identified are not mutually exclusive there may be overlaps or similarities between and among them. These uses of narratives emerged from the data collected in this research project. In a preliminary analysis of narratives, I identified different ways the narratives were functioning at different points in a narrative event. The eight uses of narrative in discussions of "race" and their definitions are as follows:

1. *Informational*: gives information about an event, thing, or process that defines or describes the context for the discussion. In discussions of "race," the informational use often identifies the "race" of the characters in the story.

2. *Interactional*: invites or acknowledges an exchange between speaker and audience, where the audience participates verbally or nonverbally in the narrative. In discussions of "race," the audience reacts to how "race" or racism is being presented through a verbal or nonverbal cue.
3. *Historical*: creates a historical context or an allusion to a racialized history for the narrative. A relationship between the past and the present racial meanings are placed on a social continuum rather than marked by rigid beginnings and endings. The significance of the narrative telling is placed in a historical context.
4. *Social*: creates community between individuals or groups who may or may not share similar experiences or funds of knowledge of "race" and/or racism. Also creates connections among different generations of people who may or may not share common interests in addressing a racial issue or eradicating racism.
5. *Political*: evokes social and/or political action between individuals or groups. Discussions of "race" often are beginning places for social activism or at least bringing attention to a social or political issue.
6. *Emotional*: evokes sympathy, empathy, anger, or resistance. Not all discussions of "race" are filled with emotion, but emotional responses to "race" is important as victims of bigotry or racism use emotion as a way to cope with racism.
7. *Moral*: conveys messages of right and wrong. Uses of narratives in discussions of "race" may illustrate (in)appropriateness toward humanity.
8. *Intellectual:* raises questions about how to think about "race" and/or racism as it is experienced or observed within the community or nationally through the production of knowledge.

Narratives are one particular mode in which discussions of "race" might occur. There are others that emerge in the data that are discussed in detail in the methodology for the research. However, it is important to note that because narratives are personal, they reflect the perspective and experiences of the narrator. Audiences can interact and be invited to share and respond to the narratives. In some cases, the interactions with the audience construct how "race" is constructed as well. Each of this instances in the data speak to the dialogic possibilities that narratives create among speech communities, particularly around subjects like "race" that are steeped in activism, anti-oppression, and community building. The next section addresses the methodology for the dissertation project in detail followed by the findings and conclusion.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The research project from which I draw my dissertation data began as a part of an ongoing inquiry throughout my doctoral program and my pursuit to engage in ethnographic research. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methodology used in conducting the pilot study. I provide a brief description of the study, followed by discussions of the research method and theoretical framework, phases of the study, and finally data collection and analysis.

This micro-ethnographic study investigates how "race" is constructed through talk. Specifically, the research focused on (a) how to define "race" talk and (2) how race is constructed through talk.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a qualitative design for studying groups, their behaviors, beliefs, and language, and how they develop shared patterns of interacting over time. One of the goals of ethnography is to capture the "whole" culture under study. Ethnography can be described as long-term research conducted over a period of years. In this attempt to capture and report on culture, the researcher attempts to gain what is described as an

"emic" perspective, an understanding of culture from the view of the members of that culture (Green & Wallat, 1981). The strategy for an ethnographer is to treat the settings observed as anthropologically strange, consciously unfamiliarizing oneself with aspects of everyday life that may have previously been considered familiar (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

Ethnography can also be described as the writing of culture, not simply observing culture. The processes involved in ethnography involves disconnecting one personal views of culture in order to "see" and question the culture (ways of doing, interacting, or communicating) observed. In the context of education, ethnographers aim to become participant observers in school settings where they are able to examine the everyday practices in schools or "naturally occurring events" that take place in school settings.

Ethnographic research is a qualitative design for describing, analyzing, and interpreting the patterns of a culture-sharing group (Creswell, 2008). Ethnographic research focuses on a micro-level aspect of a larger part of the culture. As ethnography is an in-depth study of a community, ethnographic research looks to research a community that contributes to the larger culture. Three main reasons for doing ethnographic research are: (1) to develop new perspectives on idea. This means one will be engaged in fundamental learning through an "emic" perspecive; (2) to define social and cultural phenomena. More specifically, to define social structures and the way things happen within those structures; (3) to reveal the things that are unseen because they appear to be familiar.[4] There is an explicit attempt in ethnographic research to distance oneself from

[4] In Fall 2001, I took a year-long course in ethnography with an emphasis placed on ethnographic research with Dr. David Bloome. The three reasons for conducting ethnographic research presented in this section, stem from notes taken in this course.

what *appears* to be familiar in order to raise questions about what is happening, why it is happening and whether these events are patterns representing culture.

The orgins of ethnography and ethnographic research are found in anthropology and in part, sociology (Wolcott, 1999). The application of anthropological methods to education have led to the development of methods like case-studies, focus groups and as in the case of this study, analysis of language-in-use observed and collected within these focus groups.

This research attempts to understand aspects of everyday life, specifically how "race" is constructed in talk using both observations and fieldnotes of students and teachers engaged in talk while also having them examine their own use of language about "race."

Definition of Terms

There are several terms I use throughout this dissertation that have multiple definitions and conceptual meanings. In this section, I define these key terms as use and apply them throughout the study.

Cultural model- is described by Holland & Quinn (1987) as taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared by members of a society, which inversely shapes their understanding of the world and their behavior in it.

Discourse- refers to language use "relative to social, political and cultural formations- it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order,

and shaping individuals' interaction with society" (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). Fairclough (1995) asserts that discourse is language use that is socially situated. Both of these definitions encapsulate my use of discourse throughout this research.

Narrative- refers to a sequenced telling of an event. Ochs (1997) defines narrative as "A simple chronicle of events or an account that contextualizes events, by attempting to explain them, and/or persuade others of their relevance." Narrative research spans many disciplines and has been theorized to explore the authorship, social interaction, rhetoric, as well as psycholinguistics. As narrative has been defined to encompass structural features (Labov, 1972), there are sociocultural dimensions of narrative (Bauman, 1986), and narrative performance (Bloome, et al., 2001; Gee, 1985; Michaels, 1981) that are considered throughout the analysis of this study. Bauman (1986) describes narrative as an instrument for making experience comprehensible. Bauman's description of narrative is useful to this research project for several reasons. Mainly, Bauman posits that narrative events, the time at which a narrative recount occurs, significantly influences the narrative, itself. The audience then is a complementary component to the narrative and the narrator's effort to use the narrative in different ways.

Social Construction- what can be constituted as "[real] is the outcome of social relationships" that are generated in the world rather than in the mind (Gergen, 2001). At the heart of social constructionism is a reframing of how ideological frameworks govern what individuals or groups validate, which is often based on Westernized views. Social constructionism challenges these views to suggest there is an interactive dynamic to what we identify as "reality," as well as an objective one.

Social Justice- a disposition toward recognizing and eradicating all forms of oppression and differential treatment extant in the practices and policies and institutions, as well as a fealty to participatory democracy as the means of this action (Murrell, 2006).

Research Setting

The study took place in a small high school located in a major city in the South of the United States, referred to here as River City. River City is a midsize city and is known as a historical, social, and political icon during the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s and 1970s. For many African Americans, River City is identified as a Black city.[5] Part of this designation is due to the prominent African American political leadership, such as the mayor, congressmen and other governmental officials. There is a legacy of activism among African Americans-associated with the city and is reflected in how the culture of the city supports African American heritage alongside the mainstream dominant culture.

"River City High School"[6] (RCHS) is one of 31 high schools in the school district. It is located 15 minutes from two states traveling South and West, which position it between several cultures, but central to African American migratory history.

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[5] There are several cities regarded by African Americans as Black cities. This description places emphasis on the influence of African American political leadership, art, music, and culture as visible characteristics of the entire city, rather than a neighborhood. Such cities are River City, Atlanta, D.C. (known as Chocolate City), and to a lesser degree Birmingham. African Americans see these places as viable spaces for professional, social and cultural growth. Other than D.C., all of these thriving "Black" cities are located in the South. The public schools are nearly 87percent African American, 9 percent White and 4 percent other nationalities, as reported on the cities schools' websites.

[6] "River City High School" is a pseudonym for the high school in which the study took place. Pseudonyms for all names of students, teachers, the school communities and the city are used throughout the study.

Although the city is quite metropolitan, there is large farmland where cotton, soybeans, and farm animals are raised. There are large fields that surround the community as one exits the interstate to travel 10 minutes to the high school. The high school is apart of a feeder pattern, where students are zoned based on where they live to a specific elementary, middle, and high school. RCHS shares its campus grounds with "River City Elementary School." Teachers from both schools share the parking lot and the school buses for both schools fill the street in the morning and afternoons. Although the two schools have different schedules (the high school starts at 7:15 a.m. and the elementary school begins at 8:15 a.m.), events, activities, fire drills, or other emergencies, like a school shooting[7] directly impact the elementary school. The middle school, "TAB Middle school," is located 10 minutes from RCHS.

The African American secondary students commonly refer to the once predominantly White suburb as "Black Cove," although the community is officially named "White Cove." "Black Cove" is a counter reference to the neighborhood and signifies the influence of White flight and the changes in racial demographics of the community. It also establishes a sense of community among the African American secondary students who live in "White Cove" and attend RCHS. The African American secondary students discuss using the phrase "Black Cove" to connect their own racial identity with the population of people who live in the neighborhood. In asking several of the students why they call "White Cove," "Black Cove," one student said plainly, "Cause Black folks live here." Another student in a separate interview gave a similar response

[7] There were several events during the year when a threat of a school shooting or an actual gun-related event occurred. Consequently, the parking lot has been filled with emergency response vehicles, police officers, parents, and students. On other occasions, morning security checks using electronic equipment has delayed the beginning of school as well as created a high level of activity in the parking lot.

but also added that her mother had told her that a long time ago, White folks lived there and it was really nice. She added, that when African American began to move in, the Whites quickly sold their property and moved away. "Blacks didn't want to call their neighborhood 'White Cove,' so they renamed it." In many ways the counter reference to "White Cove" adds to how the students acknowledge the influence of "race" in their community as socially stratifying and operationalized through the name "White Cove." Subsequently, they use the name "Black Cove" to do several things. First, it is used as a unifying name. At parties, schools, and other social events, students wear their clothing bearing the insignia "Black Cove" stitched on it. They have chosen "Black Cove" as a community in which to be proud and therefore as a place to be represented symbolically. However, the counter reference also reflects the students' awareness and acknowledgment that White families no longer presently live in "White Cove" in the same capacity as they had years ago. Calling "White Cove" "Black Cove" is more than a renaming of a neighborhood; it appears to be an active attempt to connect spatial boundaries with racial awareness. There are some students at RCHS that use "Black Cove" as a territorial marker that must be represented and protected. These students use "Black Cove" as way to distinguish themselves from other neighborhoods among other teenagers, similar to but not the same as street gangs. In this case, and unlike street gangs, these students do not commit crimes or acts of violence in the name of "Black Cove," but will quickly respond to how other teenagers speak of the community itself. As such, there have been street fights between kids from "Black Cove" and intruders who come through the neighborhood "lookin' fo shit ta git into" (Interview with Missy, 10th

grade 2005). Although Missy says she's "down" for "Black Cove," she states, she "ain't gone git ta fightin' fo it."

The renaming of "White Cove" to "Black Cove" is also significant because students connect the racializing term "Black" to African American people and their presence in the community. There is another part of River City called "White Stop." "White Stop" is located in a more affluent part of the city near one of they city's universities. A mall, popular eateries, natural food stores, and various opportunities for social gatherings like the museum and the zoo surround it. In a discussion with Cassey, a 10th grader, who attended "White Stop High School" before moving to "White Cove" she stated that the schools were very different because the "teachers gave you more work and seemed to expect more of you." I asked her why "White Stop" is not referred to as "Black Stop" like "White Cove" is called "Black Cove." She chuckled and said shyly she didn't know, but visibly reacted to the absurdity of my referring to "White Stop" as "Black Stop." Shortly thereafter, she asserted, "they would never call it that" (Cassey, 2005).

The school administrators are all African American and the teaching staff is more than 90 percent African American. The in-class aspect of this research project took place in a 10th grade honors class (10-h), taught by Mrs. Handley, an African American teacher, who has worked at RCHS for the past five years.

Meet Mrs. Handley

Mrs. Handley describes herself as passionate about teaching and her kids. She is from the rural South and attended a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), where she majored in journalism and also pledged a well-known African American sorority. She attended a predominantly White catholic high school (WCHS) as recommended by her mother, who was also a teacher. One of her reasons for teaching was that she knew there was a different education African American secondary students were getting, particularly in the segregated South. Her mother taught at a Black Catholic High School (BCHS) and nearly insisted Mrs. Handley commute across town to attend the WCHS, where she would benefit from more opportunities. Mrs. Handley recognized early on the difference between the education she was receiving compared to her friends who lived in the neighborhood where she lived and where her mother taught. She described the differences in her experiences as both good and bad. Good because she received a quality education that challenged and exposed her to different cultures and ways of thinking, particularly because of the religious foundation; bad because she was a social outcast and did not have the peer group she truly desired.

Mrs. Handley's experiences as an African American girl growing up in the South influenced her teaching style and method. She often includes narratives of her life experiences during her instruction as well as direct references to spiritual beliefs. In an interview, she discusses the importance of the students being able to relate to her and the importance of students being able to see her own successes and failures as tools for their own decision-making. To this end, her class is often filled with laughter and messages connected to making choices and improving one's self.

Mrs. Handley's classroom is vibrant and full of posters with academically oriented inspirational messages, artwork, and even a poster of a rap group, the OutKasts, taped to the side of her file cabinet. The class is organized in a traditional classroom setting, with the teacher's desk in front and the students' desks in rows facing it. There are 34 desks that fill the room, which makes it difficult to walk through without bumping into one of them or someone. There are several computers in the room, three of which align the right side of the classroom and sit atop two long wooden tables. Most of the time they are turned off. The other computer is connected to both a large television and printer, all of which sits on an AV equipment cart behind her desk. A powerpoint presentation runs throughout the day on the computer, which is projected on the large television. The presentation slideshow usually contains inspirational messages about staying in school, counting down days until various standardized testing dates, and ways students can benefit from school services. There are three, large green-colored chalkboards where Mrs. Handley keeps the morning "Do Now," a 15-minute warm up activity the students are expected to do each day when they enter the classroom. There is always lots of activity in Mrs. Handley's class, for she engages with the students about their weekend experiences, home lives, and community events.

Meet Mr. Welsley

Mr. Welsley is a White Canadian who came into teaching with a passion for literature, specifically European Literature and believes in the benefits of a classical education. His experiences as a student who attended an elite high school in an upper-

class community in Canada directly impacts his belief that all youth should be exposed to "the best literature." His teaching style is a reflection of his classical educational upbringing and admiration for one of his own high school English teachers. He believes direct instruction helps him guide his students so they don't stray through the readings and keeps them focused on the primary texts. He is presently working on getting a permanent visa to remain in the United States, which has been a challenge since "September 11th,"[8]. Mr. Welsley was given the opportunity to teach the Advanced Placement (AP) course at RCHS because he was recognized as having a strong intellectual grasp of literature and history. He is not reserved in his expressions of what "these students need" in order to compete in the dominant society, although he feels the AP program is too young for RCHS students to really do well on the AP exam. One of his instructional goals is to "get them ready" for the AP exam so they can feel good about their performance. In short, Mr. Welsley centralizes his curriculum on what he believes AP students should know. In addition to teaching, he is involved in several writing projects, one of which is a documentary on the city's musical history focusing on rhythm and blues (R&B), and the other is a work in progress on Sir Walter Raleigh. He speaks proudly of the investments he has made in his projects and desires to move out of the classroom to pursue them full-time.

Mr. Welsley's classroom is bright from the sunlight that shines directly into the room. He has a podium that stands in front of the room and is framed by two, long green- colored chalkboards. On the opposite side of the room, across from the podium is

[8] September 11, 2001 is the date in which terrorist attacks occurred in New York City. This event precipitated a social and political crisis in the United States spanning from national security to perspectives of Muslim and particularly Middle-Eastern Muslims. The event of the destruction has been branded simply as "September 11th."

his desk that always has large stacks of books on it. The books are usually literature reference guides but appear to be more referential for him than for the students. There is also an Oxford English Dictionary and several copies of various Shakespearean interpretive resources on his desk. Behind his desk is St. George's flag of England taped to the wall. The large red lines from the flag are a focal point as they stand in stark contrast to the blank white cement walls that form the perimeter of the room. Above the windows, as one enters the classroom, one is greeted with these words taped in bright green letters on the wall, "non scholae, sed vitae, discimus," which translates, "it's not for the school but for our lives that we study." Mr. Welsley refers to this Latin quote as his mantra, but often finds himself struggling with how to help his students understand and apply this concept to their own lives. He is oftentimes baffled as to why his students appear to not be as motivated and eager to delve into literature as he was when in high school. Additionally, he is challenged in his attempt to ground himself in the reality of who his students are and yet inspired to contribute to what they can be.

Description of the Study

The study took place in a high school that was predominantly African American in its student population and in the administration, faculty, and staff. The focus of the study was in two parts. The first portion of the study investigated discussions of "race" in classroom settings, specifically looking at when and how "race" is constituted explicitly or implicitly in classroom events. The second portion of the study focused on

the out-of-classroom context, where focus groups and follow-up interviews were created to extend dialogues that began in the classrooms or to create "mediating settings" where students could discuss their experiences and ideas about "race."

The study focused on one 10th grade Honors (H) class taught by an African American female teacher and two 12th grade English classes, one Advanced Placement (AP) and the other regular education taught by a White Canadian male. The study was conducted from January 2005 until May 2005, where I attended each of the classes for three days per week. Each class lasted approximately 50 minutes. In addition to participant observation in the classrooms, there were focus groups created with select students to reflect and discuss classroom events or to introduce topics connected to larger social issues that were observed in the school setting. The focus groups were conducted outside of class. There were four phases in the study: (1) Access, (2) Observation, (3) Focus group discussions, and (4) Exit. I will describe each phase and provide more in-depth details of the study in relation to these phases.

Phase 1: **Access**

In November 2004, I met with the Executive Principal and discussed the details of the research project. During this time, he reviewed the research proposal as submitted to Institutional Review Board (IRB) and shared information on potential participants for the study. Upon his recommendation, I generated a letter for each of the teachers and mailed them prior to the winter break. In the beginning of January, after the winter break, I met

with Mrs. Handley and answered questions she had about the research project. I also provided consent forms for her review and scheduled an opportunity to meet with her English class. Meeting with 10-H included introducing myself and the study and distributing parental consent forms and my contact information. I alerted the students that I would collect consent through the mail or in person over a period of one week. After I received parental consent forms, students were given assent forms and an opportunity to indicate their level of involvement.

Beyond the official process of gaining access, meaning permission to conduct the study, it was important to establish a relationship with students and the teachers. In order to gain access to their classroom communities, I worked to interact with the students and the teachers in multiple settings and in different ways. This aspect of access was very important because my role as an outsider would limit my ability to understand how they as a community engaged in discussions of "race." To this end, I participated in numerous school activities in and outside the classroom that would increase my time with the students and the teachers as well as help me interact with the school community from several vantage points. First, I learned of the school's extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, band competitions, and clubs) and attended these events wearing school colors or other paraphernalia that would support the school. For example, on one day, teachers and staff wore paraphernalia from their respective alma maters, so I participated in wearing a tee shirt from my undergraduate school and a ball cap from my graduate school. When I attended school events, it gave me the opportunity to support the students, and discuss the outcomes of games or other competitions in which students took part. This portion of gaining access allowed me to engage in dialogues with students about other school

related topics other than academic curriculum or the class I was observing. I also arranged to attend the school's girls' and boys' evening basketball games with Mr. Welsley. Although these events and discussions of them were centered around the students' performances or participation in the activity, I was able to learn which students were involved in what various activities and also comment on their successes in those events the next day as we passed one another in the hallway. Mr. Welsley and I were able to talk about topics not directly related to school and share our common interests in the arts.

Within the classroom, I made myself available to Mrs. Handley in a variety of ways. As a former middle school teacher, I understand the importance of having support from teachers, family members, or visitors, in general. My study required that I spend considerable time in Mrs. Handley's class, so I wanted to be an asset to the community and her instructional goals. Often, I volunteered to collect and distribute materials, when asked, I would contribute to classroom discussions. I graded papers using Mrs. Handley's grading rubric, and I even was available to teach two lessons for Mrs. Handley when she admitted she "needed a break." The two lessons I taught were derived from goals she had in her class as well as my interest in hearing what the students thought about issues related to "race." The first mini-lesson[9] was on the writing process, where the class was discussing topic sentences, developing supportive sentences, and citing textual references to strengthen an argument. Although I had not prepared a lesson plan, my own teaching experience and consistent observation of Mrs. Handley's class gave me

[9] The lesson and activity was no more than 30 minutes. Mrs. Handley asked me, if I would like to instruct class because she needed " a break," and I was familiar with the topic.

a sense of what I could and could not do. The mini-lesson on writing happened in the first two weeks of my observation.

The second class event that I participated in was a discussion I created based from Woodson's (1933) *Mis-Education of the Negro*. Woodson makes a statement about how African Americans have been conditioned to accept inferiority thereby fulfilling the desires of hegemonic ideals. I used this quote as an introduction to see how the students might react to an explicit textual reference to "race" and power. The students wrote down their ideas about "race" and power in a brainstorming activity and responded to one of the quotes I distributed to them from Woodson's text. This discussion happened one week after the writing mini-lesson and within the first of month the study. This event, in particular, shaped how I was able to interact with the students as a teacher and with Mrs. Handley on several levels.

Mrs. Handley sometimes deferred to me for an opinion or perspective in the middle of a class lesson. I was included in the culture of their discussions and debates so that I was able oftentimes to ask students questions during class discussions alongside Mrs. Handley. Students as well deferred to me and asked me questions to get another perspective on how to complete assignments when Mrs. Handley was not available (e.g., talking to another student or absent). There were times during the study when Mrs. Handley was absent, and a substitute teacher was there to instruct class. On these days, I remained on the margins of class focusing on fieldnotes and videotaping the students. The same substitute, Mr. Riley, was usually assigned to Mrs. Handley's class during her absence. During the research period, there were three specific occasions where Mr. Riley was the substitute teacher. As a result of his presence and interactions with the students,

he agreed to participate in the study as well. His level of participation was limited to being videotaped when instructing class.

Similarly to Mrs. Handley's class, I supported Mr. Welsley's instruction in several ways. He often had the students get in cooperative learning groups to discuss portions of Macbeth. During these times, I would sit in on group discussions and facilitate dialogues with various groups using guided questions Mr. Welsley created. During these events, each group was able to get feedback and support for how they were thinking about concepts and ideas in the text without the time constraints of simply one "teacher" attempting to facilitate all of the groups.

On another occasion, Mr. Welsley had an emergency and needed to run an errand. He was concerned that his 5th period class, the regular education 12th grade class would "fall behind quickly" if [he] "I am not able to discuss Act V" [of Macbeth]. I volunteered to teach his class that day using the talking points he had used with the AP class as well as to help the students sift through the sequencing of the play at this point. Mr. Welsley was quite surprised that I was willing and in some ways "able" to fill in for him and expressed his surprise by stating the following, "Well, thank you, Ayanna. I know you taught English and you had been privy to my lectures, but I have to admit, I had no idea you would be this comfortable teaching British Lit." While I did not address his comment and the possibilities of what he might have meant, we both found it as an opportunity for the students to discuss the text with a different "teacher." And the schedule set for the course wouldn't be jeopardized. Consequently, the opportunity to substitute for Mr. Welsley as he stepped out of class for about 30 minutes encouraged several students to share their ideas and express new ones in a different way.

Gaining access also included understanding the culture of the school beyond official activities. To this end, on each site visit, I spent at least two hours in the teachers' lounge between classes listening and talking with building managers, the janitorial staff, and other teachers. I also ate in the cafeteria with students and participated in monitoring the cafeteria alongside the football and track coach. On days where there were security checks, I waited outside in the parking lot with students as they stood in awkwardly formed long lines. I watched them remove jewelry, dump cell phones behind bushes, and sit in their cars listening to music until the process for entering the building was complete. On occasion, I talked with students who intentionally hid their cell phones in various places during "safety check," and then watched their phones and other "illegal school contraband"[10] re-appear as the students laughed about their savvy in hiding things and duping security or the school administration. I also sat in the main office at various times of the day to observe the interactions between students, parents, school administrative support staff, and sometimes, the administrators themselves. These opportunities to observe helped me get to know families and people in the building, but more importantly allowed me to see how several of my students interacted with adults other than Mrs. Handley and how other they participated in the school community.

[10] There were several school policies related to dress code and "tools for learning" that included a ban on cell phones, pagers and other devices that might disturb class. There was also "Zero Tolerance Policy" on drugs and weapons. There were times where some students may have discarded weapons or drugs on the school grounds before entering the building. I never saw any drugs, guns or knives but was aware of the likelihood that these things were present at school from both students and teachers.

Phase 2: Observation

Mid January 2005 through early March 2005 was the observation phase, which was foregrounded by a Grand Tour (cf., Spradley, 1979) of the high school. The Grand Tour included generating a thick description of the community in which the school is located, school facility (indoors and out), gathering data on the school population, curriculum, the classrooms, etc. I spoke with the various school support staff daily[11] and the curriculum coordinator to better understand the organization of the school. During the "Grand Tour," I noted the general interactions between students and teachers in the hallways, lunchroom, main office, parking lot, and teachers' lounge. I frequently departed campus and drove around the school community learning the major intersections and the daily routines of students walking to school, riding public transportation (there was a city bus stop in front of the school's campus) and driving private cars.

I was a participant-observer (cf., Spradley,1979) in Mrs. Handley's class. Participant observations included taking fieldnotes, assisting the teacher and students with tasks (determined by the teacher), videotaping classes, and conducting focus group discussions with selected students from her class. In Mr. Wesley's class, I was also a participant-observer, but participated far less in his class than in Mrs. Handley's class. I collected videotape data, artifacts from the class, including student work, and was able to identify several students for focus groups based on my observations. There were students selected from both Mrs. Handley's class and Mr. Wesley's class for the focus groups.

[11] Each day from 8:45 a.m. until 9:25 a.m., I sat in the teachers' lounge organizing my notes. I shared in discussions each day with the janitors, four women who had their morning break at that time. We casually ate snacks and talked about my commute to River City, weekend events, school happenings, etc.

The purpose of the focus group discussions was to reflect on events and that these 15-minute interviews were audiotaped and were scheduled during class time with the consent of the teacher. Teacher focus group discussions also took place during this phase and were scheduled based on the teacher's convenience. Teacher focus group discussions focused only on the life-story narratives of each teacher and did not include any information about specific students. Observations and fieldnotes continued throughout the research study. There were a total of 10 focus group discussions conducted with students I begun identifying as potential participants in the focus groups. The criteria for the focus groups are described in the next section.

Phase 3: Focus Group and Follow-up Interviews

April 1, 2005 through May 2, 2005 was the focus group and follow-up interview phase. During phase three, I created focus groups to engage in formal focus and informal interviews with students outside of the classroom setting. The purpose of the focus groups was to reflect on events that happened in the classroom as well as to discuss social issues related to "race," where the students could share their perspectives. Some of these discussions were a direct result from a class lesson or activity, while other discussion groups were formed as a "mediating setting" (Moll, 1997) to discuss student experiences. First, I will describe the selection process for discussion groups, the concept of a "mediating setting" for discussion groups and how I used the concept in this research study, and follow-up interviews.

Focus Group Selection

Student participants were selected for focus groups based on the following criteria:

(a) students introduced issues of "race" and diversity in classroom discussions.

(b) students used nonverbal cues during classroom events when issues of "race" and diversity are brought forth or ignored in discussions. Nonverbal cues I noted were nodding head gestures demonstrating agreeing or disagreeing with what is being said, putting one's head down or turning away from people as they spoke, rolling of the eyes, sucking one's teeth and raising one's hand to gain the floor. These particular nonverbal cues suggested the student(s) have a supportive or opposing perspective on what is being stated in class.

(c) students offered alternative interpretations of texts, which introduced new ideas related to "race" and diversity.

Each of these criteria was based from my observations documented in my fieldnotes or from reviewing videotape data of classroom activities. Focus group participants met for no more than 45 minutes in follow-up audiotape and videotaped interviews. Focus groups varied in terms of the participants for each meeting, whereby no same two or three students met each time; however, each student participated in at least two focus groups or one focus group and one follow-up interview. Of specific importance was to ensure "safe spaces" where students felt comfortable sharing their ideas and perspectives on topics discussed in class and how they experienced the class itself.

Focus group discussions were based on classroom events and activities where the students were asked to discuss events, statements they made in their writing, or specific

ideas they shared in class. Specific attention was given to issues of "race" and diversity that surfaced through classroom events and activities (e.g., discussions of texts, writings, discussions, or reflections). Data was triangulated during this period, where students sometimes reviewed videotape data of their classroom participation and provided comments or feedback on what was going on. I chose video clips that were no longer than five minutes. Usually these selected clips either featured members of the focus group or other class members that presented different viewpoints about "race" featured in the video clip. The significance of the focus groups reviewing video clips is to revisit specific classroom events where dialogues, lessons, or student interactions were relevant to the research topic. Students were able to offer their own perspective and analysis of the event itself. Before reviewing a video clip, I prefaced the group meeting with the following introduction:

"Today in our focus group discussion, we will begin by watching a short video clip from class. I thought there were some interesting things going on in the clip and wanted to hear from you what you think. The clip was not selected to make fun of or ridicule anyone. This is about how you see and understand what is being said and done in the clip."

Questions for focus group discussions were open-ended and oftentimes guided by issues the participants introduce. Focus group discussions were scheduled at the convenience of focus group participants and not during class times or during exam periods. Talking points for this phase were largely based on what occurred in the field and could not be otherwise predetermined. Questions were framed as follows:

- Tell me about what was going on in this scene (or in this passage).

- What did you mean in this segment when you said…?
- Why do you think this [event] occurred this way?
- What do you think about this [event, passage, or encounter]?

These focus group discussions were conducted with the 10th grade students from Mrs. Handley's class. The 12th grade students from Mr. Welsley class participated in a term I borrow from Moll (1997) called "mediating settings." First, I will discuss the concept of mediating settings and then I will present why creating this focus group context with the 12th grade students was significant for this study.

Moll (1997) presents the notion of a "mediating setting" in the context of working with teachers, researchers, and anthropologists in conducting a series of studies to analyze classrooms and households as cultural settings. In the organization structure of this research process, it became apparent that the teachers' experiences with their students and how they were able to interact and learn from their students were limited to the types of settings for interaction. As the researchers engage in learning about the resources and supports systems that existed in the households of the students, the teachers' knowledge of the students was not as vast. It was concluded that the researchers and the teachers needed a setting where they could collaborate and discuss what was being learned and how these cultural resources could be used pedagogically with teachers. As a result of this ongoing and recursive analysis, it was necessary to create an alternative structure and settings, where researchers and teachers could discuss issues that might change the setting of the classroom via the teachers' awareness of the students *funds of knowledge* (Moll, 1997). The process of revisiting effective settings to support a change in the teachers' outlook of the students, while supporting the

pedagogical awareness that would impact student learning, made the research building initiative more useful for both the teachers' development and the research. Mediating settings in this context created opportunities to focus on issues central to the research in a meaningful way.

In the context of this research project, the data collected in the 12th grade classrooms in conjunction with my explicit research questions were limited. The classroom setting was largely teacher-centered and/or driven by the curriculum. Instruction included lectures, historical overviews to give students social and political context for British literature or group work. During group work activities, students were directed to answer questions generated by Mr. Welsley through collaboration with one another or by comparing notes from their reading logs, which they were responsible for at home. There were occasions when students presented ideas in class; however, these ideas were always directly related to the central text (e.g., book, play, or short story) and never included intertexutal references reflective of students' everyday life experiences or socially constructed ideas like gender, class, or "race" (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Hartman, 1991; Short, 1992).

I conducted ongoing analysis of the fieldnotes and the audio and videotapes, where I identified the frequency of discussions of "race." This content analysis included identifying what constituted a discussion of "race" in the classroom, when these discussions occurred, and during what type of instructional events. Details on this preliminary analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4. However, in the process of this preliminary analysis, it became evident that even when discussions of "race" might have been relevant, (i.e. analyzing the Shakespearean sonnets), neither the students nor Mr.

Welsley engaged in these discussions. Because there was not any identifiable evidence of discussions of "race" in the 12th grade class, I began analyzing the settings in which the students did engage in these discussions. Students were engaged in "race talk" in many places at school, although it was not evident in Mr. Welsley's class. As a result of this analysis, I created a focus group as a "mediating setting" for discussions of "race" with the 12th grade students. These students were selected based on the following criteria:

(a). Students used words or phrases that constituted "race" terminologically (e.g., Nigga or White).

(b). Students used phrases that denoted "race" or racial awareness (e.g., Black Cove, 'talkin White,' ghetto or 'niggerish.')

(c). Students were members of school leadership teams that require cross-cultural and interracial interactions outside of the school building but within the school district.

(d). Students were active participants in class by contributing to class discussions.

(e). Students rarely contributed to class discussions but were very vocal outside of class as observed in the hallways, cafeteria, or school parking lot.

Using these five criteria, I created a "mediating setting" for discussions of "race," where we discussed current events, special interest topics, classroom assignments, or school and community culture. These discussions were videotaped and audio taped and held after school in the library.

Mrs. Handley also participated in two video reflection interviews. Similar to the

students' interviews, the purpose of this video reflection interview was to understand her perspective on certain issues raised in class as well as to gain clarification on her instructional choices.

Follow-up Student Interviews were one-on-one sessions designed to readdress an issue the student may have shared in a focus group. Follow-up interviews lasted no longer than 20 minutes. Table 1 illustrates the number of focus groups and interviews and the number of participants in each.

Table 1: Number of Follow-Up Interviews and Focus Group

Participants	Follow-Up Student Interviews	Focus Groups Discussions
10th Grade Students	3	8
12th Grade Students	1	6
Total Out of Class Interviews/Discussions	**4**	**14**

Phase 4: Closure and Exiting the Field

During this final phase, I met with students from the focus groups to have final interviews and discussions. Most of these discussions were informal and largely related to the students' summer and or post-graduation plans. I also conducted informal closure interviews with both teachers whose students participated in the study. These discussions were directed toward future plans for the summer and upcoming school year. The exit

period was from May 3, 2005 through May 12, 2005. None of the exit interviews were video or audiotaped.

In the Data Collection section, there is a larger illustration of the corpus of data collected during the research period.

Data Collection

The purpose of this dissertation research is to investigate discussions of "race" in school settings. More specifically, I examine discussions of "race" among African American secondary students in and outside of classroom settings. The data collection began in January 2005 and continued until May of 2005. I used several methods to collect data. The research methods were participant observation, fieldnotes, audio and videotapes, focus groups, and ethnographic interviews. Table 2 is a description of the corpus of data that illustrates the interactional contexts for discussions of "race:"

Table 2: Corpus of Data for Interactional Contexts for Discussions of "Race"

TYPE OF INTERACTIONAL / DISCUSSIONAL CONTEXT	NUMBER OF INSTANCES OBSERVED	NUMBER OF INSTANCES VIDEOTAPED
Classroom instructional contexts Mrs. Handley	30 observations @ approx. 45 minutes each =1350 minutes	22 = 990 minutes
Classroom instructional contexts for Mr. Welsley	30 observations @ approx. 45 minutes each = 1350 minutes – AP class 30 observations @ approx. 45 minutes each = 1350 minutes – Standard class	28 = 1268 minutes 26 = 910 minutes
In school but not instructional contexts	"Coming Home" pep rally = 45 minutes (2) Security safety check = 90 minutes Basketball game = 120 minutes	None None None
Focus group contexts	14 focus group discussions	14 = 628 minutes
Follow-up Interviews	4 individual student interviews 3 teacher interviews	4 =130 minutes 3 = 90 minutes

Participant Observation

During Phase 1 of the study, I participated in school events for three days. This included staying after school for a faculty meeting, attending a pep rally and "Coming Home" ceremony. After selecting two teachers for the research study and then identifying class periods where the research would take place, my observations covered

three English classes for three days per week that lasted 50 minutes each day. I frequently participated in each of the classes by assisting the teacher when requested or responding to a student's question with the permission of the teacher.

My participant observations was initially directed at learning the names of the students, the focus, scope and sequence for the curriculum of the classes; the relationship between the classroom curriculum and the school's objectives, particularly during the Spring semester.[12] One key aspect of my observations during this time period was to understand how different school personnel as well as the students engaged in the business of school during such a busy time of the year. Included in this an active attempt to learn was talking to staff members in informal contexts or assisting them with various tasks.

Fieldnotes, Methodological Notes, Theoretical Notes, and Personal Notes

During the research study, I used four types of fieldnotes, which included four different processes to organize my experiences as a participant observer in the classrooms. Table 3 is a description of these notes and the processes.

[12] Spring semesters in high schools are often busy with standardized testing, social events like prom, senior activities, and the closing of school for the year.

Table 3: Types of Notes

	Field	Methodological	Theoretical	Personal Notes
Description	Recorded in class and were brief accounts of the setting and organization of the class and the range of interactions taking place	Recorded outside of classes and were organize to evaluate the data collected in the research setting. Often times these notes supported framing of the research questions.	Recorded outside of class and were organized to readdress the purpose of the fieldnotes in relation to the research questions.	Recoded in and outside of class. These notes reflected my own questions about my observations and my role. These notes often included my reactions to events as well as my feelings about my observations.

Throughout the dissertation, I use data from different types of fieldnotes to illustrate the significance of the students' perspective in discussions of "race." Below is a sample of a partial fieldnote entry from one 50-minute class period.

4-11-05

Friday was "Senior Cut Day," the unofficial yet official day all 12th grade students don't attend school and gather at an alternative location to hang out. Generally, the teachers and administration are aware of "Senior Cut Day" but do not acknowledge it in school- a sort of "Don't ask-don't tell" policy.

Today, Monday, the students were supposed to turn in a take-home quiz they had a week to complete. Mr. Welsley's class began tenuously because only four exams were submitted by the students. So, he angrily tells the students he can't teach to four people and opted to not "teach" at all. The students were then told to "do whatever you want" because he was not teaching. And so they did…

Table 4: In-Class Social Interaction

Students	*Interaction with Instructional Materials*	*Social Interaction among Peers*
Coco *J* *Lisa* *Monique*	*Reading Paradise Lost*	*Each will occasionally look up and talk to one another or other students around them*
Latrell *Amina* *Matt*	*Materials on desk*	*Bodies are turned toward one another and are talking quietly*
Kendall *Twist*	*Kendall passes her reading log to Twist. Twist proceeds to write in his log with the "support" of Kendall's materials*	
E		*Talking softly with Lisa and Monique*

As I am jotting down who is doing what after Mr. Welsley announces his "strike," I notice her [E] head. She has it covered with a black nylon scarf. The scarf is pulled back and rolled into a knot, sort of like a pirate. What is most striking is that it looks like she has died her hair- RED! Bright fire engine red. What? We just spoke about hair (She and Jam) in a lunchtime focus group. She talked about how she wanted her hair straight rather than curly (she specifically called her hair curly and described it as "good hair" because she only needed to use water and grease to comb it. She boasted about how her hair wouldn't get "nappy" or "unruly"). Hmmphh. Why the color? Why the color? And then there's Jam. It's [her hair] curled today. Last week, I noticed she had put in a large amount of weave and it was long-really long (like Cher from 1974) and straight. She seemed rather fixated on the faux hair because she played with it and did lots of excessive flipping and moving of the hair (out of her eye and around her neck, up in the air. Is she auditioning for the greatest White girl imitation?) Today, her hair is curled (not straight) and she hasn't touched it. Hmmm. Why is it that when the girls add long straight weave to their hair, they are preoccupied with swinging it and brushing it? When they are wearing braids (long or short), natural hair (their own) or just a standard ponytail, they don't bother it at all? What is the deal with the faux hair- it seems to be a fixation, particularly when it's weaved-in synthetic hair? This is really interesting. Last week, in our focus group Jam and "E" spoke about "good hair," parental responsibility to talk about beauty bla bla bla.

However, it appears as if their own analysis of the 1st grader and her identity issues doesn't manifest itself with their own choices. I will have to get with them later on this…

This fieldnote begins as a description of the classroom instructional events but because of my observations of the patterns of behavior, attire, and hair styles worn by the girls the fieldnotes become a personal note to self about a former focus group discussion and a possible topic for the next focus group. My observation of E's change in hair color I speculate is connected to possibly larger issues of racial awareness, self-concept, etc., in light of the discussion in a previously held focus group. The fieldnote process was recursive in that there was a continuous process of evaluation, which explicitly influenced new questions I needed to ask.

Ethnographic Interviews

Ethnographic interviews provide opportunities for the researcher to begin understanding the perspectives of their subjects and how they make meaning of events and experiences. Ethnographic interviewing attempts to decentralize the researcher, although the researcher initiates questions and ideas for participants (Quinn, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through an active attempt to gain an "emic" perspective, I used two contexts to conduct ethnographic interviewing: (a) focus groups and (b) follow-up interviews.

Focus Groups

The focus groups were designed to select specific students who had displayed certain behaviors in class that might help me to gain a better understanding of how "race" is constructed in talk. The criteria for focus groups have been previously outlined in Chapter 3. What is important to note is that focus groups were organized in order to gain an "emic" perspective of concepts that were introduced in class, a student's perspective of a classroom event, or to understand students' experiences related to concepts that had been introduced in the school setting. The latter was particularly the case with the 12th grade participants in the focus groups.

Follow-up Interviews

Follow-up interviews were conducted with participants in the focus groups. These interviews were designed to hone in on points or ideas raised in the focus group by the participant and that required additional clarification. Follow-up interviews were formal. I used a set of questions I generated after reviewing the focus group interview and conducting a preliminary analysis of the interview. Although the questions for the follow-up interview were predetermined, I used open-ended questions so the student might elaborate on additional ideas of interest. Follow-up interviews with the teachers were conducted similar to the ones with the students.

Audio and Videotaping

A video camera with several microphones was used to tape classroom discussions. Videotaping was used to capture and revisit classroom events, lessons, discussion, and social interactions of the participants in the classroom. Classes were audiotaped and videotaped for each visit after the Observation Phase of the research.

Focus group and follow-up interviews were audio and videotaped. There were also at least four focus group sessions where the students or a teacher was videotape while viewing a previously recorded videotaped lesson from class. These triangulated data were significant to capture the non-verbal expressions of the participants as well as to refresh them of the event that would be central to the discussion of the present focus group session.

Methods of Analysis

The data analysis for this research are framed by the theoretical discussions in critical race theory (Matsuda, 1995; Peller, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1999); language and literacy building from ethnography of communication (Gumperz & Hymes, 1974), Intertextuality (Bloome, et. al, 1993; cf. Short, 1992; cf. Hartman, 1991); and New Literacy Studies (Street, 1995; Richardson, 2004). This study utilizes discourse analysis (Bloome, Power Carter, Christian, Otto & Faris, 2005; Bloome, 2003; Fairclough, 1995; Bloome & Theodorou, 1988), narrative analysis (Bauman, 1986; Bloome et. al, 2001),

conversational analysis (Green & Wallat, 1981; Goffman, 1967), and cultural analysis (Quinn, 2005) as methods of analysis.

The research was designed using "funneling," a concept where my observations in the classrooms around discussions of "race," and in the larger classroom setting raised more questions (Spradley, 1980) that led to the focus group setting. As my classroom observations increased, my questions about the context for discussions of "race" narrowed. I engaged in a content analysis (Silverman, 1993), documenting the types of discussions that were occurring in the classroom, specifically those that were somehow connected to "race." The guiding questions for this process were (1) What constitutes a discussion of "race?" and (2) In what context do these discussions occur in classroom settings? And (3) How frequently do these discussions occur. From this analysis, I was able to identify four domains that describe what constituted the discussions of "race" in the classroom setting. The domains for discussions of "race" that I identified from the data are (1) Terminological, (2) Racial Mimicry, (3) Language-In-Use, (4) Appropriating "Race" Through Language and (5) Lesson Content. I will briefly describe each of these domains.

1. **Terminology**- specific reference to an individual or group using a race-based term (e.g., "White folks," "Black people, "etc.)

2. **Racial Mimicry**[13]-intentional use of language, specific phrases, or sentences to mimic or perpetuate a stereotype of a racial group. This includes voice intonation and pitch and an exaggerated enunciation of words. Racial mimicry is noted because of its connection

[13] There are many racial groups outside of these examples who use the habitual "be" and the word "like" similar to those illustrated. These examples are not exclusive of other racial groups. There are similar examples of racial mimicry relegated to Asians, Middle-Easterners, and Latinos that have the same racial impact.

to how certain language features are indicative of a particular racial or regional group. For example, African American Language (AAL) uses features of the habitual "be" ("I be" or "She be"), which signifies cyclical time. It represents the past, present, and future tense as it reflects one's ordinary behavior. While the habitual be is a common language feature in AAL, it is frequently identified as a grammatical error within dominant discourse. The embodiment of racial mimicry would be when a person who is not African American intentionally signifies their attempt to perform blackness by switching his or her tone of voice and then uttering a sentence or phrase using an AAL feature.

3. **Language in Use**-use of coded language to describe a racial group in relationship to a region or community (e.g., urban, inner-city, ghetto, Chinatown, 'Mini Mexico,' 'average American,' "Shaniqua" or "Pedro"). The word choice is a coded language used to refer to a person or a group in attempt to signify "race" and sometimes race and class.

4. **Lesson Content**- the classroom curriculum is explicitly about "race,"(i.e. The Montgomery Bus Boycott), therefore the lesson content leads to a discussion of "race."

These four domains were created as a result of the different types of discussions of "race" in the classroom that I noted in the analysis of audio and videotape data. I used these four domains in the ongoing analysis of the classroom events and focus group discussions to examine the similarities and differences between discussions of "race" in the class compared to those in the discussion groups. I also conducted thematic analysis identifying concepts, phrases, and ideas that continued to surface throughout the research period. These recurring themes framed some of the questions that were used in subsequent focus group discussions. Table 5 outlines the research questions, the method of analysis, the types of data collected to address each research question, and the method

of analysis. For each type of method of analysis, I describe its utility and its application to this study.

Table 5: Data Analysis

Research Questions	Data Collection Method	Type of Data	Method of Analysis
What constitutes a discussion of "race" in school settings?	Participant observation Audio and videotaping of classroom events	Fieldnotes Audiotapes Videotapes	Thematic Analysis Content Analysis
How is racial awareness represented in discussions of "race?"	Participant observation Audio and videotaping of classroom events Focus discussion group	Fieldnotes Audiotapes Videotapes	Thematic Analysis Discourse Analysis
What shared assumptions about "race" are represented in student discussions?	Audio and videotaping of focus group discussions	Fieldnotes Audiotapes Videotapes	Cultural Analysis Thematic Analysis
How is "race" constructed as a social "reality" through talk?	Participant observation Audio and videotaping of classroom events Focus discussion group	Fieldnotes Audiotapes Videotapes	Discourse Analysis Thematic Analysis
How is language difference represented as a construction of "race?"	Participant observation Audio and videotaping of classroom events Focus discussion group	Fieldnotes Audiotapes Videotapes	Discourse Analysis Cultural Analysis Thematic Analysis
How might African American students' experiences with "race" contribute to their self-perception?	Audio and videotaping of focus group discussions and follow-up interviews	Audiotapes Videotapes Videotaped Follow-up interviews	Narrative Analysis Thematic Analysis

Content Analysis

I use content analysis to determine the frequency by which "race" is inserted into classroom or focus group dialogues on different levels. Content analysis marks the

frequency of when "race" is introduced in discussions, in what context "race" is mentioned, and how certain words, phrases or concepts are indeed racialized. This research also examines the absence of "race" from discussions that might be viewed as intentionally omitted when "race" might have been an appropriate aspect of classroom or focus group discussions.

Discourse Analysis

I draw on sociolinguistic ethnography to engage in this process of discourse analysis (Gumperz, 1986; Gumperz & Hymes, 1972). In many ways, discourse analysis is a general term used for a number of approaches to analyzing written, spoken or signed language use. The traditions of discourse analysis and the extant scholarship in discourse have framed the study of language and communication as socially situated yet boundless in the ways these discourses are represented. Discourse analysis includes close examination of speech units and their relationship to the contexts in which they are used. An analysis of discourse foregrounds questions of power, culture, ideology or socially mediated contexts in which speech and speech acts occur. Examining discussions of "race" for this research includes recognizing how "race" has been and still is a part of a historical, social, and political power structure in the United States. I use discourse analysis in this research to understand how language in–use might reflect issues of power and dominance embedded in discussions of "race.

Cultural Analysis

Cultural analysis is derived from that notion there are sets of assumptions that frame the ideological stances of communities of people embedded in discourse. Cultural analysis is a method used to understand tacit meanings that can be made visible through an analysis of talk. I used thematic analysis and discourse analysis to look at these shared assumptions that surfaced through the study around "race." I identified key words, phrases, and concepts that continued to surface in discussions of "race" and in the analysis of fieldnotes, informal, and formal interviews. Repeated analysis of these data and examining transcripts from focus group discussions allows for an understanding of the tacit meanings behind certain concepts. I use cultural models to illustrate the students' perspectives of "race."

Narrative Analysis

I use narrative analysis in this research to discuss its uses in discussions of "race." I discuss uses of narrative as a rhetorical strategy for discussions of "race" because it serves as a mode to represent "everyday life" without attempting to create generalizability about racial experiences for all people. My use of narrative analysis attempts to understand how African American secondary students connect their life experiences with what constitutes "reality" (Bruner, 1991). Using the traditions of narrative analysis in sociolinguistics (Bauman, 1986; Gee, 1985; Michaels, 1981) as well

as more recent scholarship that has specifically investigated uses of narrative among African Americans (cf. Bloome et al. 2001; Champion, T., Katz, L., Muldrow, R. & Dail, R., 1999; Champion, 1998), I identified eight uses of narrative in discussions of "race" that emerged from the data. The eight uses of narrative and their descriptions are as follows:

1. *Informational*: gives information about an event. This information may be related to the setting, characters, or context for the discussion.
2. *Interactional*: invites or acknowledges an exchange between speaker and audience, where the audience participates verbally or nonverbally in the narrative.
3. *Historical*: creates a historical context or an allusion to a racialized history for the narrative. Demonstrates a relationship between the past and the present racial meanings are placed on a social continuum rather than marked by rigid beginnings and endings.
4. *Socia*l: creates community between individuals or groups who may or may not share similar experiences or funds of knowledge of "race" and/or racism.
5. *Political*: evokes a sense of social and/or political action between individuals or groups.
6. *Emotional*: evokes sympathy, empathy, anger or resistance.
7. *Moral*: conveys messages of right and wrong; it questions (in)appropriateness toward humanity and presents a call for social justice.
8. *Intellectual:* raises questions about how to think about "race" and/or racism as it is experienced or observed within the community or nationally through the production of knowledge.

Thematic Analysis

I use thematic analysis as a means to identify the patterns of language-in-use in discussions of "race." Thematic analysis requires an intimate yet recursive review of the data to see if there are representative cases of certain issues. Most significant about the patterning process and understanding these themes is the identification of atypical instances that emerge from data. I reviewed fieldnotes, audio and videotape data, and the relationship between issues raised in class to those raised in focus groups. This process was continual and helped me raise new questions about the significance of discussions of "race."

Limitations

There are several limitations to the study in relation to the data collection process and organization of the study. First, the study was conducted during the Spring semester of the school year. This was generally a time of the year when emphasis was placed on standardized testing and graduation. During the data collection period, there were several days when I did not videotape or hold focus groups so that I did not disrupt the test preparation process or the students' focus on after-school testing support.

Another limitation to the study was creating a safe space to discuss "race." Initially, some of the focus group participants from Mr. Welsley's class were inhibited to discuss "race." One of the operating assumptions was that because Mr. Welsley was White, the discussions of "race" were reflective of the student-teacher relationship in that class. Early data with these students reflected their challenge to discuss "race" not knowing if this data would jeopardize the rapport they had with the teacher. This was resolved in the subsequent interviews where I stated "information gathered and recorded for this project was for research only and would not be viewed by your teacher, parents or the school administration."

Lastly, as discussed in the introduction, there was not a consensus as to what constituted "race" although there were several implications that racialized or racist experiences were part and parcel to what "race" meant. Oftentimes, in order for the students to express what they meant by "race," they prefaced this understanding with narratives. In order to gain an emic perspective, there was an explicit and constant effort to have the students explain what they meant by certain terms or phrases to ensure that their meanings would frame my questions as well as my growing understanding.

In addition to these limitations, there are more general conceptual limitations in conducting qualitative research on "race." Constituting "race" as a social construction partly suggests "race" is produced and therefore is "real" in how it is appropriated by individuals or society. Other aspects of the social construction argument are the assumptions about the racial identities of the research participants and the research questions. This is reflected in basic aspects of research like naming the participants with pseudonyms. Assigning anonymous names for students is a part of research ethics to

protect participants. However, within this process, the names selected are often racialized to reflect the racial identities and personalities of the subject. Naming is a process of constructing "race" that within social sciences, can either reflect "reality" or can contribute to "the mythmaking." In essence, some might argue that accepting "race" as a social construction prohibits qualitative research from examining "race" at all because the very questions we ask about "race" embed the issues the construct it.

The limitations in the research study contribute to the plethora of complexities in examining "race." I identify the participants as Black (African American) or White (European American) or White Canadian. This is done without a process of self-identification of the students or teachers. The research is then framed to look at African Americans students' discussions of "race," which places a racial, cultural, and historical backdrop on the discussions by virtue of how I have identified them. However, the notion of "race" as a socially constructed "reality" is not grounded in self-identification but in how the students construct their identities as a result of their experiences. I place my own racial awareness and identity development within this challenge because who I profess to be as an African American woman in the South directly influences my questions and my approach to analyzing the issues presented in the research. As such, this limitation is also a theoretical and methodological challenge for qualitative researchers who attempt to examine the "house[s] that race built" (Lubiano, 1998).

The Role of the Researcher: "Being Black in the Academy"

There were several events that transpired during my time as a doctoral student that were salient; as they reminded be that I was "Black in the Academy." Some of these events created opportunities for me to strengthen my resolve to finish my program. More of these events reminded me that "race," and discussions of "race" matter because they reveal unresolved biases and privileges that deeply effect our society's ability to progress. The phrase "Black in the Academy" comes from a presentation delivered by Gloria Ladson-Billings at the Mid-Winter Conference 2006 for the National Council of Teachers of English. At the time she spoke, she was also President of the American Education Research Association and shared with the audience her tenure at Stanford as a graduate student. At Stanford, she learned that while she was privileged as a Black woman to be educated and attending an elite institution of higher education, within this academy, she was *still* Black. Being Black in the academy, in its most subtle fashion, did not give her access to the culture of higher education. More profoundly, she spoke on how there were simple events that she did not or could not participate in because she was not a part of the culture itself. Nothing directly prohibited her attendance the in physical sense, but the culture of power within the academy had not necessarily included making the cultural norms of power visible, especially to communities of people who had not been historically members of this culture. I use this concept of "Being Black in the Academy" to describe the nexus between being privileged as a Black women to be a part of the academy and being quasi-oppressed because the academy was not necessarily

interested in examining its own dominance and the subsequent impact that it has on non-White communities.

I initially attempted to conduct this research in Easton City Schools. The school district leadership and many of the officials in the schools district are a part of a long-standing history of preserving power and status without creating "waves." The city can be seen as progressive in some respects, but when it comes issues of "race," the communities within the school district have learned to create spaces for shared racial and political power but not necessarily creating equity for children within the system. I had worked for and with the leadership in Easton City Schools for over 8 years and had developed meaningful working relationships with people committed to social and educational change. With pending IRB approval from the university, I had the support of a high school administrator and his teachers to begin this research on discussions of "race." I only needed to get confirmation through letter from Easton. After waiting for weeks from the school district office for my official letter or approval, I contacted the Department of Research and Evaluation to find out what had happened to the letter. To my surprise and disappointment, the school district had denied my request to conduct this study stating "it would disrupt classroom teaching and learning," and might "create problems within the school." Additionally, they never mailed me the letter to alert of this denial so I could inform the principal and find a new research site. I had falsely placed my ability to progress in graduate school in the hands of a school district I had served and supported, changing the lives of many students that had been socially, economically and racially written-off. Waiting for a response from Easton cost me a delay of nearly 4 months of fieldwork, and later an entire a year toward completing my doctoral program.

I turned to my family for support in trying to figure out how this research project would happen. My brother-in-law, a principal in Rivercity suggested I contact the Rivercity School District. He was prepared to find a principal who would welcome me into his school for this project. I drove to RCSD hand delivering my proposal to their Department of Research and Evaluation, and within one-week, received a letter of approval to conduct the study. Within three-weeks time, I had met with the school principal, Mrs. Handley and Mr. Welsely, who allowed me to spend the Spring 2005 with them.

I share this narrative for several reasons. First, I am sure the social and political landscape in Easton was not in favor of this research because otherwise "silent" communities would share their experiences with "race" in school. I am equally convinced that because the district leadership was comprised of White, African American and Latino administrators who had come through the ranks of the district, this study would alter the pristine view that "race" and racism are resolved issues in Easton. Plainly stated, this research project might "awake sleeping dogs." Interestingly, the study does not focus on the school district or the teachers. The centrality of the work is on how the students discuss their own experiences with "race" in whatever communities they identify, which may or may not include school. Yet, because the proposed study introduced that idea that schools are a part of the historical and present day racializing experiences of students, it was denied. For all of the support and well wishes I received from the district and my former school colleagues on pursuing my doctoral degree, when it was time for me to conduct my research, I did not have support at all. "Being Black in the Academy" is not just about getting denied, but recognizing the relationship between

with my identity, the research topic, and the power structures in place with educational institutions. There was no social or cultural capital available to me in Easton that would make this research happen. And when there is a greater desire to maintain an image of racial harmony, this type of research is perceived as destructive rather than constructive. Yet contrastingly, in a city where "race" and racism are outwardly discussed, and the leadership in the communities and schools represent the changing South, I was able to get support in three-weeks from a district where I had never served at all.

My role as a researcher in this study was complex. I have had my own set of experiences that have shaped how I make sense of "race" in everyday life. I was challenged on several levels to put aside my own experiences, so that I could hear from the students and teachers who shared openly and honestly with me. In order to do this, I explicitly wrote down my opinions about ideas that was shared. This process helped me see my thoughts as one of many and how they may have been similar or different than those of the students. There were times that I was shocked with what the participants would say and how they would respond. Other times, I noted the things that the participants would share that were also concepts I had heard from friends within my own social circles. I concluded, however, that in order for this research to be conducted, I could not ignore my own social, cultural, and racial identity. I needed to keep them at the forefront of my mind, because they are assets and enabled me to connect with the very communities I was researching.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this dissertation research is to investigate discussions of "race" in schools settings. More specifically, I examine discussions of "race" among African American secondary students in and outside of classroom settings. This chapter first provides a thick description of the classroom contexts and a brief overview of discussions in each class. I also provide a description of classroom discussions when they are about "race." These discussions provide context for the social and cultural interactions in the classes and frame the use of language in discussions of "race" as compared to other discussions in the classes. Second, the chapter presents findings and analysis for the following research questions:

1. What constitutes a discussion of "race" in school settings?
2. How is racial awareness represented in discussions of "race?"

The findings and analysis will be presented in three parts. In Part I., I present five classroom events from which several aspects of the data analysis is derived. These five events from Mrs. Handley's 10th grade English class are: (1) The Tone Collage, (2) "Odds Stacked Against You," (3) White Cove and River City, (4) Alice Walker, and (5) "Head-Ragged Generals." These five classroom events represent a range of ways "race" is explored within the classroom context. Each is unique in the ways the classroom community engages in the event and yet they all contribute to understanding how "race"

is constituted in school settings, which I demonstrate after presenting each event. Through a content analysis, I establish the frequency and contexts for discussions of "race" that emerged from the data across Mrs. Handley and Mr. Welsley's classes, the differences between them, and how these discussions are connected to experiences of both the teacher and the students.

Part II of the findings addresses the second question, "Is there any relationship between racial awareness and discussions of "race?" Section A focuses on students' perspectives of "race," which is an analysis and discussion of the 10th grade focus groups. Section B focuses on teachers' perspectives of "race," which analysis two teacher's use of language. I focus only on the teachers' uses of language to look at how their racial awareness intersects with the social interactions and curriculum of the classroom. I use the "Odds Stack Against You" and "Montgomery Bus Boycott" events to focus on the teachers' use of language to connect the comments made by the students in the focus group discussions to the teacher's use of language. These two class events were the only two focus group discussions that were organized to reflect on specific events from class. I based my findings on fieldnotes, thematic analysis and discourse analysis conducted from transcriptions of the data.

Part III of the findings stems from ongoing focus group discussions conducted with 12th grade students from Mr. Welsley's classes. I analyze three focus groups discussions using discourse and cultural analysis. From the three focus groups, I extract four narratives examining the uses of narrative within these focus group discussions. I discuss these uses of narratives in terms of how "race" is being constructed within each of them.

Thick Description of Discussions and Interactions in Mrs. Handley's Class

The following fieldnote is from a classroom event that characterizes the nature of discussions and social interactions in Mrs. Handley's 10th grade Honors English class. This event was selected after reviewing fieldnotes because, in its broadest sense, it represents the academic, social, and cultural interactions between the students and Mrs. Handley.

January 24, 2005.

At 9:50, the bell rings. Students file in and sign-in on an attendance sheet that is on a clipboard sitting atop a shelf. As they walk in, there is an overhead projector on with an image displayed on the wall. Although there is light chatter as they come in, most of the students' attention is on the projected image. Mrs. Handley shouts out, "Get you 'Do-Now' done." She isn't yelling, but her volume is loud enough to command attention. The "Do-Now" is a grammar lesson entitled, "Complex Sentences." The students work quietly for the most part. They are trying to insert the correct words or phrases into the sentences. As they work, Mrs. Handley moves about checking papers and getting materials ready. They work for about five to seven minutes on the "Do-Now."

Once Mrs. Handley opens the floor to begin going over the lesson, the class immediately begins to fill with conversation about the work. Students correct one another, as questions, or talk about things completely unrelated to the task. Handley creatively brings all this chatter together by calling on students to address specific parts of the assignment but seems to make all the conversations, whether related or not, a part

of the class. She says things like, "Look, Boo. How was what you said an answer to number two." Boo? She really does have relationships with the students calling them Boo. I know his name is Jamarcus. By 10:15, they have completed the "Do-Now" and each student has been given the opportunity to speak up about what he or she did or did not get. Handley says, "Speak up if you are lost, my children. We have about ninety days until TCAP." There was always a reminder about how soon the state-wide exams were coming. It is even written on the board behind her desk and is updated each day. 95, 94, 93 ,92, 91, 90. The only break from this countdown was on weekends.

At 10:20, it is almost as if the class collectively exhales because now the conversations begin. What happens after the "Do Now," is what Mrs. Handley describes at teaching time. Mrs. Handley uses her tone of voice, her body language to move about the room navigating students' responses- the good ones and the "smart-alecky" ones, too. In the midst of the conversation of Man vs. Nature, Brian says, "Mrs. Handley, we ain't got no time for all dis here." Handley shouts out waving her hands in the air as if she were in a Baptist Church pulpit, "Glory be. We ain't got no!" She stops at "no" and canvasses the room with her eyes raising one eyebrow. The students all laugh on cue- they all seem to know where she is going with this. "Ain't got no," she repeats. "Help me, Lord." Brian then recants, "You know what I meant to say."

"No, I don't. Please tell me," Handley says smiling as she walks swaying slowly toward her desk.

Students laugh, but in a controlled manner as if they are waiting to hear the next utterance between she and Brian.

Brian then starts out, "You can't put the Lord in everything."

"Yes, I can," Handley says without looking back.

This back and forth looks like a sporting event. Maybe even "playing the dozens" without the insults.

This particular fieldnote is selected for several reasons. It typifies how Mrs. Handley and the students interact with one another on several levels. First, there are set routines in the class that decentralize Mrs. Handley role that are not typical in most classrooms. Having students sign-in as they enter class eliminates the act of "calling roll." Students are responsible for signing in as they enter. Mrs. Handley oftentimes takes up the attendance sheet about 20 minutes after the class has begun and cross checks the names of students who sign-in with the students working on their "Do Now." This daily process seems to keep the students focused on their work while she takes care of required formal school procedures. The "Do Now" activity is a daily warm-up exercise that Mrs. Handley uses to accomplish TCAP assessment skills. These 20 minutes exercises are used to place short emphasis on certain testing skills. The students respond to the "Do-Now" in a regimented manner. They talk very little, they raise their hands, or they wait for Mrs. Handley to signal that the "Do Now" is due. What is most interesting about this description of class is how the tone and activity level shifts once the testing practice activity is over. The students hand in the "Do Now," the lights are turned on, and conversation begins in several directions. Mrs. Handley centers all of the conversations by rarely telling students to "stop talking," but by drawing on what they say as a means to begin her lesson. Each time she redirects a student, she addresses the student directly rather than drawing the entire class in on the event. However, in the description and the dialogue between her and Brian, the entire class is privy to the

conversation and encouraged to participate. Notice when Brian says, "Mrs. Handley, we ain't got no time for all dis here," Handley dramatically stops, waves her hands, adds her own spiritual colloquialism and then repeats what Brian says intentionally stopping at "no." Here she waits for the class to take notice of her reaction to Brian. The students laugh and then the interaction continues. What becomes the focal point of class is now the interaction between Brian and Handley, and both of them seem to know it. Although Mrs. Handley is dramatically pointing out Brian's use of language, she does not condemn him for it by asking him to restate what he said. She doesn't use phrases that demean his language but brings attention to it by exaggerating a reaction to it. Brian immediately picks up on this exaggeration and replies, "You know what I meant to say."

This type of interaction between Mrs. Handley and her students contribute to a very expressive, and in some cases, exciting classroom. Even Brian points out Mrs. Handley's spiritual references and how Mrs. Handley reacts to it is typical nothing is considered off-limits in this class. Sometimes it appears that the class gets off-task and Mrs. Handley strongly participates in the direction the class takes with careful orchestration to bring everything back to center. However, it also appears that Mrs. Handley rarely loses the opportunity to connect with her students through sociocultural interactions that might help her relate to the students and they to her. This includes referring to them by commonly used terms of endearment like, "Boo" and "Pookey." There are 32 students in Mrs. Handley's class.

Classroom instruction happens in a traditional manner that is teacher-directed. Mrs. Handley formally begins lessons drawing students to look at specific materials. Her teaching style varies depending on whether the students are doing group work or listening

to a lecture. Traditional styles of questioning and answering, using an Initiation, Response and Evaluation (I-R-E) sequence is typical but deviations from I-R-E happen often.

Thick Description of Discussions and Interactions in Mr. Welsley's Class

Similarly with the sample fieldnote from Mrs. Handley's class, this fieldnote typifies the discussions and interactions between students and Mr. Welsley. Classroom discussions occur in Mr. Welsley's class but in a distinctly different way.

January 31, 2005

The class is continuing in its analysis of the Shakespearean sonnets today. Each student has been presenting his or her sonnets and doing an analysis presentation at the podium. Today is the last day, I think, of the sonnets. As the students file in, it is clear that it is seven or so in the morning. They look tired. They walk in talking amongst themselves. Mr. Welsley stands outside the door in the hallway saying,"Good morning," as each student enters. He stops a few of the boys and tells them to tuck their "shirt tails in" before entering class. Most of the boys stop and adjust their clothing. Mr. Welsley waits until each student has entered before closing the door and walking to the podium. The students talk until he is standing in front of them. Then, the class quickly quiets down.

Mr. Welsley's announces that after today's final presentations of the sonnets, they will begin Macbeth and the students need to prepare themselves for the play. Without speaking too long on the matter, he walks to his desk, which is directly across the room from the podium and begins to shuffle his papers to call the first student. He announces

the next student by calling on the number for the sonnet. "Sonnet number twenty," he calls.

The class quietly listens as Gennie reads the notes she has on her note cards. After summarizing the meaning of the sonnet, she begins an interpretation and analysis using a line by line structure. As she re-reads lines, she looks up from her cards periodically at Mr. Welsley. It appears as if she is "checking in" to see if she should continue. I say this because she never looks toward her classmates. Her presentation takes about five to seven minutes. When she is done, she remains standing at the podium for Mr. Welsley's comments. Mr. Welsley begins his comments by talking about the idea of gender as a social construction and "the Shakespeare's sonnets are the quintessential example of how gender is constructed through the words of the poets, especially women." As he continues, the students listen and write notes ferociously. No one raises his or her hand to ask questions- they just write. I wonder if they know what he means by the notion that gender is a social construction. If they don't it seems they are determined to find out later, but why not during the talk. Will they ask later what he means by gender as a social construction? At the end of his talk and as the student is still standing at the podium for her evaluation, he says, "That was actually a good analysis." He continues, "Gennie's talk is a good model for a poetry presentation." After he compliments Gennie, she returns to her seat. Was this a perfect presentation? Unlike all of the other students, he had nothing more to say than "that was ***actually*** *a good analysis." It was good, but there were several things she did not cover, according to his rubric. Gennie doesn't ask him to explain the social construction bit on gender, which she did not*

include in her analysis. Why? Maybe just getting it over with was good enough. Gennie analyzed Sonnet 20

"A woman's face with nature's own hand painted,

Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;

A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted

With shifting change, as is false women's fashion:

An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,

Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;

A man in hue all hues in his controlling,

Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.

And for a woman wert thou first created;

Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,

And by addition me of thee defeated,

By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.

But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,

Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure."

The context for discussions is generally modeled after a traditional lecture-based class. Mr. Welsley often gave very detailed historical background information on the pieces of literature they were reading before they began a text. He had a tremendous grasp for relating social and political events of the time to the role of the writer. He constructs a context for the readings in class illuminating the enigma's that often define the relationship between European government and British Literature. Because of the command he has for this work, when he speaks- the students listen and write notes. Rarely do students contribute to the class during these time periods. Some students ask questions, but generally it is to clarify ideas or information that was presented.

The classroom exchanges between Mr. Welsley and students modeled an I-R-E sequencing. Mr. Welsley would ask a student a question, he or she would respond, and Mr. Welsley would evaluate. In some cases, even if a student's response is answered correctly, he would say, "Yes. That's right," and then add, "actually" or "And I would add." There was rarely a time when a student's comment stood alone. Yet, there were times when he would say, "Even I had not thought of that" after a student would introduce an idea or present an analysis of something. Mr. Welsley had a deep appreciation for analysis and critical thinking, and so when it happened it was well supported. He found students attempt to go beyond literal meanings intriguing and would comment on how well a student's line of thinking was; however, he was also very clear to inform students that it was not "their job to assume what the writer meant, rather seek out evidence from what has been written." This commentary encouraged students to always look in the readings as they grappled with meaning, but also it discouraged students from bringing forth ideas that could be based in present day or more personal contexts. Students did not use examples from their own funds of knowledge to discuss literature in Mr. Welsley's class. To the extent that, oftentimes, there were students who I rarely heard speak at all.

In the Part I of the findings and analysis, I present an overview of the content analysis for discussions of "race." I discuss the extent to which Mrs. Handley's class and Mr. Welsley's class engage in discussions of "race" and the analysis of those findings. Next, I present a detailed content analysis of six specific classroom events from Mrs. Handley's class and a thematic analysis across those five classroom events. I use this

detailed analysis to discuss the significance of discussions of "race" in classroom settings.

Part I. What Constitutes a Discussion of "Race?": Content Analysis

A key aspect to examining discussions of "race" in school settings is creating a process to identify what constitutes a discussion of "race." There are several considerations that must be made in an attempt to identify discussions of "race" and when they are occurring. First, one must consider what language or linguistic markers signify racial meanings. In some cases, there are explicit uses of language that denote "race." In other cases, it is the content of the lesson that creates a discussion of "race" although certain words or phrases are not present. First, I present five classroom events that are used in this portion of the analysis from Mrs. Handley's class. In an attempt to identify what constitutes discussions of "race" in school settings, when they occur, in what context, and how frequently, I identified five categories that emerged from the data and then engaged in a content analysis of these discussions. After the five classroom events, I illustrate a sample content analysis and discussion from "The Odds Stacked Against You" and a further discussion of the abject absence of discussions of "race" as represented in Mr. Welsley's class. An in-depth content analysis of discussions of "race" in Mrs. Handley's class follows.

Class Event 1: The Tone Collage

(Beginning of Class)

1. Mrs. Handley: If you noticed for your homework tonight in your literature book you gonna read "The Author's Perspective" pages 452 through 460. And your gonna read a story that's dealing with tone "A Celebration of Grandfathers." In dealing..it's it's a Hispanic story-but it's written in English, so you can understand it- so there is no excuse. But everybody has grandfather's or have had grandfathers and the history that they provide sets up the story- the story itself sets up a certain tone. Cause how do you remember your grandfathers. How do you remember people from your, the past. The picture that you're looking at, if you notice on there they have some very history figures on there. If you'll notice, there are four most prominent people's pictures on the little collage. How many of you see one that pop right at you?

2. Class: (various students) Martin Luther King (then class members start naming other people they are able to identify on the collage.

3. Mrs. Handley: Alright. So

(undescipherable speech by students)

4. Mrs. Handley: Now using this collage- let's read the directions as a group, you're gonna work together for this activity. (Long Pause) Collaborate with your peers as you examine the collage closely. Yes this is in black and white, I'm gonna cut the lights on once I go over the directions with you. What words or feelings come to mind as you examine this visual. Where can you get your words from?

5. Student A: From the ummm

6. Mrs. Handley: Your tone list. (long pause) Alright. So, you are gonna write that down as a team. If you notice as a team, you might look at things what?

7. Class: Differently

8. Mrs. Handley: Differently. Because we do not all think the same. But we have more things in common than we have things that are different. Alright? List at least three things that can be learned or taught from the collage. If you were a teacher, what could you teach from that picture.

9. Kemi: That these are all-

10. Mrs. Handley: ahhh chh chh chh. That's part of the activity Pookie- you gone write that down with you partners there.

Class Event 1: The Tone Collage continued…

(random students begin to laugh)

11. Mrs. Handley: You're gonna these three things that can be taught from it. Now, that may be something from history, science, uhhh uhhh literature- any aspect of that can be taught or learned. Taught or learned from it. Then what could you add to this picture to expand on it. You might think there are some things that are missing. You might think there are some other words that can be put on here. Some other pictures that can be put on here. Sit up son (short pause)

12. (Students begin looking around to see who Mrs. Handley is addressing)

13. Mrs. Handley: Alright. Next. What personal or world mental connections are you making as you think or visualize the image. What you looking at that picture- what kind of images can you relate to personally or what could you relate to that is happening in the world. Making connections. (pause) Alright. And then finally, what is the theme of the collage. With every all of the books that we've read- they all had a central theme right- a central theme means what.

14. Students: the main idea

15. Mrs. Handley: the main idea- the main topic- the main uhhh spsss uh (long pause) component that the story is about. So, what is the main theme that you as a group can collaborate on the come with for that picture. As you- if just say if you were gonna give it another title. O.K? Does everybody understand what you're gonna do. You're not getting the whole class period to do it.

(A students groans.)

16. Mrs. Handley: You're getting fifteen minutes. So that means you have to work expedisously.

17. Student: Do that mean fast?

18. Kemi: Very fast.

19. Mrs. Handley: Yes, it does. But does that mean that you gone slack on your thinking skills because you goin so fast?

20. Student: No, that mean

21. Mrs. Handley: That means you need to work on thinking speed.

22. Student: Thinking speed?

Class Event 1: The Tone Collage continued…

23. Mrs. Handley: Alright? Anybody have any question.

(Chloe's leans back and lifts up her paper and peers over at Mrs. Handley)

24. Chloe: You said what title. Do it have a main title or-

25. Mrs. Handley: No it doesn't have one- not that's on there.

(The students work in groups of four or five and examine the collage for 20 minutes. They return to the whole class for the group discussion).

26. Kemi: they weren't only Black they were also White so it wasn't over a racial conflict umm it was over power so you know it wan't like because he White I mean because Martin Luther King was Black that he got assassinated it was also White people too it was because of power they and other people felt

27. Sharice: that he had over the White people

28. Kemi: intimidated because he had so much power over people and they didn't like that so they figured out that if they could take him out that it would be better off.

29. Mrs. Handley: O.K., good.

30. Student X (in background): good (said at the same time as Mrs. Handley)

31. Mrs. Handley: ooh, I like that.

32. Student X (in background): I wish I had something like that.

33. Missy: What question ya'll on?

34. Mrs. Handley: Alright. What could you uhh.. What three things could you be taught from that collage...or learned?

(Missy raises her hand)

35. Mrs. Handley: If you were a history teacher, what could you teach from that collage?

36. Mrs. Handley: Somebody else wanna try? (pointing at Missy)

37. Alright.

Class Event 1: The Tone Collage continued…

38. Missy: Umm the struggle that the world had to go to. go through to get where it is today

39. Mrs. Handley: o.k.

(Long pause)

40. Missy (looking at the group notes): you want me to go through all three of them?

41. Mrs. Handley: yeah

42. Missy: How everybody in the picture helped to shape our world. And...What could we add? (Missy begins to review notes)

43. Missy: (said in a low tone) Naah we said what could we learn.

44. Mrs. Handley: O.K., you can go on to the next one what you can add.

(Missy and Chloe begin smiling. Missy leans back pulling back her braids).

45. Missy: I said a title. I said it coulda had been a title on nare. So it could better- so it coulda help us better understand the picture, so we woulda got more outta the picture if we woulda had- if they would have gave us a title.

46. Mrs. Handley: You don't think it's a title on the picture? Does anybody not see a title on the picture?

47. Class: Social Justice

48. Missy: I seen it but... (smiling)

49. Mrs. Handley: I told you it was one on there. I just didn't-

50. Student X: Noooo

51. Mrs. Handley: Actually, I told you it wasn't one- you're right. But it was. But it could have also just been some words, right.

52. Class: (collecting talking affirming Handley's comments)

53. Mrs. Handley: on the picture. But that was the title- Social Justice. How did that that theme set for the whole picture?

54. Class: (undecipherable)

Class Event 1: The Tone Collage continued…

55. Student Y: I got a question?

56. Kemi: Because they all stood up for what they believed in. You know like Martin Luther King believed in his dream. And Abraham Lincoln...

57. Mrs. Handley: What was his dream? Everybody keep saying that but what was his dream?

58. Class: (students all talking at once)

59. Kemi: (talking a bit louder than the class to gain the floor)- Blacks and Whites can live together and be as one instead of..

60. Mrs. Handley: sshhhh (waving her hands)

61. Kemi: You know when a White kid walk in a room a be like (she lowers her head and grimaces)"Uuhh look at him" or when a Black kid walks inna umm walks somewhere and they be like "I don't want to sit over there cause a Black been there." You know everybody you know come as one you know like Whites and Blacks can both sit together and be as one.

(Whole class begins to comment and talk.)

62. Mrs. Handley: Why do you think..as he asked the question..Mr. Johnson asked the question, why do you think Corretta Scott King's picture was on here?

63. Marcus: Cause that's Martin Luther King's wife.

(Someone laughs in the background. Missy & Sharice raise their hands.)

64. Mrs. Handley: O.K. that's a good reason, but there is also another reason. (She points to Missy.)

65. Missy: Cause she helped too!

66. Kemi: She stood behind him through the whole thing.

67. Student Q: She helped women out too.

(undecipherable speech)

68. Missy: Cause just cause she was his wife doesn't mean she did'nt have a part in our history. She played a big part in our history- she she was with him a lot and she she believed in what he believed in so it wasn't just because she was his wife.

Class Event 1: The Tone Collage continued…

69. Mrs. Handley: You act as though she is dead.

(silence then small rustling of talk)

70. Mrs. Handley: She is still alive.

(laugher)

71. Mrs. Handley: Aren't they still continuing the dream now- With all the different things they are still doing now?

72. Several students: She's a leader.

73. Mrs. Handley: She's a leader too even though she didn't what?

74. Mr. Johnson: Do nothin.

(undecipherable)

75. Mrs. Handley: She didn't die because all of these people who are on here are dead. Now, something that you may not know...they were all assasinated in a sense- because even Princess Diana- the accident that she had they think it was a set-up for her to be murdered. So- in a sense, all of them were murdered because of the power that you say they had. Alright. And all of them died young.

76. Student B: We put that.

77. Mrs. Handley: Good. (while pointing to that group) I heard you.

78. (two minute 12 second time lapse)

79. Kemi: Anger because (undecipherable) all he fought for and what we doing- you know. We have free education that's all he really- you know we got all this type of choices now. And back then we didn't have choices to get an education and get a job and now we just throwing everything away. So, I think he'd be mad.

(three minute time lapse)

80. Mrs. Handley: How many of you think that's the Million Man March on that picture?

81. Class: responds

82. Student- It's the March on Washington

Class Event 1: The Tone Collage continued…

83. Mrs. Handley: It's the March on Washington. But doesn't the Million Man March and the March on Washington look very similar?

84. Class: Yeah

85. Mrs. Handley: Because we came together- men came together for the same purpose that Dr. King came for. With the same feelin- the spirit of wanting equality, wanting freedom, wanting us to have more rights, and for us to stand together. Everybody. Cr, race, creed, nationality, whatever. To stand together with one general purpose. Everybody being equal.

Class Event 2: "Odds Stacked Against You"

1. Mrs. Handley- It's a statement in "A Remembrance of Grandfathers" that I want you to look at because it is so true

(time lapse)

2. Mrs. Handley- ...and please stop talkin so much. That's mainly your problem. The passage is on page 458.

3. Missy- Yes. Maam.

4. Mrs. Handley- When the grandfather says, "Tiene paciendo" (attempts to pronounce this in Spanish) I may be saying this very wrong; he says it in Spanish, but he says, "Have patience. Patience is a word with the strength centuries-centuries of strength. A word that says that someday we would overcome." What kind of tone does that one statement make? Does that set for you about this man and how he helped in the raising of his grandson?

(coughing in the background)

(Few students mumble)

5. Mrs. Handley- Just think about it. The statement is on page 458.

(long pause about 8 seconds)

6. Melanie- She said 458?

7. Mrs. Handley- How many of you read first of all cause I'm not gonna waist my time.

Class Event 2: “Odds Stacked Against You” continued…

8. (students respond explaining that they had or had not read. Monica and Missy raise their hands

9. Mrs. Handley- I'm not seeing a whole class of hands. I wonder why. It should have only taken you ten minutes to read. (long pause). It was not long at all. (long pause). So those of you who didn't read- can I ask you why not?

10. Mrs. Handley- And then you ask me about summer school. And you see why I say, they don't need it. What is the purpose of it? You want to do in six weeks what you were supposed to do in nine months- it takes nine months for a child to develop in its mother, right?

(Coughing. Students silent.)

11. Mrs. Handley- If the baby comes at six weeks it might not have a chance at all for living, right? Even if a child comes six weeks earlier it is call called (pause) premature. It means it's not what?

12. Some Students- Ready (in low voices)

13. Mrs. Handley- Fully developed. You need that whole 9 monts to get what? Development. You need to start thinking on that aspect. When you go to college- you don't want to be in college, cause I know everybody in here is aspiring to go to college. I don't care if it's a four year institution or a two year college. You gone need some college education. Please believe what I'm sayin to you. (long pause). Because in this room, I have people who are African American, then I have women and then I have men (long pause) And the odds already are stacked up against you. The story you read last night was about somebody who's what?

14. Students- (undecipherable)

15. Mrs. Handley- Mexian? They were speaking Spanish possibly?

16. Missy- I said Spanish

17. Mrs. Handley- Spanish. Spanish is the name of the language.

18. Chloe- Aren't they Hispanic?

19. Missy- O.k. then Hispanic

20. Mrs. Handley- Hispanic. Thank you.

Class Event 2: “Odds Stacked Against You” continued…

21. Student- Puerto Ricans

(cough)

22. Mrs. Handley- That's a whole different set of people. All of- we have Mexicans who speak what?

23. Class- Spanish.

24. Mrs. Handley- We have Puerto Ricans who speak

25. Class and Mrs. Handley- Spanish.

26. Mrs. Handley- We have Italians what do they speak? Italian or Spanish?

27. Class- Italian

28. Mrs. Handley - O.K. (undecipherable) so you get what I'm saying. We have all these different languages but everybody in a same sense has to do what?

29. Student- Learn English

30. Mrs. Handley- Learn. Cause. He even told the child. You're gonna have to learn what? You're gonna have to learn the language of The Americans.

31. Student: Not if you don't live in America

32. Mrs. Handley- (repeating herself) You have to learn the language of The Americans. Wanna know why? United States

33. of America is considered the most powerful country in the world. Why do you think we have our nose in everybody's business?

(students comment)

34. Mrs. Handley- Everybody's business

35. Student- We know everything.

36. Mrs. Handley- North Korea comes out and tells us hey- we got the weapons you were looking for...why'd they have to tell us

(light talking in background)

Class Event 2: “Odds Stacked Against You” continued…

37. Mrs. Handley- Why when the Tsunami had hapened-we're the ones saying hey we need to go help these people out. Let's get some money together to help em. I'm not trying to be cruel or anything but we have to control everybody.

(light talking in background)

38. Mrs. Handley- We got to go over to Iraq and help control what?

(students comments undecipherable)

39. Mrs. Handley- (says while chuckling) their- what's going on-up with them.

(long pause)

40. Mrs. Handley- All of us are related. We are in this one melting pot together. What is the tone of our world? (Long pause). See- tone, mood- what's the mood of the nation right now?

(pause)

41. Mrs. Handley- Everybody wants to have what?

42. Several students- Money

43. Student- Power

(other students lightly talking)

44. Mrs. Handley- We want money.

45. Student- Power

46. Several Students- Control

47. Mrs. Handley- Control

48. Missy- Wooh

49. Mrs. Handley- And our mentality is once you have all the money- you have all the

50. Students- control

51. Students-power

Class Event 2: “Odds Stacked Against You” continued…
-

52. Mrs. Handley- But is that necessarily true?

(Some students say "No" others say "Yes")

53. Mrs. Handley- It's not necessarily true. The statement that you all studied with Ms. Ayanna, when a man controls what?

54. Students- (several students speaking at one time)

55. Mrs. Handley- A man's mind- they also control what?

56. Students- His actions

57. Mrs. Handley- His actions.

(long pause)

58. Mrs. Handley- This grandfather- what what did he try to instill in his grandson? Anybody..who read.

(pause)

59. Mrs. Handley- Oooh Chris yes.

(long pause)

60. Student- I know.

61. Student- patience?

62. Mrs. Handley- You can look at the story. Patience. He told em you got to have patience. Because when did he tell the child he had to have patience? (pause) When did the grandson say he wanted to give up?

(pause)

63. Student- learning English

64. Mrs. Handley- When he was learning what? When he was learning English. Just think- you all grow up speaking English--and we still haven't mastered English. We have people from other countries who learn...six seven languages at a time. Starting out as infants..they master- they come over here and blow us away and we get upset cause they come to our country and take over.
(long pause)

Class Event 2: “Odds Stacked Against You” continued…

65. Mrs. Handley- We get upset. They master two- we struggle to get what?

66. Class & Mrs. Handley- One

67. Mrs. Handley- (long pause)But its all about what you want to

68. Student- learn

69. Mrs. Handley- What you want to learn. (long pause). And when you have knowledge you have what?

70. Students- (said softly) power

71. Mrs. Handley- Power. It is so true. (short pause). You have to have knowledge. His grandfather told him what else? What was one thing that his grandfather told him that he said- he said yes, my grandfather was quick (snaps her finger) with statements. He would give you a quick thing (snaps her fingers) and that was it. Huh- Look at the begining of the story.

72. (Time Lapse)- Handley begins a discussion about authors' purpose, which segeways into a discussion of children's books as a form of entertainment. This conversation turns into a discussion of picture books.

73. Mrs. Handley- Some of the books- some of the picture books are actually teaching. So don't not buy the baby the picture books- get the baby the picture books. He may be learning his shapes, he may learn his colors-

74. Student- His culture

75. Mrs. Handley- His culture

76. Student- African queens

77. Mrs. Handley- Please buy little children books with different colors of people in em'.

78. Student- I read all kinds (undecipherable)

79. Mrs. Handley- So they won't just think that the world is just Black people because when they get their first experience with meeting somebody else and going- actually, when little kids are little, all they see hey- we the same age, we the same height, we playing together-

(Students comment.)

Class Event 2: “Odds Stacked Against You” continued…

80. Mrs. Handley-And then- who comes along and says

81. Student- they people around them

82. Mrs. Handley- "You can't play with her-" (snatches Missy's arm as if to tug her child away from other children)

83. Student- they people around them

84. Student- They mamas

85. (Several students commenting)

86. Mrs. Handley- And they wanna know why?

(Several students commenting)

87. Mrs. Handley- So we set a tone for how what? For how children are ?

88. Students- brought up.

89. Mrs. Handley-Tone. Tone and Mood. They are important in literature.

Class Event 3: “White Cove vs. Rivercity”

(This discussion begins after 22 minutes into the class in the midst of a reading lesson)

1. Mrs. Handley- The school I went to got bankrupt and closed down. (long pause)

(students talking- then laughter)

2. Student- Sounds like Rivercity.

3. Mrs. Handley- It got bankrupt and closed down. Rivercity is not a school by itself it is a part of a whole collection of schools. (undeciperable comments by students). Ya'll always talkin about Rivercity, but Rivercity is not the only broke school. It's the Rivercity School District. (students making comments at once) River County Schools.

4. Student- They closed the elementary school. They gone close this one. We broker than anybody.

Class Event 3: “White Cove vs. Rivercity” continued…

5. Mrs. Handley- They not gone close us because the White Cove people, the people that send their children to White Haven don't want to send them to Rivercity, and they want to keep them separated. Rivercity will be here baby.

(short pause)

6. Student- We still on the list?

7. Ayanna- Why is that? Mrs. Handley. What's what's the? Can you clarify?

8. Mrs. Handley- (chuckling)

9. Ayanna- I'm sorry.

10. Mrs. Handley- uh huhh

11. Ayanna- Can your clarify the distinction between community in White Cove and this community- the reason why?

12. Mrs. Handley- Well, this is apart of White Cove- but this is considered- (short pause) from what I've seen since I've moved here, and the way they have broken down Rivercity as look at it- this is a predominantly Black area- well African American (said in a corrective tone) area and then we have our (begins looking at students)are

(Students talking)

13. Mrs. Handley- I guess our higher- our upper class Black people uhhh Black families that want to send their kids to White Cove (turn to students) - Cause White Cove is an optional school right?

(Students comment. Some say, “yeah.”)

14. Mrs. Handley- It has optional program. What optional means- I have no clue because isn't it basically

15. Student- Yes!

16. Mrs. Handley- Don't they learn

17. Student- Yes!

(students talking)

Class Event 3: “White Cove vs. Rivercity” continued…

18. Mrs. Handley- I see the same teachers at the same meetings I go to- so my thing is, what's the option?

19. (Mrs. Handley chuckles- the classroom is relatively quiet)

20. Ayanna- Do students have to apply to get in?

21. Mrs. Handley- You have to apply to get in- and they'll check to make sure that they will take you at their school.

22. Ayanna- o.k.

23. Mrs. Handley- unlike the others that will

(students talking)

24. Ayanna- So it's the same neighborhood

25. Mrs. Handley- Same neighborhood. And the sick- thing that a lot of the kids don't understand about it

(students talking)

26. Mrs. Handley- Excuse us- a thing that a lot of people don't realize is that when the kids start failing the first semester over at White Cove-

27. Student- they come to Rivercity

28. Mrs. Handley- they get sent to Rivercity. They get put out. Because if the if they're not (snaps finger) cuttin the mustard- they end up comin here anyway.

29. Ayanna- Do we ever have students that leave Rivercity and go to White Cove?

30. Mrs. Handley- Noooo- they just can't go hoppin up in White Cove like they can hop into Rivercity.

31. Ayanna- Do you all know people that go to White Cove?

32. Students- Yes

33. Student- Plenty of em.

Class Event 3: “White Cove vs. Rivercity” continued…

(Undecipherable)

34. Ayanna- I mean

35. Mrs. Handley- Like your neighbors and stuff

(students talking)

36. Mrs. Handley- You went to school, middle school with them.
37. Student- But it's some students who go here that went to White Cove.

38. Student- Missy went to White Cove

39. Ayanna- that need to or should

40. (Students talking. One student starts listing names of students who attend Rivercity that formely attended White Cove.)

41. Mrs. Handley- you all can't talk at once so she'd be able to understand what your saying.

42. Ayanna- It's alright. I got it. O.K. Thank you. You can go back to what you were doing.

43. Student- You're welcome

44. Mrs. Handley- But it's part of what everybody (undecipherable)

(students talking)

45. Kemi- But that girl from California- the one that used to- Patricia, she goes to White Cove.

46. Mrs. Handley- But she had to take the test to get in.

(long pause- Mrs. Handley is about to say something)

47. Student- You have to take a test to get in? (Said with surprise)

48. Mrs. Handley- It's and option school

49. Student- Everybody (Undecipherable)

(students talking)

Class Event 3: “White Cove vs. Rivercity” continued…

50. Mrs. Handley- That's what I said
(students talking)

51. Mrs. Handley- If you live in that district though I don't think you have to do it.

(students talking)

52. Mrs. Handley- Why do you think they have those optional school fairs that tell your parents to come fill out these papers and stuff?

53. Student- So why didnt' they make Rivercity and optional school?

(students talking)

54. Mrs. Handley- I don't know. I wasn't here. I have no clue.

(students talking)

55. Mrs. Handley- You got good teachers here just like you have good teachers there. It's all about how you (students talking)(Undecipherable)

Class Event 4: “Alice Walker”

(Begins a class with a quiz on Alice Walker's story. After the quiz, Handley begins an open class discussion on the story.)

1. Handley- What is she basically trying to say in the essay?

(long pause)

2. Chloe- That uhh Black women ah o.k. like African American women mothers are like the leaders of because they do great things and they show how their creativity throughout the world

3. Handley- despite

4. Missy- Everything that

5. Chloe- Everything that happened to them

6. Handley-Yeah. Despite everything that's against them- they still persevered. (Students talking in background) Because Alice Walker is considered one of those

Class Event 4: “Alice Walker” continued…

ladies who had a part in the women's movement. You ever heard of the women's movement? Where women had to fight for the right to vote (short pause)

7. Class- umm hmmm

8. Handley- and to have equal rights just like men.

9. Class- yeah

10. Handley- Cause not as slaves, even White women still didn't have the same rights that we had. Shocker! (Long pause). And then we all got together and decided that we wanted to work for the same thing (gasp)

11. Student- White women, too?

12. Handley- White women, too. They didn't have the right to vote either. The only people who were in control were the men-and not Black men, just

13. Class- White men

14. Handley- White men (gasp) Shocking isn't it. (Long pause). So we were thinking we were the only ones that that been oppressed. But that was the mentality. That men were supposed to be the ones who were the dominant force- not Black men- just White men. That's why it was so hard for them to let go. You summed up what the main idea for for the essay was-despite everything Black women- African American women were able to express their creativity through

15. Student- sewing

16. Handley- through sewing, through art, through writing, through being mothers, through gardens despite the opposition. How many of you got that?

(Various students begin sharing their responses.)

17. Handley- You were looking for an actual statement to be said in the story? (short pause) Main ideas are not always written- are they?

18. Class- Noooo (elongated)

19. Handley- They are also...

20. Class- Implied.

21. Handley- Implied.

Class Event 4: “Alice Walker” continued…

(Long pause)Time laps

22. Handley- Who you are is based on what you're taught. And what you learn. (Short pause). If you're not stagnant and told that you can't do anything- if you're told to dream big and look for the beauty in the world- you know to go out and do whatever you can based-despite where you coming from be more than what you are. (Long pause) I mean- think about it. Mama made the towels. Mama made our clothes- what is all the stuff she said she made- she made the quilt. And then this woman, whose quilt is hanging in the Smithsonian Institution. Widest known museum in the world. A quilt that a woman has made- and just so happens that it has the design-

23. You know how long it takes to make a quilt?

24. Class- ummm hmmm

25. Handley- You got grandparents who make quilts

26. Student- My grandmamma

27. Handley- and you probably have a quilt that Mama done kept- that's been passed on from generation to generation. I know when I went to college I had a quilt that my great-grandmother made...you know. And they’re the heavy ones

28. Class- ummm hmmm

29. Handley- with the cotton in it.

30. Class- ummm hmmm

31. Handley-you don't need nothin else on the bed once you have one of those quilts. That's if they were- you know...that heavy quilt. And it's a thing of beauty. A few months ago when it was cold- we had the women making quilts and sending them to the soldiers with the different flags on it. Women got together and was just quilting. It's an actual art because it takes time to put those colors together. I've even seen people who done it now who even put pictures on it.

(Time lapse)

32. (Handley asks the class who Phyllis Wheatley is, which was a reference made in one of the questions from the literature book)

33. Handley- And she was also an African American woman. She was one of our first great Black poets.

Class Event 4: “Alice Walker” continued…

34. Handley- We claim we know our history but we do not know our history. You need to know who these people are. They are a part of you. They might not have your name- but they are a part of your heritage. It's amazing more White people know about our folks than we do.

35. Missy- I don't know what she looks like.

36. Handley- When they show her she's sitting with a rag on her head and she has on a- she's usually like she sitting holding a book- every picture I've seen they just ho have a picture of a dark skinned woman with a hair tied up- like you know most of them did back then

37. Student- like a slave

38. Handley- And she sittin holding a book with this big white petticoat thing on stuff like that. But my thing is you got to know your history. But what is she saying in those two lines. Perhaps Phyllis Wheatley's mother was also an artist...

(Time lapse)

39. Handley- We do things in life the way it is presented to us. And I believe in strength because the women that raised me- my mama and my grandmamma- my granddaddy was there but he was sick. He had strokes and I having ta pick him up outta bed and do--I understand when the kids come tell me they gotta take care of folk. I was there- been there, done that. You ain't gotta- that's what Black folks do. We take care of our own people. We don't send everybody to nursing home like everybody-

(Class comments)

40. Handley- like most folks do. I'm not saying that's a bad thing. But if we puttin somebody in a nursing home, we going to check on our folks.

41. Class-umm hmmm

42. Handley-most of the ones I know- we checkin on em'. I know people who haven't seen grandma, and she right around the corner in my neighborhood. She in the nursing home around the corner. That's my thing- we have to do- we do it to- we take care of our people. But it's fallin off now because we not even takin care of ourselves, anymore. I was watching the news this morning- the monument they put up for Martin Luther King, some seventeen-year-old boy knocked it down (pause) his parents turned him in. He can do twenty years to life for that.

43. Student-(asks a question)

Class Event 4: “Alice Walker” continued…

44. low chatter)

45. Handley-He knocked the monument down and broke it

46. Class- (responding to Handley's comment)

47. Handley-Yeah he went and broke it. His parents turned him in.

48. Student- White

49. Handley- Destruction of property. They didn't put his picture on the t.v. though so that let me know...

50. Class- He White

51. Handley- Must of been a White boy

52. Bernard- Yep.

53. Handley-They would've showed us.

54. Class- (commenting)

(Time lapse)

55. Handley-Think about it. As African American people, we are taught we were taught when we got here that we were inferior that we couldn't do anything. So they tried to muzzle us and keep us from having a voice and so then they tried- then they beat us and mutilated us (long pause). But yet and still from all of that, we were able to pull out creativity- despite all the hardship and pain and destruction and being destroyed mentally, physically. We we were still able to pull out of that and have voice and vibrance of within us. The author's that we have before we got the Richard Wright's there were other authors before them. The Countee Cullens.

(Quiet)

56. Handley- Anybody know any other authors?

57. Student- Langston Hughes.

58. Class- Hesitant Comments

Class Event 5: "Head-Ragged Generals"

59. Handley- You wear braids in your hair, do you know where they come from?

60. Student- Yes.

61. Another student- Africa.

62. Handley- Do you know the tradition?

63. Bernard- You wear wraps. Where that come from?

64. Handley-You wrap your hair up in the turbans and things- do you know about all of that. Why do we take such pride in our hair? Why do we take so much pride in jewelry?

65. Mrs. Handley- So, I don't even know where to start today (long pause). Yes I do. In the poem she says that - she describes mothers as being head-ragged generals. Head-ragged generals.

66. Student- Head-ragged (undecipherable)

67. Mrs. Handley- See did you raise your hand?

(Bernard raises his hand)

(Long pause)

68. Mrs. Handley- Ain't a general the head in the

69. Mrs. Handley- Somebody who is in charge.

70. Bernard- O.K. the generals are the head and they um rags are the over the the younger.

71. Mrs. Handley- O.k. He said that they are leaders for younger people. Because generals- and they just happen to have head-rags on. Anybody else have an opinion? (She waits) Cause I'mma bring it to your level- bring it ta (pause) us now once we figure out what she was trying to talk about as far as head-ragged general.

72. Student- What did he say?

73. Mrs. Handley- He said it was women in charge of others- younger people, who took control.

(long pause)

Class Event 5: "Head-Ragged Generals" continued…

74. Shemetria- I think they were...(raises her hand and then begins to wave it in the air)

75. Mrs. Handley- Because she says, "How they lead armies, head-ragged generals across mine-fields, booby-trapped kitchens to discover books, desks(students hands go up) ...Are they- Is she literally

76. Students- No no

77. Mrs. Handley- talking about women being out there carrying the rifle over her shoulder

78. Students- No

(Mrs. Handley begins marching and stomping her feet)

79. Mrs. Handley- marching down to the (undecipherable)

80. Bernard- She talking about fighting for they freedom

81. Mrs. Handley- Even though we know there were some out there with those guns

(Several people talking)

82. Mrs. Handley- Alright...Mr. Jones

83. Cedric-the family.

84. Mrs. Handely- the family. Was she considering her family as an army?

85. Cedric- yeah.

86. Mrs. Handley- Who were they fighting against?

87. (various students give ideas in low voices)

88. Kemi- outsiders

89. Several students- Society

90. Mrs. Handley- Society. The world.

91. Bernard- Man vs. (undecipherable)

Class Event 5: “Head-Ragged Generals” continued…

92. Charles- it’s a methaphor.

93. Mrs. Handley- Did you raise your hand?

94. Charles- ohhh. (raises his hand)

95. Mrs. Handley- Yes. sir.

96. Charles- It's like she using a metaphor. Like uhh. man being in an army like umm. I can't explain it. I'm tryin.

97. Mrs. Handley- you tryin.

98. (time lapse- discusses Tom Joyner and rapper DMX. He continued to say "You know what I'm saying.")

99. Mrs. Handley- Do we have any head-ragged generals now?

100. Students: Yeah

101. Students: My grandmama, teachers, my mama

102. Mrs. Handley- Do you have...would you consider that all women who are mothers head-ragged generals

103. Students (loudly in unison)- Nooo

104. Bernard- some of them left they kids like as soon as they have them.

105. Brian- yep.

106. Mrs. Handley- Anybody else (long pause) (looks back at Ayanna) They quiet today.

107. Student (undecipherable)

108. Mrs. Handley- I asked if we have any head-ragged generals today. Any women who are crossing minedfield into boobey-trapped kitchens.

109. Students- Yes.

110. Bernard- Teachers.

(Shemetria raises her hand)

Class Event 5: "Head-Ragged Generals" continued…

(Lots of talking)

111. Mrs. Handley- what does she mean? what was she actually saying when she was talking about a boobey-trapped kitchen?

112. Students- Yes (loudly)

113. Monica- slavery

114. Mrs. Handley- Did the kitchen have..were there mines in the kitchen when you stepped on them

115. Students- No.

116. Mrs. Handley- they shot up

117. Shemetria- I don't think she

118. Charles- Slavery

119. Shemetria- She is not talking about a real kitchen, I think she was relating it to a boobey-trapped kitchen, like they were in a boobey-trap, like a the army- her like

(interrupts Shemetria)

120. Mrs. Handley- How much do you all know about slavery..that's the question? Or actually what your people went through as slaves.

(silence)

121. Student- Not enough.

122. Mrs. Handley- Exactly. We know about he ships, and we know about the people getting hung and whipped and all of that stuff, but do you actually know about the sodemy and the other stuff that went on.

123. Students: No

124. Mrs. Handley- The rapes. The mutilation.

125. Bernard- We saw that in that movie.

Table 6: Sample of Content Analysis from "The Odds Stacked Against You"

	Terminological	**Racial Mimicry**	**Language in Use**	**Content of Lesson**
Number of Instances	9	0	8	8
Some Examples from the analysis.	I have people who are **African American**, **Mexican?** They were speaking Spanish possibly? **Aren't they Hispanic?**		Just think- **you all grow up speaking English**--and **we still haven't** mastered English. **We** get upset. **They** master two- **we struggle to get what?**	And the **odds already are stacked up against you**. You're gonna **have to learn the language of the Americans.**

The sample content analysis used in Table 6 from the classroom event "Odds Stacked Against You" shows the frequency of discussions of "race" according to the domains that have been identified. In each domain, there is a frequency count of how many times that domain was represented in the classroom event. In addition to the frequency, I record the discussions themselves as they occur in the audio and videotaped recording. In Table 6, there are three domains that were represented most frequently: (1)Terminology, (2) Language in Use and (3) Lesson Content. In "Odds Stacked Against You," labels for groups of people and languages are as frequent as both language in use and lesson content. This particular lesson focused on a short story called, "A Remembrance of Grandfather's" that was based on the experiences of a Hispanic boy and the lessons he learned from his grandfather. On the surface, one aspect of the frequency of discussions of "race" in this lesson is the recognition that the content of the lesson and the identity of the characters lent themselves to a greater likelihood of racial terminology

being used. Setting the context for the story includes describing the boy and his racial, ethnic, and linguistic identity, which is pivotal in understanding the content of the story itself. The meaning behind the story includes the recognition of the cultural identities of his grandfather as an agricultural laborer, a Spanish speaker, and someone who is able to connect his opportunities for success with his access to power. In this case, the grandfather associates power through the English language and, in some ways, cultural assimilation. The class lesson explicitly referenced the racial and linguistic identities that impacted the lessons the grandfather wanted to pass on to his grandson. However, another important aspect of this lesson is that recorded discussions of "race" that occurred are not located in the story content. The discussions of "race" in this class event were evident in the continual intertextual connections Mrs. Handley makes throughout instruction.

Mrs. Handley constructs several connections between the content of the story and the lives and experiences of her students. Most of these connections were identified in the "Language in Use" domain and the "Lesson Content." The significance of these two domains is that they both rely more heavily on the social context of the discussions and their context clues rather than the literal words or phrases uttered in the class. For example, in Table 6 in the domain, "Lesson Content," Mrs. Handley states, "And the odds already are stacked up against you." This statement is identified as a discussion of "race" because the context of the comment is directed toward her students' racial identities and later their gender. She continues stating that because she has "African American women and African American men in [her] this class, the odds are stacked against you." In a follow-up interview, Mrs. Handley expounds on this point in the

video asserting that she wants her students to recognize how hard they have to work because they are African American. Her intentions for communicating the notion that the "Odds are stacked" against her students because of their racial identities, constitutes aspects of the class lesson as one about "race." For the purpose of this content analysis in identifying discussions of "race," it was important to consider the sociocultural context for class discussions. This would include considering the relationship between what is being said in the larger context of the setting and the audience for the discussion. The domain "Lesson Content" centralizes the relationship between the curriculum and the context whether the term "race" or racial terminology is used or not. The content of the lesson may signify the historical, social and cultural issues that are racial.

The "Language in Use" domain also contextually identifies discussions of "race" but by considering the context cues in the discussions. Table 6 notes the statement, "you all grow up speaking English--and we still haven't mastered English." This is an example of how Mrs. Handley attempts to relate the experiences of the main character in the story with the students. The main character expresses the notion that it is frustrating and discouraging to learn English. Mrs. Handley attempts to help the students conceptualize with this idea and states, "you all grow up speaking English." This statement positions the students in that they have never had to grapple with the idea of learning a language. She implies that these students have not had to fathom the idea of learning a new language and there are challenges they have yet to encounter. But in the second part of her comment that directly connects this discussion as racial is her comment "and we still haven't mastered English." The teachers' use of "we" creates a connectivity of her own identity with her students. "We" suggests there is something shared between the teacher

and the students that have impacted their mastery or lack thereof of English. Although she does not name or judge the language used among the "we," she suggests that the "we" have not mastered English; therefore, the language used among the "we" doesn't reflect mastery. The word "still" in the phrasing "we still have not mastered English" positions the speakers and the language English. In a follow-up interview with Mrs. Handley, she identifies her comments about "The Odds Stacked Against You" as being directly connected to what she believes "Black children ought to know." As demonstrated with a segment from "The Odds Stacked Against You."

The content analysis was a process not simply to identify when discussions of "race," occurred but to also organize the discussions according to how they functioned in the class lessons. This process was done for each of the videotaped class lessons for all three English classes. Below are the results of the content analysis looking at frequency of discussions across the three classes.

Table 7: Content Analysis for Discussions of "Race"

	Total Number of Classroom lesson Analyzed	**Total Number of Discussions of "race"**	**Terminology**	**Racial Mimicry**	**Language in Use**	**Content of Lesson**
Mrs. Handley	20		93	4	52	87
Mr. Welsley AP English	28		67	0	0	0
Mr. Welsley Standard English	26		74	0	0	0

The content analysis from Table 7 shows that discussions of "race" happened often in the three classes. Accordingly, there were a total of 74 classes lesson analyzed, where 381 discussions were constituted as discussions of "race." 26 of the class lessons analyzed were that of Mr. Welsley's. Of the 26 lessons analyzed, there were 74 discussions of "race." However, the 74 discussions of "race" were only identified in the domain "Terminology." After closer examination and reviewing the lessons that had been marked as discussions of "race," the terminology used referred to the title of the course, naming literature, or in historical contexts, discussing ethnic groups of Great Britain. For example, in preparing the students for the reading of MacBeth, Mr. Welsley did a lecture on "European Literature" and the historical and religious shifts that occurred in Britain. Terms like "the British," and "Europeans" were mentioned in the context of the Elizabethan period. As such, these discussions are identified as discussions of "race" because they "name" groups of people. They are not discussions that are contextually connected to "race" as a concept to be addressed in the literature. For example, the students engaged in an analysis of Shakespearean Sonnets. During this process, there are several instances where there is mention of beauty, skin color, skin type even phrases like "niggard" (e.g., Sonnet 4). Although the word "niggard" refers to the notion of being "stingy," the derivative of the word has racial implications for Black people, notwithstanding the tone of the word is pejorative and is associative, at best, with Black people. The students' analysis of these sonnets and Mr. Welsley's commentary never include a racial examination. The images and metaphors associated with constructs of whiteness and blackness are important thematically to the reading of Shakespeare but are left out of class discussions to the degree that they are not interrogated. The absence of

discussions of "race" in a class of all African American students and a White teacher is profound. Based on this data, it was curious to me how these African American 12th grade students identified and discussed "race." This was largely based on the school demographics, where the student body is more than 95 percent African American and the teaching staff includes no more than 10 White teachers, one of whom is the only Advance Placement English teacher in the entire school. It is the absence of discussions of "race" that created my interest in a "mediating setting" to speak with and learn from several of the 12th grade students. Although there was the absence of discussions of "race," which in the content of the class, the students had a significant amount of ideas and experiences related to "race" they shared openly in focus group discussions. These analysis and findings will be presented in Part III.

The next section focuses on the content analysis of discussions of "race" from the five different class events from Mrs. Handley's class. Table 8 is an organizational schema of these five classroom events, which includes the frequency of each type of identified discussion of "race" across all five classroom events. These five events were selected because they represent the range of discussions of "race" in a classroom setting.

Table 8: Organizational Schema of Discussions of "Race"

Class Event	Terminology	Grammatical Performance	Language in Use	Content of Lesson
The Tone Collage	10	2	9	10
"Odds Stacked Against You"	9	1	8	8
"White Cove vs. River City"	2	0	1	1
Alice Walker	18	0	14	14
"Head-Ragged Generals"	20	1	10	15

Each of the four domains for discussions of "race" contains different contexts for the class discussions. I use two types of samplings from the class events to illustrate how discussions of "race" are constituted in a classroom setting. The first type of sample comes from comments made by an individual. The second type of sample comes from partial transcripts from discussions in class. Comments selected represent statements and expressions made by an individual that is a part of a larger discussion. I identify these comments as discussions of "race" because their contents can be identified in one of the four domains. Transcripts selected represent an exchange between one or more classroom participants. These selections are chosen because aspects of the discussion can be identified in the four domains for discussions of "race" as well. In both samplings, I highlight the words or phrases that hold the meanings or frame the discussion of "race" for the domain, with the exception of Domain 4: Content of Lesson. The domain "Content of Lesson" focuses less on specific words or phrases used and

centralizes how the content of the lesson itself is a discussion of "race." In the case of this domain, the entire comment or transcript selected represents the domain. What is of seminal importance is that there is no terminology like "Black" or "White" or uses of language like "we" or "us" that suggests "race." Content of Lesson speaks very closely to the curricular choice by the teacher that concomitantly creates a discussion of "race."

The second portion of the findings for this section is a thematic analysis. I underscore common themes represented in the words or phrases used in both the comments and the transcripts that speak to how discussions of "race" are constituted in classroom settings. The three themes that have been identified for this analysis are: (1) Collective Identity and Responsibility, (2) Racial Representations, and (3) Power. I will discuss the use of these themes and their significance in the discussion of "race."

Domain 1: Terminology

Mrs. Handley, "The Tone Collage"

1. "And you're going to read a story that is dealing with tone- "A Celebration of Grandfathers." (pause) In dealing with- **it's a Hispanic story-but it's written in English**, so you can understand it so there are no excuses."

Kemi, The Tone Collage

27. "They weren't only **Black they were also White, so it wasn't over a racial conflict it was over power** so you know it wasn't like because he White I mean because Martin Luther King was Black that he was assassinated- it was also White people too- it was because of power."

Partial transcript from "White Cove vs. River City"

12. Mrs. Handley: "But this is considered-from what I've seen since I've moved here, and the way they have broken down River City as I Iook at it- **this is a predominantly Black area- well African American** area and then we have our-

(students talking)
13. Mrs. Handley: I guess our higher- **our upper class Black people uhhh Black families that want to send their kids to White Cove** - Cause White Cove is an optional school right?"

Partial transcript from "Odds Stacked Against You"

13. Mrs. Handley: The story you read last night was about somebody who was what?
(various students mumble responses)
14. Mrs. Handley: **Mexican? They were speaking Spanish possibly**?
15. Missy- I said Spanish.
16. Mrs. Handley: Spanish is the name of the language.
17. Chloe- **Aren't they Hispanic?**
18. Missy-**O.k. then Hispanic.**
(students mumble)
19. Handley- **Hispanic.** Thank you.
20. Barry- **Puerto Ricans**
21. Mrs. Handley: **We have Mexicans who speak what?**

Partial transcript from "Alice Walker"

10. Handley-Cause not as slaves, even **White women** still didn't have the same rights that we had. Shocker! (long pause). And then we all got together and decided that we wanted to work for the same thing (gasp)
11. Student- **White women, too**?
12. Handley-**White women, too**. They didn't have the right to vote either. The only people who were in control were the men-and **not Black men**, just
13. Class:**White men**
14. Handley-**White men** (gasp) Shocking isn't it.

Sandra, "Head-ragged Generals"

130. "She was relating to how they had to stay home for the **White** women and keep their children. And keeping their children was considered like a booby-trapped kitchen. Cause they had to sit in there and **slave over the stove**."

Domain 2: Racial Mimicry

Kemi, The Tone Collage

62. "You know like when a White kid walk in a room and **be like, 'Ughhh, look at him.**' Or when a Black kid walks somewhere and **they be like, 'I don't want to sit over there cause a Black been there.'"**

Partial transcript from "Odds Stacked Against You"

79. Mrs. Handley: When little kids are little, all they see is hey- we the same age, we all the same height…
80. Casey-They don't think about all that stuff
81. Mrs. Handley: we playin together.
(students laugh)
82. Mrs. Handley: And then all of the sudden- who come along and says
83. Casey- They people around them
84. Mrs. Handley (grabbing Missy's arm)- **You can't play with hu [her].**
85. Casey- The mamas.

Charles, "White Cove vs. Rivercity"

58. "Your husband put yall in **Bart-lett**"

Domain 3: Language in Use

Kemi, The Tone Collage

80. "**We have** free education. **We got** all this type of choices now and back then we didn't have choices to get education to get a job and now, **we just throwing** everything away."

Mrs. Handley, The Tone Collage

84. "But doesn't The Million Man March and The March on Washington look very similar. **Because we came together**-men came together for the same purpose that Dr. King came for. With the same feeling- the spirit of wanting equality, wanting freedom, **wanting us to have more rights and for us to stand together**."

Partial transcript from White Cove vs. Rivercity

21. Mrs. Handley:You have to apply to get in- and **they'll check to make sure that they will take you at their school.**
22. Ayanna-o.k.
23. Mrs. Handley: unlike the others that will
(students talking)
24. Ayanna-So it's the same neighborhood
25. Mrs. Handley: Same neighborhood. And the sick- thing that a lot of the kids don't understand about it
(students talking)
26. Mrs. Handley:excuse us- a thing that a lot of people don't realize is that when the kids start failing the first semester over at White Cove-
27. Student- **they come to Rivercity**

28. Mrs. Handley:**they get sent to Rivercity. They get put out. Because if the if they're not (snaps finger) cuttin the mustard- they end up comin here anyway**.
29. Ayanna-Do **we ever have students** that leave Rivercity and go to White Cove?
30. Mrs. Handley: **Noooo- they just can't go hoppin up in White Cove like they can hop into Rivercity."**

Partial transcript from "Odds Stacked Against You"

62. Mrs. Handley: When did the grandson say he wanted to give up?
63. Missy- When he was learning.
64. Mrs. Handley: When he was learning what?
65. (Students)- English
66. Mrs. Handley: Just think- **you all** grow up speaking English--and **we still haven't** mastered English. We have people from other countries who learn six seven languages at a time..starting out as infants. **They master- they come over here and blow us away** and **we get upset cause they come to our country** and take over. **They master two- we struggle to get what?**
67. Students (in unison with Handley)- one.

Mrs. Handley, "Alice Walker"

35. Handley-**We claim we know our history** but **we do not know our history**. **You need** to know who **these people are**. **They are a part of you**. **They** might not **have your name-** but **they are a part of your heritage**. It's amazing **more White people know about our folks than we do**.

Mrs. Handley, "Head-Ragged Generals"

124. "How much do **you all know** about slavery..that's the question? Or actually what **your people** went through as slaves."

Domain 4: Content of Lesson

Mrs. Handley, The Tone Collage

72. "Aren't they still continuing the dream now- With all the different things they are still doing now?"

Mrs. Handley, "Odds Stacked Against You"

13. "You gonna need some college education- please believe what I am saying to you. Because in this room, I have people who are African American, then I have women and then I have men and the odds are already stacked against you."

Partial transcipt from, " Odds Stacked Against You"

28. Mrs. Handley: So you get what I'm saying. We have all these different languages but everybody in a same sense has to do what?
29. Student- Learn English
30. Mrs. Handley: Learn. Cause he even told the child. You're gonna have to learn what? You have to learn the language of The Americans.
31. Roger (speaking to another student)- Not if you don't live in America?
32. Mrs. Handley: You have to learn the language of the Americas. You wanna know why? Because the United States of America (emphasis on America) is the most powerful country in the world.

Partial transcript from, "Alice Walker"

43. Mrs. Handley:…I was watching the news this morning- the monument they put up for Martin Luther King, some seventeen-year old boy knocked it down (pause) His parents turned him in. He can do twenty years to life for that.
44. Student-(asks a question but it is undecipherable)
45. Class:(low chatter)
46. Handley-He knocked the monument down and broke it
47. Class:(responding to Handley's comment but undecipherable)
48. Handley-Yeah he went and broke it. His parents turned him in.
49. Student- White
Class:(commenting)
50. Handley-Destruction of property. They didn't put his picture on the t.v. though, so that let me know...
51. Class: He White
52. Handley- Must of been a White boy
53. Bernard- Yep.
54. Handley-They would've showed us.

Partial transcript from "Head-Ragged Generals"

114. Mrs. Handley: What does she mean? What was she actually saying when she was talking about a booby-trapped kitchen?
115. Students- Yes.
116. Monica- slavery
117. Mrs. Handley: Were there mines in the kitchen when you stepped on them
118. Students- No.
119. Mrs. Handley: they shot up
120. Shemetria- I don't think she
121. Charles- Slavery
122. Shemetria- She is not talking about a real kitchen, I think she was relating it to a booby-trapped kitchen, like they were in a booby-trap, like a the army- her like (interupts Shemetria)
123. Mrs. Handley: How much do you all know about slavery..that's the question? Or actually what your people went through as slaves.

124. Charles- Not as much as we should.
125. Mrs. Handley: Exactly
126. Mrs. Handley: We know about the ships, we know about being hung and whipped and all of that stuff, but do you actually know about the sodomy and stuff that went on.
127. Students- Noo.

Theme 1: Collective Identity and Responsibility

I identify three comments made over the course of three different class lessons that illustrate collective identity and responsibility. The implication of this theme is that there is a pattern of ideas expressed about the collective group signaled with the word "we." In other cases the personal pronoun "you" (including possessive pronouns) is used to imply the collective group. The context for each of these discussions was related to African Americans. I highlight the use of both "we" and "you" to underscore the notion of collective group.

Identity Example 1: Mrs. Handley, "Head-Ragged Generals"
"How much do **you all know about slavery**..that's the question? Or **actually what your people** went through as slaves."

Identity Example 2: Kemi, The Tone Collage
"**We have** free education. **We got** all this type of choices now and back **then we didn't have** choices to get education to get a job and now, **we just** throwing everything away."

Identity Example 3: Mrs. Handley, "Alice Walker"
Handley-**We claim we know our history** but **we do not know our history**. **You need** to know who these people are. **They are a part of you**. **They** might not **have your name-** but **they are a part of your heritage**. It's amazing **more White people** know about **our folks than we do**.

The signaling of the collective group through the use of "we ," "our," "you," and "your" is not done simply to identify group members. Part of the signaling is an active choice on the part of the speaker to address issues of collective group identity and the

responsibility of being members of this group. Thematically, discussions of "race" in Mrs. Handley's class, even when connected to explicit curriculum were framed around this notion of being. These discussions were not unilateral meaning students also made remarks and comments that signaled the group to think about this notion of responsibility.

In Example 1, Mrs. Handley asks the students about their knowledge base about slavery. She extends this question and places emphasis on them being responsible for this knowledge by evoking the collective group. She states, "Or actually what your people went through as slaves." By identifying slaves as "your people," the possessive case seeks to help students identify their knowledge about slavery as more than simple historical knowledge. She challenges them to know this history because it "belongs to them." This can be seen as an act of being held accountable for historical knowledge.

In Example 2, Kemi discusses what she sees as a challenge within the collective group that includes herself. She uses "we" in a fashion to list the things she identifies as historically significant for the "we" group. "We have free education. We got all this type of choices now and back then we didn't have choices…" The issues that Kemi raises regarding educational access, opportunity, and choice are set in a historical context. She frames her comments by separating what the collective group "has" free education and choice, and then sets them against a historical backdrop by stating "back then we didn't have choices." The rhetorical strategy places emphasis on the collective identity and responsibility because it creates a compelling argument for audiences to at least recognize their status as compared to "their" forefathers and foremothers. Kemi closes her comments by stating, "we just throwing everything away." One the surface, this comment suggests dismay or disappointment. The tone established in Kemi's comment

is that opportunities today are or have been lost because of the "we" group. She does not explain why or how she concludes on the idea that the "we" is "just throwing it away." However, a contextualized examination of Kemi's comments suggest she is not dismayed or unhopeful about the collective group she is, however, issuing a statement of responsibility that the "we" has to take responsibility for themselves as well as their community. "We just throwing everything away," is an exaggeration. Kemi's statement is indeed a critique of the "we" but it is simultaneously grounded in a challenge to the "we," of which she is a part. Because she makes this critique, but uses "we" rather than "you" or "they" implies her own membership to the collective group and is therefore stabling her own behaviors and choices as a part of the accountability framework for progress. In the context of her statements, I imply student success in school is the argument she is making.

And finally, collective identity and responsibility is presented in example three. Mrs. Handley does several things with the use of the pronoun and possessive case. As already discussed, she identifies the group as well as her membership in the group. The collective sense of identity is made by evoking a passionate plea for knowing and understanding who people are and the role(s) they've played for the community. Moreover, she uses certain phrases that convey strong notions of legacy and pride like "They are a part of you" and "They might not have your name- but they are a part of your heritage." These phrases are provocative in their attempt to connect the students to knowing how their present is deeply connected to larger constructs. This pattern is illustrated in the previous examples. However, the framing of responsibility is quite profound in the latter part of her comments. She states, "It's amazing more White people

know about our folks than we do." Mrs. Handley uses "White people" to position them against what the "we" *should know*. She suggests "White people" should not be more knowledgeable about "our folks." This statement positions members of the "we" as well as creates a position for "White people." Being knowledgeable about history is not the issue being raised by Mrs. Handley's comments. What is being presented to the students is the issue of investing time into learning about one's "own" history and that there should be a value for communities in doing this work. By identifying "White people" as knowledgeable about "our history," contributes partly to essentializing *whiteness* as knowledgeable- even when this may not be the case. She identifies "White people" as a way to create a juxtaposition of entitlement for the group and what "we" should value (i.e. history of our people).

There are several aspects of Mrs. Handley's comment that could be argued in terms of what constitutes history and entitlement to that history. Addressing these issues would include how schools and society have organized historical domains of entitlement in stratifying ways (e.g., Black History vs. American History). People create a sense of community oftentimes around common ground, which includes history (similarly with literature and art). In this light, Mrs. Handley's comment is in alignment with a sociocultural trend in American society that has permeated everyday aspects of life. Bookstores, libraries, and textbooks are thematically organized. But these schema are not nearly as neutral as they may intend to be. Categories like American history, Western Civilization or Music Appreciation are not associated with any particular "group" of people through terminology but are epistemologically and ideologically foregrounded on dominant culture, unquestioned. For historically disenfranchised groups, emphasizing

the need to know "our history" is an act of coveting knowledge so that its significance is not minimized. Mrs. Handley presents this as an issue of accountability. "We should know" more about "our folks" is placing a level of responsibility on the collective group to which she includes herself.

Each of these examples from classroom discussions is part of larger classroom discussions of "race." Collective identity and responsibility are woven into discussions about grammar and literature in intricate ways and from many directions. Because the collective identity and responsibility is embedded in classroom discussions, these discussions cannot be minimized or isolated as "one-of" accounts. Rather there is continual attempt to discuss "race" in a contextualized meaningful way.

Theme 2: Racial Representation

Racial Representation Example 1: Transcript from "Odds Stacked Against You"

13. Mrs. Handley: The story you read last night was about somebody who was what?
(various students mumble responses)
14. Mrs. Handley: Mexican? They were speaking Spanish possibly?
15. Missy- I said Spanish.
16. Mrs. Handley: Spanish is the name of the language.
17. Chloe- Aren't they Hispanic?
18. Missy-O.k. then Hispanic.
(students mumble)
19. Handley- Hispanic. Thank you.
20. Barry- Puerto Ricans
21. Mrs. Handley: We have Mexicans who speak what?

Racial Representation Example 2: Transcript from "Alice Walker"

10. Handley-Cause not as slaves, even White women still didn't have the same rights that we had. Shocker! (long pause). And then we all got together and decided that we wanted to work for the same thing (gasp)
11. Student- White women, too?
12. Handley-White women, too. They didn't have the right to vote either. The only people who were in control were the men-and not Black men, just
13. Class:White men
14. Handley-White men (gasp) Shocking isn't it.

Racial Representation Example 3: Transcript from "Odds Stacked Against You"

62. Mrs. Handley: When did the grandson say he wanted to give up?
63. Missy- When he was learning.
64. Mrs. Handley: When he was learning what?
65. Students- English
66. Mrs. Handley: Just think- you all grow up speaking English--and we still haven't mastered English. We have people from other countries who learn six seven languages at a time..starting out as infants. They master- they come over here and blow us away and we get upset cause they come to our country and take over. They master two- we struggle to get what?
67. Students (in unison)- one.

There is a pattern of racial representation in the classroom discussions on several levels. Some aspects of these representations are based on terminological use by the simple act of mentioning a group of people racially. Moreover, there is a pattern of situational contexts used when racial groups are mentioned, specifically when they are not Black or African American. First, I examine racial representation where ethnicity is unclear and the impact of this in school settings. Next, I discuss positionality and the power of relegating groups of people in sociohistorical ways. Lastly, I look at how ideological constructs around language can be reflective of discussions of "race."

In Racial Representation Example 1: Transcript from "Odds Stacked Against You, " Mrs. Handley is beginning a discussion of a memoir the students read for

homework. In her introduction, she uses terminology to identify the sociocultural context of the story. She begins the discussion by asking the students to identify the main character. She states, "The story you read last night was about somebody who was what?" This question foregrounds the story's significance as being related to "who" and more poignantly "what" the main character is. The students don't reply convincingly with assured answers. There are responses but they are mumbled to stated in very low tones. Mrs. Handley fills the "silence" with "Mexican?" From this point forward, there are representations of "Mexicans" that create a representation. Mrs. Handley points out language immediately after she suggests who or what the characters may "be." This representation of "race" is co-constructed among the students and not necessarily deferred back to the actual text.

15. Mrs. Handley: Mexican? They were speaking Spanish possibly?
16. Missy- I said Spanish.
17. Mrs. Handley: Spanish is the name of the language.
18. Chloe- Aren't they Hispanic?
19. Missy-O.k. then Hispanic.
(students mumble)
20. Handley- Hispanic. Thank you.
21. Barry- Puerto Ricans
22. Mrs. Handley: We have Mexicans who speak what?

In line 16, Missy suggests the main characters of the story are "Spanish," to which the teacher responds "Spanish is **the** name of **the** language." It is unclear as to whether Mrs. Handley's correction is textually based, meaning she provides this clarification based on what is written about the story in the text. But her correction does not yield the possibility that there are Spanish people. She also suggests that Spanish is *only* a name of a language, in the phrasing "**the** name of **the** language." This brief exchange creates a representation of "race" that is given authority because it comes from the teacher.

However, another student, “Chloe,” does not accept the designation of the character as simply Mexican or Spanish. The next four lines of the transcript illustrate the co-construction of how the characters in the memoir are racially represented in the class.

18. Chloe- Aren't they Hispanic?
19. Missy-O.k. then Hispanic.
(students mumble)
20. Handley- Hispanic. Thank you.

Chloe’s question, “Aren’t they Hispanic?” suggests that there is an alternative representation of the characters that might be seen in a much more broad sense. The term “Hispanic” seems to encapsulate more options for the characters than just Mexican or Spanish, specifically because it is not clear that the class knows the answer. Missy and Mrs. Handley take up Chloe’s question as an assertion that Hispanic is a better term to represent the group. Even in this moment where is appears final that the class has constructed a racial representation for the character, Barry says “Puerto Rican.” He does not ask a question directly or make reference to the book that there is a text-based answer for the class dialogue. Moreover, he seemingly tosses in “Puerto Rican,” nearly suggesting that it is as much a viable option as any of the other suggestions. His comments do not get taken up by Mrs. Handley or the other students. There is no identifiable response in the videotape data that suggests the class verbally reacts to Barry. But there is a point to note that is significant in the issue of racial representation.

There is considerable dialogue around the question of “who” or “what” the characters are, which continues despite the fact that there is reasonable debate about the use of Hispanic or Latino to describe the cultural and geographic histories of many Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities. This absence of dialogue, although there

are several ideas presented, is telling about the lack of discussions of "race," culture, and ethnicity that designate community. This absence of dialogue creates the opportunity for the class to co-construct and designate a racial group *for* the story's main characters without consideration that the answer to the question might be found in the story. This absence of diverse representation in the school and in the class makes it more apt that groups of people can be essentialized in different ways. It is clearly not the intentions of Mrs. Handley, pedagogically nor through the curricular choices she has made, to itemize ethnicity. However the limits of discussions of "race" (which plausibly include discussions of ethnicity and culture) create windows of opportunity for guesswork. Line 15 represents a transition instruction where Mrs. Handley attempts to identify groups of people by the languages that they speak. In the full transcript of "Odds Stacked Against You," she asks about the language backgrounds of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Italians first to show how each these groups of people speak different languages. However, as a means to bring the conversation back to the story, she comments about the main character's challenges in learning English.

Racial Representation Example 2: Transcript from "Alice Walker," reflects how groups of people are positioned or located in situational or contextualized ways. The context for the class discussion is the reading and sharing of ideas around an Alice Walker short story, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens." This discussion shifts into conversation about the feminist movement and the different way different women articulated issues of inequity. Mrs. Handley identifies Alice Walker as a creative voice in discussing the oppression of women. In the transcript, Mrs. Handley engages the students in this dialogue about women's rights. She attempts to help her students

understand that although Alice Walker is African American and her characters are usually African or African American, the issues of gender inequity are issues for *all* women. Consequently, she positions "White men" to create an understanding of this point. She presents to the students that even within the oppression of slavery, White women were too oppressed. Her focus on oppression rather than "race" creates a reframing for how different types of people are impacted by injustice. And yet, within this racial representation it is even more pronounced.

10. Handley-Cause not as slaves, even White women still didn't have the same rights that we had. Shocker! (long pause). And then we all got together and decided that we wanted to work for the same thing (gasp)
11. Student- White women, too?
12. Handley-White women, too. They didn't have the right to vote either. The only people who were in control were the men-and not Black men, just
13. Class: White men
14. Handley-White men (gasp) Shocking, isn't it?

Line 10 suggests that "we" [African Americans] had rights. Mrs. Handley is referring specifically to the right to vote that was constituted in the 15th Amendment[14], five years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued and 50 years before women had the right to vote. She communicates this notion of oppression stating **even White women** did not have rights afforded to Black men. This positions Black people and White women in complex ways. One aspect of this complexity is in regard to expectation. Historical record and the readings for this class have shown Blacks did not have rights. It is expected or a given that students understand that Blacks did not have rights. But more poignantly, her expression *even White Women* establishes that it would be expected that White women would have rights. It is not clear if this expectation is

[14] The 15th Amendment established the right to vote for African American men. However, in the South, Black Codes were largely in place that prohibited many African American men from actually exercising this right to vote.

because they are White or because they are White women; yet, it is important to note that the power of Handley's comment is created in the relationship between the oppression of Blacks and Whites. In order to demonstrate the significance of oppression for White women, she uses Black people as a constant variable of oppression, if you will. "Even White women still didn't have the same rights that we had" is a statement to magnify the degree to which White women were oppressed. Morrison's (1992) literary analysis of the construct of whiteness as empowered by the presence of blackness is also represented in this exchange. Mrs. Handley's explication of oppression is made more impressionable when juxtaposed to the sociocultural and historical position of Black people in the United States. The student's response in line 11, "White women, too?" exemplifies the degree to which associating whiteness with oppression is rarely if ever approached.

Racial representation continues in the positioning of White men. Lines 12 through 14 places emphasis on power and control as being represented by men, more specifically White men. Mrs. Handley's use of questioning in line 13 and the students' response in 14 is an exchange of historical fact albeit an act of positioning *all* White men. Mrs. Handley uses sarcasm at the closing of the exchange to make a point. "White men" and then she gasps holding her mouth open and then continues, "Shocking isn't it?" Handley establishes through her use of sarcasm this notion of a pattern or trend in the sociohistorical roles of White men. The discussion of Alice Walker's story is a discussion of "race" because the content of the text lends itself to addressing the suffrage of African American women, gender identity, and societal injustice. However, alongside these literary themes, the classroom conversations are equally discussions of "race" because of the historical and contextual work necessary to be done to create a framing for

the story, itself. Although "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" is not about White women, Handley provides and intertextually based historical discussion for gender oppression, which includes White women and ultimately White men. Racial representation thematically connects several of these class discussions to support the meaning-making of the explicit curriculum. Conversely, discussions of "race" contribute to the depth to which the students and teacher engage with the assignments.

Theme 3: Power

Power Example 1: Mrs. Handley, "Odds Stacked Against You"
"You gonna need some college education- please believe what I am saying to you. Because in this room, I have people who are African American, then I have women and then I have men and the odds are already stacked against you."

Power Example 2: Transcipt from, " Odds Stacked Against You"

28. Mrs. Handley: We have all these different languages but everybody in a same sense has to do what?
29. Student- Learn English
30. Mrs. Handley: Learn. Cause he even told the child. You're gonna have to learn the language of The Americans.
31. Roger (speaking to another student)- Not if you don't live in America?
32. Mrs. Handley: You have to learn the language of the Americas. You wanna know why? Because the United States of America (emphasis on America) is the most powerful country in the world.

Power Example 3: Transcript from, "Alice Walker"

43. Mrs. Handley:…I was watching the news this morning- the monument they put up for Martin Luther King, some seventeen-year old boy knocked it down (pause) His parents turned him in. He can do twenty years to life for that.
44. Student-(asks a question but it is undecipherable)
45. Class:(low chatter)
46. Handley-He knocked the monument down and broke it
47. Class:(responding to Handley's comment but undecipherable)
48. Handley-Yeah he went and broke it. His parents turned him in.
49. Student- White
Class:(commenting)

50. Handley-Destruction of property. They didn't put his picture on the t.v. though, so that let me know...
51. Class: He White
52. Handley- Must of been a White boy
53. Handley-They would've showed us.

The "Power" theme emerges in different ways throughout the class discussions. There are times when power is presented in the context of gender inequity as well as a functioning dynamic of power roles in the class (e.g., teacher vs. students, active class participants vs. passive class participants). Identifying how "race" is constituted in classroom settings creates an opportunity to see power as systemic. The three classroom events I analyzed represent power as systemic, but manifested in classroom discussions about both curriculum and everyday life.

Power Example 1, "Odds Stacked Against You," represents a teacher's view of how both racial and gender identity negatively impacts one's chances for success. She frames her comments by asserting that a college education is a major factor in being successful. There is no specific discussion about the relationship between being African American or being male or female and success except through the implication of systemic power. Mrs. Handley concludes, "…the odds are already stacked against you." This could be interpreted as a cautionary statement to encourage her students to work hard or to be committed to advancing their education. In either case, her statement is framed by the idea that because of her students' racial and gender backgrounds, there is systemic inequity that will hinder them from being successful.

The significance of examining Mrs. Handley's comments from a vantage point of power is rooted in the sociocultural dynamics of the class. The classroom culture has established discussions of "race" to be acceptable and even necessary, in some cases.

This comment is directly in alignment with Mrs. Handley's normative forthright approach to discussing issues and ideas. Teacher identity and her position as an African American woman teaching in a predominantly African American school allows her the ease to which she can directly address power in this manner. In a follow-up interview she admits, "these kids need someone to tell then that the world is not fair. They are accustomed to living in an all Black neighborhood attending an all Black high school. The world ain't Black." "…The odds are already stacked against you," is a powerful statement that suggests that who these students are limits their access to success despite their active behaviors and choices. The implication is regardless of their work ethic or promise, there are larger factors in place that will "count them out" before they get started. Mrs. Handley is addressing power and the inherently inequitable distribution of power as larger than individual actions and choices.

The history of "race" in the United States is a reflection of the distribution of power. Discussions of "race" might therefore be laden with issues of power or vice versa. Kemi, in a discussion of the Tone Collage, states that the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King wasn't about race but was about power. She argues that because there were White people involved in the Civil Rights Movement, race was less of a factor in the death of King. While this might be true, there is an inextricable relationship between race and power. Which one precedes the other is less of an argument, for it does not yield Mrs. Handley's admission that being African American men and women creates less than favorable "odds" for success in the United States.

Power Example 2: Transcript from, " Odds Stacked Against You" is an ideological example of power associated with language. The complexity of this example

is embedded in the perspective of the teacher against how language difference functions in everyday life. In the reading of "A Remembrance of Grandfathers," a young boy reflects on the advice his grandfather gives him about learning English. In the story, the life experiences of the grandfather encourage him to explain to his grandson that an aspect of his success in life will be based on his mastery of English. "You have to learn the language of the American" is a literature-based example of an elitist ideology of language that is strongly reflected in society today. The transcript begins with Mrs. Handley reviewing what the short story is about. However, in the course of the review, an ideology of language that shows favor toward English creates a discussion of power.

Mrs. Handley affirms that "we all speak different languages," but then adds that regardless of these languages it is a requirement that "we" have to learn English. What is striking about this example of power is the manner in which the students chime-in "English," in unison, to fill in the blank of Mrs. Handley's question. There is an explicit ideology of language that has been established in the United States. The students responding to this question in unison is reminiscent of an indoctrination into an "English Only" society. Roger, however, in line 3, suggests that if you do not live in America you do not have to learn English. This comment does not go unnoticed. Mrs. Handley simply re-iterates "You have to learn the language of the Americas." She then continues that rationale for this is because of the power of the United States. The presence of power in this class discussion is located in how the English language is positioned in the text and reinforced by the teacher. The continual phrasing "you must learn the language of the Americans" is quoted from the text but is also used as a mantra for "success."

Power becomes located in the ideological ideals of learning English and is centralized in the class.

The final example of power is Example 3: Transcript from, "Alice Walker." Different from the preceding examples, this discussion is not about the "Alice Walker" story but is a tangential discussion that begins as the teacher and students discuss how Black people are represented in society. Mrs. Handley begins a narrative about watching the news and hearing the report about the destruction of the Martin Luther King monument. During her narrative, she states that the assailant was caught because his parents turned him in. There was low chatter in the class as she shares this story but amidst the chatter a students utters, "White." Mrs. Handley does not take up this comment. She continues discussing the case. She then states in line 50, "…They didn't put his picture on the t.v. though, so that let me know..." Immediately, the class responds in unison, "He White" to which Mrs. Handley concurs while nodding her head, "Must have been White boy." This discussion of "race" reflects power in the shared knowledge among the students and the teacher about how non-Whites are represented in the media compared to Whites. The shared conclusion that the young man who knocked over the King monument had to be White revolves around the common overrepresentation of African Americans (and Latinos) as criminals in the media. Mrs. Handley and the students shared perspectives about the media and racial representation. Before she expressed her views the students in the class understood that "race" and the representation of Whites as criminals does not happen in the same capacity as it does for African Americans. To which, Mrs. Handley states, "they would have shown us."

These discussions of "race" are as equally significant to explicit discussion about curriculum. There are aspects of "race" that the teacher and the student understand because of either personal experiences or being members of communities who experience "race" differently in their everyday lives. Each of the three themes presented in this section demonstrate that discussions of "race" are present in classroom settings. They could be embedded in the curriculum because of the types of texts being used, or they could be intricately woven into discussions because there is an active attempt for teachers and students to connect their life experiences with the curriculum. Mrs. Handley's class welcomes discussions of "race" as they were often central to making sense of personal as well as pedagogical ideas. It is not clear whether these discussions were a result of explicit curricular planning yielding discussions of "race," or if African American students' and teachers' racial awareness supported these discussions. Part II of the findings examines the possible relationship between racial awareness and discussions of "race" with an analysis of focus groups and a follow-up interview all reflecting on two different classroom events.

Part II. Racial Awareness in Discussions of "Race"

This section of the findings is an in-depth analysis of the relationship between racial awareness and discussions of "race." This analysis and discussion is divided in two sections. Section A focuses on students' perspectives of "race," and Section B focuses on the teachers' perspectives. The student perspectives are derived from three

focus group discussions organized to discuss issues raised in class events. I base my findings on fieldnotes, thematic analysis, and discourse analysis conducted from transcriptions of the data. First, I discuss racial awareness and its relationship to discussions of "race." Next, I provide background information and a partial transcript for the two classroom events "Odds Stacked Against You" and "The Montgomery Bus Boycott."

This section of the findings examines how racial awareness is represented in discussions of "race," and is a response to research that suggests students and teachers are challenged to discuss "race" if their own level of racial awareness (consciousness) is limited (Keating, 1995; Sleeter, 1996; Jervis, 1996).

There are several operating assumptions embedded in the question about the relationship between how racial awareness is represented in discussions of "race." First, it could be assumed that one who is aware of "race" will likely engage in discussions of "race." For some, racial awareness could simply be recognizing difference (i.e. skin color, language use, etc.), which reflects biologically based notions of race. This is a minimal level of racial awareness. Discussions of "race" at this biological level are then limited notions of access to physical spaces (i.e. entering certain facilities and attending certain schools) and ability to participate in society and social processes (i.e. voting) have long defined racial barriers and therefore, racial progress.

The second operating assumption embedded in examining the relationship between racial awareness and discussions of "race" is the idea that a homogenous racial group might engage in discussions of "race" with the same level of understanding. It might be assumed because all of the students and the teacher are African American, their

awareness of "race" and responses to discussions of "race" are similar. This assumption can be made about many racial groups and the ideologies that might shape discussions of "race." This assumption contributes to the stereotype that racial groups are "like-minded," and therefore, their reactions to "race" would be the same. Homogenous racial orientation does not yield homogenous thought.

The last operating assumption is that inclusive discourse (i.e. *equality*) means there is the presence of racial awareness. In the last 20 years, students have had greater exposure to *colorblind* ideologies in schools, which scholars have argued has made educational experiences for non-Whites damaging in different ways (Nieto, 2004). One of the residual effects of multicultural education was teachers' retreat to "not seeing color." This happened nationally in part to combat the pressure of recognizing difference and suggesting that its recognition (difference) created racism. Much of this happened at the same time there was national "backlash against affirmative action" and the concept of *reverse-discrimination* (Cochran-Smith, Davis and Fries, 1995). Subsequently, many teachers embraced discourse of *sameness, diversity* and *equality* as ominous terms to derail discussing "race." as the national political climate deduced racial awareness to paranoia and lack of accountability for non-Whites. Terms like *sameness*, *diversity*, and *equality* are laden with the connotation of being racially aware on the surface. On the other hand, it is also a "catch-all" rhetorical strategy to not address "race" at all in a politically correct, yet deductive manner.

Section A. Student Perspectives of Racial Awareness

I use thematic analysis as a way to look at racial awareness and how it is represented in discussions of "race." I note the common ideas, expressions, and concepts that occur in three different focus group discussions with the 10th grade African American students. I also revisit the classroom events themselves detailing, racial awareness as it is represented by the teachers, and provide an analysis. The three 10th grade focus group discussions are conducted as reflective discussions on two classroom events, "Odds Stacked Against You," which has been presented earlier and "The Montgomery Bus Boycott," which I will foreground below.

March 4, 2005- "The Montgomery Bus Boycott"

On March 4th, the students had a substitute, Mr.Riley[15], who has worked at Rivercity High School as a substitute teacher for several teachers. He is very familiar with the students and knows many of them by first name. He is an African American in his mid-50's who had practiced law in the North and Northeast. He moved "back South" to raise his teenage son and to begin a new career. He identifies himself as a member of the Post Civil Rights Generation. Mr. Riley had substituted for Mrs. Handley on six occasions prior to this class event during the fall semester.

On this day, the students were assigned to read the "Montgomery Bus Boycott" on page 124 in their textbook for homework the night before and were directed to

[15] Mr. Riley signed an IRB permission slip for this study because of his frequent interaction with the students and because he substituted for the class on several occasions. I was not able to interview Mr. Riley after this lesson and he did not substitute for Mrs. Handley's class during the remaining time of the study.

"answer the critical thinking questions" at the end of the reading in class the following day. These instructions were written under "Class Procedures" on the chalkboard by Mrs. Handley. The students arrived with their textbooks. In the introduction of class, Mr. Riley explained to the students that rather then completing this assignment independently, they would have a large group discussion and answer the questions together. The group discussion began with Mr. Riley recapping hallmark events during the Civil Rights Movement as an introduction to the group discussion before answering the questions. Below is portion of the class transcript.

Transcript Key
.. two second pause
…three second pause
-short break

Introduction to Lesson

Mr. Riley: The Montgomery bus boycott was about Rosa Parks- was triggered when Rosa Parks didn't get up from her seat. You all are familiar with this- she refused to get up. Dr. King and some of the others got together and organized a protest- an opposition to the oppression that Blacks had suffered for many years. Oftentimes, Blacks would pay their fare..they would have to get off the bus and go to the back door and then when they would get off the bus-the bus driver would pull off and leave em. Bus driver would be laughin' and carryin' on. The reason why Rosa Parks was significant- she wasn't the first person that went to jail- the reason why she was important was because she was dignified. If this was just another low life another drug dealer or somebody they wouldn't have cared- they would've said they brought it on themselves. The reason why Rosa Parks is significant in our history..is because this was a Black woman that people could respect. And if- if they couldn't- if the White infrastructure could still disrespect this dignified woman…the thought was they could disrespect anybody.

(17 minutes pass as Mr. Riley talks about Civil Rights, regentrification in River City, the ramification of drugs in the inner city, the availability of jobs and resources in poor communities and his former work in the legal profession. The students do not talk during this time until Faith raises her hand).

"Montgomery Bus Boycott" continued…

Faith: Uhhh, I wanna stay on what you're talking about. Ummm you keep saying "them people" and "those people-" I mean we as Black people we can get our education we can do the same thing they are doin- I- I mean we ain't gonna be able to move forward if we keep on lookin back.

Mr. Riley: I'm cognizant of this young lady, and that's one of the reasons why I'm havin this discussion. Because these people moved forward because they organized a protest…They were lead by intelligent people. My objective today is to inspire to implore to intrigued the students here to get their education. I don't believe in livin in the past- but I also know that we can not move into the future without knowledge of the past. Malcolm said "tomorrow only belongs to those who prepare for it today." So my objective here is to give students an understanding.

(3 minutes pass as Mr. Riley continues to explain the significance of this lesson and his introductory comments)

Mr. Riley: We're gonna talk about The Montgomery Bus Boycott-Connecting Literature..Number one- The very first question says, "What went through your mind while reading the selection? (long pause). The story is about a young lady who got off the bus- I mean who refused to get up and they locked her up. The people got mad-they got indignant…they organized a protest to boycott the buses. Number one young lady? What went through your mind..don't know what went through your mind, but normally when you read the story you realize how can people who smile in your face everyday. Take your money. And then you pay your fare on the bus and you get off to go to the back and the bus driver pulls off. How can you do that to a pregnant woman and you gone make her give up her seat and you let some ole White man some grown White boy twenty year old White boy sit down and she's pregnant. How can you make an eighty-year old Black woman get up and let a teenager a White teenager sit down. How can you let a woman pay her fare and then make her get off and you pull off. How can you call Black people d-dogs and animals all day long and expect them to do nothing about it. How can you act so nice and have kids pledging allegiance about an indivisible nation one nation under God and then turn around and treat them like this. And you supposed to be a Christian people in a Christian nation. That was went through-those were some of my thoughts

Faith: Mr. uhhh Riley. Are you still offended about acts that happened a long time ago?

Mr. Riley: Say it again young lady?

Faith: Are you still offended on what happened a long time ago?

"Montgomery Bus Boycott" continued…

Mr. Riley: Young lady I'm not so much offended about what happened a long time ago. I'm thankful that I came from a group of people that were so strong that no injustice could hold them back. What offends me is my own people- is turning back. what our forefathers fought to push us forward. I hate to see young people with all this brain everytime I come to a classroom and I look at you all face and I look at the beauty and intelligence radiating in you alls face and then I look at you all throwing it away and I think about people died and suffering dogs bitin em', goin to jail, getting beaten over the head just so we could be here today…and I want you all to understand that. That is what my indignation is predicated upon. I'm not worried about what happened in the past because..my people in the past fought the good fight.they kept the faith.that's why we are where we are.but I want us to keep the faith going forward.so that the people still fightin against us won't keep us back…longer. Cause I have a child in this world and he may have some children. I want the fight to continue.

Student: Preach!

These two classroom events are very different but are equally important in discussion of "race" in classroom settings. I use the classroom events to begin gaining the students' perspectives on several issues. The event "Odds Stacked Against You" is used to learn from the students their understanding and ideas around the significance of learning English when living in the United States. The second event "The Montgomery Bus Boycott" is used to learn from the students how they understand or view "race" as African Americans who are more directly a part of a long history of "race" and racism, specifically in the South. I use both of these class events to examine the relationship between racial awareness and discussions of "race" among the 10th grade students.

"Odds Stacked Against You:" Focus Group Discussions

Portions of this transcript have already been analyzed in Part I of the findings. I revisit this class event because an issue of language difference became a focus for other out-of-class focus group discussions. One of those focus group discussions entitled, "We Just Can't Understand What You Saying" took place with Faith and Monica. Another focus group discussion entitled, "Coming to America," reflected on the same class event with Monica and Dionne. Monica participates in both focus group discussions, as she was a informant for understanding discussions of "race" for the study. I documented in my fieldnotes that another student, Shemetria who was an active participant in class (e.g., raising her hand and offering ideas), was even more engaged in class during the study of Alice Walker's work. During the study of "Women" and "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," Shemetria offered comments and reacted to her peers differently than usual. I met with Shemetria to discuss her reactions to "Alice Walker" and "Head-Ragged Generals." In this discussion, she provided insight about her personal experiences and racial awareness that contributes to her relationship with discussions of "race."

Racial awareness is represented in many different ways in several discussions in the study. One aspect of racial awareness is represented in discussions of language difference. I was interested in hearing the students' perspectives on learning English based on how it was presented in the classroom context with the reading of "A Remembrance of Grandfathers." Each focus group began with the students discussing what they remembered from the class event and then watching a five-minute video clip

from the beginning of class. The transcript of "Odds Stacked Against You" is the portion of the video clip each discussion group reviewed.

Three themes emerged from these two focus group discussions that are significant in discussions of "race." These three themes are: (1) Language and Power, (2) Morality and (3) Representations of Language. First, I provide a brief transcript from each discussion group and then I provide a table organizing each theme and statements made by the focus group participants that demonstrate racial awareness from the discussion group. I then discuss the findings from this thematic analysis using discourse analysis.

Focus Group 1: "We Just Can't Understand You"

1. Monica: And it's racism from when you know they come over to our culture cause.. this is something that happened to me [places her hand on her chest] that I can't stand. When you go to a nail shop and Chinese people talk

2. Faith: talk (begins nodding her head in and slightly rocking)

3. Monica: in their own language cause they know you can't understand what they saying

4. Ayanna: umm hmm

5. Monica: I hate that because I know that they talking about people because like I went to the nail shop with my Mama..and this Black old lady came in and she had a little hair (shrinks her body in a bit demonstrating frailty to smallness wiggling her hands next to her head) because she old and the Chinese ladies was lookin at her like this (stares blankly) and had a smirk on her face and looked at the other Chinese lady and was "percent&*^percent*&&^" (begins making nonsensical noises to signify speaking Chinese) talking. And I don't like that. I don't think that is right. I don't think they should do that. You know cause we ain't stupid. We know what you talking about we just can't understand **w**hat you saying.

Focus Group 2: " Coming to America"- 10th Grade discussion

1. Dionne- Yeah. I do. Like- it's a corner store around the corner from my house and they they Iranians Iranians and they talk funny. People talkin about them because they can't quite understand what we be saying sometime. And sometime they be trying to struggle and talk how we talk. So- I mean in order to live in America you must learn English. It's a must (said nodding her head)

2. Monica- And I feel like they want to live in America because really the United States is where you can get the most money-instead of their countries because they have small countries- but in America you can have small businesses and get all kinda people come cause it such a big place.

3. Ayanna-What do you think about the idea that people are told that they can't speak their own language? Let's say that someone moves here, let's take the example of the family that that owns a store- works in the store. And you're saying in order to understand the customers there needs to be a common language that both of you understand to work. Ummm. What do you think about the idea that sometimes these families are told they can't speak their own language here at all.

4. Monica- To me that that's that's right- cause people love talking about people. That's how I feel. You shouldn't do that. Talk so everybody feel comfortable.

5. Dionne- (talking to Monica) You gotcha grill did?

6. Monica- No

7. Dionne- ohh

8. Monica- So you can feel comfortable. Like cause like when I be going to the nail place you know Chinese people own it (Dionne begins nodding quickly) and get our nails done. We seen this old lady come it with her hair was lookin funny and the Chinese lady looked at her are started laughing and start talking in their language

9. Dionne- Yeahhh Yeahh (nodding quickly)

10. Monica- to the other lady. And I was lookin like that is not right.

11. Dionne- That makes you feel so uncomfortable.

12. Monica- That is wrong.

13. Dionne- I know what you saying. That makes you feel so uncomfortable.

14. Monica- So, I feel its its good and I say this cause uhh

Focus Group 1: “We Just Can’t Understand You” continued…

15. Dionne- And they just talkin and laughing and everything. And that make you- at the corner store they be talkin about us too, cause sometimes you be like how much this cost and they'll point to the price tag and say it's right in front of your face and then they'll just start talking to they daddy or something (Undecipherable)

16. Monica- She stupid

17. Dionne-Yeah. They be talking about people and that just make you feel so uncomfortable. Make you not want leave your mone

Table 9: Representations of Racial Awareness

Discussions of "Race"	Theme 1 "Language and Power"	Theme 2 "Morality"	Theme 3 "Representations of Language Difference"
"We just can't understand what you saying."	**Example 1** **Monica:** When you go to a nail shop and Chinese people talk **Faith**: talk (begins nodding her head in and slightly rocking) **Monica**: in their own language cause they know you can't understand what they saying **Example 2:** **Monica:** You know cause we ain't stupid. We know what you talking about we just can't understand what you saying.	**Example 1** **Monica**: I hate that because I know that they talking about people **Example 2** **Monica:** And I don't like that. I don't think that is right. I don't think they should do that.	**Monica:** Chinese ladies was lookin at her like this (stares blankly) and had a smirk on her face and looked at the other Chinese lady and was "percent&*^percent*&&^" (begins making nonsensical noises to signify speaking Chinese) talking.
"Coming to America"	**Example 1** **Dionne:…** So- I mean in order to live in America you must learn English. It's a must (said nodding her head) **Example 2** **Dionne:…** cause sometimes you be like how much this cost and they'll point to the price tag and say it's right in front of your face and then they'll just start talking to they daddy or something (Undecipherable) **Monica**- She stupid **Dionne**-Yeah. They be talking about people and that just make you feel so uncomfortable. Make you not want leave your money	**Example 1** **Dionne:…**People talkin about them because they can't quite understand what we be saying sometime. **Example 2** **Monica**- To me that that's that's right- cause people love talking about people. That's how I feel. You shouldn't do that. Talk so everybody feel comfortable. **Example 3** **Dionne**-they'll point to the price tag and say it's right in front of your face	**Dionne:…**They Iranians Iranians and they talk funny. People talkin about them because they can't quite understand what we be saying sometime.

The two focus group discussions that feature Monica provide a context for how language difference is closely connected to "race." Moreover, racial awareness is aptly connected to the power or lack of power expressed by the students as a result of language difference. Simply stated, the African American students suggested they do not have the same level of power as the multilingual community members they describe; "they can understand our language but we can't understand theirs." Part of this lack of power is expressed as purely linguistic not being able to communicate effectively with one another. Yet, another critical aspect of this power is the moral feelings of inadequacy and inferiority because of the belief that these speakers abuse their multilingual abilities.

These experiences that both Monica and Dionne present are each examples of the relationship between proprietors and consumers. In each discussion of "race," the African American students are consumers and the proprietors are multilingual and more importantly, not African American. This is an important factor because even as multilingual speakers, the proprietors do not share racial identities with the community. Each of these accounts come from the perspectives of the African American students, which makes the significance of racial awareness important as the events are retold. On the surface, the students are discussing language and discussing their belief about immigrants learning English. But it is important to note that their beliefs are contextualized by experiences in everyday life. What is on one level a discussion of language is also a discussion of "race" and racial awareness.

Monica begins the narrative as a racial narrative in passage 1, where she states, "And it's racism from when you know they come over to our culture." Immediately, there is a sense of entitlement to "culture," that Monica expresses in the binary language

of "they" and "our." "When they come over to our culture," implies that first, whoever is coming over doesn't truly belong. Secondly, the "culture" *they* are coming into is defined and need not be altered or intruded upon by *they*. Furthermore, it is unclear whether "our culture" is Black culture or American culture or Southern culture. Yet, this lack of clarity is not as significant as Monica's assertion that the relationship between the *they* and the *our* is racial; she posits it's racism.

In the narrative, Monica explains the eye gaze of one "Chinese lady" to another "Chinese lady" as they reportedly stare at what Monica describes as an "old Black lady." In passage 5, Monica adds that after the "Chinese ladies" exchanged glances, they started talking to one another in what she believes was Chinese. Monica begins using nonsensical sounds to illustrate the "Chinese ladies" speaking. This is a racial representation of language. She is aware of the language difference but does not simply state that the ladies were speaking another language. Her imitation of the language in a nonsensical format is suggestive of how she might perceive the language because of her lack of access to it. Monica's interpretation of the event creates a framework that she is disenfranchised and powerless because of her perception of how the "Chinese ladies" are using their language. We don't know if indeed the ladies were "talking about" anyone, but the recurrence of this theme of power and lack of power is significant for these students. This same theme is addressed by Dionne in "Coming to America."

Dionne begins the telling of her experiences similarly to Monica's narrative. She identifies *they* to signify "the Iranians" early in passage 1. She also immediately locates the issue of communication as significant but clearly a problem as she tells her story. In Passage 1 she states, "People talking about them because they can't quite understand

what we be saying sometime." This line is important because she presents a dynamic perspective. She states, "people talk about them." This statement implies that there is a level of awareness beyond her own that recognizes the differences between *them* and *us*. "People" represents community members who have access to the corner store, who are likely neighborhood "people." It is possible that she is implying a racial tension between "the Iranians" and African Americans, for she lives in a predominantly African American community. She suggests that there is an effort on the part of "the Iranian" proprietors to communicate with the consumers when she states, "And sometimes they be trying to struggle and talk how we talk." It is not clear if "talk[ing] how *we* talk" means speaking English, African American Language, or Southern dialect; however, Dionne is aware of the language in use when "the Iranians" make attempts to communicate with *them*.

Passage 15 is where racial awareness is more keenly represented in the event. She states, "…*they* be talking about *us* too." Here she presents another view of the tension between *them* and *us*. Initially when she states, "people talk about them *because* they can't quite understand," here begins her personal account of interactions with the store proprietors. "…you be like how much this cost and they'll point to the price tag and say it's right in front of your face and then they'll just start talking to they daddy or something." This portion of the passage reflects the power dynamic that exists between "the Iranians" and her account of their social interactions in the store. She never mentions "race" per se, nor does she describe the event as racist; however, it is significant that her retelling of this event is in connection with her previous statement in passage 1, "order to live in America you must learn English." The tone of her account when she

states, "…they'll point to the price tag and say it's right in front of your face" makes this event more complicated. Her conclusion of not wanting to leave the money to pay for an item expresses the tension between the communities, which are racially defined.

During the focus group discussions, Monica suggests that the interactions between these racial communities are "not right." She states in several lines "that is wrong." Monica comments on how she views these interactions morally. In both focus group discussions, there is considerable attention given to the notion of being "talked" about. This same idea comes up in a focus group discussion with the 12th grade participants. Among the African American students, many of them perceive that when a second language is spoken (non-English), and particularly when the second language is spoken by service providers while performing services, they (African Americans) are being ridiculed. Where this notions stems from is not clear, but it is a commonly stated idea among several of the participants. The idea of not knowing what is being said by "the Chinese ladies" or "the Iranians" is seen as "wrong." In defense of the moral stance, Monica states in a later portion of the focus group discussion that people should have the right to their own language, but "if you're in public doing business they need to speak English."

Conversely to Monica's moral ascription that these interactions are "wrong," Dionne does not explicitly judge the interactions. Rather she states, "it makes you feel uncomfortable" and "make you feel like not leaving your money." Dionne's comment represents an affective response that is a response to a level of racial awareness. The feeling of discomfort is suggestive of feeling vulnerable or not pleased with the

circumstance. However, in each of these events, the consumer is presented as reliant upon the goods and services of the proprietor. The statement that it "make you feel like not leaving your money," suggests that she first, has always paid her money anyway out of obligation. Secondly, she discusses these events as if they are recurring. This suggests that these interactions are not one-time occurrences and raises the question as to why she continues to go to this particular store. The idea that the interactions are morally connected is implied in Dionne's final statement.

In Focus Group 1, I ask about people's rights to their own language. I specifically question the students' opinion about immigrants being told that "they can't speak their own language" posed as a scenario. Monica responds in passage 4, "To me that, that's right-cause people love talking about people." Monica associates people speaking the first language with being ridiculed. She continues, "Talk so everybody feel comfortable." This issue of "comfortability" recurs and is something that has impacted Monica on several occasions. Later on in Focus Group 2, she recounts a time in the nail shop when a "Chinese lady" is completing a manicure and while holding her hand, she asks Monica if she has ever bleached her skin "like Michael Jackson." Monica describes the event as insulting because as she is being questioned, the "Chinese lady" turns to the side and begins speaking "Chinese" to one of the other service providers. Each comment Monica makes to the "Chinese lady" was followed by additional remarks between other workers. In this example, she *knows* the conversation is about her and deems it inappropriate and insulting. Notwithstanding the question about "race" and skin color was offensive as well although it was posed as a question of curiosity. The association of

appropriateness and a moral sense of right and wrong is a result of the differences made visible by racial awareness.

The last theme present in examining racial awareness is the "Representation of Language Difference." In both focus groups, Monica and Dionne represent language difference as an awareness of "race." Monica's awareness begins when she describes the ladies as "Chinese" and then later mimics the language as she explains her perspective of the interaction. Her representation of "^%$#@*&^talking" is set against the language spoken by the consumers in the nail shop, English. In creating the description of the "Chinese ladies'" language, she sets them apart from the clients in the nail shop and further stratifies the "Chinese ladies" against English speakers. Monica's racial awareness is heightened as she presents the interactions, eye gazes, and language use in the context of the event with the "Old Black lady." The focus of the narrative includes representing language use, but this is done while recognizing "race" as a significant part of her interpretation of the event.

Dionne's account of the events at the corner store also represent language of non-English speakers in stratifying ways that signify "race." Dionne begins her narrative emphasizing the "Iranians" and "they talk funny." Her racial awareness is located in first identifying the proprietors as a fundamental aspect of her story. She continues the narrative explaining how *they* are subject to ridicule because *they* speak differently. Dionne is setting up the narrative to explore the significance of communication. She does this by pointing out the "Iranians" attempt to "talk how we talk." She presents her awareness of difference by describing the shifts between the store workers in three parts:

(1) them speaking a language that she does not understand; (2) speaking English, which she constitutes as talking funny; and (3) the attempts to "talk how we talk." This language awareness is not isolated from "race" at any point because of the focus she brings to the racial identities of the store proprietors.

The discussions of "race" in these two focus groups were made visible because of the students' racial awareness. Racial awareness as analyzed was not limited to biologically based notions of race. The students presented "race" in the context of discussing power, morality, and representation of language. This is significant because oftentimes what may appear to be a simple dialogue about a topic (e.g., English only initiatives or re-gentrification) is inclusive of larger issues, like "race" or even reflective of racism. The students' sharing their experiences, which formulates their opinions about rights to one's own language, critically demonstrates how "race" is not always an explicit issue. It often lurks in the background of other issues and requires examination to demonstrate the dynamic nature of discussions of "race.

"The Montgomery Bus Boycott": Focus Group

This focus group took place with three 10th grade students during lunchtime on the same day as the classroom event. The student participants are Faith, Missy and Chloe. I identified two themes of racial awareness in this particular focus group discussion. These themes are (1) "Stuck in the Past" and

(2) "Race Matters But It Shouldn't," I divided the transcript from the focus group discussion according to each of the themes to organize the analysis. The context for this focus group discussion is different than the two previously presented focus groups because it occurs directly after the classroom event during their lunchtime. In the fieldnotes below, I describe some of these reactions.

Partial Fieldnotes From Montgomery Bus Boycott Discussion March 4, 2005

Mr. Riley is *still* talking. I am not sure if he is connecting with the students. It does sound more like a sermon than a discussion. Except to Faith. She is certainly not responding with an "Amen." Why is she the only one questioning Mr. Riley? Why are the other students silent?

Mr. Riley is using several strategies to talk about the Civil Rights Movement, mostly his perspective based from experiences. I wonder is this how many African American youth perceive talks about Civil Rights- sermons.

Missy continues to make eye contact with me as if she wants me to do something. I am not sure what she wants me to do. She did it again. It is sort of a stare without shifting her eye gaze from mine and then she nods her head and widens her eyes as if to shout, "Ayanna- do something." Although the issues are not funny- this is funny. I am going to have to talk to Missy about what this eye gazing head-nodding is all about.

About four minutes have gone by. Faith is still proposing ideas about "race" and equity to Mr. Riley. He is responding/defending? Then... What just happened. Faith is quiet- not just quiet…silent…silenced?

Faith's Body Language
Faith throws her pencil down on her notebook.
Head down looking at texts with right hand on forehead.
Takes hand away to look across the room and then places index finger on left temple.
She sits for about fifteen seconds and then places left hand across her forehead leaning with her shoulder on the back of the seat.
She sits for another thirty two seconds and shifts forward uttering something to herself.
She moves her purse to the left side of her desk and leans her head down on her left arm facing the wall. She shakes her legs and then sits up still facing the wall.
She then wipes her left eye under her glasses then her right eye.
After four seconds she turns around.
I think Faith is crying. She is. She is crying. (End of fieldnote)

This class event raised several questions for me regarding racial awareness. What was most apparent was the tension between Mr. Riley and Faith. My fieldnotes reflect a Faith's emotional response to the discussion in class. It was critical to get the students' perspectives on the class event and the ideas that were being discussed in the event. The focus group discussion was organized to get a reaction from the students on the class event. The first transcript entitled, "Stuck in the Past" reflects the students' reactions to the event; whereas, "Race Matters But it Shouldn't" is a discussion about issues raised in the class event. After each transcript of this focus group discussion, I analyze how racial awareness is represented in the discussion of "race" and then return to the class event to discuss how Mr. Riley represents "race" in the discussion.

Transcript Key
.. two second pause
…three second pause
-short break

Transcript 1: "Stuck in the Past"

1. **Faith**: (looked down big sigh exhaling and fiddling with pen) class today-it really struck a point with me..because he was talking about the Black people and Mr. uh Martin Luther King and all the old leaders you know from back (rolling her hands backward) you know what I'm sayin they still leaders today but what we have to understand is families from generation generation should build so we can just up constant up build it (lifting her hands up with palms facing upward). And it seems like there's not a steady ground (said slowly using hands to emphasize "foundation") for us. It should be we. They want us to just graduate and take over the nation. And it's gonna be kinda hard because it's not it's nothing it's no foundation out there.

2. **Ayanna**: o.k. help me understand who you're talking about. Who is

3. **Faith**: Mr.
4. **Ayanna**: they? They want us to…Who are you talking about?

5. **Faith**: uhhh like Mr. Riley (throwing her right hand up and slapping her leg) He want us to graduate and be smart and educated but.. it's when I look at the world from my perspective there's (shaking her head) there's not a strong enough foundation for us to just jump out there and take over the world

6. **Ayanna**: And when you say there is not a strong enough foundation for us.Who is the us?
7. **Faith**: I dunn (pause) Black people…the.young Black people…I mean its I mean just people all come together that's down and don't have what we have-black people well I have-they should be able to come up (flopping her hands down in her lap)

8. **Ayanna**: You seemed to be really(pause) At what point in the talk today did you feel like you had to say something. What at what point did you have to say something?

9. **Faith**: When he. It just seemed like he just kept going Mr. Riley kept going back into the past to the past to the past…and

10. **Missy**: Like he was stuck on the past

Transcript 1: "Stuck in the Past" continued…

11. **Faith**: and every year in school it's like it's something we need to do to pass to graduate and so it's like it's getting harder and harder and when it's time for us to go to college..I mean tuition is gonna be up there…and I mean we should just take it one step at a time and just ask us how we feel and what should we do..you know what I'm sayin..we we tryin I dunn. we tryin real hard...

(long pause)

12. **Missy**: and you know about that when we was like you know how he was like "in the past"…I mean things did happen in the past and stuff happen in the future the same thing they used in the past might not work today in the future because this is we this a new time- everything not the same. Everything might not work. Like they all got together. In society we in today people do not can not get together. It's like you got to do for yourself. I mean you have to you have to have somebody for you. (Banging noise in the background) But you also have to do for yourself. You can't trust on other people. In the past, they was like knit-they was close. What you knew, I knew. What you knew-everybody knew. Like that they was close. But today, it's like you gotta use different strategies. You can't dwell on the past…and expect everything from the past to work to emerge on the future.

Analysis of Racial Awareness for "Stuck in the Past"

In the follow-up interview with Faith, Missy, and Chloe, Faith begins the conversation. Immediately, she identifies her emotional response as "striking to her" and elaborates on why the conversation was so important to her. In line 1, she immediately identifies the historical aspect of Black leadership by identifying Martin Luther King as an "old leader" from "back in the day." This historical positioning of Martin Luther King is critical because it suggests not only how the person, Dr. King, is seen iconically rather than actively. This distinction between MLK as an icon versus an active force in the racial and social politics of the day, positions Dr. King and the social and cultural issues that surround his legacy (i.e. Civil Rights Movement) as being issues of the past.

Although the students seem to understand the context of Mr. Riley's talk, the perceived presentation as historical even questioned whether Mr. Riley was **still** offended. This reference to the past becomes thematic in the discussion with the students. Faith's conception of Dr. King is situated. Her awareness of "race" suggests the challenges she faces today are not the same as they were during the Civil Rights Movement. She clarifies this in line 5 where she discusses graduating and school success as her challenges. Faith and Missy constantly reinforce the disconnect between "the past" and their experiences by regarding Mr. Riley's comments as being "stuck in the past." They are aware of the significance of the Civil Rights Movement but also suggest the discussion needed to embrace more.

In line 5, Faith states, "when I look at the world from my perspective there's (shaking her head) there's not a strong enough foundation for us to just jump out there and take over the world." Faith identifies her ability to be successful as directly connected to the support of the older generation. She connects this idea to Mr. Riley's comment during the lesson that students today have not taken "advantage of the hard work" accomplished during the Civil Rights Movement. Her statement about the lack of foundation or support is a critique of the Civil Rights Generation and the Post Civil Rights Generation whose platform of equality was necessary but incomplete. In line 11, Faith introduces the continually changing graduation requirements as well as rising economic costs for college as impacting variables for the success of Black youth. These challenges are "real" for the context of her "everyday life," and these issues she promotes, are as much a part of the discussion of "race" presented within the context of Black progress as those located in Mr. Riley's talk.

Faith's regard to Mr. Riley being "stuck in the past" is also a critique of how the challenges with "race" are systemic and not simply issues of physical access or perception of Black people. Faith states in line 11 "We tryin. We tryin real hard," but despite their [African American students'] efforts, the requirements for academic success are constantly changing. For Faith, the benchmarks for success in school are challenging because of the continual threat of failure and this she sees as the struggle for Black youth.

Faith's comments about work ethic, academic success, and "race" as a generational responsibility is continued by Missy, who views social and racial progress as a result of the approach of members of the Civil Rights and Post Civil Rights Generation. Missy identifies the Civil Rights Movement as a series of events where "they all got together" (Line 12). Missy's racial awareness is represented in line 12 where she juxtaposes possibilities of unity among the Civil Rights Generation and society today. She states, "In society we in today people do not can not get together. It's like you got to do for yourself." Both Faith and Missy relate Mr. Riley perspective as not applicable to today's Black youth and don't feel as if the approach of the Civil Rights Movement can meet the needs that Black youth have today.

In the second half of the transcript, the discussion shifts from reacting to Mr. Riley and the class event to discussing "race" and its relevance in the discussion.

Transcript 2: "Race Matters But it Shouldn't"

1. **Ayanna**: Why do you think…race..was a part of the discussion? And why is it not a part of what you guys are talking about?

2. **Missy**: o.k. race don't matter. Black.white.indian. blue.purple.green. everybody is the same people race color don't mean nothing. **(Faith nodding in agreement)**

3. **(Missy continues):** Everybody is gonna be the same way. Everybody go through the same problems no matter what color you are no matter what you still goin through the same thing. they make race such a big issue because it had to do with the past. I mean it still is race issues goin on, but it's not as worse as the past. Everybody goes through something right now- so it's not race- it's (long pause with hand palm up shifting it back and forth)…it's everybody

4. **Ayanna**: Faith- what's what's why

5. **Faith**: race…it's nothing but another word. That's that's how I feel because..Black Black and White. Why they split us up like that…I I I don't understand cause we all can come together. (using her fingers to list things as if she's counting) we can go to the same church, we can go to the same school. We can go to the same bar. We up under the same jail! I (she sighs and shaking her head)

6. **Missy**: I know a White boy

7. **Ayanna**: Chloe- what's your

8. **Chloe**: I feel two sided about it cause I feel like the same way Faith feel. We can go to the same church and all that but yet..society is making it seem like your White you better than them. You can get o.k.you have five children and you don't have to be on welfare we'll just give you the money. And you Black you can't get welfare cause you ain't doin nothing with ya life anyway like that. That's how I feel and like White people…White people out there they doin drugs, they robbin banks, **Missy and Faith** (nodding in agreement as they listen) they havin babies and all that but they not broadcast on the news

9. **(Missy turning toward Chloe pointing with her index finger)**: that's true

10. **Chloe**: but let a Black person have a baby, and need welfare and have two or three babies and be on welfare it's all over the news. "Why she need welfare she ain't doin nothing with her life but"

11. **Missy**: (in a low tone) it's racism when White folks doing it

Transcript 2: "Race Matters But it Shouldn't" continued…

12. **Ayanna**: It sounds like..It sounds like you're saying race is a factor, it's just different now.

13. **Chloe**: I feel like it is a factor it just…it's like Black people(waving her hands in a circular motion) is taking it and saying that it's like it's just a name and stuff like that and the White people over there saying well (unclear) I'm White she Black we don't need to be together cause she low income I'm high income, but they doin the same thing.

14. **Missy**: well maybe. What kill me is that the same thing that a Black lady could be doin havin all them babies and sittin in the house- it's a White lady doin it.

15. **Ayanna**: so

16. **Missy**: the same thing it's happening both sided..so people the same. With the race thing it's just that people are so stuck on race that when it happens with a Black person- it's gotta be…it's just everywhere. If it happens with a White person it might not be everywhere.

17. **Ayanna**: So is that…is is the examples you're giving are these examples other examples of racism? Is that racism?

18. **Missy**: Yes. Yes

19. **Chloe**: (nodding yes)

20. **Faith**: (nodding yes but slightly)

21. **Ayanna**: So why do we think that race doesn't matter then?

22. **Miss**y: I mean. Race. O.k. o.k. let me see. Race does matter but to me. it shouldn't

23. **Ayanna**: aaahh. O.k. that's a different comment

Analysis of Racial Awareness in "Race Matters But it Shouldn't"

In Part I of the focus group discussion, Faith and Missy discuss the challenges presented in participating in class. Specifically, they identify Mr. Riley as being "Stuck in the past." Included in their notion of being "stuck" is their belief that the challenges

Black students deal with today are not the same as it was "back then." This recurring concept suggested that they saw the social influence of "race" differently in their lives than in what had been presented by Mr. Riley. Faith stated, "all people should be able to come up not just Black." This statement suggests that she associated Mr. Riley's comments with "race" about only Black people. "Race Matters But it Shouldn't" begins with the following question, "Why do you think…race..was a part of the discussion? And why is it not a part of what you guys are talking about?" This question was derived from my fieldnotes taken in class where Faith challenges Mr. Riley's presentation by asking him whether or not he was still offended by White people? This was a curious question I identified. Faith seemed to locate the tension with "race" as Mr. Riley's concerns, only. As the students reacted in Part I of the focus group discussion, I also noted the absence of discussion "race." This question was used to centralize "race" for the discussion and to understand how the students see their lives and social interactions outside of the contexts provided by Mr. Riley.

Missy responds in line 2 to the question of "race" stating "race" or color doesn't matter. She uses the racial, ethnic, and color framework often presented in public discourse to represent cultural and or racial diversity. She lists colors as concepts for "race." Faith's nod of agreement is in line with her typical challenge to discuss equality and *sameness* rather than discuss "race." Missy then continues in line 3 and states that people are all the same. Missy's emphasis on *sameness* shapes her response to Mr. Riley. Missy's stance is her argument against Mr. Riley's presentation of "race." He used scenarios from the Civil Rights Movement, personal accounts and opinions about "race," and racist acts. Because his presentation was strongly worded with tones of racial

division, Missy's reaction of *sameness* was to dismantle racial divide rather than taking up how "race" functions systemically.

This discussion continues through line 5. However, notice Faith's use of language. She uses, "We **can** go" as she lists all of the opportunities available to African American youth. This list reflects the freedoms that are implicitly available to all groups of people, though explicitly, many people still cannot go to the same churches or schools because other variables, directly connected to "race," disparages them from being participants in certain communities. The point in this line is Faith's argument that unlike the pre Civil Rights Generation, who were physically outlawed from communities based on the color of their skin, those boundaries are no longer in place. One can interact with all "races" if one chooses to. For Faith and Missy, this ability to interact with people across "race" makes "race" reminiscent of "the past." Missy adds in line 6, "I **know** a White boy." Although a small remark, this comment suggests that she **can** know a White boy, which is stated symbolically to represent what she constitutes as social progress.

The course of the dialogue shifts dramatically in line 8 when Chloe introduces racialization. She adds to the discussion,"I feel two sided about it cause I feel like the same way Faith feel. We can go to the same church and all that but yet..society is making it seem like your White you better than them." Her introduction of racialization changes the focus group discussion from this point forward. She begins to identify how society brands people actions and behaviors according to "race," but there is only irreparable damage done to the image of Black people as a result of this branding. Once the examples of everyday life experiences are introduced using narratives of ordinary people, the discussion of "race" shifts. Lines 8 through 11 is Chloe's discussion of how

racialization is operationalized in everyday life. She uses a stereotypical example of how Black women are often purported as being abusers of government assistance (i.e. welfare). Once Chloe offers this perspective, Faith and Missy both agree that there is a problem with the images associated with "race" and poverty. This shift is significant because up to this point, the students had not challenged one another's perspectives of "race."

In Line 14, Chloe adds another level to racialization intersecting it with class. She suggests that even when both Black and Whites are "doin the same thing," Whites use their class status to segregate themselves from Blacks. At this point in the focus group, Chloe presents the alternative framework for thinking about "race" using examples of how it functions in everyday life. Chloe's examples gain support from Missy and Faith through their nonverbal gestures or finger pointing although it challenges the positivistic views they both expressed earlier. Yet, when Chloe points out that White and Blacks do the "same things," Missy concludes, "… it's happening both sided..so people the same." This statement represents a confirmation of *sameness* for her despite the circumstances Chloe presents as racialization.

Asking the students whether "race matters" challenged them to address social realities that they believe should not exist. What is key about the phrasing "race matters…but it shouldn't" is the awareness of the significance of "race" that wasn't present in the earlier portions of the discussions. Even after Chloe provides an alternative way to think about "race" in "everyday life, " Missy in line 17 retreats to her earlier notion that "people the same." Missy uses Chloe's example to confirm the ideas

that all people do good and bad things. All people rely on support or services. Missy's strong belief in *sameness* and *equality* acts as a filter for seeing "race" as systemic.

The class event itself created tensions for the students. Although Mr. Riley had substituted in the class on previous occasions, he engaged in this class event differently than in the past. I asked Chloe about Mr. Riley's teaching on previous occasions as we were departing the discussion group. She stated that he never went "on and on" about a topic in this manner. I then asked her how did he normally conduct class on days he substituted, to which she responded, "He calls roll, tell us what Mrs. Handley wanted us to do, and asks us to be respectful while we complete the work. Today- he went off." Chloe's remarks suggests that "The Montgomery Bus Boycott" event was not a normal interaction with Mr. Riley. Although this was the first time Mr. Riley's presence intersected with the data collection process, the interactions in the class and the reaction of the students prompted an analysis of the class event.

The last focus group discussion was conducted with "Shemetria," a 10th grade student in Mrs. Handley's class. I noted that during the focus on Alice Walker, she was *more* active than usual. Meaning, she contributed ideas and responded to other students' comments more frequently than I had previously observed. Observing Shemetria lead to my interest in knowing her perspective of these lessons. In an analysis of Shemetria's comments, she suggests that these lessons connected with her because of her personal experiences with "race." "Being Black" is the one-on-one discussion with Shemetria after the Alice Walker series in Mrs. Handley's class. She shares her personal experiences with opportunities to read as issues germane to African Americans.

"Being Black": Shemetria's Discussions of Alice Walker and Self

1. **Ayanna**: You said that you like to read- what type of books do you like to read?

2. **Shemetria:** I like to read ummm lots of books especially like the ones my Auntie has. My mom reads a lot too. Like in Essense magazine there are articles talking about books and we have some of those. And she let me read them. But in was one book that we read in English this past year- I really was inspired by or remembering of something in my past or whatever and it was called "The Skin I'm In."

3. **Ayanna**: Oh o.k. (nodding head)

4. **Shemetria:** and

5. **Ayanna:** Why did you like that book? Tell me about the book first.

6. **Shemetria:** Well I liked the book because I was- it was like a stage that I was going through when I was younger and it was so- I guess it was my complexion and I felt like that it was against me just because of my complexion. I had low self-esteem, it was a lot of things that I was going through at school or whatever. And uhh it was the same thing she had with her complexion. And she had to do things to make friends- but I never had a problem with having friends- it was just that I felt like I had something in common with her because of my complexion and low self-esteem. And around when I was in the 5th grade I joined the majorette squad and my confidence started to build up and started to see more things and see that everything was alright. And nothing was wrong with my complexion or whatever.

7. **Ayanna:** So what did you used to think about your complexion?

8. **Shemetria:** That I don't know- it wasn't it wasn't good enough for anybody or better or or you know other people. I felt that if they looked at me then it would be different like "She dark I don't like her" I felt like it was a light or brown skinned thing

(The school intercom comes on. We stop talking waiting for the announcer to finish)

9. **Ayanna:** So anyway, so how old were you when you first started having not good feelings about your skin complexion?

10. **Shemetria:** Uhh about the 3rd or 4th grade.

11. **Ayanna:** Did you ever talk to anybody in your family about it?

12. **Shemetria**: Yeah- my mom

"Being Black": Shemetria's Discussions of Alice Walker and Self continued…

13. **Ayanna-** What she say?

14. **Shemetria:** She would just tell me to ignore stuff like that. But I couldn't ignore it cause I guess I was young it was a stage or whatever. And then in the stage of acne started and I was like "oh no" it just started really getting to me or whatever. And so

15. **Ayanna:** And so what would happen- help me understand

16. **Shemetria:** It was like- it could be sometimes name or pickin on me and saying (holding up quote fingers) ooh you Black and ugly and all that. And if I was to sit down and talk to her she be like "You should ignore stuff like that. You are African American you're not ugly and why do you pay attention to stuff like that." Then I knew I could (undecipherable) get confidence built on myself- I had to believe in my self that I wasn't this or I wasn't that- more positive stuff. Then I was brave enough to try out and I made it. I then started having confidence start have more people or friends -well friends that were boys and stuff like that.

17. **Ayanna:** They were sides (laughter)[16]

18. **Shemetria**: (laughs) Naaah they weren't sides

19. **Ayanna:** So one of the things I was interested in was this week for the first time I just saw you come alive in talking about Alice Walker.

20. **"Shemetria**: (laughter)

21. **Ayanna:** What what-

22. **Shemetria:** It to me it felt good to hear about Alice Walker or our history cause I like to watch stuff like that- I be watching stuff like that on t.v or whatever. And I like to talk about stuff like that cause it shows me or others and me the long road where came from or and it's good that I'm here and I'm doing what I should be doing. And then what my mother or my mother's grandmother has fought for me to do. That's why I liked it.

23. **Ayanna:** You really got into it. I mean- you were there. I thought that was really interesting. Do you have those experiences a lot in school where you talk about things that are African American

24. (Shemetria shakes her head no)

[16] Refers to an earlier discussion in another focus group where the students shared a concept of dating.

Being Black": Shemetria's Discussions of Alice Walker and Self continued…

25. **Shemetria:** We talk about it sometime but not all the time.

(topic shifts)
end of transcript

"Being Black" is a different reflection on the class events in Mrs. Handley's class because the reflection centers on Shemetria's perspectives about her own identity. I call this discussion "Being Black" because Shemetria talks about two concepts of racial awareness, (1) skin color and (2) representations of Black issues in school. Shemetria identifies her racial awareness as a personal journey with herself and resolving the challenges she faced in elementary school with being dark-skinned.[17] Referring to African Americans as Black is sometimes tenuous because it is suggestive of skin tone although "Black" people are represented in a host of skin colors. I use "Being Black" to demonstrate the multiple meanings that are associated with blackness for African Americans and the complexities involved with Black identity.

Shemetria discusses the enjoyment she finds in reading and the access to literature within her family. She refers to "*Essence Magazine*," an African American owned magazine that focuses on entertainment, social and cultural issues within the African American community. She mentions in line 2 that many of the books she has accees to are books listed in Essence magazine. This suggests she reads literature by African American authors. In this line she mentions that a particular book really inspired her that was read in Mrs. Handley's class earlier in the school year called "The Skin I'm In." She

[17] Skin color in the African American community is often described on a spectrum of lightness to darkness. Phrases like light-skinned, brown skinned, or dark are used as descriptors of Black people. The term "black" when used in this concept is considered a derogatory term, negatively depicting a black person as being unattractive. Statements like "She's cute to be dark" are used as a compliment toward darker skinned people but are negatively regarded as insults.

describes “inspiration” as an influence for her to remember her own experiences in school dealing with her skin color. She says in line 6, “ I guess it was my complexion and I felt like that it was against me just because of my complexion.” Shemetria describes her challenges as having low self-esteem and fear of not being accepted because she was “dark.” She states that her awareness of skin color became prevalent for her in the 3rd or 4th grade. In line 16, she describes the ridicule. “It was like- it could be sometimes names or pickin on me and saying (holding up quote fingers) ooh you Black and ugly and all that.” Her description of these events and her conversation with her mother in dealing with these challenges illustrate the depth to which she was aware of how skin color impacted her personally. This awareness however is reflective of a larger societal construct of racism that used skin color among enslaved Africans and African Americans to give preferences. Within the African American community, preferential regard for certain skin colors and hair textures are argued to be lasting effects from chattel slavery (hooks, 1992;1993, Fanon, 1967) and segregation. Shemetria’s experiences in the 3rd or 4th grade are about social interactions with peers who subjected her to ridicule because of her skin color that she was able to reconcile with the support of her family and by “building up” her self-esteem. Reading the book in Mrs. Handely’s class reflects opportunities in the classroom for curriculum to contribute to the students engaging in discussions about “race” or even reflecting on their own levels of racial awareness like Shemetria.

Further in the discussion, I reveal to Shemetria that I noticed a change in her participation in Mrs. Handley’s class when they read and discussed the Alice Walker pieces. Shemetria responds, “It to me it felt good to hear about Alice Walker or our

history cause I like to watch stuff like that- I be watching stuff like that on t.v or whatever. And I like to talk about stuff like that cause it shows me or others and me the long road where I came from or and it's good that I'm here and I'm doing what I should be doing." She continues adding, "And then what my mother or my mother's grandmother has fought for me to do. That's why I liked it." Shemetria's comments about reading and discussing Alice Walker's words further contributes to the notion that the curriculum selected in the class impacts more than simply enhancing students' reading and writing skills. Shemetria connects the classroom curriculum to her history, identity and family. "…it shows me or others and me the long road where I came from or and it's good that I'm here" suggests that her present being is the result of "the long road" she describes.

"Being Black" briefly focuses on Shemetria's connection to the literature selected in the class and to racial awareness. At the same time, it implicitly discusses the absence of African American issues, topics across the curriculum or in other subjects. In line 23, I ask Shemetria about her experiences in other classes around topics related to African Americans. She responds, "We talk about it sometime but not all the time." Shemetria refers to African American topics is "it" in her reply.

In this next section, I examine the relationship between racial awareness across three classroom events, "The Montgomery Bus Boycott," "Alice Walker," and "Head-Ragged Generals" from the teacher's perspective through their use of language. I identify the patterns and themes represented across the three class events and discuss how racial awareness influences discussions of "race."

Section B. Teachers' Perspectives of "Race"

The three tables from "The Montgomery Bus Boycott," "Alice Walker," and "Head-Ragged Generals," identify statements made in class by the teachers that are a part of discussions of "race." Each statement was selected because it represents the "use of language" described earlier in the findings as one of four criteria for discussions of "race." The table includes the category "Representation of Racial Awareness," which is used to analyze how the use of language is a representation of "racial awareness." This process of identifying "racial awareness" through discussions of "race" focuses directly on the rhetorical strategies and wording employed by the teachers during the class lessons.

Table 10: Teacher's Use of Language and Racial Awareness

Class Event	Use of Language	Racial Awareness
"Montgomery Bus Boycott"	1. Repetition of "How can you" in passage	Mr. Riley uses repetitive questioning to illustrate various forms of racist practices Racists are implied in using the word "you" in the repetition as he juxtaposes discriminatory practices against Blacks and Black women enacted by Whites and White men.
	2. I came from a group of people that were so strong that no injustice could hold them back.	Mr. Riley uses words that denote heritage and lineage. His word choice connects him racially as well as to a history of social activism to confront racism.
	3. What offends me is my own people- is turning back. what our forefathers fought to push us forward	He continues to connect himself to this sense of heritage and lineage while he offers a critique of what he perceives as "turning back" among Black youth.
	4. I think about people died and suffering, dogs bitin em', goin to jail, getting beaten over the head just so we could be here today	Similarly to line 1, he uses a repetitive rhythm and cadence to place emphasis on racist acts committed during the Civil Rights Movement. This rhythm is marked by the gerund. He punctuates all of the images of sufferance with the final clause "**just** so we would be here today."
	5. my people in the past fought the good fight.they kept the faith.that's why we are where we are.but I want us to keep the faith going forward	He strategically aligns the heroism involved during the Civil Rights Movement with himself and the present opportunities for African American students today. In line 3, he suggests there has been a regression in success demonstrated in the behaviors of African American youth.

Table 11: Teacher's Use of Language and Racial Awareness

Class Event	Use of Language	Racial Awareness
"Alice Walker"	1. We claim we know our history but we do not know our history. You need to know who these people are. They are a part of you. They might not have your name- but they are a part of your heritage.	Mrs. Handley uses the word "we" repetitively to identify a collective group of people. She connects the "we" with history and heritage establishing relationships that go beyond the students' present.
	2. It's amazing more White people know about our folks than we do.	Mrs. Handley specifically identifies a racial group and suggest that the "we" group should know their own history, which should be greater than what White people know about the "we" group's history.
	3. Think about it. As African American people, we are taught we were taught when we got here that we were inferior that we couldn't do anything.	Introduces the idea that African Americans are not "from" America through the phrase "when we got here." She does not explore the context of this statement but slavery and the slave trade are implied. She continues by introducing the concept of inferiority that was imposed on African Americans formally and informally.
	4. So they tried to muzzle us and keep us from having a voice and so then they tried- then they beat us and mutilated us (long pause).	Handley describes conditions of slavery and uses inclusive language "us" to signify African American people.
	3. but yet and still from all of that, we were able to pull out creativity- despite all the hardship and pain and destruction and being destroyed mentally, physically, we were still able to pull out of that and have voice and vibrance of within us.	Shifts her language to identify the strength of the group. Uses a cadence and rhythm to list the obstacles before identifying the successes.

Table 12: Teacher's Use of Language and Racial Awareness

Class Event	Use of Language	Racial Awareness
"Head-Ragged Generals"	How much do you all actually know about slavery? That's the question. Actually what your people went through as slaves?	Questions the students about their prior knowledge of slavery? Locates the question in a *fictive kinship* context suggesting that because slaves were "their people," meaning their ancestors they *should* be knowledgeable of slavery.
	We know about the ships and we know about getting hung and all that stuff, but do you actually know about the sodomy and stuff that went on? The rapes, the mutilation.	Begins to identify commonly known ideas indicated with the phrase, "and all that stuff." Extends her question torhetorically initiate thinking about far more graphic conditions of slavery.

Tables 12, 13, and 14 isolate comments made by the teachers during instruction across three lessons where their use of language represent racial awareness. Discussions of literature and the students' reactions to that literature were explicit in the organization of the class lesson. All of the discussions included historical facts, details, perspectives and in some cases opinions about "race." Whether the lessons or activities were intended to focus on "race" is not clear, but there are notable commonalities between the teachers' use of language that suggest "race" was of importance in the presentation of the curriculum.

First, the class events, "Montgomery Bus Boycott," "Alice Walker," and "Head-Ragged Generals," were each based on literature written about African Americans and aspects African American history. "The Montgomery Bus Boycott" was based on the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement and the social issues that began the movement in Alabama. "Alice Walker" was based on the students reading "In Search of Our Mothers'

Gardens," a short story written by Alice Walker hallmarking the relationship Black women have to their mothers. The last class event, "Head-Ragged Generals" is based on a poem entitled "Women" by Alice Walker, which is about how the roles of women in society amidst racial and gender discrimination are central to the feminist movement. Mr. Riley and Mrs. Handley conduct these classes in different ways with different levels of experience and different investments in the school community. Mr. Riley is a substitute teacher who frequently filled-in for Mrs. Handley in her absence. He is not a teacher by profession , and is not employed full-time by River City Schools. Mrs. Handley has taught at River City High School for more than five years. Because of their roles in the schools, their levels of engagement with the students are different in formal ways. In informal conversations with Mr. Riley and Mrs. Handley, both teachers are concerned about the success of the students and River City High School primarily because the school is stereotyped for being a *bad* school and because it is predominantly Black. The *concerns* they both have impact a great bit of why they speak so frankly and openly with the students in class. This analysis looks in-depth at the use of language.

There are several commonalities in the use of language between Mr. Riley and Mrs. Handley in these three particular lessons that represent racial awareness. These commonalities are important because they represent a social, academic, and political interest these teachers have for their African American students. I have identified three commonalities in their use of language that centralize the significance of "race" as an influence in their teaching and teaching presentation: (1) Acknowledging "Race," (2) Connecting Students to Community, and (3) Speech Delivery.

There are several aspects of the use of language that are profoundly influential in how the classroom events take place and the social interactions in those events. Earlier in the project these same events have been used to illustrate frequency of discussions of "race," context for discussions and students' reactions to these discussions. Once of the central aspects of these discussions of "race," which is critically important, is the teachers' acknowledgment of their own racial identities. The teachers use their racial backgrounds to support their discussions in "class." The insertions of their own African American identities through discussing family relationships, historical events, and social issues are key in class events. There are statements identified in Tables 12, 13, and 14 that the teachers use to establish a relationship with the texts and well as with the students. Phrases like, "I came from a group of people that were so strong that no injustice could hold them back," and "We were still able to pull out of that and have voice and vibrance of within us," represent how Mr. Riley and Mrs. Handley make their racial identities a part of the classroom context. I identify this as important because who the teachers are and their willingness to include these identities influences the discussions themselves.

In the focus group discussion "Stuck in the Past," the students didn't agree with some of the information presented by Mr. Riley or in the manner in which he presented it. But they were able to discuss the content of the talk in a personable way in the discussion group because they each found a relationship between some of the issues embedded in the discussion. Similarly, Mr. Riley was able to engage in the discussion because he included himself in the context of the discussion. Mrs. Handley's approach to the discussions in "Alice Walker and "Head-Ragged Generals" is very different than Mr.

Riley's. Part of this variance may be due to her professional knowledge about teaching and learning; however, she also includes her racial awareness in the context of the discussion. The interchange between "we" and "us" and "our community" are words that represent a connection she establishes with the students based on what they share. In this context "race" is used as a way to bond with the students as well as as means to connect the significance of the information with the explicit curriculum.

Connecting the students with the curriculum is expanded in the ways both teachers remind the students of the positive and negative aspects of their racial history. The teachers use history and the students' racial backgrounds in provocative ways. Rather than presenting the curriculum as historical events of the past, the teachers establish a present-day context for the information. Mr. Riley's comment, "my people in the past fought the good fight.they kept the faith.that's why we are where we are.but I want us to keep the faith going forward" is a charge for the students. He reminds the students that they are historically connected to a people that engaged in struggle. The latter part of his message reminds the students that "we are where we are" because of this "fight" or sociopolitical struggle. Mrs. Handley asks, "How much do you all actually know about slavery? That's the question. Actually what your people went through as slaves?" This line of questioning does two things. First, it suggests to the students that they *should* know about slavery and that this history is important for them to know. She extends this question reminding the students of their relationship to slavery in her statement, "Actually what your people went through as slaves." This comment is not a critique of their knowledge but a commentary about connecting themselves to an aspect of their racial identities. The discussions of "race" in the class take shape because both

teachers have identified these issues as being important for the students to know. This is not because of explicit curriculum requirements, as there are no standards in the 10th grade English curriculum that discusses "knowledge of slavery" (10th Grade English Curriculum Guidelines for River City School District, 2004-2005). Moreover, the River City School Curriculum Guidelines identify sets of skills for students to accomplish broken down in quarters or six-week sessions. For example, some of the skills or State Performance Indicators (SPIs) for students to develop are author's point of view, author's purpose, and the identification of literary concepts in the context of works. The curriculum focuses on skills as they are to be *tested* and is framed in this manner in the handbook. I raise these issues because it adds meaning to the manner in which Mr. Riley and Mrs. Handley approach discussions in their class.

Mrs. Handley selects material for the students to read as she develops a curriculum for her students organized around the SPIs for the school district. The material she selects is a reflection of literature she identifies as useful for the students to read. In informal discussions with Mrs. Handley, she informed me that the students have read books she believes they can relate to and stories that can be easily used to "deal with all of the testing requirements." In one particular conversation she states, "It is overwhelming all of the skill sets and objectives they want us to teach for the test. I feel like I have to teach these things and pray the students will make sense of it for testing-which is why everyday I do the 'Do-Nows.' That is test prep. But they can not tell me what to teach or who to read. I make that choice" (March, 2005). Mrs. Handley's comments are important because each teacher can choose what types of literature to teach to accomplish the district guidelines. In Mrs. Handley's class, they have read several

pieces of literature by African American authors or focused on issues related to people of color in addition to what she regards is American Literature. The curriculum she executes is reflective of a social and cultural agenda *she* created, which is subjective and can be done by all teachers throughout the district. That is to say, discussions of "race" in Mrs. Handley's class are partly because of the texts she chooses. A focus on authors of color or literature that takes on issues related to people of color might guide these types of discussions or the absence of discussions. In a later lunchtime conversation with Mrs. Handley, I asked her why she mentions slavery at all in teaching literature. Her response was "If all our kids know is slavery and many of them don't get that in their history classes, then all they will think about is us being poor and dumb. I want them to know that we are intelligent and creative and that is because of our struggle." She later continued to state, "Our history in American began at slavery. These kids- and maybe its because of they mamas and families, but these kids act like they don't want to be connected to this history. I won't let them run from it because they should be proud. I don't think they see pride in it" (Fieldnote, April 2005). In the class event "Alice Walker," Mrs. Handley says, "we were still able to pull out of that and have voice and vibrance of[sic] within us." I see how her perspectives about teaching African American students are more than accomplishing skills. She wants to motivate her students by connecting them to history and the power that is a part of that history.

Mrs. Handley and Mr. Riley approach teaching differently, for there are different contexts for their instruction and instructional choices. However, between them is a shared speech delivery that is reflective of African American speech styles. These particular speaking styles are referred to as rhetorical features of African American

Language (Smithermann, 2000). Rhetorical features include speech rhythms, voice inflection, and even body language (Williams, 2007). Many of these mannerism and speech styles are sometimes associated with African American ministers or are put in use by people intending to connect with African American audiences. Mrs. Handley's and Mr. Riley's speech delivery in the classroom discussions reflect aspects of African American Language. I identify in Tables 12, 13, and 14 specific examples that reflect these rhetorical strategies. For example, in Table 12, I identify Mr. Riley's use of repetition in his speech delivery. However, it is not simply the repeating of words and phrases that is significant in these discussions, rather it is how he places emphasis on words in the repeating sequence. I select portions of "The Montgomery Bus Boycott" class event highlighting the repetition. I then underline the words that are emphasized through his intonations in the selection.

Mr. Riley: Number one young lady? What went through your mind..don't know what went through your mind, but normally when you read the story you realize **how can people** who smile in your face everyday. Take your money. And then you pay your fare on the bus and you get off to go to the back and the bus driver pulls off. **How can you** do that to a pregnant woman and you gone make her give up her seat and you let some ole White man some grown White boy twenty year old White boy sit down and she's pregnant. **How can you** make an eighty-year old Black woman get up and let a teenager a White teenager sit down. **How can** let a woman pay her fare and then make her get off and you pull off. **How can you** call Black people d-dogs and animals all day long and expect them to do nothing about it. **How can you** act so nice and have kids pledging allegiance about an indivisible nation one nation under God and then turn around and

treat them like this. And you supposed to be a Christian people in a Christian nation. That was went through-those were some of my thoughts. ("Montgomery Bus Boycott") A more in-depth rhetorical analysis would identify other aspects of AAL features focusing on phonology, pitch, and prosody (Labov, 1972; Williams, 2006). What I have identified for the purpose of this research is Mr. Riley's use of language as the presence of a speech style used to accomplish something with his audience. At the end of Mr. Riley's responses to Faith during the class event, a student shouts out "Preach!" This suggests that the student connected with Mr. Riley's speech delivery and associated the use of language with a preaching.

Mrs. Handley's use of language also reflects the rhetorical features of AAL. Intonational contouring is described as placing stress or emphasis in pronouncing words. Similarly to Mr. Riley emphasizing words or sounds, Mrs. Handley uses this strategy to convey ideas to her audiences. I identify increased pitch (rise of voice), decreased pitch (lowering of voice), and stress (elongated enunciation of syllables) in a portion of the "Alice Walker" class event.

Key
Increase pitch ↑
Decrease pitch ↓
Stress ____ (the syllabic unit or units are enunciated)

"Alice Walker"
1. We claim↑ we↓ know our history but we do not know our history. You↑ need to know who↓ these people are. They are a part of you. They might not have your name- but they are a part of your heritage.

2. It's amazing more White people know about our folks than we do.

3. Think↑ about it. As African American people, we are taught we were taught ↑ when we got here that we were inferior↑ that we↓ couldn't do anything↓.

4. So they tried to muzzle us and keep us from having a voice and so then they tried- then they beat us and mutilated us (long pause).
Class Event "Alice Walker" continued…

3. but yet and still from all of that↑, we were able to pull out creativity↓- despite all the hardship and pain and destruction and being destroyed mentally, physically, we were still able to pull out of that and have voice and vibrance of within us.

Mrs. Handley uses varying ways to pronounce her words, placing stress and emphasis on sounds that add to the social context of the class event. This is a common feature in the way she communicates with the students in her teaching. In "Head-Ragged Generals," these features of increased and decreased pitch are present as well.

1. How much do you all actually know↓ about slavery? That's↑ the question. Actually what your people went through as slaves↑?

2. We know about the ships and we know about getting hung and all that stuff, but do you actually know about the sodomy↓ and stuff that went on? The rapes↓, the mutilation.

Teaching is not a neural act. These teachers use language with intentions to convey ideas, place emphasis on imagery, and to raise an affective response from the students. Mrs. Handley discusses why she teaches literature that centralizes social issues.

She associates these issues with things to which the students can relate or things she wants them to understand. This curricular choice is intentional and explicit. Additionally, her curriculum and the approach to which she teaches her students are a part of a larger more broad concern related to African American history, culture and student identity. Using language in particular ways is an implicit act that connects racial awareness in discussions of "race." Both Mr. Riley and Mrs. Handley focus on "race" to raise their students' racial awareness or to bring consciousness to their students. This effort to raise awareness is strategic and rhetorically based. At no point do either teachers state, "I'm discussing 'race,' racism, and slavery with you because I want you to be aware of these issues." Rather they infuse African American cultural ways of engaging to signify importance. Racial awareness is, implicit on the surface. One can not clearly ascertain what one's level of racial awareness, is but as the discussions of literature become more focused on racial issues- the discussions themselves shift in their emphasis raising "race" to the surface in the class events.

In the 12th grade English classes, there was an absence of discussions of "race." As discussed in the content analysis, terminology was the only representation of discussions of "race" in the classroom. There were not any discussions of "race" that addressed the influence colonialism or post-colonialism as the read, interpreted, and analyzed European literature. As such, the focus groups served as the mediating setting for discussions of "race." Outside of the classes, students were frequently engaged in discussions of "race." In many cases, students shared stories about the activities they participated in over the weekend, or shared their opinions about events happening in the media that were discussions of "race." Based on my observations of these discussions,

coupled with my observations of students' participation or "silence" in class, I identified several students as participants in several focus group discussions. Unlike the 10th grade focus group discussions that were in some cases reflections from class or interviews about ideas expressed in class these focus group discussions were organized as mediating settings to discuss "race" in the context of their experiences.

Part III: Constructions of "Race" and Narrative Analysis

The last section of the findings focuses on the discussions of "race" with some 12th grade students selected from the AP English class and the Standard English class. I use these selected focus groups because they are not reflections from class events or explicitly discussions about comments made in class. Rather each of the focus groups selected for this analysis was chosen because students shared their own ideas about "race" in the context of their own experiences. I conduct two types of analysis of the focus groups discussions of "race:" (1) Cultural Analysis and (2) Narrative Analysis. Next, I describe the focus group for the 12th grade students and the context for these discussions.

Focus Groups Discussions: The 12th Graders

This portion of the findings focuses on focus group discussions with the 12th grade students. I selected three particular focus groups for this section of the findings for several reasons. First, the students in the focus groups share their personal experiences alongside their opinions about "race." This was important because rather than the

students simply exploring the opinions and potential biases, they discuss their everyday life encounters as support for their ideas. Also, my role as a participant observer and researcher lessened as we engaged in discussions. I was able to ask questions during the discussions, but the students shared their perspectives and reacted to one another with greater ease than in other discussions. These discussions lead to the group exploring ideas and contradicting others in important ways. Secondly, these discussions reflected students expounding on points made by their peers through comments supporting or explaining what they thought their peers meant. This was an important characteristic because I was able to discover the students' perspectives in greater depth because they were reacting to one another. And finally, the students in these discussion groups were identified as "good students" in Mr. Welsley class by Mr. Welsley, but in my fieldnotes, many of these students did not voluntarily talk often if ever in class. Mr. Welsley often praised many of his students who did exceptional work. Students were encouraged to challenge themselves in class and in their assignments, but these same students were obscure in their classroom participation. I identified these students for the focus groups because of the ways they interacted in class (this criteria is discussed in Chapter 3); however, on a larger scale, they were all relatively quiet. Once these students participated in the focus groups, they voluntarily shared ideas and made comments about issues in remarkable ways. Below is a personal fieldnote from a focus group discussion that reflects my reaction.

4-11-05

Today I did a focus group interview with five students from Mr. Welsley's fifth period class. I was completely blown away. I don't recall what the leading question was that inspired them to "catch a fire" and just run with the discussion of "race." I will have to review my videotape of the focus group discussion to really examine what it was that got them talking so quickly. These students touched on soooo many topics and were quite insightful. I don't mean to sound surprised by their intellect, but honestly I heard more from a few of them in the focus group than I had heard in observing them in class over the past three months. They were far more engaged & talkative than I had ever heard before. I have now "dubbed" them "The Power Group," because they quickly suggested "race" is about power. Hmmm. I think there is a lot more to hear from them. Not to mention their introduction of "race" and politics.

I present the transcripts from three focus groups conducted with the 12th grade students. I use thematic and discourse analysis to illustrate the Constructions of "Race" embedded in these students' comments and that have been reflected throughout the research project. I discuss the cultural models as they are reflected in the students' perspectives of 'race" across the data presented in the entire project. I conclude the findings examining several narratives presented throughout the data set. I analyze students' uses of narratives to illustrate how "race" is constructed through talk as African American students discuss their everyday life experiences.

Focus Group 1: Jackie and Emani

Context for Focus Group 1

This focus group began with the students asking me about where I was from. I explained that I was born in New York and grew up in the The Bay Area. Leaving for college brought me to the South. I asked the students if they had lived in any cities other than River City. Both of them replied no but wanted to experience other cities maybe in college. I responded that I attended a Historically Black College, which was a different experience than living in California. I got up to adjust the video camera and overheard Jackie and Emani make a comment about California and it being the "land of Valley Girls."

Focus Group 1 Transcript

1. **Ayanna**: So what's your perception of other cities that are not predominantly Black.

2. **Jackie**: They are safe and they suck.

3. **Ayanna**: O.k. what do you mean by that?

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

4. **Emani**: I don't think they safe but- they probably better. I dunno. You know Black people-black folks- they can be so niggerish at times.

5. **J**: Naaah niggerish (laughs)

6. **Emani**: Like just real rowdy and

7. **Jackie**:Trifflin'

8. **Emani**: Yeah...ghetto and stuff. It's like daang. I can't wait so I can move (starts motioning her arms like she is jogging) by the White folks and then you know...that's just like the stereotype of the world, "I can live by the White folks" (as if imitating someone else speaking). I got to get away from these niggas (said movin her neck side to side and waving her left hand).

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

9. **Jackie**: And then once you start movin' by them (short pause) they start movin out

10. **Emani**: They move away (throwing up her hands)

11. **Jackie**: (begins laughing)

12. **Emani**: River City was predominantly White.
13. **Jackie**: River City High School was all White

14. **Emani**: Well yeah. All White

15. **Jackie**: White Cove

16. **Emani**: White

17. **Jackie** and **Emani**: (laugh)

18. **Jackie**: They call it Black Cove now

19. **Emani**: Black

20. **Ayanna:** Why is that?

21. **Jackie**:Cause all the White people moved. My mamma said on Hillside that they it- like Hillside is a long street it was probably like three Black families in that community and they all stayed by my grandmama. She said once those Black people start movin in them White people put them for sale signs up so quick- don't nothin but Black folks live there now . And but a couple of White people stay in Hillside now- and they old (said whispering).

22. **Ayanna:** So so why do you think that happened

23. **Emani**: They the White people that didn't get away.

24. **Jackie**: I believe I heard somewhere that they ummm they community messes ya umm the

25. **Emani**: it lowers your property value

26. **Jackie**:Yeah- your property value and (long pause) uhhh

27. **Ayanna**: What lowers your property value?

28. **Jackie**:When Black people start moving into your community.

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

29. **Emani**: Like they community was bad (said in very low tone with her head down)

30. **Ayanna**: Do you think that's true?

31. **Jackie**: It depends sometimes

32. **Emani**: It depends on which Black people you talkin about.

33. **Jackie**: I say young. If young people move out there-than the older crowd. The older people

34. **Emani**: Well not necessearily the young folks cause I mean if we (leaning in toward J lifting her right hand up directly toward J) moved out there (shrugs her shoulders) they wouldn't have no problems with it. We'd fit right in.

35. **Jackie**:The older Black people they like to cut they grass and keep they houses up.

36. **Ayanna:** So you think it's an issue of if if if you don't take care of your stuff

37. **Jackie**:Yeah

38. **Ayanna:** that will encourage people to want to move away?

39. **Emani**: Yeah cause it's like if the little so called quote unquote Trailor Park Trash moved in right next door see uhh uhh I got to move (begins moving her arms as if she is jogging)

40. **Jackie**: Black folks don't want to cut they grass- don't want to fertilize nothin-

41. **Emani**: (using a high pitched voice) They're always barbequeing

42. **Ayanna:** Who says that?

43. **Jackie** and **Emani**: Stereotypes

44. **Ayanna:** oh o.k. So, what I heard you saying is you heard that if Black people move into a predominantly White neighborhood period- not what age of Black people just period-White people move out.

45. **Jackie**:Yep

46. **Emani**: The world is still racist it's just sugarcoated.

47. **Ayanna:** What do you mean?

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

48. **Emani**: Like how back in the day in slavery and this that and the others but nowadays, it's sugar coated like uhh

49. **Jackie**: I'm tryna think.

50. **Ayanna:** I'm tryna understand what you talking about.

51. **Emani**: Like a couple of weeks ago

52. (undecipherable. E is mumbling something)

53. **Ayanna**: So you think there is still racism

54. **Jackie**: It is.

55. **Ayanna**: But it's just sugarcoated.

56. **Jackie**: Ms. Ayanna...Ima tell you. When I went Wednesday to the automechanic uhh it was the VICA uhh ASC competition or whatever- they had automechanics, cosmeotology all of that.

57. **Ayanna**: What does VICA stand for?

58. **Emani**: Vocational somethin somethin

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

59. **Jackie**:I honestly don't know (long pause) I know it was called Skills USA and they changed it to VICA I don't know. But I went for automechanics. It was enormous. There were probably like ten out of forty Black folk. What I say? I mean 10 Black folk out of forty somethin people. And those White people were lookin (make a frowning face).. All the Black people were on one side of the room. The White folks was looking like

60. **Emani**: Uhhh

61. **Jackie:** Yeah- looking like (makes a face).

62. **Emani**: They were smart enough to make it?

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

63. **Jackie**: It wa so messed up because they had some high school students administer like the little tests we took and passed out the pencils and call out the names and give the name tags out. So when he was administering the test the guy that I sat next to- you know we were just talking and I was saying I'm nervous and he said I'm nervous too. He the guy, it was a White boy passing out the pencils and stuff. He was like "Who all need a umm a test?" And so me, we the table was like (begins demonstrating the length of table) a long straight table not a round table he was standing right here- right in front of us. Me and the other dude were right there. He raised his hand and was waving his hand "I need a test." He raises all in dude face. He stood there and looked at him. He passed out all the tests and gave him his test last. I was like (makes a frown).. I mean he walked all the way to the back of the room, to the folks on the side and then came back and gave him his test last. I was like (frowns again).

64. **Ayanna**: And the person who was waving his hand was

65. **Jackie**: Black. So, he was like dude was like "Can we get pencils?" And the White guy was like "Oh- who all needs writing utensils?" And everybody start raising their hands. You know I said, "If he give you yo pencil last, Ima raise all types of hell up in here." You the one who brough the pencils up in the first place.

66. **Ayanna**: So why do you think that was a racial event?

67. **Jackie**: Mann cause. You should have saw it. Ms. Ayanna. If you would have saw it. The room was humongous. This man walks all the way to the back and to the side and then came back. All he had to do was reach to the side and gave him his test. And then what made it so bad was that he didn't have but five pencils and ten people rose they hands. So I said if you didn't get a pencil I would've said somethin. But he passed him the last pencil.

68. **Ayanna**: So do you think when it's a environment of predominantly White people you sort of wait to see what they gone do?

69. **Jackie**: (begins shaking her head) Oh- yeah (elongates the vowel sounds).

70. **Jackie**: Tell me about that

71. **Emani**: Cause there are so many stereotypes it's just like- o.k. I'm finna walk up in here. Let me see if they gone grab they purse.

72. **Jackie**: And so

73. **Emani**: Sometimes it happens

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

74. **Ayanna**: So how do you feel when that happens?

75. **Emani**: I'm comin up in here. I'm fearin for my life just like you are (begins grabbing at her jackets as if covering herself up) I don't know what you got in your purse- you don't know what I got in my purse. We don't know what each other finna do. So just like you holding on to your purse (she acts as if she grabbing and clutching someting)- I'm holding on to mine too.

76. (2 mintues lapse- interrupted by school intercom and students entering the library)

77. **Emani**: We was up in the movies. The movie is one and everybody's laughin and talking hee hee or whatever cause that's what we do in the movies. Of course, when you go to the movies you watch the movie. But we commentin ha ha that was funny or that was messed up. This little White couple was sittin in front of us. It was some White folks on the side of us and some White folks behind us. White folks on the other side of us and it was like a couple of sprinkles of Blacks (undecipherable) We was the "Oak," which is there were so many White folks around us.

78. **Ayanna**: Where is the Oak?

79. **Jackie**: East River City

80. **Emani**: Yeah...it's in East River City. It's a lot of White folks out there. But anyway, we was talking and whatever laughin and jokin so they just turned around "Uhh could you be quiet" I'm like (long pause and then she sits straight up in her seat) these folks doin the same thing I'm doing and they (and begins poiting in each direction) and they are too but you gonna single us out. O.K. then. Alright. Now you gonna make me act like my color. O.k. uhh huhh. Now if she don't turn around and say nothing to them then I know what's up.

81. **Ayanna**: At that point you were waiting to see if they were going to say something to the other people?

82. **Emani**: Yeah, I'm like o.k. I 'm see what you gone say to them over there- since they your same (starts rubbing her right hand) skin color.

83. **Jackie**: And let me tell you.

84. **Emani**: Wait a minute

85. **Jackie**: Oh you still talking (laughter)

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

86. **Emani**: And then she had the audacity to tell us to be quiet but ten minutes later (she says pounding her right fist into her left had while saying each syllable) she start talking. I'm like no you didn't- you tellin me to be quiet but you talking. Oh o.k. I see this. My cousin was like, Ima find out where she live. I said naah it ain't even worth it. All that ain't even called for. That's why the White folks don't want to stay by us now.

87. **Jackie**: O.K…(opens her hands with her palms up) I can understand with some people- you know theya count they money (gestures as if counting out paper-made money) they'll lay it down- you know I'm like (in a slightly lower tone) you still can hand it to me (raises tone)- but I ain't trippin…(slightly rocking back and forth in her chair and eyes widening slightly) Maann.nem white folks come innare (throws her hands out as if throwing dice then speaks in a lower tone) "Is that enough?" You be like (sinks a bit in her shoulders looking puzzled)…

88. **Emani**: No you just did not (undecipherable)

89. **Jackie**: // (in a high pitched tone but whispered to signal her thoughts) I know you did not just throw this money at me

90. **Emani**: You gone make me lose my job (waving her right hand and moving her neck from left to right)

91. **Jackie**: (in a raised voice) and fool look. don't let it be no change..Let me get some jelly beans (begins pulling the bag toward her getting out jelly beans) Ima show you what they do to the change…he'll drop dude- one dude just dropped the change and he was like this (tosses out jelly beans and stares at them with hands open and a smug expression on her face) He was like, "How much I need?" I said, "It's eleven twenty seven." (Begins flicking each jelly bean one by one across the table)

92. **Ayanna**: And he flicked the jelly beans

93. **Jackie**: Yes. He flicked naaw he flicked the change (laughing and picking up jelly beans)

94. **Ayanna**: Ahh oh I'm sorry (laughter)

95. **Jackie**: He flicked the change at me.

96. **Emani**: //Dang

97. **Jackie**: He was like "Is that enough?" (sits for two seconds with an intentional blank stare imitating the serious demeanor of the customer)

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

98. **Emani**: // No you just did not do that

99. **Jackie**: (speaks slowly in a high pitched voice connoting surprise) No you did not just flick ya money at me man (shifts to a normal tone) I'm like (shifts back to slow high pitch tone) you done threw ya money and flicked ya change. You must be crazy

100. **Ayanna**: So what didja do?

101. **Jackie**: I looked at him like he was crazy and took the money and said, "Have a nice day sir"..That's all I could do. But I was over there (undecipherable)

102. **Emani**: //You don't wanna lose your job

102. **Ayanna**: Tell me about the comment you made I'm gonna act my color. What does that mean?

103. **Emani**: Well, like well, stereotypically- Ima act my color or whatever cause we have this stereotype that's been put on us for so many years that we just like the worst people in the world- we the scum of the earth and the only we can do is negative things we always in the jail houses and just (pause) like we negative people. We're ignorant, we don't have knowledge about anything. We get smart recognition "umm umm you didn't do that by yourself- you was cheatin" or something like that. You know just stupid stuff. I'm like dang man, half the time we don't even be doing stuff like that.

104. **Ayanna**: So when you say you gonna act your color what do you mean?

105. **Emani**: Ima Ima o.k. since you think I'm like that I'm gonna be like that. I'm gonna get real stupid wichu. So

106. **Jackie**: Every color though is stereotyped like muslims-everybody always think they got bazookas bazookas hanging around them. Like the Chinese, everybody think the Chinese always talking bout you

107. **Emani**: Yeah (J and Emani begin laughing. Emani is leaning forward and then back into her seat while laughing). I told my Mama one day we was going up in the nail shop- "Mama, I'm gonna learn me some Philipinese(sic)"

108. **Jackie**: Philipinese? Haaaa (Lets out a big chuckle)

Focus Group 1 Transcript continued…

109. **Emani**: So we can know what they sayin when we come up in there. Cause I know they be talking about some of them folks. Cause they be like (makes a strong grimacing facial gesture)

110. **Jackie**: And listen closely. They saying English words.

111. **Emani**: **(**Begins mimicking speaking another language using nonsensical sounds and gesturing her body as if she is working) (short pause) o.k., I know what you talking about.

(Conversation shifts. Students begin talking about getting ready for tomorrow's class.)

Analysis of Focus Group 1

Jackie and Emani express certain perspectives of "race" that are complex. Each of them shares experiences they have had that they believe were racially connected. Both Jackie and Emani construct "race" as they talk about their own personal experiences. Some of these constructions appear on the surface to contribute to stereotypes of both African Americans and Whites, while other aspects of these constructions are interpretations of their experiences. I present a partial analysis of this focus group identifying how they both construct "race" in the discussion. I do a line-by-line analysis of the first 50 lines to demonstrate the complexities and nuances in the students' constructions.

Table 13: Constructions of "race:" Jackie and Emani

Line	Speaker	Turn at Talk	Interpretation	Construct of "race"
1	Ayanna	So what's your perception of other cities that are not predominantly Black.	Suggests J and E might have another perception of cities that are not predominantly Black	
2	Jackie	They are safe and they suck.	Does not associate safety with Black communities	Black communities are not safe
4	Emani	I don't think they safe but- they probably better. I dunno. You know Black people- black folks- they can be so niggerish at times.	Suggests predominantly Black cities are safe but they may not be *better* than other areas. Constructs Black people as *niggerish*.	Black communities are not better than White communities.
6	Emani	Like just real rowdy and	Describes *niggerish*	Black people are rowdy
7	Jackie	Trifflin	Adds to Emani's description	Black people are not honest or upstanding
8	Emani	Yeah...ghetto and stuff	Continues to add to the evolving description of *niggerish*	Black people do not take care of their property or generally behave carelessly.
9	Emani	I can't wait so I can move (starts motioning her arms like she is jogging) by the White folks	Suggest non-Whites express strong desires to move in White communities or to *get away from* Blacks.	Some Black people want badly to live near White people
9	Emani	that's just like the stereotype of the world, "I can live by the White folks." (as if imitating someone else speaking)	Expands the notion that non-Whites desire to live closer to Whites and this is a stereotype of both Whites and Blacks.	Living *by* White people is desirable
9	Emani	I got to get away from these niggas (said movin her neck side to side and waving her left hand).	Uses body language to appropriate a Black identity and suggests Blacks who want to "live by the White folks" refer to other Blacks as niggas.	Presents the complexity of Blacks who view other Blacks as "niggas."

Table 13: Constructions of "race:" Jackie and Emani continued…

Line	Speaker	Turn at Talk	Interpretation	Construct of "race"
9	Jackie	And then once you start movin' by them (short pause) they start movin out	Presents "White flight" as a result of Black people moving "by the White folks."	Whites don't want to live near Blacks either.
10	Emani	They move away (throwing up her hands)	Reiterates Jackie's point	Reinforces White flight
12	Emani	River City High School was predominantly White.	Localizes the issues of White flight	Describing the community
13	Jackie	River City High School was all White	Corrects Emani and implore RCHS was *all white*	Emphasizes the homogeneity of the community
14	Emani	Well yeah. All White	Accepts Jackie's correction	Reiterates the emphasis
15	Jackie	White Cove	Points out the the name of the community racial demographics	
16	Emani	White	Confirms the connection of the racial demographics and the name of the community	
18	Jackie	They call it Black Cove now	Introduces the name change for some people	
19	Emani	Black	The neighborhood is predominantly Black so it is referred to as Black Cove	
21	Jackie	Cause all the White people moved	Explains why people call White Cove Black Cove	
21	Jackie	My mamma said on Hillside that they it- like Hillside is a long street it was probably like three Black families in that community and they all stayed by my grandmama. She said once those Black people start movin in them White people put them for sale signs up so quick- don't nothin but Black folks live there now. And but a couple of White people stay in Hillside now- and they old (said whispering).	Uses a discussion of "race" with her mother to illustrate White flight	Presents the movement of the White families out of Hillside as an mass exodus because of Black people moving into the neighborhood.
22	Ayanna	So so why do you think that happened	Eliciting the students' perspective on White flight	

Table 13: Constructions of "race:" Jackie and Emani continued…

Line	Speaker	Turn at Talk	Interpretation	Construct of "race"
23	Emani	They the White people that didn't get away.	Referring to the "couple of old people" who remain in Hillside	Suggests they were "left behind" or couldn't get out but wanted to.
24	Jackie	I believe I heard somewhere that they ummm they community messes ya umm the	Trying to remember what she heard about how "they" community gets "messed" up	Uses coded language implying a racial group
25	Emani	it lowers your property value	Clarifying what Jackie is trying to explain	Associates people with lowering value of property
26	Jackie	Yeah- your property value and (long pause) uhhh	Accepts Emani's clarification	
27	Ayanna	What lowers your property value?	Eliciting the students to be more specific	
28	Jackie	When Black people start moving into your community	Defines the relationship between property valued and people.	Black people lower property value
29	Emani	Like they community was bad	Trying to make sense of the association between Black people and depreciated property value	
30	Ayanna	Do you think that's true?	Eliciting students' perspective beyond what they heard	
31	Jackie	It depends sometimes	Believes there is an association between Blacks and depreciated property value- then suggests it is qualified	Introduces a quality factor for depreciating property value
32	Emani	It depends on which Black people you talkin about.	Reiterates Jackie's suggestion of the ideas being qualified	Proposes there are certain *types* of Black people

Table 13: Constructions of "race:" Jackie and Emani continued…

Line	Speaker	Turn at Talk	Interpretation	Construct of "race"
33-34	Jackie and Emani	I say young. If young people move out there-than the older crowd. The older people Well not necessearily the young folks cause I mean if we (leaning in toward J lifting her right hand up directly toward J) moved out there (shrugs her shoulders) they wouldn't have no problems with it. We'd fit right in.	Trying to figure out which types of Black people would not drive White people away	Both propose that the ages of Black people are the factors for "White flight"
35	Jackie	The older Black people they like to cut they grass and keep they houses up.	Suggests that White flight may be resultant of Black people not taking care of their property. Expounds on the notion that "Old people" like carrying for their property.	
36	Ayanna	So you think it's an issue of if if if you don't take care of your stuff	Questions if this is about property upkeep or something else?	Implies "White flight" is a larger construct than manicured property
37	Jackie	Yeah	Agrees with my question	
38	Ayanna	that will encourage people to want to move away?	Extends the question to see if students will still agree	Subversively brings attention to "White Flight" being bigger than property appearance
39	Emani	Yeah cause it's like if the little so called quote unquote Trailor Park Trash moved in right next door see uhh uhh "I got to move" (begins moving her arms as if she is jogging)	Suggest that upkeep of property is a factor based on the stereotype of "Trailor Park Trash." Says she would move too.	She would leave the Black community if poor Whites moved in.
40	Jackie	Black folks don't want to cut they grass-don't want to fertilize nothin-	Reiterating how Black people don't keep up property	Constructs Black people as not keeping up property

Table 13: Constructions of "race:" Jackie and Emani continued…

Line	Speaker	Turn at Talk	Interpretation	Construct of "race"
41	Emani	(using a high pitched voice) They're always barbequeing	Uses performance to enact a character	
42	Ayanna	Who says that?	Eliciting clarification on the voice Emani uses in line 41	
43	Jackie and Emani	Stereotypes	Suggests she is stereotyping the enacted "speaker" in line 41.	What might be said about Black people
44	Ayanna	oh o.k. So, what I heard you saying is you heard that if Black people move into a predominantly White neighborhood period- not what age of Black people just period-White people move out.	Questioning the girls earlier notion of age being a factor after they've used "Black Folks" as a contruct	
45	Jackie	Yep	Confirms her perspective	
46	Emani	The world is still racist it's just sugarcoated.	Proposes that racism is causal to "White Flight"	
47	Ayanna	What do you mean?	Eliciting a description or definition of "sugarcoated racism"	
48	Emani	Like how back in the day in slavery and this that and the others but nowadays, it's sugar coated like uhh	Compares explicit institutional forms of racism to now	Suggest racism is concealed
53	Ayanna	So you think there is still racism		
54	Jackie	It is.	Confirms her perspective	
55	Emani	But it's just sugarcoated.	Reiterates the notion that it is not explicit	

The first 55 lines in this focus group discussion presents several constructs of "race" that focus on stereotypes and images of Black and White people. These constructions of

"race" are powerful in that although they are stereotypes, the students affirm them as being true conditions for who Black and White people are. In some ways, these stereotypes are used to rationalize racialization.

The construct of Black people as *niggerish* in line 4 is used to describe what Jackie and Emani construct as negative characteristics of Black people. It is not clear if they consider these descriptors as stereotypes, but they present them as an accepted description. The negative description of Black people continues throughout the discussion as they discuss an issue as complicated as "White Flight." In lines 8-36, the discussion focuses on potential reasons why "White flight" occurs, and why Black people so desire to "live by White folks." In these lines, there is greater discussion about the supposed qualities of Black people that cause White people to move. "White flight" is not attributed to racism until the end of the exchange in line 46, where Emani proposes that it is a form of sugarcoated racism. She implies that Whites leaving a neighborhood because Blacks move in is a racist move. Admittedly so, she inverts the scenario and suggests that if "Trailor park trash," a stereotypical metaphor for poor White people, moved into her community, she would leave. The association of lowered property value with Black people illustrates the extent to which Black people are regarded as a liability, as Emani and Jackie describe.

Emani introduces a greatly contested issue of the use of the word "nigger," and variations of the word. Over the past ten years, there has been an increased public discussion of the word "niggger," "nigga," and "niggaz" spurned by its use in rap music and Black culture more broadly. The controversy stems from an issue of entitlement, who can use this word and in what context (Shuman, 2005). Many contributors to the

debate come from all socioeconomic status within the African American community and reflect the diversity within the Black community. What seems to be a key component to this discussion is partly, semantics represented in the ending of the word. "Nigg**er**" is associated with ethnocentric ideologies that shaped how African and African Americans were oppressed by Whites (Bennett, 1993; Philogene, 1961). Within hip-hop culture, the purpose for using the word itself is to "flip the script" of its historical meaning (Smitherman, 1991). Changing the meaning and context of the word "nigger" is reflected in the overwhelming use of "nigg**a**" or "nigg**az**" in rap songs. Rap artist Tupac Shakur (1991) takes the term "nigga" and not only redefines it, but raises questions to African-American about entitlement and agency for sociopolitical responsibility in the Black community.

"Killing us one by one
In one way or another
American will find a way to eliminate the problem
One by one
The problem is
the troubles in the Black youth of the ghettos
And one by one
we are being wiped off the face of this earth
At an extremely alarming rate
And even more alarming is the fact
that we are not fighting back
Brothers, sistas, niggas
When I say niggas it is not the nigga we are grown to fear
It is not the nigga we say as if it has no meaning
But to me
It means Never Ignorant Getting Goals Accomplished, nigga
Niggas what are we going to do
Walk blind into a line or fight
Fight and die if we must like niggas" (Shakur, 1991)

There is a growing sense of entitlement among African American youth to take ownership of the use of the word, applying its concept to behavior rather than aligning the word with "race." Emani's use of the word in part is a representation of this entitlement.

Another construction of "race" presented in the discussion is the exodus of Black people who are presented as wanting to live by "White folks." In line 9, Emani articulates this notion that Black folks desire to live by "White folks" in efforts to "get away from niggas." Although Emani does not describe in full detail who wants to "get away" from "niggas," she uses distinct body language that implies the voice she is enacting is that of a Black woman. I note that when she says, "I can't wait to get away from these niggas," she is moving her head from side to side isolating her neck and waving her hand. These mannerisms are often stereotypically associated with the assertive direct mannerism of Black women. In combining this body language with the words spoken- she introduces the construct that *even* Black people don't want to live among Black people. Moreover, Black people want to live "by the White folks." This construction of Blackness introduces the notion of classes of Black people, which gets explored later in the discussion. I bring attention to this because it is important to see how the students begin to organize categories of Black people based on their desire to interact with one another. However, they do not explore the categories of Black people that are acceptable enough to **not** cause White flight. Their discussion is focused on the negative images and stereotypes of Black people. The students do not discuss any situated contexts for the movement of Whites or for the desire to move among Blacks. "We move in and they move out," is expressed to discuss the broad result of "White flight" that does not give exception to the type of Black people that Emani and Jackie suggest exist.

The discussion from lines 30 to 40 is my attempt to challenge the students' constructions of Black people. Up to this point, the students use broad descriptions of

Black people that seemingly justify "White flight." In lines 30-41 the discussion shifts as Emani and Jackie consider who might qualify to live by White folks. Note line 32 where Emani suggests that "White flight" might depend on the type of Black people. This suggest Emani recognizes that *all* Black people are not the same or at least that *all* Black people are not *niggerish*, *trifflin,* or *ghetto*. Jackie co-signs to this idea of types of Black people suggesting that the age of the Black people moving in the White communities might reconcile "White flight." Within this discussion, Emani and Jackie disagree on what might be constituted as acceptable cohabitants of White communities. In their discussion, Jackie concludes in line 35 that old Black people like to cut their grass. This comment nearly returns the discussion to the construct that Black people don't maintain property with the exception of old Black people. I challenge this idea of "White flight" being a result of Black people's property upkeep through my line of questioning. In line 36, I ask if the issue is about keeping up one's property. When Jackie replies "Yeah," I immediately qualify my initial question with a follow-up question, "this will encourage them to move?" My own line of questioning reflects my problem with the ways they construct blackness. Rather than inserting more specific details or questions like, "Do you keep up your property?" or "Does that mean your family is *niggerish*, or *ghetto*?" I allow the discussion to continue to see how the students will resolve the constructs they have presented. I also recognized that the line of questioning I was considering would be constituted as an offense to the students. It might be construed that I was calling them and their families *niggerish*- even though these are constructs they created in the discussion for certain types of behaviors.

In addition to how the students present these constructions of "race" as sets of behaviors, the students use narratives to explain instances in their personal lives that they consider illustrations of racism. After line 50, there are two narratives embedded in the discussions of "race" that will be analyzed in the final portion of these findings. However, I would like to bring attention to a construction of a stereotype of *blackness* that Emani has embraced in a profound way.

In line 80, Emani is explaining an event at the movie theatre. She describes the audience as predominantly White and points out that there are White people sitting next to her in each direction with "sprinkles of Black folks" in the theatre. She explains the context of the scene where she states that everybody in the theatre is talking, chatting, and commenting as they are watching the film. A White movie patron turns around and asks her to be quiet. She is offended by the request not because she wasn't talking but because she felt singled out considering that others were talking as well. She associates being singled out with race, to which she states, "Alright. Now you gonna make me act like my color." She does not say this to the movie patron but represents this statement as the thought she had. I asked her later in the discussion what does "act my color" mean. She replies, "Ima Ima[18] o.k. since you think I'm like that I'm gonna be like that. I'm gonna get real stupid wichu." Jackie then adds that all groups of people have stereotypes and proceeds to explain various stereotypes for different racial and ethnic groups. In this explanation, she does not explain the stereotype for Black people. Her words, "since you think I'm like that I'm gonna be like that" are an a priori assumption based on the descriptions of Black people they presented earlier. The notions that Black people are

[18] "Ima" is a figure of speech that represents the phrase "I am going to." It suggests the speaker is consideration some form of action.

niggerish, rowdy,and trifflin are constructs that Emani uses to define Black people that in this case, she is willing to accept and embrace to accomplish dealing with the other movie patron. A point of fact is that as Emani and Jackie described Black people, they never clarified if they believed this characteristics to be true; however, Emani presents the idea that when she is unjustly pointed out, as she implies, she is positioned to "act her color." This constructs of *blackness* and the assumptions that seem to constitute Black identity for Jackie and Emani are expressed to illustrate the complexities and contextualized meanings they associate with being Black. Narrative 2 with Kevin and Thessely also explore these complexities represented in what they consider "Black names" and the consequences for having a name that "sounds Black."

Focus Group 2: Kevin and Thessely

Context for Focus Group 2

As we were getting organized for the focus group (e.g., setting chairs, snacks, etc.) Kevin and Thessely were sharing their experiences with activities, clubs and work outside of school. Both students talked about being very busy with working and earning money for things they want to buy but which their families can't afford. So, they choose to work to get extra money for senior class expenses. Within this discussion, we began talking about the different social organizations in and out of school in which they each participate and where they find the time to do it- given their busy schedules. As we began talking out social interactions, the issue of meeting different people from different

backgrounds emerged. Thessely made a comment about how these cross-cultural interactions helped deal with racism.

Focus Group 2 Transcript

1. Ayanna: What is racism?

2. Kevin: To me racism is like a Black person can be racist to another Black person. Cause he don't like this person. He don't like how he act. He don't like- he don't like him. Cause like if you don't like somebody, you don't like yourself. Racism is like a strong hatred toward someone.

3. Ayanna: O.k. so racism is a strong hatred

4. Kevin: Toward anybody Black, White.

5. Ayanna: What is that hate based on?

6. Kevin: Probably personal feelings.

7. Ayanna: umm hmm. What do you think racism is?

8. Thessley: I think racism could be a lot of different things. You can be racist in a lot of ways. I mean it can be implied racism. Say if I'm - it doens't necessarily have to deal with color, let's say if I be like, class or social status. Just say you're so "think you're so high class" (shifts tone and enunciation) and you're always lookin down on me (folds her arms and looks over her right shoulder) "Oh, Gosh, I'm not going to sit next to Thessely" (said in a different tone) "look at her shoes." You can act toward a person just because you think they don't have money. Or it could be about skin color. Be like "Oh my gosh I hate White people, I hate Black people, I hate Asian people"- you know just the way you treat a person nose turned up to people and then. I think racism can go sort of into like getting a job. Maybe in the really (undecipherable) society- you know. (Kevin nods)

9. Thessely: I really haven't experienced it but this is what I think- cause you know let's say, cause I saw on the news that the names- let's say your name is Laquinisha and Susan. You have the same criteria (holding her hands parallel to one another as if forming a boundary on the table), same experience, same degrees and everything. Susan gonna get the job.

10. Kevin- Because of the name

Focus Group 2 Transcript continued…

11. Thessely: But basically I mean not to categorize or anything but we basically know that's a Black person's name just by lookin at it. Ninety percent of Black people mostly have names like that. White people mostly have names like that even though there is probably some Black girl name Jennifer, which can be White or Black- you know just by the names, I guess the names tell them basically ok."We know we're not gonna pick her." How you know uuhhh Laquinisha can't do the job way better than she can even though you have the same type of experience.

12. Ayanna: (turning to Kevin) So what do you think about these names that Thessely is talking about?

13. Kevin: Ninety percent of Black females anyway

14. Thessley: Yeah the males names more common. Like Greg. My name is so different ain't a whole lot of Thesselys in the world, but like Keishas. that's a Black name (Kevin nods). See Monica can go for White or Black. Ain't too many-

15. Ayanna: How do you decide if a name is a White name?

16. Thessely: I'm sayin this- it's the way names are mostly categorized this way. Cause you know I know people who have named their kids Oscar, but I mean that's just how the people look at it cause they know- I guess Black people have not been- I dunno. I don't know why people name. I guess they stick with the trend, tradition, it's been names that you like.

17. Kevin: /u/. Every Black woman has an /u/ on the end of they name (slightly jolts his body forward when he says it)

18. Ayanna: Black women have an /u/ (Ayanna mimics Kevin jolting her body when saying /u/)

19. Kevin: Keisha, Shanika,

20. (group laughs)

21. Thessely: Jamira

22. Ayanna: Ayanna (long pause). What do you think about that?

23. Kevin- Ain't nothing wrong with it. I feel like folk make they own decisions.

Focus Group 2 Transcript continued…

24. Thessely- I mean you really can't

25. Ayanna- I'm sorry (talking to Thessely) I'm trying to hear what he just said

26. Kevin- Folks have to name they own child. Whatever your name come out to be...sometime I want to change mine.

27. Ayanna- To what?

28. Kevin- Anythang but Kevin.

29. Thessely- Bob

30. Kevin- It's too many of us in my family already. So I don't like it.

31. Ayanna- Really?

32. Kevin (shaking his head no). I like my middle name.

33. Ayanna- What's your middle name?

34. Kevin- Dion

35. Ayanna- Dion. So just go by your middle name

36. Kevin- (Shaking his head no) Can't go by your middle name.

37. Ayanna- Why?

38. Kevin- Cause it's unprofessional. Like

39. Ayanna- How is Dion unprofessional?

40. Kevin- It's Black.

41. Ayanna- Ahh. Let's talk about that. If your name (uses quotes) sounds Black- Dion you're saying it sounds Black, Thessely are you saying Thessely sounds Black

42. Thessely- I don't know.

43. Ayanna- Laquinisha sounds Black- those name are unprofessional to you?

Focus Group 2 Transcript continued…

44. Kevin- It's not really unprofessional -it sounds like someone who plays sports or something. You don't find too many Kevins who plays sports. It's like title of your name is like what business you go into. Like you don't find to many Kevins that play sports. But you find a lot of Dions.

45. Ayanna- So does that mean we need to have more Dions in law?

46. Kevin- Yes (sits back in his seat putting his back against the back of the chair)

47. Ayanna- So why wouldn't you go by Dion?

48. Kevin- I would. I don't have no problem with it but I still love my first name because it's me. It's who I am (holding his had palms toward chest). (bell rings)

Kevin and Thessely co-construct "race" as being associated with names. During this focus group discussion, Kevin and Thessely raise the issue that certain names are suggestive of racial orientaton. As the students discuss their perspectives of racism, Thessely connects racism with employment opportunities. In line 10, she states, " let's say your name is Laquinisha and Susan. You have the same criteria (holding her hands parallel to one another as if forming a boundary on the table), same experience, same degrees and everything. Susan gonna get the job." The scenario she creates is the result of something she saw on the news where resumes of different job candidates were submitted with different names on them. She presents the scenario as an act of racism suggesting that people's names can potentially hurt their chances to get jobs. The name "Laquinisha" is presented as the "Black name" and "Susan" the other name. "Susan" is presented as a name that does indicate *blackness* but is possibly presented to represent *whiteness*. Although she does not refer to "Susan" as White, she creates an opposition between the names to bring attention to the *blackness* in the name "Laquinisha." In presenting this concept, Kevin adds in line 11 that Susan gets the job "because of the

name." Kevin's statement reiterates the notion that it is because "Laquinisha" sounds Black or because "Susan" does not sound Black, that Susan is awarded the job. The racial construction created in this discussion is connected to social outcomes and opportunities. Thessely explains the idea that the person with the "Black name" will not get the job because her name is an indicator that she is Black. She expounds on this idea in line 12, "I guess the names tell them basically ok. 'We know we're not gonna pick her.'" Thessely actively constructs a perspective from a potential employer illustrating that her name is used to determine her access to the job. Thessely questions this process as she shares the idea of racializing names, "How you know uuhhh Laquinisha can't do the job way better than she can even though you have the same type of experience?" Thessely's questioning is posed as a challenge to the outcome of racializing names loss job opportunities. I questioned Kevin about what he thought of this idea since he agreed that there are lost job opportunities for people with "Black names." Kevin suggests that the issue of "Black names" is evident with Black women. He explains in line 18 that Black women have an /u/ sound at the end of their names. As he suggests a phonetic short "u" sounds, he jolts his body forward in a quick intentional manner. I laugh and repeat his movements restating his comment, "Black women have an /u/ sound?" This is posed as a question to Kevin so that he could clarify how he associates a sound ending on a name with "race." Lines 20-23 is the following exchange where in the discussion, we all begin to name people we know whose names fit Kevin's description. As we list names, we each add emphasis on the ending sound. I highlight the end sound on the portion of the transcript below.

20. Kevin: Keish**a**, Shanik**a**,

21. (group laughs)

22. Thessely: Jamir**a**

23. Ayanna: Ayann**a** (long pause).

Once the group tests what Kevin identifies as characterisitics of Black women's names, we laugh as a group. This common laughter is a recognition that what is partly a stereotype of Black names was evident in the names we quickly listed, even my own. I follow up this exchange by asking for Kevin's perspective of naming and Black names. He responds, "people have to make their own decisions." This comment inserts the idea that naming children is a choice, but later in the discussion, he presents the complexities of choices like naming that he sees as problematic in his own life.

In lines 30-40, Kevin personalizes the discussion mentioning that he does not like his name. He says there are too many Kevins in his family, which makes his name undesirable. He adds that he would change his name to "anythang but Kevin." Thessely inserts "Bob" in line 30. She inserts "Bob" as either an example of "anythang but Kevin" or as a choice Kevin might be pondering. I note this insertion because when she says "Bob," she enunciates the short "o" sound elongating the name. Her phonetic pronounciation mimics the stereotypical sound for the construct sounding "White" (Williams, 2006). Sounding "Black" or sounding "White" is a discussion of prosody often associated with Black speech patterns. Williams (2006) discusses these racialized sounds within the cultural models of African American language constructed by African American secondary students. "Sounding White" is associated often with non-Whites signifying mimicry or as a statement of critique of other Black people. When Kevin

proposes the idea of having any name other than Kevin, Thessley selects a stereotypical "White name" and pronounces "Bob" emphasizing the short "o" vowel sound, which gives it its distinctive "White" sound. Her insertion of "Bob" as a proposed name is another illustration of using names to construct "race."

More telling in this event is what Kevin expresses in lines 32-44. I propose that maybe he can use his middle name since he does not like his first name. Kevin states that *he can't* use his middle name. I ask him what his middle name is to which he responds Dion. He replies "he can't" use his middle name because it *sounds unprofessional*. Here Kevin links his name to professionalism, which partly reinforces the bias Thessely initially presented in the scenario earlier in the discussion group. I ask Kevin how is the name Dion unprofessional? He replies in line 40, "It's Black." Kevin relates his own name to what constitutes professionalism. He identifies his name as not sounding professional and deduces that it does not sound professional because it *sounds* "Black." Kevin's reasoning is cyclical. He creates an unresolved cycle for what he cannot call himself. Kevin's personal perspective of his own name, and possibly his identity is complicated. He does not relate his name to professionalism because he constructs it as a "Black name." Constructing a name as a "Black name" or a "White name" is less about heritage, group identity, family, and history and is thought about in the context of social mobility. What is implied in this discussion is that Black people are regarded as professional or "able to do the job," as Thessely presented, based initially on their names. In this case, the students view "Black names" as inhibiting factors to getting a job or being viewed a professional.

Kevin later presents the idea that Dion sounds like an athlete's name. In an attempt to reframe Kevin's perception of his name, I state in line 45, "So does that mean we need to have more Dions in law?" to which he replies, "Yes." My statement about having "more Dions" in law is not constructed as people named Dion in law but rather about having more Black people in law. The students associate names with "race" throughout the discussion. "Black names" represent Black people. I continue this construct in my question. Part of this question is addressing representation of Black people in different professional areas. I choose law because it is stereotypically a White profession as opposed to sports, which is stereotypically a Black profession. The a priori assumption in my question is that Kevin will view practicing law as associated with Whites and will take up the notion that if "more Dions" are represented there it increases the acceptance of Black people with "Black names" as professional people. Kevin's response, "Yes," is his agreement that "more Dions" need to be represented in law (or possibly professions outside of sports). It is not clear as to what aspect of my question Dion is taking up; however the issue of representation of Black people in professional spaces being accepted with their names is the subtext for the conversation.

This focus group discussion represents a construction of "race" both Blacks and Whites. Partly, *whiteness* is constructed as an acceptable status represented in names like "Susan" or "Bob." Although there are different types of people named Susan and Bob, the students construct these names as representations of *whiteness*. Similarly, "Laquinisha," "Dion," or Black women with names that end with the /u/ sound are constructed to represent *blackness*. These representations of "race" however do not stand alone. Thessely uses getting a job and Kevin uses *sounding professional* as ways to

construct consequences for having names they perceive as racialized. What is being purported in this discussion is a relationship between access and identity based on naming alone. The students see names as important keys to gaining access to opportunities despite the bias they discuss that allows access to racially amorphous names. As this discussion begins with the students defining or describing racism, Thessely using the resume scenario with "Laquinisha" and "Susan" is important. She constructs the scenario as an act of bias or discrimination because of, in this case, "race." The students demonstrate that constructions of "race" are not complicated because they are not solely located in what people look like or even what they do but in how they are perceived based on associative domains, like names.

The final focus group used for analysis examines constructions of "race" as reflected in students' perspectives of "race" as it is experienced and how it is purported in everyday life.

Focus Group 3: Power Group

Context for Focus Group 3

This focus group begins with the students describing the reading journals in Mr. Welsley's class. I asked them to describe the reading journal process and the work required to conduct analysis in the journals. They talked about strategies they each used to get through the reading journal, which for some students included making up analysis or copying ideas they expressed in earlier parts of the logs. I then asked them if they believed the reading journal process effected how they read other work in other classes? This question introduced the groups' discussion of politics.

Focus Group 3 Transcript

1. Jackson- We went over an article you know- we really figured out what that was sayin.

2. Lee- Was the article about how Blacks are Democrats vote for Democrats?

3. Jackson- Yeah Yeah.

4. Lee- No matter what who the candidate is.

5. Ayanna- What article was this?

6. Lee- It was some article some uhhh. It was so long ago.

7. Ayanna- Who gave you the article?

Transcript 3: Power Group continued…

8. Lee, Shamar and Kevin- (said in unison) Mr. Welsley.

9. Shamar- He still got it.

10. Ayanna- O.k. What was the article about?

11. Jackson- Black folks. They got a lock on the voting system like they only vote for Democrats so long they don't know how to change up from who they vote for. They don't know what's going on they still just vote for Democrats.

12. Lee- They don't care who the candidates is

13. Ayanna- When did he give you all this article?

14. Kevin- During the second six weeks.

15. Ayanna- oh, like very early in the school year. O.K. so this was like around the election period. What did you think about that- that whole ideas that uhhh uhhh.

16. The group- It's true.

17. Jackson- It's true.

18. Ayanna- Why do Black people- not so much about yeah it's true it's true- but what is it about the democratic party the reason why Black people align themselves?

19. Kevin- The Democratic party is willing to help us more than the Republican party.

Focus Group 3 Transcript continued…

20. Shamar- Republican is for the rich people.

21. Kevin- Yeah.

22. Lee- Yeah. That's how my grandmama taught me. She be like, put Democrats in they gone care about us. You put Republicans in, the rich people gonna get richer.

23. Ayanna- So is it an issue of rich and poor or is it an issue of Black and White?

24. Lee and Kevin- Rich and poor

25. Shamar- Both

26. Group- Yeah both both.

27. Kelly- It really is both.

28. Ayanna- How so?

29. Kelly- If you really looked at it not to offend anybody or anything-

30. Ayanna- Why do people do that? Say what you gotta say?

31. Kelly- I'm mixed with both races that's why I'm saying that.

32. Ayanna- Oh o.k.

33. Kelly- That's what I'm saying. I come from both perspectives of life like this. And to me it like its both ways. You got some rich Black folks but majority is all White people that's rich. It is mostly all of the Blacks that like (short pause) down there. So- the system is actually like that. It's kind of both ways. For the rich and poor- Whites and Blacks is racist too.

34. Shamar- They really the ones with all the power.

35. Lee- Yeah, I really don't see no difference between who the presidents is-if you don't own nothin you gone be broke.

36. Ayanna- umm. So you're sayin- What were you saying about power?

37. Shamar- I said it seems like its all the White people who got all the power.

38. Ayanna- No matter if they're Democrat or Republican, or what- what are you saying?

Focus Group 3 Transcript continued…

39. Shamar- In general.

40. Ayanna- What's power?

41. Kevin- Control.

(long pause)

42. Kevin- Like see, when you look at Congress, you don't see too many Blacks in Congress mostly only Whites- so you see they have all the power. Cause Congress can run the President.

43. Lee- They'll throw a few of em' up in there. Just to make us happy.

44. (Several people chuckle)

Transcript 3: Power Group continued…

45. Ayanna- What did you say- just to make us happy?

46. Lee (laughing)- yep. So we don't start arguing or start no riot or nothing.

47. Shamar- So won't start protesting then. Demonstratin-
48. (Kelly laughing)
49. Lee- You know what I'm sayin.

(long pause)

50. Lee- Like we uhh. who was that who uhh that Black man tried to run for uuh President this last time.

51. Jackson- Al Sharpton. ahh.

52. Lee- C'mon man- Al Sharpton?

53. Ayanna- Did you take Al seriously?

54. Lee- (frowing his face) No!

55. Ayanna- Why not?

56. Jackson- Man

57. Lee- (leans his head to the right and frowns his face). That man still got a curl.

Focus Group 3 Transcript continued…

58. (group laughs).

59. Ayanna- O.K. but why wouldn't you take Al Sharpton seriously?

60. Jackson- Cause everybody sayin man we ain't ready for no Black president.

61. Lee- They don't come serious.

62. Jackson- For real. I don't think we are either. Unless you just really sophisticated. Doin-

63. Lee- You ain't even gotta be doin all that. You gotta know what you talking about.

64. Jackson- You gonna be a president and tryna run and you a preacher.

65. Ayanna- What's required of Black people (pause) that makes them-us (making air quotes) ready to have a Black president that's not required of White people? What we gotta do more? Or do we have to do something more than White people in order to run?

66. Kevin- First of all we have to come together as a whole.

67. Lee- You gonna have to be better!

68. Ayanna: I'm sorry, what were you saying? (looking at Kevin)

69. Lee- He was saying we gotta come together as a whole. And I was sayin, man, for there to be a Black president you gonna have to be a whole lot better than the candidates you runnin against I'm telling you now.

70. Shamar- you have to be real real educated too.

71. Lee- Real educated. You know what I'm saying.

72. Shamar- gotta go to Harvard

73. Lee- We can't have nobody going up there just (wiggles in his seat slightly throwing his hand up). It ain't necessarily where you from. You just can't be goin up there running for it just to see if you can get it, man.

74. Shamar- just tryna see if you can be the first Black president.

75. Kelly- and then havin-

76. Lee- you gotta have a real purpose. A real purpose

Focus Group 3 Transcript continued…

77. Kelley- about how Black folks talk. You need somebody up there that is sophisticated-know how to talk. You know. Be like (pause) not tryna say proper. But not that thuggish type of talk.

78. Lee- that's the education right there.

79. Kelly- Street talk. We don't need that type of talk.

80. Lee- Not a thug.

81. Ayanna- Do we hold that same criteria for White people? I mean do we sit an go (speaks in a lower tone) "In order for him to be president he's gonna have to make sure he comes with it?- Make sure he gotta talk proper"

82. Kelly- Naah

83. Lee- Yeah.

84. Ayanna- How come we say this?

85. Lee- I think we do. I think you do.

86. Ayanna- Hold up. Let's lets really see what happens. Do you think about this when you think about White people?

87. Jackson- No

88. Ayanna- Do you think "all you gone have to come with it."

89. Jackson- No but look we been around Blacks so long we know what we about. We know how we talk

90. Kelly- Yeah

91. Jackson- (undecipherable) The only way we know how White people is is if we grow up around them and see how they act- so when we see them on t.v. o.k. its like this its just they nature.

92. Kevin- It's the way they brought up.

93. Jackson- But you know how we act. We can't seem to think about how they act- maybe they think about how they act to themselves.

94. Ayanna- What were you sayin Shamar?

Focus Group 3 Transcript continued…

95. Shamar- They the ones that go to the good schools. (undecipherable) They can get into college. If we want to go to college, we have to get a scholarship.

96. Lee- That that ain't necessarily true (shaking his head no)

97. Ayanna- So is it assumed (short pause) is it assumed wait let me move out the way- you had another opinion.

98. Lee: See like you know when I went to elementary I grew up around a lot of White folk-you know what I'm sayin cause I went to Lincoln for a minute- like two years. It was all types of races there. Then like umm (shaking his hand quickly) my brother's daddy he was with a White woman for eight nine years (peers over his glasses) you know what I'm sayin. Can't nobody tell me. Them folks is hood as any of us (pause). Them folk fight- (laughs loudly)

99. Ayanna- So why do we make this assumption that if Black people are going to get into political office, why why do we have to do more than them?

100. Lee- Cause it's like a majority thing man. Even though it is some White people like that- majority White people right. That's how we see it.

101. (people enter the library and the student's comments are not clear).

102. Ayanna- If Jackson said I want to run for president you know Kelly said you have to make sure your language is right- you gonna have to make sure you come with it. Why do we have to-

103. Jackson- Cause we been downgraded so long it's like when we do get a chance we gotta just bring it. you know.

104. Lee- Cause they gonna find any mistake you make.

105. Kevin- Your background

106. Kelly- background- whatchu did.

I analyze this focus group discussion by identifying the constructions of "race" as presented by the students in three domains: (1) Use of Language (2) Power, and (3) Representations. These three constructions of "race" emerged from the comments the students made in the focus group. I will then discuss these constructs and how they

present and how they frame a cultural model of "race." In Table 14, I begin the analysis from line 11 where Jackson presents an overview of the article they read in Mr. Welsley's class. I identify the statements that reflect constructions of "race" as an issue of either language or power. I do not focus on the students' language use in their discussion but rather how they discuss use of language as a construction of "race." The distinction is made in the analysis of *what* they say rather than *how* they say it.

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
11	Jackson	Black folks. They got a lock on the voting system like they only vote for Democrats so long they don't know how to change up from who they vote for. They don't know what's going on they still just vote for Democrats.		Summary of the article that suggested Black voters unquestionably vote for Democrats- even if they are unaware of political issues.	
12	Lee	They don't care who the candidates is		Reiterates the summary Jackson presents	
16-17	Lee and Jackson	It's true		Both assert that Black people unquestionably vote democrat.	
18	Ayanna	Why do Black people- not so much about yeah it's true it's true- but what is it about the democratic party the reason why Black people align themselves?		Challenges the students to consider the Black vote as more than a "blind vote."	
19	Kevin	The Democratic party is willing to help us more than the Republican party.		Identifies "us" as a collective group of people that need "help"	
20	Shamar	Republican is for the rich people		Associates voting parties with economics; indirectly positions Black people as not "rich" because they are associated with the Democratic party	

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation cont…

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
22	Lee	Yeah. That's how my grandmama taught me. She be like, put Democrats in they gone care about us. You put Republicans in, the rich people gonna get richer.		Both the Republican and Democratic party are positions of power that will impact "us."	
23	Ayanna	So is it an issue of rich and poor or is it an issue of Black and White?		Attempts to have the students identify voting habits in the Black community according to "race" or class.	
24	Lee and Kevin	Rich and poor		Identifies class	
25	Shamar	Both		Identifies "race" and class.	
26	Group	Both		Emphasizes "race" and class.	
27	Kelly	It really is both.		Re-emphasizes "race" and class.	
31	Kelly	I'm mixed with both races that's why I'm saying that.		Established entitlement to discuss the issue from a racial perspective representing both Black and White.	
33	Kelly	That's what I'm saying. I come from both perspectives of life like this. And to me it like its both ways. You got some rich Black folks but majority is all White people that's rich. It is mostly all of the Blacks that like (short pause) down there. So- the system is actually like that. It's kind of both ways. For the rich and poor- Whites and Blacks is racist too.		Introduces the idea that there are rich Black people just as there are rich White people. Adds that similarly there are racist Black people just like there are racist White people.	

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation cont…

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
34	Shamar	They really the ones with all the power.		Shamar inserts that both groups don't have power.	
35	Lee	Yeah, I really don't see no difference between who the presidents is-if you don't own nothin you gone be broke		Extends Shamar's idea inserting property ownership entitles wealth.	
36	Ayanna	umm. So you're sayin- What were you saying about power?		Redirects the conversation to power.	
37	Shamar	I said it seems like its all the White people who got all the power.		Aligns "race" and power as something belonging to White people.	
38	Ayanna	No matter if they're Democrat or Republican, or what-what are you saying?		Clarifying the proposition of power.	
39	Shamar	In general		Suggest not a political power-simply power.	
40	Ayanna	What is power?		Eliciting a definition of power from students.	
41	Kevin	Control.			
42	Kevin	Like see, when you look at Congress, you don't see too many Blacks in Congress mostly only Whites-so you see they have all the power. Cause Congress can run the President.		See Whites as in power because they serve in Congress at larger numbers than Blacks.	Introduces the limited number of Black represented in Congress
43	Lee	They'll throw a few of em' up in there. Just to make us happy.		White people decide how many Black people can be in Congress. Having Black people in Congress is an act of appeasement.	

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation cont…

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
44	Several people	(laugh at Lee's comment)		Recognition of power and control being at the hand of Whites in power.	
46	Lee	yep. So we don't start arguing or start no riot or nothing.		Continues the idea of appeasing Black people.	
47	Shamar	So won't start protesting then. Demonstratin-		Extends the idea that if Blacks are not satisfied- they will protest and demonstrate.	
50	Lee	Like we uhh. who was that who uhh that Black man tried to run for uuh President this last time.			Introduces Al Sharpton as a representation of appeasing Black people.
52	Lee	C'mon man- Al Sharpton?			Questions Al Sharpton as a legitimate candidate.
57	Lee	(leans his head to the right and frowns his face). That man still got a curl.			Suggest Al Sharpton's appearance doesn't warrant him as a serious candidate.
60	Jackson	Cause everybody sayin man we ain't ready for no Black president.		Suggests society has to "get ready" for a president that is not White or more profoundly that is Black.	Suggest society may not be prepared for a Black person to lead the nation.
61	Lee	They don't come serious.			Black candidates present themselves as serious contenders.
62	Jackson	For real. I don't think we are either. Unless you just really sophisticated. Doin-			Creates a criteria for a Black president.
63	Lee	You ain't even gotta be doin all that. You gotta know what you talking about.			Adds a second criteria- knowledge.

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation cont…

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
67	Lee	You gonna have to be better!			Adds a third critieria- "better than…"
69	Lee	He was saying we gotta come together as a whole. And I was sayin, man, for there to be a Black president you gonna have to be a whole lot better than the candidates you runnin against I'm telling you now.			Emphasizes holding Black candidates to a higher criteria than other candidates.
70	Shamar	you have to be real real educated too.			Adds fourth criteria of being *real* educated.
72	Shamar	gotta go to Harvard			Presents the type of schooling that constitutes *real* educated
73	Lee	We can't have nobody going up there just (wiggles in his seat slightly throwing his hand up). It ain't necessarily where you from. You just can't be goin up there running for it just to see if you can get it, man.			Emphasizes being serious.
74	Shamar	just tryna see if you can be the first Black president.			Suggest running for President by past Blacks was a symbolic act.
76	Lee	you gotta have a real purpose. A real purpose			Adds fifth criteria for Black presidential candidates.

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation cont…

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
77	Kelly	about how Black folks talk. You need somebody up there that is sophisticated- know how to talk. You know. Be like (pause) not tryna say proper. But not that thuggish type of talk.	Introduces "Black folk talk" as a limiting factor. Associates *thuggish talk* with "Black folk talk."		Adds sixth criteria- distinguishes sophisticated speech from "tryna be proper."
78	Lee	that's the education right there.			Reiterates fourth criteria.
79	Kelly	Street talk. We don't need that type of talk.			
80	Lee	Not a thug.			Suggests a way to act- seventh criteria.
81	Ayanna	Do we hold that same criteria for White people? I mean do we sit an go (speaks in a lower tone) "In order for him to be president he's gonna have to make sure he comes with it?- Make sure he gotta talk proper"		Questions the power they attribute to Whites by suggesting a criteria for Blacks.	Questions the criteria the students created for Blacks to see if they impose these same ideas on Whites.
86	Ayanna	Hold up. Let's lets really see what happens. Do you think about this when you think about White people?		Proposes we examine the issue more directly asking what they think about White candidates	
88	Ayanna	Do you think "all you gone have to come with it."		Re-verbalizes the students' language to illustrate the power they have distributed between White and Black presidential candidates	
89	Jackson	No but look we been around Blacks so long we know what we about. We know how we talk			

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation cont…

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
91	Jackson	The only way we know how White people is is if we grow up around them and see how they act- so when we see them on t.v. o.k. its like this its just they nature.			States that the only view of White people they have is based on what is on t.v. because they don't grow up around Whites. The t.v. image shows White people a certain way.
92	Kevin	It's the way they brought up.		Introduces being raised or taught to be a certain way	
93	Jackson	But you know how we act. We can't seem to think about how they act- maybe they think about how they act to themselves.		Suggests the criteria they have created is because they *know* Black people and what they have constituted as *how* Black people act.	
95	Shamar	They the one's that go to the good schools. (undecipherable) They can get into college. If we want to go to college, we have to get a scholarship.		Introduces access to education as a factor for what becomes access to power.	White people are represented as having access to school as Blacks are represented as relying on scholarships.
96	Lee	That that ain't necessarily true (shaking his head no)			Disagrees with the proposal of access for Whites.

Table 14: Constructions of "Race:" Language, Power and Representation cont…

Line	Speaker	Construction of "Race"	Use of Language	Power	Representations
98	Lee	See like you know when I went to Elementary I grew up around a lot of White folk-you know what I'm sayin cause I went to Lincoln for a minute- like two years. It was all types of races there. Then like umm (shaking his hand quickly) my brother's daddy he was with a White woman for eight nine years (peers over his glasses) you know what I'm sayin. Can't nobody tell me. Them folks is hood as any of us (pause). Them folk fight- (laughs loudly)			Suggests there is another view of White people if you live around them. He aligns this view of Whites alongside Blacks.
99	Ayanna	So why do we make this assumption that if Black people are going to get into political office, why why do we have to do more than them?		Questions how the students attribute power to Whites that results in *more* work for Blacks.	
100	Lee	Cause it's like a majority thing man. Even though it is some White people like that- majority White people right. That's how we see it.			Because White are the majority of people represented in politics, we see them as *right.*

Table 14 breaks down the focus group isolating how "race" is constructed through (1) Use of Language, (2) Power, and (3) Representation. There were several aspects of

this focus group that struck me as significant to discussions of "race." At this point in the analysis, the students participate in constructing "race" even as they discuss the disparities and contradictions that exist in a racialized society. Unlike Shemetria's focus group discussion, where she discusses the challenges of having dark skin and being ridiculed for it, being black in the context presented in this discussion is about power, language, and image. I raise this issue here because as the "Power Group" grapples with the notion of Black people qualifying to be a presidential candidate, their understandings of "race" and *blackness* are driven by their experiences in their communities.

The analysis of the "Power Group" illustrates how these African American students discuss "race" and politics as a scheme controlled by people in power. They discuss the electability of Black president using specific criteria, but they frame these criteria within the boundaries of power. For more than the first half of the discussion, most of the comments the students make are about power and entitlement to that power. Although they attempt to discuss wealth and class status as domains for power, they return to "race" as a determining factor of power. Lines 33-39 illustrate this "thinking aloud" between Kelly, Shamar, and Lee. Kelly states that there are rich Black and White people just as there are racist Black and White people. One might suggest that because Kelly is both Black and White, she resists the notion of attributing all good qualities to one group while *villainizing* the other. She presents both Black and White people as being a part of affluence and participating in discrimination and bigotry. And although her peers don't disagree with her[19], Shamar inserts the notion that Black people are not in power. This comment suggests that irrespective of individual people's access to wealth

[19] I use this phrasing because in the transcript no one actually says "I agree" with Kelly either. It is more effective to state that they "don't disagree" with her because nothing was said in response to her comment.

and their acts of racism, power is a dynamic that controls more. Shamar's comment about power is a challenge to Kelly's identifying both Blacks and Whites as rich and that being rich does not change life circumstances for shared racial groups of people.

Once the group begins discussing politics in the area of representation of presidential candidates, the constructions of "race" become more salient. The image of Al Sharpton becomes a focus of conversation where Lee responds verbally and physically to the seriousness of Al Sharpton being a candidate. The group engages in this exchange, which leads to a discussion of the criteria for a Black person to run for President the students create. This list includes image, language use, education, and sense of purpose. On the surface, these same criteria are issues that are mentioned with all presidential candidates. Discourses surrounding presidential candidates include whether they *look* presidential, their charisma, intelligence, political savvy, etc. However, although these descriptions happen in the media, the students use these criteria around the idea of a Black candidate in different ways. As they present criteria they believe are important for a Black president, they also present essentialized views of Black people, simultaneously. "You know how we act," or "Black folk talk" suggest Black people engage in behaviors inherently unbecoming political office. "Black folks talk," suggest all Black people speak in one way and this way of speaking is viewed negatively. I ask in lines 81 and 86 whether these ideas apply to White people? This question creates a new discussion of "race." Lee suggests, "yes," White people display these characteristics as well. Not satisfied with the response, I rephrase the question to the group in line 88, which generates a different response. Jackson suggests that the only perspective they have on White people is based on what is presented to them on

television because they don't grow up with White people. Conversely, the images and representations of White people on television do not bring into question their use of language, education, sophistication, etc. This comment is powerful because here we find the power of representation in the media. The ideas of what constitutes *being White* or *being Black* and being qualified for a position like president of the United States is dictated largely by how these racial images are portrayed worldwide.

Issues of racial representation are raised in several places in the data. Jackie and Emani describe Black folks as *niggerish* and *ghetto* and Missy, Faith, and Chloe talk about unity as an antiquated concept within the Black community. What recurs from these discussions are negative and somewhat disappointing views of Black people. Despite the fact that the students are African American, they critique the Black community as both members invested in its progress and as adolescents seeking support from it. Although their views of the Black community and in some ways, Black people are multi-dimensional, they create a cultural model of "*blackness*." I explore cultural models in the context of the ideas expressed by the students in the data.

Some of the ideas for cultural models were embedded in narratives the students shared in their discussions of "race." I extracted three particular narratives from the 12th grade focus groups examining the uses of narratives and the relationship between these uses of narratives in constructing cultural models of "race." First, I present each of the narratives extracted from the 12th grade focus groups and then present the analysis for the narratives. I then present the cultural analysis of the data for the research with a cultural model of "race" that emerged from the focus group discussions with both the 10th and 12th grade students.

12th Grade Narratives From the Focus Group Discussions of Race

Narrative 1: "Ima Raise All Types of Hell Up in Here"

1. **Jackie**: Ms. Ayanna...Ima tell you. When I went Wednesday to the auto mechanic uhh it was the VICA uhh ASC competition or whatever- they had auto mechanics, cosmetology all of that.

2. **Ayanna**: What does VICA stand for?

3. **Emani**: Vocational somethin somethin

4. **Jackie**: I honestly don't know (long pause) I know it was called Skills USA and they changed it to VICA I don't know. But I went for auto mechanics. It was enormous. There were probably like 10 out of 40 Black folk. What I say? I mean 10 Black folk out of 40 somethin people. And those White people were lookin (make a frowning face).. All the Black people were on one side of the room. The White folks was looking like

5. **Emani**: Uhhh

6. **Jackie:** Yeah- looking like (makes a face).

7. **Emani**: They were smart enough to make it?

8. **Jackie**: It was so messed up because they had some high school students administer like the little tests we took and passed out the pencils and call out the names and gave the name tags out. So when he was administering the test the guy that I sat next to- you know we were just talking and I was saying I'm nervous and he said I'm nervous too. It was a White boy passing out the pencils and stuff. He was like "Who all need a umm a test?" And so me, we the table was like (begins demonstrating the length of table) a long straight table not a round table he was standing right here- right in front of us. Me and the other dude were right there. He raised his hand and was waving his hand "I need a test." He raises-all in dude face. He stood there and looked at him. He passed out all the tests and gave him his test last. I was like (makes a frown).. I mean he walked all the way to the back of the room, to the folks on the side and then came back and gave him his test last. I was like (frowns again).

9. **Ayanna**: And the person who was waving his hand was

Narrative 1: “Ima Raise All Types of Hell Up in Here”

10. **Jackie**: Black. So, he was like dude was like "Can we get pencils?" And the White guy was like "Oh- who all needs writing utensils?" And everybody start raising their hands. You know I said, "If he give you yo pencil last, Ima raise all types of hell up in here." You the one who brough the pencils up in the first place.

Narrative 2: “That’s Why the White Folks Don’t Want to Stay By Us Now”

1. **Emani**: We was up in the movies. The movie is one and everybody's laughin and talking hee hee or whatever cause that's what we do in the movies. Of course, when you go to the movies you watch the movie. But we commentin, “ ha ha that was funny” or “that was messed up.” This little White couple was sittin in front of us. It was some White folks on the side of us and some White folks behind us. White folks on the other side of us and it was like a couple of sprinkles of Blacks (undecipherable) We was at the "Oak," which is why there were so many White folks around us.

2. **Ayanna**: Where is the Oak?

3. **Jackie**:East River City

4. **Emani**: Yeah...it's in East River City. It's a lot of White folks out there. But anyway, we was talkin and whatever laughin and jokin so they just turned around "Uhh could you be quiet" I'm like (long pause and then she sits straight up in her seat) these folks doin the same thing I'm doing and they (and begins pointing in each direction) and they are too but you gonna single us out. O.K. then. Alright. Now you gonna make me act like my color. O.k. uhh huhh. Now if she don't turn around and say nothing to them then I know what's up.

5. **Ayanna**: At that point you were waiting to see if they were going to say something to the other people?

6. **Emani**: Yeah, I'm like o.k. I'm see what you gone say to them over there- since they your same (starts rubbing her right hand) skin color.

7. **Jackie**: And let me tell you.

8. **Emani**: Wait a minute

9. **Jackie**: Oh you still talking (laughter)

Narrative 2: “That’s Why the White Folks Don’t Want to Stay By Us Now”

10. **Emani**: And then she had the audacity to tell us to be quiet but ten minutes later (she says pounding her right fist into her left had while saying each syllable) she start talking. I'm like no you didn't- you tellin me to be quiet but you talking. Oh o.k. I see this. My cousin was like, Ima find out where she live. I said naah it ain't even worth it. All that ain't even called for. That's why the White folks don't want to stay by us now.

Narrative 3: “Tossing the Change”

1. **Jackie:** Hold on (then lifts up right hand pointing her index finger) I finna tell you real quick (while chewing on jelly beans). them ole white people who been

2. **Emani:** //(begins an anxious moving of her legs while shaking her head left to right and making an “ooing” gesture with her lips)

3. **Jackie:** you can tell they been in the military because they got the guls and stuff tattooed on their arms (points with her left hand to her right triceps)..when they come to visit Elvis Presley.

4. **Emani**://(partially smiling and nodding subtly)

5. **Jackie**: (raises left hand with index finger above table) I hate for folks to throw their change at me like I’m suppose to pick that stuff up off the counter

6. **Emani**: // (in a deep tone while gesturing her hands as if she was tossing something across the table) “Here gurl” (sucks her teeth and makes a face of disgust leaning her head slightly to the right)

7. **Jackie**: (Loud yelp) Hold up (pops up out of her seat leaning over the table and then sits down immediately) I’m finna tell ya- I could understand (holding both of her hands out with palms up)

8. **Emani**: //(gestures moving her right hand under her chin waving it as if to say “cut” like a film director)

9. **Ayanna**: (interrupts pulling the bag of jelly beans away from J toward E) you can demonstrate with the jelly beans that are broken or that you don’t wanna eat

10. **Jackie**: (hovers over her three books on table giggling)

11. **Ayanna**: So here’s the situation..

Narrative 3: "Tossing the Change" continued…

12. **Jackie**: O.K…(opens her hands with her palms up) I can understand with some people- you know theya count they money (gestures as if counting out paper-made money) they'll lay it down- you know I'm like (in a slightly lower tone) you still can hand it to me (raises tone)- but I ain't trippin…(slightly rocking back and forth in her chair and eyes widening slightly) Maann.nem white folks come innare (throws her hands out as if throwing dice then speaks in a lower tone) "Is that enough?" You be like (sinks a bit in her shoulders looking puzzled)…

13. **Emani**: No you just did not (undecipherable)

14. **Jackie**: // (in a high pitched tone but whispered to signal her thoughts) I know you did not just throw this money at me

15. **Emani**: You gone make me lose my job (waving her right hand and moving her neck from left to right)

16. **Jackie**: (in a raised voice) and fool look. don't let it be no change..Let me get some jelly beans (begins pulling the bag toward her getting out jelly beans) Ima show you what they do to the change…he'll drop dude- one dude just dropped the change and he was like this (tosses out jelly beans and stares at them with hands open and a smug expression on her face) He was like, "How much I need?" I said, "It's eleven twenty seven." (Begins flicking each jelly bean one by one across the table)

17. **Ayanna**: And he flicked the jelly beans

18. **Jackie**: Yes. He flicked naaw he flicked the change (laughing and picking up jelly beans)

19. **Ayanna**: Ahh oh I'm sorry (laughter)

20. **Jackie**: He flicked the change at me.

21. **Emani**: //Dang

22. **Jackie**: He was like "Is that enough?" (sits for two seconds with an intentional blank stare imitating the serious demeanor of the customer)

23. **Emani**: // No you just did not do that

24. **Jackie**: (speaks slowly in a high pitched voice connoting surprise) No you did not just flick ya money at me man (shifts to a normal tone) I'm like (shifts back to slow high pitch tone) you done threw ya money and flicked ya change. You must be crazy.

Narrative 3: "Tossing the Change" continued…

25. **Ayanna**: So what didja do?

26. **Jackie**:I looked at him like he was crazy and took the money and said, "Have a nice day sir"..That's all I could do. But I was over there (undecipherable)

27. **Emani**: //You don't wanna lose your job

Narrative 4: "Them Folks is Hood As Any of Us"

Lee: See like you know when I went to Elementary I grew up around a lot of White folk-you know what I'm sayin cause I went to Lincoln for a minute- like two years. It was all types of races there. Then like umm (shaking his hand quickly) my brother's daddy he was with a White woman for eight nine years (peers over his glasses) you know what I'm sayin. Can't nobody tell me. Them folks is hood as any of us (pause). Them folk fight- (laughs loudly)

Each of the four narratives presented from the selected 12th grade focus groups is different. Each of them focuses on different events, different circumstances, and involve different situated contexts. However, across the narratives there are similar features that describe how the narratives are being used. I describe these functions as "uses." In different portions of the narratives, words and phrases are used as rhetorical strategies to evoke responses from the audience or to suggest action from the audience in some capacity. I describe these "uses" of narrative as rhetorical because they are a part of the conventions of storytelling or story-sharing. Phrases like, "You know what I'm sayin'" and "You know I was mad" are colloquial expressions that invite the audience to respond either verbally or nonverbally. These phrases are used in colloquial discourse to reconnect the storyteller and audience to the ideas conveyed in the story. Unlike a "call and response" feature of African American Language, where the speaker waits or shifts the pitch of a question to signal a response, rhetorical strategies in the uses of narrative in

discussions of "race" are about the speaker connecting the audience to the narrative more than it is about the audience actually responding.

These uses of narrative emerged from this data in a preliminary analysis of why narratives were so prevalent in students' discussions of "race." I identified eight uses of narratives, which have been described in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. In each of the narratives, the students participate in the construction of "race." Some of these constructions contribute to the very stereotypes they later attempt to combat within their own discussions. Other constructions of "race" are the result of the students making sense of how they see the world. In any case, the students evoke narrative partly to process and to provide illustrations for otherwise complex and complicated notions of "race." For example, Lee's narrative "Them Folks is as Hood as Any of Us" challenges the stereotype that normalizes *whiteness*. He counters the construction of White people that is being discussed using his own personal experiences to offer another perspective. "Them Folks is as Hood as Any of Us," is presented as a testimonial that suggests Lee's firsthand experiences with White people tell him that the images of White people and their behaviors "can be as hood" as the stereotype of Blacks. Lee's attempt to deconstruct a priori assumptions about Whites inadvertently construct racial meanings for Blacks. His conclusion that "them folks is a hood as any of us," reiterates how "race" is socially constructed. He clarifies that Black people have constructed *whiteness* in ways that position *all* White people with certain behaviors and ways of thinking. Conversely, Black people have also constructed *blackness* in relation to these views of Whites. "Race" is Lee's narrative is a key example how these constructions and how they manifest themselves in everyday life.

Uses of narratives illustrate how storytelling is not a neutral act. As narratives are used to share perspectives based either from one's own experiences or as Shuman (2005) discusses retellings of "other people's stories." Bauman (1986) discusses narratives as creative exaggerations of the truth. People use these creative exaggerations for different reasons in narratives, which shape the significance of the narrative performance. The eight uses of narrative presented in this research are significant because in discussions of "race," the racial identity is actively present in the construction of the narrative, itself. Moreover, the narrator's perspective of "race" directly influences why and how the narrative is being told in the first place.

The informational use contains the details that largely define the event. It identifies the thing or process that signifies the importance of the narrative. In each of the narratives presented in the focus group, identifying race was a common factor. In "Ima Raise All Types of Hell Up in Here," Jackie structures the narrative to provide background information about the racial demographics of the ASC competition that is important to know in order to understand the tensions that arise around the distribution of materials.

> "I mean 10 Black folk out of 40 somethin people. And those White people were lookin;..All the Black people were on one side of the room."

Emani's narrative, "That's Why the White Folks Don't Want to Stay By Us Now," has the same organizational structure. She begins the story with the setting and then immediately identifies the racial demographics for the listener.

> "This little White couple was sittin in front of us. It was some White folks on the side of us and some White folks behind us. White folks on the other side of us and it was like a couple of sprinkles of Blacks."

Narratives serve a purpose in discussions of "race." Narratives create an opportunity for the audience or listeners to develop an understanding for the relevance of the narrative. In discussions of "race" the interactional, social, and emotional uses each invite the listener to participate in the narrative event in different ways. In some instances, listeners respond by adding to the narratives. In other cases, rhetorical questions or ideas are posed to the listener to place emphasis on the importance of what is being stated.

Interactional

Jackie: He was like "Is that enough?" (sits for two seconds with an intentional blank stare imitating the serious demeanor of the customer)

Emani: No you just did not do that

Jackie: (speaks slowly in a high pitched voice connoting surprise) No you did not just flick ya money at me man (shifts to a normal tone) I'm like (shifts back to slow high pitch tone) you done threw ya money and flicked ya change. You must be crazy

Social

"That's Why the White Folks Don't Want to Stay By Us Now."

Ayanna: Where is the Oak?

Jackie: East River City

Emani: Yeah...it's in East River City. It's a lot of White folks out there. But anyway, we was talking and whatever laughin and jokin so they just turned around "Uhh could you be quiet" I'm like (long pause and then she sits straight up in her seat) these folks doin the same thing I'm doing and they (and begins pointing in each direction) and they are too but you gonna single us out. O.K. then. Alright. Now you gonna make me act like my color. O.k. uhh huhh. Now if she don't turn around and say nothing to them then I know what's up.

In this exchange, I question the location of the Oak in part because I am not from the city and didn't understand why the location was important. Emani states, "We was at

the 'Oak,' which is why there were so many White folks around us." The other part of Emani's comment that makes this use of narrative a social one. We are not a part of the same generation and my experiences growing up include interacting with and attending high school with large numbers of White, Asian and Latino students. Emani suggests that the location of the Oak is the reason for the amount of Whites that were around them. This idea does not connect with me, which lead to my question, "Where is the Oak?" This question leads the narrative to an even more definitive discussion of "race" as Emani clarifies the segregated aspect of the city itself.

Emotional

"Can't nobody tell me. Them folks is hood as any of us (pause). Them folk fight- (laughs loudly)"- Lee

The use of emotion in discussions of "race" has distinctive a discursive feature. When the narrator uses emotion, he or she uses strong language that expresses action. Lee says, "Can't nobody tell me," which is a self-assured statement that conveys his unwillingness to accept another view or perspective on the matter. He uses this language to suggest that his knowledge of his experiences cannot be challenged. He uses this emotion to preface the statement that he stands behind in addition to his framing of the narrative by establishing his *right* to disband the image of *Whiteness*. His elaboration on his relationships to White people through social and academic interactions is a rhetorical strategy used to make his main point.

Similarly, Jackie uses the question, "You know what I said," to set up the importance of the statement to follow. "If he give you yo pencil last, Ima raise all types of hell up in here." She expresses her emotion in a controlled manner nearly warning her

peer that her actions to follow will not be controlled but only *if* he gets his pencil last. Her language is deliberate, yet demonstrates that emotion in discussions of "race" can be rational.

Emani also rationalizes her emotion and also the notion that *if* the White couple doesn't say anthing to anyone else about talking in the movie, she then is justified to "act like my color." More poignantly, she states "you gonna make me act like my color," which also signifies her reaction is not "knee-jerk," but based on her observations of what she perceives to be unjust.

The use of emotion in narratives is not simply a series of "rants" that positions people either as victims or villains. Emotions are strategically placed in narratives so that the listeners can follow the order of the story and arrive at the same place as the narrator. Notice in narratives 1, 2, and 4 the use of emotions happens at the end of the narrative. It is used to provide the resolution of the story. It does not always indicate that the problem or scenario has been resolved, but it acts as the narrator's "final word" on the matter.

Morality and intellectual uses of narrative are important in discussions of "race" because these uses call into question the sense of *right* and *wrong*. They function to demonstrate the relationship between racial dynamics presented in the narrative from the point of view of the narrator. In several of the narratives, the idea of something being "messed up," or unbalanced is a question of morality. Whether the listeners in the narrative event agree or not with the moral issues or questions raised within the narrative are not of consequence. The narrator uses morality and the intellectual approaches to the narrative to demonstrate how she perceives the set of actions.

And finally, within the historical and political discussion of "race," the complexity of these two uses of narrative lies in the nature of "race," particularly in the United States. The social dimensions of "race" today are steeped in the relationship between politics and history. The organizational structure of the United States is based on using social and political institutions to control the livelihoods of millions of people. To discuss "race," one is engaging in a historical and political discussion. "Tossing the Change," may appear to be a narrative about a teenager working at a fast-food restaurant. It may simply be a narrative about how she is displeased when money is not placed in her hand but is tossed on the counter. However, the context that Jackie creates for the narrative is historical and based on the details she provides in the informational use of narrative. Identifying the people as White, suggesting their ideologies based on visiting Elvis Presley's home, and emphasizing a particular type of disposition held by White folks by describing the people in certain terms creates a historical context for the event. The act of tossing change on the counter becomes a part of the historical narrative of Blacks being treated in an inferior manner. She accomplishes creating a historical context in the narrative by relating tossing change to issues of power. Resolving that all she could do is say, "Have a nice day sir," places the whole event in a historical frame; the extent that this narrative could have been told in the 1930's and much of the information might have been the same.

The uses of narrative in discussions of "race" are not mutually exclusive. There is a great deal of fluidity between the uses and in some cases overlap of meaning. These categories for narratives are heuristics that provide a ways for thinking about and analyzing the relationship between narratives and discussions of "race." Identifying the

uses of narrative particularly in discussion of "race" supports the aims of CRT to use narrative a tool for important work within social justice. To simply listen to or share narratives of experiences devoid of sociocultural analysis minimizes the significance of the narratives themselves. The effort for discussions of "race" by ordinary people to be useful in considering how to address racial disparity and social inequity requires some examination of the narratives themselves. I propose identifying the functions within these narratives as one of many possible methods to understand the cultural models that influence thinking about "race"

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this dissertation research is to investigate discussions of "race" in schools settings. More specifically, I examine discussions of "race" among African American secondary students in and outside of the classroom setting. The findings from this research project demonstrate that discussions of "race" happen in classroom settings in several ways. First, they happen explicitly through the curriculum choices of the teacher. In this case, the choice of literature and the historical background for certain texts lend themselves to discussions of "race" in a deliberate way. There are possibilities for teachers to not discuss "race," even contextually appropriate to classroom curriculum; however, I argue that the absence of a discussion of "race" is a substantive cause for discussions of "race."

Secondly, the values, concerns, and teaching philosophies of teachers and their own social cultural identities impact the presence or absence of discussions of "race." Mrs. Handley and Mr. Riley insert discussions of "race" in the 10th grade classroom largely because of a greater issue. Their respective uses of discussions reflect wanting to raise issues of social justice, academic achievement, or simply to motivate their students to work hard in school. In any case, both of them felt that explicit insertions of discussion of "race" were fundamentally appropriate to achieving a larger goal. The absence of discussions of "race" in Mr. Welsely's class also reflects a teaching

philosophy and the choices made within a guided framework. Placing one's teaching philosophy at the center of his or her instructional plans and choices shape the experiences students will have in the classes. Mr. Welsley organized his classroom curriculum around developing the students' ability to analyze and critique literature. This work required creating an environment that focused students on their lives beyond high school. The absence of discussions of "race" in Mr. Welsely class does not negate the rigor and intellectual challenges these students were able to face through his teaching; however it does reveal that "race" can be ignored in classrooms even in the midst of students wrestling with the complexities of "race" in their everyday lives. The difference between Mrs. Handley's class and Mr. Welsley's classes, other than grade level was how both the students' and teachers' lives were integrated into the classroom curriculum. Mrs. Handley embraced the students' sociocultural and racial identities to discuss literature and experiences in class. Mr. Welsley challenged the students to learn despite of their sociocultural and racial identities, and did not create academic spaces for the students to use these identities explicitly.

Next, the students interpreted their experiences in class as a part of these discussions of "race" in different ways. As they interact with the teachers, the teachers' approach to classroom discussion or curriculum in general, the students formulate and construct their own ideas and opinions about "race." As seen in the focus group interviews that reflected on "Odds Stacked Against You" and "The Montgomery Bus Boycott," these students had their own views of how "race" was represented in class. Largely, their perspectives were not shaped solely by discussions of "race" based on class readings. The students' perspectives of "race" were personal and constructed as a result

of their personal experiences in everyday life. Going to the store, going to the "nail shop," attending a movie or reading a book were all ordinary experiences that contributed to how they saw "race" in their own respective "realities." These experiences are valuable because they interact with how these African American students will accept or challenge racial constructs as they apply in their own social interaction.

There were several questions that emerged as a result of the findings in the data set that are important to address. I will discuss each of these questions in the context of the findings of the data as way to generate new questions about the significance of research on "race" in school settings.

What shared assumptions about "race" are represented in student discussions?

In several of the focus groups, the students talk about "race" in either two ways: (a) tangibly or (b) socially. Tangible discussions of "race" included references to skin color, language use, or as represented in print (i.e. Black names). I refer to this as a tangible discussion because "race" can be associated easily in these contexts. "Black folks talk," "being dark," or having a "Black name," all represent sociocultural understandings of "race" the students shared and reproduced throughout the data.

The focus group discussion with Kevin and Thessely introduced the idea that how a person is named is evidence of "race." Kevin particularly discusses his dislike for his name and his inability to use his middle name because it *sounds Black*. The tone of this discussion is that "race" and the consequences of *blackness* create a sense of inevitability. The substance of the focus group was based on Thessely mentioning African American job candidates not securing jobs because their names *sound Black.* Kevin concludes that he cannot use his middle name because it is "not professional" and

because it "sounds Black." This construction of "race" is powerful because the students associate their abilities to be successful in life with the tangible things they describe as *being black*.

The focus group with Shemetria addresses her skin color and how "being dark" created negative feelings about herself. It is implied in her connections between reading a book in class and her own school experiences that the ridicule of "being dark" came from other African Americans. She mentions that she "just thought it was a light skinned-dark skinned thing," which is a reference to how many African American categorize the hues and tones of Black people. This discussion of "race" exemplifies the degree to which students' personal experiences with "race" can be impacted by curriculum and opportunities to discuss "race" in formal ways. In the data, I discuss how I noticed Shemetria's increased participation in class during the focus on Alice Walker. Mrs. Handley's choice to read Walker's work encouraged a different level of engagement in class for this student, partly because she connected the content to her own personal journey with "race."

The second way students discussed "race" was conceptually. Jackie and Emani present complex ideas about the behaviors of "Black folk" and regard these behaviors in pejorative contexts. In an attempt to make sense of "White flight," they reproduce constructions of "Black folk" that appear to be self-hating. I refer to these constructions as self-hating or self-deprecating because they contribute to an oppressive context for Black people constructed in their own language. The risk embedded in how these two students attempt to make sense of "White flight" is in how they seemingly justify it by socially and culturally positioning "Black Folk."

Similarly, the "Power Group" discusses the social and political conditions that describe the voting trends in the Black community. In their attempts to discuss the historical relationship between the Democratic Party and Black people, they construct general views about Black people. The notion that "we ain't ready for a Black president," is grounded in the ideas that Black people have yet to demonstrate the cultural, linguistic, physical, or intellectual capacities to become president of the United States. The students ultimately create criteria for a Black presidential candidate. In this discussion, they construct images of both *blackness and whiteness* that reproduce ideological beliefs about "race" that have long defined racism in the United States.

The students discuss these constructs relying on what they *know* to crystallize these ideas. Jackie and Emani also use *knowing* as an absolute representation of entitlement with statements like, "You *know* Black people- Black folks- they can be so niggerish." These statements represent how the students' experiences with some Black people have shaped the beliefs about "Black folk," in general. They express their views in these discussions as constructs of knowing, which by and large is based on first, being members of the racial community and thereby establishing entitlement for raising these ideas. Secondly, they distance their *knowing* from *being* a part of the critiques they raise. In several instances, the students use "Black people" or "Black folk" without referring to themselves within these constructs. They do not use "we" or "our" embracing their racial or cultural communities to explain the issues they raise. This distancing language serves as a tool to construct a generalize view of blackness or whiteness, but does not move beyond generalities to include their own more personal identities.

A discussion of "race" that begins as a conceptual dialogue about African Americans and politics becomes a discussion that reproduces deficient-based thinking about their own racial identities. These shared assumptions reveal that these African American students have had limited opportunities to experience diverse interactions and representations of Black people. The self-deprecating language also suggests that they are not able to connect success of African American people in diverse ways to their "every day lives." How they *know* Black folk is a limited but shared set of assumptions that allow them to construct Black people in profound ways.

How is "race" constructed through talk?

Throughout the data, the students and teachers use specific words or phrases that contribute to the constructions of "race." These words and phrases however do not happen in isolation. It is within the context of discussions of "race" in the classroom setting that make "race" visible. For example, in "Head-Ragged Generals," Mrs. Handley explains the conditions that describe oppression for White women. The exchange represented "race" within the context of distributed power. In order to explore the idea of White women not having rights, the class discussion includes socially positioning White and Black men. As discussed in the analysis, the exchange exemplifies "race" as a social construct. The terms White women and White men do not yield to the meaning of "race" until they are situated within a context of power. "Race" then is constructed in the classroom setting as a means to understand the historical concept of women's right's. Racial oppression could have been thematically addressed in the curriculum of the class. There were several texts that they read throughout the year that might have served a series on "race." However, even as the class is exploring

gender, the significance and potential meanings for understanding gender could only be made more clear through a discussion of "race."

In another event, "Alice Walker," Mrs. Handley states, "**We claim we know our history** but **we do not know our history**. **You need** to know who these people are. **They are a part of you**. **They** might not **have your name-** but **they are a part of your heritage**. It's amazing **more White people** know about **our folks than we do**." In this context, Mrs. Handley challenges the students about knowing their history. The highlighted words identify racial meanings. Her statements are directed toward the students addressing ancestry and responsibility for knowledge, yet within this discussion, she constructs a racial image of both Black and White people. White people are constructed as knowledgeable and Black people are constructed as not knowing their heritage.

During the class event, "Odds Stacked Against You," constructions of racial and language identities are created for Black people and even more so for people who speak multiple languages. Embedded in Mrs. Handley's comments is a perspective of power that is ascribed to people who "master English.," which according to Mrs. Handley, something "we still haven't done." "Odd's Stacked Against You," represents how "race" is connected to language and access to language is linked to power. Black people are positioned as not having mastered English even though they have had access to it since birth, "you all grow up speaking English—and we still haven't mastered English." This construct is presented against a construction of immigrants, who are described as being multiple language speakers and who embrace a certain type of work ethic. Mrs. Handley states, "they come over here and blow us away and we get upset cause they

come to our country and take over." An underlying issue in this statement is that immigrants *should not* be able to access power in the United States *before* Black people. She idealizes the notion that because Black people have been in the United States, they should ideally have first, mastered English and secondly not be subjected to immigrants "taking over." Her perspective is that mastering English is the gateway to accessing power. Yet, what is not present in Mrs. Handley's comments is the influence of racialization and its impact on accessing power. Ogbu (1978, 1994) presents this concept of Blacks being limited to their access of power in his discussion of the "caste" system. Although there are many who transcend the ramifications of "involuntary minority" status, these individuals have not changed the status of how an entire racial group of people are positioned in society and the greater effect that other "involuntary minorities" have in school. Notwithstanding that an individual person's success does not alleviate him or her from the social impact of "race" that governs his or her own experiences in everyday life. Mrs. Handley's comments suggest that there are self-imposed limitations that Black people as a whole have adopted thereby allowing them to be "blown away" by immigrants.

Do students connect language difference to constructions of "race?"

There were several discussions in the data that focused on language difference. The first focus group with Faith and Monica, the second focus group with Monica and Dionne, and the 12th grade focus group discussion with Jackie and Emani each presented notions about language difference. In each of these discussions, the conversations centered on the students' perceptions of people who speak several languages in their presence. The students identified situations where they were receiving services (i.e.,

buying goods in a store or getting their nails done). The use of one's first language or using the language of a specifically identified speech community was considered offensive by the students. To the extent that Emani stated she want to learn "Filipinese [sic]" so she can know what is being said. However, as the students present the issue of feeling vulnerable because of not having access to these languages, they do not associate their perspectives with "race." In a distinct way, they recognize how they perceive "race" as a factor for why they experience being "talked about," but the significance of "race" is not expressed as operating in the ways they construct the store owners or the ladies in the nail shop. This unilateral discussion of "race" and powerlessness is important because of the influence of English-Only policies and the national debate on officializing language. The students believe that language difference is used to offend non-language speakers rather than to establish and preserve cultural and linguistic identity among speech communities. They inadvertently construct "race" through a discussion of language. Monica states that people "speak their own language cause they know you can't understand what they are saying," which implies speech communities are preserved for bigoted reasons. These students experience non-English speech communities during the exchange of goods and services, which limits their view of speech communities being about culture and family moreso than racism and bigotry. This does not suggest the Monica and Dionne have not experienced being ridiculed or have encountered non-English speech communities using language with a separatist agenda; however the pathology of non-English speakers abut a national climate that promotes English as an Only Language and creates tensions for historically oppressed community in different ways. Monica and Dionne describe their experiences as additional forms of oppression

even from immigrants because that is they manner in which non-English speaking speech communities are presented more broadly.

What influences do classroom curriculum has on students' perspective of language difference?

The focus groups with Faith and Monica and the second focus group with Monica and Dionne specifically revealed an association with language difference and social injustice. These discussions were created as a response to the classroom lesson focused on language difference. The presentation of this lesson included Mrs. Handley's perspective of language, learning English and power. The operating ideology of language that was presented in the story, "you must learn the language of the Americans" and the emphasis Mrs. Handley placed on African Americans **not** "mastering English" directly influenced the Monica and Dionne's discussion of language difference.

Monica's reflections and narrative of going to the nail shop reflects a set of a priori assumptions about language and language difference irrespective of Mrs. Handley's comments. This same assumption is represented in the focus group with Emani where they divulge their belief that "Chinese" ladies who work in nail shops "talk about" them. Their experience with multiple language speakers, where English is not the first language has created pejorative views about non-English speakers in general. In all three focus groups, the students shared the same sentiment; they felt discriminated against because "Chinese" or "Arabic" was being spoken. However, despite the personal experiences that Monica and Dionne share that may have shaped their views on language difference, how language difference is presented is similar to the language used

from an instructional event. The portions from two transcripts below are boldfaced to illustrate the common language.

Class Event

018: Mrs. Handley: Learn. Cause he even told the child. You're gonna have to learn what? You have to learn the language of The Americans.
019: Roger (speaking to another student)- Not if you don't live in America?
020: Mrs. Handley: **You have to learn the language of the Americas. You wanna know why? Because the United States of America (emphasis on America) is the most powerful country in the world.**

Focus Group

Dionne- Yeah. I do. Like- it's a corner store around the corner from my house and they they Iranians Iranians and they talk funny. People talkin about them because they can't quite understand what we be saying sometime. And sometime they be trying to struggle and talk how we talk. **So- I mean in order to live in America you must learn English. It's a must** (said nodding her head).

What Dionne expresses as the rationale for why one must learn English to live in America is different than what Mrs. Handley expresses. Mrs. Handley speaks of learning English from the perspective of power and English being a language reflective of globalization. "The language of the Americans," is the wording used by the character in the story that Mrs. Handley adopts in her discussion of the text. However, because she too believes that African American children need to have access to power, she subscribes to emphasizing this point in her discussion of the story. Dionne uses similar language in her statement. She foregrounds the idea of learning English by establishing a criteria, "…in order to live." Her discussion of learning English is grounded in being able to communicate while conducting business, like shopping in a store. She previously discusses the challenges that exist between "the Iranians" and people in her "neighborhood" because both groups recognize the language difference and work within

these constraints differently. Dionne concludes that "it [learning English] is a must" not because it is official but because it impacts the interactions of ordinary people in everyday life.

There is a relationship between how language difference was presented in the class lesson and how Dionne and Monica convey their respective views on language difference. It is not to say that Dionne and Monica would not have believed that English is "a must" to learn if you live in America, but the presentation of the lesson contributes to how the students convey their own ideas.

How might African American students' experiences with "race" contribute to their self-perception?

The focus group discussions with both the 12th grade students and the 10th grade students contribute to a larger discussion of self-perception and Black identity. There are several examples in the data where the students discuss "race" in comparison to or in opposition to White people. As discussed in the analysis of the data, these discussions of "race" illustrate the power of racialization and how these African American secondary students have internalized ideas about who Black people are and their possibilities for success. I describe several of these comments and ideas as self-deprecating. In several instances, they do not include themselves in their general statements about Black people. "Black folks talk" or "you know how Black folks act," are generalizations that are not personalized. The students do not say, "I act niggerish," or "I don't know how to act." That language would be explicitly self-hating. However, the power of racialization is that the students experiences with "race," within their own communities are used as an anchor to compare themselves to White people.

In the discussion with the "Power Group," Jackson suggests that the only thing they know about White people is based on how they are presented on television. Conversely, he *knows* Black people because he has grown up Black and lives among Blacks. His "funds of knowledge" about Black people is used however to confirm a pathology about White people and to confirm what he sees as an absolute interpretation of how "Black folks act." I found these discussions most disturbing and quite personally challenging because they seemed to support the agenda of racism. Despite the students' keen abilities to think critically about "race" and politics, they didn't use these skills to present alternative ways to think about themselves. They accepted the racial pathologies about Black people as simply "so." Lee's narrative within the discussion was presented to counter the glorified pathology of White people. His conclusion that "Them folks is hood as any of us" simultaneously deconstructs the pathology of White people and reconstructs a pathology of Black people at the same time. This is extended even further when he states, "Even though it is some White people like that [hood]- majority White people right." What does not happen in their discussions in the same concept of *some Black people* to express the idea that *all* Black people are not "hood." Later in the discussion, I asked Jackson why does he believe Black people have to work so hard in presenting themselves to run for president. He replied, "Cause we be downgraded so long it's like when we do get a chance we gotta just bring it. You know."

I wrestled with understanding how the students associated having to "bring it" to combat being "downgraded so long," and not discussing how they also construct these stereotypes which make it harder for Black people to gain one another's approval. Uses of narrative in discussion of "race" are significant because they help those of us interested

in understanding how "race" is constructed understand it as a function in people's lives. Simply, the narratives remind us that people are connected to one another socially, politically, emotionally, and historically. What may appear to be situated incidences are not always regarded that way, specifically for historically disenfranchised groups of people. One of the challenges in presenting uses of narratives in discussions of "race" is reconciling that the narrative event is a retelling limited by the interpretations and perceptions of the narrator. Whatever the aims or agenda may be for the narrator shapes the narrative as this is the case with all narratives. However, how "race" is constructed is based on a series of narrative experiences people have in their lives. "Race" is constructed based on the social interactions people have, and these social interactions have the power to challenge assumptions or to confirm them. I argue that discussions of "race" happen all of the time in many different settings. It is important that we attend to how "race" is constructed through experiences and the use of narratives to illustrate these experiences so that the possibilities for social justice are actually attainable. These students have demonstrated that within their adolescent experiences, how they see themselves as Black people is largely based on the ways they see "race" functioning in society. They are powerfully impacted by "race" and must have opportunities to make sense of it if they are expected to have a sense of control over their own life destinies.

This research centralizes "race" to gain a better understanding as to how "race" is constructed in discussions among African American students, and to address the notion that because of national social progress, there is less of a need to discuss "race" at all. This research illustrates discussions of "race" as active and dynamic dialogues happening in different ways and with different contexts. The African American

secondary students see "race" functioning in their everyday lives in powerful ways that sometimes reproduces inferior thinking. However, because students actively engage in these discussions recognizing power as being larger than situated and contextual, they are willing to present issues interlinked with "race" in complex ways.

What is clear from learning from these students through these discussions of "race" is that there are several factors that contribute to how communities see themselves and how they see others. "Race" and racism cannot be identified as simply negative consequences of social life and social interactions. These students and their teachers narrate experiences and connect these experiences to curriculum, school functions, neighborhood social interactions, and politics illustrating the linkages and nuances that distinguish "race" from racialization and racism. It is within these discussions of "race" among African American secondary students that we begin to hear the evidence of the power of "race." It has long-term effects that are not defined by particular generation who lived in racially historic time periods. These students have not suffered the direct brunt of physical abuse that has long-defined racism in African American communities. Alternatively, it is because these students have not had these experiences that make these discussions so powerful.

How has American society perpetuated racist ideologies and its nuances cloaked in words like "diversity" and "equality," to create these types of narratives for youth in the 21st century? What issues have we failed in to address in school settings to change the assumptions we make about people and communities that are different than our own? If social constructivist theories about "race" are accepted and discussed in the theoretical domain, without attending to the present day experiences of those most impacted by

"race," we become limited in our understanding of how these narratives and discussions of "race" even exist in the 21st century. In some ways, these discussions are reflections of the past. In other ways, these discussions are historical iterations of "race" because we have neglected address "race" as a significant factor in everyday life, which includes the past and the present.

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